Gathering Knowledges to Inform Best Practices in Indigenous Publishing

by

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B.A., Simon Fraser University, 2015

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Abstract

Storytelling is at the core of Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of life. Indigenous community members—including Elders, storytellers, writers, poets, artists, scholars, activists, editors, and publishers—have worked for decades to increase Indigenous representation in publishing. Many feel a responsibility to share their stories, knowing that when published in a good way their stories can promote healing among Indigenous cultures, and address a lack of understanding among settler Canadians about Indigenous people's lives and experiences. Through conducting interviews and readings and reflecting on my own experience, I gathered knowledge about some themes and concerns repeatedly raised in discussions around publishing for and by Indigenous people. I put what I learned into practice with this project, creating one model for learning how to share stories in a good way in the publishing industry.

Keywords: Publishing; editing; Indigenous; literatures; storytelling; protocols
For Mom
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I would like to thank Vicki White from my heart for the trust she placed in me while we worked on the stories of her mother, Dr. Ellen Rice White, Kwulasulwut, as part of my project placement at Theytus Books.

I am very grateful to have the encouragement and support of my partner, James McLaughlin, who also helped me organize this report.

Quyana.

Author’s Note: Like everyone working to advance the ethical publishing of Indigenous stories and knowledge, I owe a great deal to the late Dr. Gregory Younging, who passed unexpectedly while I was in the process of revising this report. Among his many accomplishments, he was the first (and until today, I believe the only) Indigenous graduate of the Master of Publishing program, and often returned to the program as a guest to share his insight and experience. Without his diligent advocacy the field would not be where it is today.
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Introduction

Although we are born into human bodies, it's our teachings—and our stories—that make us human. – Daniel Heath Justice

My name is Rachel Taylor. My mother is Iñupiaq from Anchorage, Alaska. Her family come from the Seward Peninsula and the Diomede Islands. My father was a settler from Minnesota; his family come from English, Scottish, and Irish descendants who settled in the eastern United States beginning about 200 years ago. My parents raised my siblings and me in Smithers, BC, on Wet'suwet'en and Gitxsan territories where our family were uninvited guests. I have lived on the unceded traditional territories of the x̱w̱m̴ɑ̨kw̱ay̱ɑ̨m, Stz’uminus, Stó:lō, Skwxwú7mesh, and Sa̓iw̓atəl Nations as an uninvited guest for 18 years. I live in the city; my mother was not taught Iñupiatun as a child and I have yet to learn. I am an editor and a student in the Master of Publishing program at Simon Fraser University.

While the storytelling protocols I learned about during my research are diverse and continuously changing, Indigenous storytellers often start with who they are and where they are from, where they got the story, and why they have the right to tell it. They might add “why they feel it’s important to retell the story right now to this particular person.”

Proper acknowledgment and attribution is very important in Indigenous storytelling. Dr. Ellen Rice White, also known as Kwulasulwut, a celebrated Snuneymuxw Elder, author, and educator, was careful to say that the stories in Legends and Teachings of Xeel’s, the Creator

2 Also spelled Gitksan.
3 https://native-land.ca/ and the accompanying blog are recommended resources.
4 Gabrielle Hill (Cree, Métis, and settler visual artist, writer, editor, and instructor in the Aboriginal University Prep Program at Simon Fraser University [SFU]), in discussion with the author, Vancouver, January 18, 2019; Sophie McCall (editor, author, and associate professor in the Department of English at SFU), in discussion with the author, Vancouver, December 12, 2018; Quvi Taylor (Iñupiaq and settler editor, writer, parent, registered nurse, and brother of the author), in discussion with the author, via telephone, February 6, 2019.
5 McCall, 2018.
6 Ellen Rice White, Legends and Teachings of Xeel’s, the Creator, 2nd ed. (Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 2019).
were passed to her from her grandmother, Mary Rice, and her grand-uncle, known to her as Grandpa Tommy. As she told her friend Q’um Q’um Xiiem, Dr. Jo-ann Archibald,\(^8\)

> I could never say these stories are mine or Granny’s or Grandpa’s. Everybody knows that long ago Xeel’s, the Creator travelled from village to village. He would say, “I am needed. I have to go.” These stories belonged to Xeel’s and he told them to people during his travels. We have to remember that.\(^9\)

The practice of proper acknowledgment speaks to the power stories carry and where the power comes from. In part, my research project looks at why the stories need protection.

**My research project**

Publishers in Canada need guidance on working with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit authors. For this project, I gathered information specifically for emerging publishing professionals about Indigenous storytelling and knowledge-keeping protocols. I interviewed people with insight and experience, and extrapolated from Indigenous writings on literature, research, and education. I aimed to practice the protocols I learned about, including proper acknowledgment,\(^10\) using Indigenous frameworks\(^11\) and research methods,\(^12\) making my own meaning from stories,\(^13\) fulfilling my responsibilities to those I am in relationship

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7 Jo-ann Archibald, “Foreword,” in White, 2019, xiii.


10 McCall, 2018.


12 Rebecca Taylor (Iñupiaq and settler writer, guardianship worker, parent, and sister of the author), in discussion with the author, via telephone, March 2, 2019.

with, obtaining continuous consent, and avoiding hierarchical relationships. I failed to address one of the most important protocols: to connect with the people on whose land I live and work. I hope to conduct many more interviews in the future and correct that mistake.

My family members talked to me about how to approach my work as an Inupiaq. I found their insight on this difficult to make applicable to others’ experiences, but it informs how I thought about my writing and what was important to share. Through my talks with them I realized I would not be able to produce the list of recommendations I had imagined at the outset of this research. However, I hope my work provides helpful resources and a research model for learners like me.

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16 Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm, “We Think Differently. We Have a Different Understanding’: Editing Indigenous Texts as an Indigenous Editor,” Editing as Cultural Practice in Canada, edited by Dean Irvine and Smaro Kamboureli (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016), 36.
Part One: Lack of Access, Lack of Knowledge

We have a lot of teachers come in and they’re like, “OK, where do I start? How do I Indigenize my classroom?” One of the first questions I ask is, where do you live? What’s your territory? [...] Because it’s not pan-Indianism. One size does not fit all. – Ann Doyon

I originally set out to understand Indigenous people’s lack of access to the means of production in publishing. However, I found that an underlying issue was more frequently raised: a lack of knowledge among the Canadian public—including publishers—about Canada’s ongoing colonial history and about Indigenous experiences and rights. Publishing is so tied to education that any minority group’s lack of access to publishing perpetuates, and is perpetuated by, a lack of knowledge about that minority group. Dr. Margery Fee writes that Canadians believe that “their” government treats Indigenous people well—even too well. Little is taught in Canadian schools and universities that might fill the huge gap between what “ordinary” citizens believe and what many white scholars and judges, not to mention Indigenous activists and intellectuals, are now saying.

For example, the “dominant discourse” does not reflect statements by Canada’s Supreme Court affirming that Aboriginal People “were never conquered,” or the Government of Canada’s recognition of self-government as an Aboriginal right.

17 Ann Doyon (Cree and Norwegian, Marketing and Sales Technician and more at Theytus Books), in discussion with the author, via telephone, February 1, 2019.
18 McCall, 2018.
20 Fee, 2015, 21.
21 Fee, 2015, 21–2.
The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has given Canada a mandate to improve education about Indigenous Peoples generally and in particular fields, such as journalism and media schools and the corporate sector. It is a good time for the publishing industry to commit to addressing its own lack of knowledge and to give back to the people from whom it has taken so much.

Publishing and Canadian Assimilation Policies

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

Indigenous Peoples find their homelands around the world crossed by colonial borders, but often express solidarity with each other. While working on the anthology *Read, Listen, Tell: Indigenous Stories from Turtle Island*, Gabrielle Hill strove “to include Chicano writers and Mexican writers as Indigenous writers, rather than making this divide that ends at the Mexico-US border.” This goal of recognizing unity across borders is common among colonized Peoples who see their struggles as related. At the same time—as Ann Doyon (Cree and Norwegian), who is the Marketing and Sales representative at Theytus Books, points out—Indigenous people recognize that “each nation and culture is affected differently by the attempted genocide.” For example, unlike First Nations and Métis, the Inuit were largely ignored until the 1950s when the Canadian government became “increasingly

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26 Truth, 2015, 354.

27 Akiwenzie-Damm, 2016, 30.


29 Hill, 2019.

30 Doyon, 2019.

concerned with maintaining Arctic sovereignty,” leading to a “period of increased and reluctant paternalism.”

Settler colonial doctrines and policies, including the Doctrine of Discovery and the legal concept of terra nullius, justify settlers taking possession of “land belonging to no one.” The Indian Residential Schools are one example of a genocidal policy based on this view of Indigenous Peoples as “no one.” The TRC final report details the Euro-supremacist, genocidal intent of Residential Schools, and the severe traumatic and intergenerational effects.

Another genocidal tactic contributing to these same legacies is “the wide-scale national apprehension of Aboriginal children by child-welfare agencies.” When first identified, this practice came to be known as the Sixties Scoop, but Fee describes how this “has since turned into the ‘Millennium Scoop.'” First Nations children in particular are 12 times more likely to be placed in foster care. Child apprehension is “largely” driven by poverty, itself one effect of the many assimilation policies used to divorce Peoples from their homelands, ways of life, and traditional economies. Cindy Blackstock (Gitksan) is Professor of Social Work at McGill University and Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society. She writes, “Even taking the modest estimates of child

32 Igliolorte, 2009, 129.
33 Igliolorte, 2009, 129.
34 Truth, 2015, 50.
35 Truth, 2015, 50.
36 Gregory Younging, “Gnaritas Nullius (No One’s Knowledge): The Essence of Traditional Knowledge and Its Colonization through Western Legal Regimes,” in Free Knowledge: Confronting the Commodification of Human Discovery, edited by Patricia W. Elliott and Daryl H. Hepting (Regina, SK: University of Regina Press, 2015), 173.
38 Truth, 2015, 186.
39 Truth, 2015, 186.
welfare authorities, there are more First Nations children in the care of the child welfare and justice systems today than there were at the height of the residential schools era.”

She says the reasons are “poverty; poor housing [including] overcrowding, black mold, lack of water, lack of sanitation, those kinds of things; and multigenerational trauma that leads to addictions.” The good news, she says, is that with the proper interventions we can deal with a lot of that. But the bad news is that the Canadian government underfunds all of those services. [...] You can do child welfare but if no one is building proper homes, and if no one is looking at the water supply, then it’s really gonna make it still hard for families to get to a place of wellness.

The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission in 2007, which ended in a ruling that the federal government “discriminates against First Nation children on reserves by failing to provide the same level of child welfare services that exist elsewhere.” Blackstock is still trying to make the federal government comply to the tribunal’s rulings, which she emphasizes are legally binding.

These ongoing histories are important for settler publishers to understand, as are the ongoing traditions of Indigenous storytelling. Dr. Gregory Younging, Opaskwayak Cree professor, author, and publisher of Theytus Books, suggests:

Canadian publishers need to acknowledge that they’re on a territory that has a long storytelling tradition, and if they’re going to publish from that territory, they need to make a connection with the people there, find out a bit about their stories and their history, and maybe publish a book or two by them.

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45 Blackstock, 2019.
48 Gregory Younging, “Gregory Younging on the History of Theytus Press,” interview by Natalie Knight, The People and the Text, 12 May 2018. thepeopleandthetext.ca/12May2018
Younging sees “Indigenous publishing as an extension of Indigenous storytelling.” Dr. Deanna Reder (Cree Métis), Associate Professor in the First Nations Studies and English departments at Simon Fraser University and Series Editor for the Indigenous Studies Series at Wilfrid Laurier University Press, agrees, and encourages her students to enlarge the definition of literacies that can hold Indigenous philosophies, ways of knowing, and storytelling in a variety of forms that include ones told verbally (like story cycles, hip hop, nursery rhymes, lectures, invocations); physically (dance, video games, ceremony with drumming and singing); through to writing (like short stories, petroglyphs, novels, winter counts, beading, graphic novels, carving).

Professor Hartmut Lutz’ writings illuminate some of the conditions determining the relationships between Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the Canadian publishing industry. Lutz was once asked to contribute an article about 1960s Canadian Native literature to a 1997 issue of Canadian Literature, but could find almost no fiction, poetry, or drama by Native people from that decade. When he recounted this to Métis writer Howard Adams, Adams replied, “We were still concerned with issues of bread and butter on the table. You cannot talk about culture or literature when you are hungry.” This is not to say that Indigenous people did not write or create stories at all; but Lutz describes how “texts stemming from the oral tradition were usually collected, translated, and often heavily edited by non-Native missionaries, anthropologists and hobbyists.” These texts were “represented as ‘quaint’ or ‘exotic,’ [not fit] for serious literary studying.” Early and even some current anthologies have printed poems or songs without any storyteller attributed.

54 Lutz, 2015, 87.
55 Lutz, 2015, 87.
56 McCall, 2018.
Younging has coined the term *gnaritas nullius* to describe the treatment of Indigenous knowledge as “no one’s knowledge,” available to be taken.

Even as Indigenous writers such as Adams, George Manuel, and Maria Campbell emerged, they were characterized as “protest literature.” This characterization, while somewhat dismissive, speaks to how Indigenous-led movements in literature at that time were part of an Indigenous social movement unfolding since the 1960s across the globe. Colonialism was met with resistance movements informed by what Linda Tuhiwai Smith calls “the survival strategies and cultural systems which have nurtured people, their values and their beliefs within their own communities, reserves, tribes and nations for over 500 years.”

The 1970s saw the publishing of canonical Indigenous authors including “Maria Campbell, Harold Cardinal, [Mini] Aodla Freeman, Elizabeth Goudie, Alma Green, Emma LaRocque, Lee Maracle, Mike Mountain Horse, Wilfred Pelletier, Peter Pitseolak, Duke Redbird, Chief John Snow, John Tetso, Anthony Apakark Thrasher, and Jane Willis.” This was followed by an “onslaught” of Indigenous writing in the 1980s as more Indigenous publishers came on the scene. Still, as a student in the 1980s Reder found “no Indigenous writing being taught in any of my classes, even at the masters level.”

There was a turning point around 1990 because of a number of significant events. One was Elijah Harper’s act of resistance to the Meech Lake Accord, which put Indigenous rights onto the public agenda; another was the “Kanienkehaka resistance at Kanehsatake and Kahnawake,” more commonly known as the Oka Crisis. These and other events

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57 Younging, 2015, 175.
58 Younging, 2015, 175.
61 Smith, 2012, 112.
catalyzed the Indigenous literary movement’s growth over the following three decades. Indigenous writing, and writing about it, increased dramatically.

One of the goals of Reder’s research project “The People and the Text: Indigenous Writing in Northern North America up to 1992” is to create “a collaborative literary history of Indigenous texts”67 produced during that time period. 1992 was a watershed year, but did not mark an ending. There is much to celebrate in the historical and continuing resistance and advocacy of Indigenous writers, storytellers, poets, artists, Elders, students, educators, editors, publishers, activists, and others. Thanks to all of their work over generations, there is now an established market for Indigenous literatures,68 which constitute a recognizable canon in their own right69 and “not a subgroup of CanLit.”70

Today, a new set of significant events is stimulating the appetite71 for Indigenous writing among the public and in academia.72 People want to learn how to share stories respectfully. In August 2017, settler editors and publishers quickly filled the one-week Editing Indigenous Manuscripts course at Humber College, and expressed many times during the week their gratitude for the opportunity to learn more. But after “so much has been taken,”73 publishers must take time to earn trust. Indigenous voices have been ignored, whitewashed,74 suppressed, and stolen; not only through disregard or carelessness, but also when people have the best of intentions. The colonial context75 is inescapable. For example, when Western literary conventions, genres, and expectations are imposed on Indigenous storytelling, Indigenous perspectives can be suppressed even as they are celebrated.

Mini Aodla Freeman is an Inuk author and playwright76 who grew up on Cape Hope Island.77 As a young woman she moved south to Ottawa “to work as a translator for […]

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67 “About the Project,” The People and the Text, n.d., http://thepeopleandthetext.ca/about
68 Reder, 2019.
72 Doyon, 2019; Reder, 2019.
73 Préfontaine, 2019.
74 Doyon, 2019; Préfontaine, 2019.
75 Akiwenzie-Damm, 2016, 30.
77 Mini Aodla Freeman, Life Among the Qallunaat, 1st ed. (Edmonton, AB: Hurtig, 1978), 69.
what was then the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources.” In her 1978 memoir *Life Among the Qallunaat*, she writes about her childhood, during which she attended two Residential Schools, and her experiences in Ottawa. She also reflects on Inuit worldviews regarding a variety of topics ranging from child-rearing and rule-making to social decorum and intimacy, from concepts of time and space to beauty standards and prejudice, from homesickness and loss to humour and happiness, and from memory and storytelling to politics and freedom.

When this incredible book came out, “half of its 6,254 copies were bought by the government and hidden in a basement” in a building belonging to the Department she had worked for, “effectively ruin[ing] its chances for success.” According to Freeman, this was likely done because “they thought I wrote something bad about residential schools, which I should have, but I didn’t.” Freeman did not allow this experience to stop her, and among her many accomplishments she co-edited the celebrated book *Inuit Women Artists: Voices from Cape Dorset* (Douglas & McIntyre, 1996). *Life Among the Qallunaat* has since been re-released in the University of Manitoba Press’ First Voices, First Texts series, in a new edition that “seeks to restore the author’s agency and original intents.” But the actions of the Department left their mark.

Canadian publishers also have the potential to enact permanent harm. (A note to readers: this paragraph contains a reference to sexual assault.) In the 1973 classic autobiography *Halfbreed*, Métis author Maria Campbell says, “I write this for all of you, to tell you what it is like to be a Halfbreed woman in our country.” Alix Shield, a research assistant at The People and the Text, recently examined the original manuscript. (While

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78 Freeman, 1978, 19.
79 Estlin, 2018.
80 Estlin, 2018.
81 McCall, 2018.
83 Mini Aodla Freeman, quoted in Estlin, 2018.
84 Furlan, 2018.
86 Reder and Shield, 2018.
Campbell supported this, and gave permission to Reder and Shield to publish an article about her story, “she does not wish to be contacted by members of the public, academics, or the press.” The original manuscript shows how the editorial treatment suppressed a key part of Campbell’s story. Editors at McClelland & Stewart decided to excise a passage, against Campbell’s insistence that it remain, in which she describes being raped by RCMP officers in her home at the age of 14. Shield notes, “That Campbell was even willing to share the rape publicly is extraordinary.” At her next opportunity to revise the manuscript before publication in 1973, Campbell put the passage back in. However, the editorial team took it out once more, and the book was printed with the passage omitted against her will. At that time, editor David Berry wrote to Campbell, “We made very few changes in the manuscript, and since there was a big rush to get it to the printer I didn’t think it would be worthwhile to send it back to you.” The editorial team downplayed (or did not grasp) the importance of the change, and denied her the opportunity to consent to the change before print. Campbell told Shield that she had once asked Jack McClelland for the excised manuscript but “he said he had destroyed it so I wouldn’t get into trouble.”

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

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87 Reder and Shield, 2018.
88 Hartmut Lutz, Contemporary Challenges: Conversations with Canadian Native Authors (Saskatoon, SK: Fifth House, 1991), 42.
89 Reder and Shield, 2018.
90 Reder and Shield, 2018.
91 Reder and Shield, 2018.
92 Reder and Shield, 2018.
93 Reder and Shield, 2018.
94 Doyon, 2019. At least three deaths are suspected to have occurred as a result of so-called starlight tours (Meagan Campbell, “New light on Saskatoon’s ‘starlight tours,’” Maclean’s, April 8, 2016. https://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/new-light-on-saskatoons-starlight-tours/).
and widely taught book, how might this have informed Canadians’ understanding of decades of police inaction on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls?

This story shows a selective Canadian “appetite” for Indigenous trauma. The marketing plan for _Halfbreed_ relied on the “major theme of injustice to be promoted personally by the author.” But the incident with the RCMP was too much injustice. This story highlights the distinction in publishing between marketable and unmarketable trauma and the role publishing plays in Canadians’ education about Indigenous experiences. It is also an example of a willingness on the part of publishers in Canada to enact injustice against Indigenous authors.

These stories provide context for us to understand the historical conditions in which we operate. We should also have some understanding of what roles Indigenous stories themselves can play, keeping in mind the vast diversity between and within Peoples and communities. In the following section I share what I have learned about some roles stories play in Indigenous cultures.

**What Stories Can Be**

_I have come to believe that a story is not a thing the way we think of it in the West. Perhaps it is like the land in that way._ – Warren Cariou

In this project, my focus is not on what in the West might be called the “literary devices” found in Indigenous storytelling—for example, the way narratives can resemble circles or spirals more than lines. These particularities of Indigenous literatures and oratures are interesting and important, but I refer readers to Gregory Younging’s _Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples_ (Brush Education, 2018) for a comprehensive introduction.

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96 Reder and Shield, 2018.
97 Warren Cariou, opening statements in the Indigenous Editing Circle/Editing Indigenous Manuscripts combined course, in which Cariou was a member of faculty, at Humber College in Etobicoke, ON, August 14–18, 2017.
98 Archibald, _Indigenous Storywork_, 1.
When I talk about Indigenous stories, I include traditional and contemporary ones, because both are valid and important, and because it is a false binary. It is not always obvious when a story involves traditional knowledge and oral traditions. For example, Younging describes the “Indigenous Voice” as a way of writing that “involves combining and extending Traditional Knowledge and Oral Traditions with new ideas and expressions.” Hill points out that we have a tendency to think of “Indigenous stories” as a certain kind of story, what might be called a myth or legend:

People can tend to privilege certain sorts of Indigenous stories, like traditional stories that are about supernatural characters or something. But just as important are stories about politics, and stories about family, and stories about everyday things. For Indigenous people, stories are a form of knowledge.

This is the first important aspect of Indigenous stories I learned about: their special relationship to knowledge. We tend in the West to treat knowledge as different from stories. Also, Dr. Heather Igliolorte notes that "Western discourse often separates, classifies, or compartmentalizes its objects of study," while it seems to me that in Indigenous epistemologies, knowledge is holistic. Stories transmit all kinds of knowledge, and one story can contain knowledge from what we might think of as many different disciplines. Hill says that stories are not “just” literature in the sense that they are not just a form of art: “It’s also the politics, and as Leslie Marmon Silko says, it’s recipes, it’s directions to places, it’s knowledge of our lineage, genealogy, it’s biology, plant uses, and things like that. All of that is in a story.” Hill says one way settler publishers could avoid this tendency to focus

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100 Gregory Younging, Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples (Brush Education, 2018), 44.

101 Younging, Elements, 2018, 44.

102 Hill, 2019.

103 Igliolorte, 2009, 125.

104 Rebecca Taylor, 2019.

105 Hill, 2019.

106 Hill, 2019.
on only certain kinds of stories is by seeking ongoing involvement from Indigenous people on their publishing decisions.107

Dr. Keavy Martin writes of a movement toward renaming what have previously been called myths and crafts as “Indigenous intellectual traditions.”108 This is not to say that the old names are never to be used, but as Martin writes, “Myths are easy for the university to sideline, but intellectual traditions it must contend with.”109 Dr. Val Napoleon and Dr. Hadley Friedland also talk about “Indigenous legal traditions”110 and provide context for how and why stories transmit knowledge:

As most Indigenous societies are characterized by the absence of centralized, state authorities, they require decentralized and accessible forms of public memory (i.e., oral histories and stories, among other tools). Stories are forms of legal precedent that can be drawn on in order to legitimately resolve issues in decentralized legal orders. Some stories are formal and collectively owned (e.g., Gitksan adaawk), others are in the form of ancient and recent legal cases (e.g., Gitksan and Cree law cases), and others record relationships and obligations, decision making and resolutions, legal norms, authorities, and legal processes.111

This shows how Indigenous people recognize stories as important historical records. I learned from Sophie McCall that the telling of a story can also be a way of enacting sovereignty.112 For example, to assert their Aboriginal title over their traditional territories, “Gitxsan and Wet’suwet’en elders testified about their land using oral histories and in their own languages”113 in Delgamuukw v. British Columbia.

The telling of stories can be a fulfillment of responsibility to others. A storyteller may fulfill responsibilities to younger generations in their Nation and/or community by passing down cultural knowledge. They may also fulfill their responsibility to their previous generations by making sure the legacies of storytellers who have passed on will survive.114

108 Keavy Martin, “Renaming a Double-Edged Nationalism,” in Fagan et al., 2009, 22.
111 Napoleon, 2016, 739.
112 McCall, 2018.
114 Préfontaine, 2019.
Stories help us fulfill all of our responsibilities by passing on knowledge about our relationships and obligations to each other, to our non-human relations, and to the world we live in. In *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, Dr. Daniel Heath Justice argues that they help us with questions like “How Do We Behave as Good Relatives?”, “How Do We Become Good Ancestors?”, and “How Do We Learn to Live Together?”

Napoleon and Friedland point out that “greater recognition and use of Indigenous laws in Canada requires more than simply uncovering pristine laws in protective bubbles to isolate them from the damages of colonization. It is not an exercise in legal archaeology.” This caution might apply to our responsibilities when sharing stories in publishing in two ways. First, Indigenous Peoples and stories are not frozen in the past. Harmful stories have long been told describing Indigenous people as primitive and inferior, and therefore belonging to the past or even not human. This view justifies the historic and ongoing colonial theft of Indigenous lands and disrespect of Indigenous human rights. Indigenous Peoples and their cultures are living, vibrant, and resilient, and capable of change and adaptation.

Jo-ann Archibald offers an alternative to the “archaeological” approach to making meaning from stories. She says of the years she spent learning from elders,

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

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115 Napoleon, 2016, 739.
116 Justice, 2018, 28.
117 Napoleon, 2016, 740.
121 Janke, 2007, 12.
There is a second way I understand the caution against “archaeological” approaches to stories. My brother Quvi Taylor talked about how publishing needs to change so that “success isn’t measured by how many people you reach, but whether you reach the right people.” He talked about our great-great grandfather, Angokwazhuk “Happy Jack” Omilak, and his carvings and engravings, which our sister Rebecca Taylor taught us about during her masters’ research in Alaska (my first exposure to Indigenous methods of research). She learned more about the story of where our family’s name Omelak came from and saw the story depicted in one of Happy Jack’s engravings. Quvi says of this carving,

> There’s information in it. Those things are a touchstone for us, and we can interpret them. But they actually exist without the interpretation. And the interpretation helps us give some meaning to it, but [it’s important to be] able to have the story in a form like that.

It is difficult for me to imagine the information about historical events in these stories separately from the forms and paths in which it has been transmitted to me. For example, Dr. Napoleon—who had been a friend of my father’s mother Peggy, who had been a friend of Jeannette Armstrong, who helped found the En’owkin Centre, where Theytus Books is housed, and where I did my internship—supervised my sister’s research, which was informed by stories from our brother Quvi, our mother Rose, her mother Phoebe, our Uncle Jack, and our great-grandfather Happy Jack. Napoleon encouraged Rebecca to create a multifaceted final presentation, so as part of her final project, Rebecca created a print of the engraving. If this were a regular paper, I would not discuss any of these personal connections, and Napoleon would appear, at most, as a footnote. This is what I was talking about when I said earlier that we in the West tend to treat stories as different from knowledge. I want to be able to tell the next generation how I know what I know about our family name.

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

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123 Quvi Taylor, 2019.
124 Quvi Taylor, 2019.
What Some Protocols Are Like

Protocols are diverse. They can be encoded in a rule-like way, or flexible and informal. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has given publishers in Canada a mandate to understand and implement Indigenous protocols. I found three resources particularly helpful in learning about protocols: the Australia Council for the Arts’ Protocols for Producing Indigenous Australian Writing (2007); Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm’s “’We Think Differently. We Have a Different Understanding’: Editing Indigenous Texts as an Indigenous Editor” (2016); and Gregory Younging’s Elements of Indigenous Style (2018). All three define or describe protocols in relation to their underlying ethical principles. For example, Akiwenzie-Damm explains that “Non-Hierarchical Relationships with Authors” is a practice based on the principles of “Dbadendizwin/Humility and Mnaadendiwin/Respect”; “Empowerment of Those Involved” is based on the principle of “Zaagidiwin/Love”; and “Linguistic Accuracy” is based on the principle of “Debwewin/Truth.”

Terri Janke argues that “[t]he current legal framework does not promote or protect the rights of Indigenous people—particularly to own and control representation and dissemination of their stories, knowledge and other cultural expression.” Indigenous storytelling protocols can function in part to protect the rights of Indigenous people, and fill a gap that intellectual property law does not cover. For example, the authors of Protocols for Producing Indigenous Australian Writing define “secret and sacred material” as information or material that, under customary law, is: made available only to the initiated; used for a particular purpose; used at a particular time; information or material that can only be seen and heard by particular language group members (such as men or women or people with certain knowledge).

125 Akiwenzie-Damm, 2016, 36–8.
The authors discuss some examples and note, "It is the responsibility of those putting together writing projects to discuss any restrictions on use of the information with relevant Indigenous people and groups." Learning about the protocols in place elsewhere will not give us clear universal rules, but may help us learn what questions to ask in these discussions.

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

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

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

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

130 Janke, 2007, 36.
131 Younging, 2015, 163.
Implementing protocols requires judgment. For example, Hill says she was raised with “a sense of responsibility around not telling embarrassing stories or stories that people wouldn’t want to hear publicly.”134 This is not to say that potentially embarrassing stories must never be told; more so that they require permission, sensitivity, and judgment. Protocols seem best implemented on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with those who might be affected.

The principles and protocols outlined above speak to the responsibilities Indigenous storytellers feel toward their communities and relations. In English, the word “responsibility” can connote a sense of burden, but I don’t think that is how storytellers use it. My mother writes her stories and poems in part to help people, and to provide understanding and hope. For her, to be able to show compassion is a gift, because it means you have been shown compassion and have the ability to use it in your life and relationships.135 In my research, I saw the concept of responsibility being treated in a way that suggests it is also considered a gift. When I talked with Darren Préfontaine about Métis protocols and his work at the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) Press, he said, “It’s a real blessing for us to be involved in that process because you learn so much. [...] It’s just so enriching to work with so many talented people.”136

When I asked Préfontaine about the protocols followed at GDI Press, he said the first and foremost thing is being “grounded in the community. [...] We make sure that anything we publish is agreed to by our authors or our elders, and that they have a chance to look through it and go through the whole process with us.”137 Similarly, Métis control of Métis material is a priority with GDI’s online museum, where GDI makes sure every item is properly credited, and makes copies of materials (for example, photos of family members) available to the community. Decisions about licensing the use of cultural materials are always made by the community member(s) involved; they also have a say in how resources are marketed.138

134 Hill, 2019.
135 Rose Ann Taylor (Iñupiaq writer, poet, horse trainer, mother of the author), in discussion with the author, via telephone, February 5, 2019.
137 Préfontaine, 2019.
My brother Quvi Taylor pointed out that if publishers are disconnected from the people they are trying to invite and welcome into the industry, then once those people arrive “they have to do the work of educating.” He encourages publishers to spend “some time listening before getting writers involved.” Indigenous publishing cannot often be rushed. Karen Clark, scholarly acquisitions editor at University of Regina Press, emphasized that setting aside as much time as necessary is particularly important “because you’re working within communities, not [just] individuals. Where one person can quickly say ‘yes, no,’ when you’re working within communities, it takes longer.” The publishing world of strict deadlines is not always compatible with a world where “when it’s time, it’s time; and to take our time is part of our practice, and to gather community is part of our practice.” Préfontaine agrees; while it sometimes means more work, he says, “that’s part of how we do our business here.” Similarly, Younging emphasizes “the essential role of relationship and trust,” saying, “You can’t just ‘get someone to sign off’ on Indigenous content from Traditional Knowledge and Oral Traditions.” It takes time to build trust and form meaningful relationships that are not tokenistic or one-sided.

**Different Peoples, Different Protocols**

There is a move toward nation-specific approaches to Indigenous literatures and toward respecting the historical and cultural differences among and within Indigenous Peoples. Préfontaine says:

> I hate to use the word “Indigenous.” We should be naming nations and people. That’s the other thing, that pan-word. Like white, or settler. They’re pan-words we use, but instead of Indigenous, we should say what the nêhiyawak

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139 Quvi Taylor, 2019.
140 Quvi Taylor, 2019.
141 Karen Clark (scholarly acquisitions editor, University of Regina Press), in discussion with the author, February 14, 2019.
142 Clark, 2019.
143 Préfontaine, 2019.
144 Younging, *Elements*, 2018, 44.
are doing, what the Haudenosaunee are doing, what the Salish, what the Michif are doing.\footnote{Préfontaine, 2019.}

In *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* Justice writes:

I’m suspicious of claims of universal values between all Indigenous peoples around the world, as such broad assertions too often gloss over real and meaningful distinctions between communities [...] These claims are all too easily weaponized in colonialist authenticity debates against Indigenous individuals and groups” (Justice, 2018, 27-8).

Editing presents a useful example. Just because an editor is Indigenous does not mean they can handle any manuscript by any other Indigenous person. Préfontaine stressed it is not usually possible to have a First Nations editor do “cultural editing”\footnote{Préfontaine, 2019.} of Métis manuscripts. Having a Cree editor, for example, work with a Métis manuscript “may or may not work, depending on how well they know the Métis stuff. Even if they're familiar with some aspects of Métis culture that was originally Cree, it’s been Michifized; it’s become Métis.”\footnote{Préfontaine, 2019.} Doyon agrees, saying that at Theytus they always make sure that the story represents the people. We don't have Cree people writing about Mohawks. [...] I know it's been done in the past. But truth and honesty in a story comes from a good place. That good place starts when people are respected that their cultures are different from other cultures.\footnote{Doyon, 2019.}

Pan-Indigenous expectations of writers are also harmful when writers are included only to produce a "token story." For one thing, my brother Quvi Taylor pointed out that when editors or publishers seek out an Indigenous story in a tokenizing way, there is a risk the manuscript won't be treated with the same rigorous attention.\footnote{Quvi Taylor, 2019.} He says as a writer, it feels like a setup:\footnote{Quvi Taylor, 2019.}

I don’t like to be left with my ass hanging out. I don’t want people to think that people only get jobs because they’re Native but don't produce the same quality stuff, because we don't get the same [quality of editing].\footnote{Quvi Taylor, 2019.}
Publishers should never treat Indigenous writing and representation as a box to check. At the same time, Reder writes,

I predict that the next generation of literary critics will return to pan-Indian approaches in the discussion of literature, not because they wish to return to a monolithic, homogenous notion of "Indian" but because such approaches hold within them possibilities to theorize aspects of common experience and common aesthetics, especially given the growing presence of urban Native populations with little connection to home communities, languages or cultures.\(^{154}\)

Emerging publishing professionals should avoid tokenizing Indigenous people and making pan-Indigenous assumptions, while keeping in mind that each author does not "fit perfectly into a national tradition,"\(^{155}\) and that each person’s relationship to their culture is different.

Despite the colonial experience in Canada, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit writers have always passed down stories and created new ones through a great variety of mediums, whether they were published or not. These stories have important functions in Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems. But as Younging illustrates, Western laws are inadequate to recognize these knowledge systems, instead leaving them vulnerable; so Indigenous protocols based on ethical principles are needed. The protocols are not a rote list of rules to follow, but require judgment. Indigenous voices have been and continue to be ignored, suppressed, misrepresented, whitewashed, or stolen by settler publishers who don’t understand the protocols. These acts of “destructive editing”\(^{156}\) persist. Today, all progress is thanks to the work of previous Indigenous generations and their work to pass on and protect Indigenous stories and storytelling practices. Indigenous publishing is in a period of resurgence characterized by projects with Indigenous-led goals and agendas. In the next section, I will explore some of the work being undertaken today.

\(^{154}\) Reder, in Fagan et al., 2009, 36.

\(^{155}\) Reder, in Fagan et al., 2009, 33.

\(^{156}\) Alix Shield, “‘I write this for all of you’: Recovering the Unpublished RCMP ‘Incident’ in Maria Campbell’s Halfbreed (1973),” The People and the Text, June 10, 2018. http://thepeopleandthetext.ca/10June2018
Part Two: Indigenous Publishing Agendas

_We are not writing back, we are writing our way home._ – Lee Maracle

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

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

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

During a panel session titled “Best Practices in Indigenous Publishing,” Younging explained his use of the terms extraction and reclamation with respect to Indigenous literature. Since the beginning of Aboriginal literature, he said, the majority of its history has been about extraction. I think he was referring to the extraction of stories from the people, of resources from the land, and of children from their families and communities. I also take this to mean both that Indigenous people and communities were mined for the stories that settlers wanted; and that those stories were often themselves about the trauma of extraction. Younging said that people are now turning toward “reclamation,” which I

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157 Lee Maracle, quoted in Lutz, 2015, 89.
158 Quvi Taylor, 2019.
159 Younging, _Elements_, 2018, 3.
161 Younging, 2017.
understand as Indigenous Peoples taking back what's been taken, and making it belong to us again on our own terms.162

I was inspired to think in terms of Indigenous publishing “agendas” by the work of Linda Tuhiiwai Smith, a Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou educator and author of the classic text Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, one chapter of which concerns “Articulating an Indigenous Research Agenda.”163 Many of her discussions of Indigenous research are applicable to me and my emerging publishing colleagues when we view ourselves as learners, or researchers, in the field of Indigenous publishing. This section focuses on projects and agendas of Indigenous reclamation in literature and publishing.

A Few Ongoing Projects

I owe a great deal of what I have learned about the following Indigenous publishing initiatives in Canada to Deanna Reder, who was introduced to me by Gabrielle Hill. My particular education in the field began when I was working for the research project I mentioned in Part One called “The People and the Text: Indigenous Writing in Northern North America up to 1992,” or TPatT, which Reder co-created and operates. My work with TPatT familiarized me with the Indigenous Literary Studies Association (ILSA), of which she is a founding member and past president. She and Gregory Younging encouraged me to join the Indigenous Editors Circle (IEC); and she involved me at an early stage with the inaugural Indigenous Voices Awards (IVAs). These initiatives are where I met many of the interviewees for this research project. I mention this because I want to acknowledge the mentorship I have been lucky to receive, and the close relationships which are of course a feature of the Indigenous publishing community. I also want to highlight how my awareness of Indigenous publishing initiatives is not at all comprehensive, but very limited to my particular perspective.

TPatT is a multifaceted research project at Simon Fraser University led by Reder. TPatT collects and studies the Indigenous literary archive in English Canada. The four objectives of TPatT are:

1) a collaborative literary history of Indigenous texts; 2) a manual on Indigenous research methods and protocols for literary scholars; 3) a sustainable open-access bibliography of Indigenous texts and related

162 Younging, 2017.
secondary materials [...]; 4) regular forums including training [...] to promote work on the growing bibliography and to investigate models for working responsibly with community.\textsuperscript{164}

ILSA formed in 2013 “to address the need for a scholarly body based in lands claimed by Canada that focuses specifically on the study and teaching of Indigenous peoples’ literatures.”\textsuperscript{165} Reder describes “one of the founding values of ILSA: that ‘Indigenous literatures’ is a broad term that includes writing and also orature, and that scholarship exists in more places than within the walls of the university.”\textsuperscript{166}

The IEC and the IVAs are recent initiatives that connect emerging communities in Indigenous literatures. The most recent gathering of the IEC was in August 2017. The gathering had two streams or courses that studied together most of the time: one for Indigenous editors, and the Editing Indigenous Manuscripts stream directed toward settler publishing professionals. The second stream was created to accommodate the explosion in interest among settler publishers generated by previous gatherings. The next gathering of the IEC has not yet been announced.

The IVAs came about as the result of a very successful crowdfunding initiative to create an award for emerging Indigenous writers. The initiative began in response to an editorial published in an issue of WRITE Magazine arguing in favour of cultural appropriation—a position considered especially insulting since the issue was dedicated to Indigenous writing. Approximately $25,000 was awarded to emerging Indigenous writers at the inaugural gala. The second Gala was held on June 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2019 at the First Nations Longhouse at the University of British Columbia.

**Future Agendas**

*In recent years, some artists have daringly stepped outside this framework to provide us with a number of divergent perspectives on the transformation of the North. These new artworks, uncommon and introspective, are a significant departure from the traditional imagery usually found in past decades, but I would argue that they serve similar ends: to strengthen from within a culture*

\textsuperscript{164} “About the Project.”


\textsuperscript{166} Deanna Reder, “Exploding the Canon,” Write Magazine 45, no. 2 (Fall 2017): 25.
threatened by dominant outside forces and to examine the way of life as Inuit know it. – Heather Igliolorte

In the above quote, Igliolorte is writing about Northern Indigenous artists, but I believe Indigenous storytellers, knowledge keepers, and publishing professionals working with Indigenous stories are similarly driven by a desire to strengthen Indigenous cultures from within. In discussions with interviewees and in my readings, I noticed two closely related themes reflecting this agenda: education and hope.

**Education**

When I asked Doyon to tell me about her biggest dreams for Indigenous publishing in Canada, she answered,

> That all the Indigenous publishers in Canada start our own group, to fill in the gaps that are blatantly obvious in regards to education curriculum for classrooms in Canada by Indigenous people. For non-Indigenous people to learn the history not from white academia but actually from Indigenous people themselves.

Indigenous publishing professionals are often driven to provide reliable information about Indigenous realities. They recognize the need for high-quality, Indigenous-led resources.

Reder agrees that “educators are desperate for stuff.” This spurred her to work with partners to co-create two resources for university English students: *Learn, Teach, Challenge: Approaching Indigenous Literatures*, a collection of essays by Indigenous thinkers on the study of Indigenous literatures in North America; and *Read, Listen, Tell: Indigenous Stories from Turtle Island*, a reader intended for first-year English classes.

Educators often need help not only finding materials but deciding which ones are appropriate for their classrooms. GoodMinds.com is an excellent resource for this purpose. At Theytus, Doyon is developing a teacher’s guide to assist educators with selecting books

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167 Igliolorte, 2009, 131.
169 Reder, 2019.
that meet the requirements of provincial curricula, many of which are being updated in response to the calls of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.  

**Hope**

Indigenous youth in Canada face a great number and variety of challenges, and storytellers feel a responsibility to provide hope, especially for young people. Like other oppressed, marginalized, and displaced peoples, Indigenous people face “high rates of depression and mental illness, feelings of hopelessness, high incidence of substance abuse, sexual abuse and violence,” all of which are “behavioural predictors [of suicide] that result from oppression.”

I have learned that if stories of colonial injustice and accompanying trauma are told, they should be told in balance with stories of Indigenous resiliency and the power to heal; stories of colonial power relations should be told in balance with stories of Indigenous agency; stories of dispossession should be told in balance with stories of the “lessons and culture and strength of our nations.” Indigenous youth and Indigenous people of all ages are brilliant, strong, and very loved, and published stories should reflect that.

Award-winning Interior Salish author, storyteller, and mother Nicola I. Campbell (Shi-shi-etto, Shin-Chi’s Canoe, and A Day with Yayah) argues,

> [T]he continual retelling of stories that depict the most shattered, colonized and fragmented version of ourselves as Indigenous people without showing our transformational opposite—our best selves: our healing, joy, and achievements, and especially our journey to transformation—is a form of narrative violence that validates erroneous and incomplete truths.

At the Indigenous Editors Circle/Editing Indigenous Manuscripts course at Humber College in 2017, Campbell and other Indigenous authors and editors including Jenny Kay Dupuis and Cherie Dimaline repeatedly emphasized authors’ and storytellers’ responsibilities to

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172 Doyon, 2019.
175 Olson, n.d.
176 Warren Cariou, quoted in Justice, 2018, 56.
177 Doyon, 2019.
youth. This doesn’t mean authors simply shy away from difficult topics; in fact, part of the reason they write is “to make sure that the young people know what really happened.”

Reflecting on her own process of writing *I Am Not a Number* about her grandmother’s experience with Residential School, author Jenny Kay Dupuis says that Indigenous writers of children’s stories “do not simply gloss over topics. [...] Yet, I was also cognizant that in the plot, resiliency and strength needed to be communicated to give hope to the younger generation.” Similarly, Campbell argues that the story of tragedy cannot be “the only story being told. [...] We need to show the other stories that are happening, we need to show ourselves as empowered, we need to break that trail.” Indigenous authors, whatever stories they tell, tend to recognize and respect children’s powerful abilities to, for better or worse, understand stories and make them their own. Recognizing this power is one way that Indigenous authors, and publishing professionals, work toward the goal of providing hope for young people.

While interviewing Lutz, I told him about how I sometimes feel conflicted about the possibility of becoming a publisher. I told him how I felt that operating a capitalist business to produce commodities for profit at some point goes against much of the values I am learning about and trying to embody. Lutz answered in part that Indigenous publishing houses are important for several reasons:

for Aboriginal authors so they know there are some people they can trust, and also to make Indigenous writing less vulnerable because there are some who support them. And also it teaches the mainstream, “Hey, they are there and they are publishing that, and if we”—and here comes the capitalism—“if we want to access that market, we have to change our policies.” So it’s also a political move toward self-determination and thereby also changing the mainstream, I hope.

This is true for the legacies of Indigenous-owned and operated publishing houses such as Theytus Books, Kegedonce Press, GDI Press, Inhabit Media, and Pemmican Publications.

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179 Mayureak Ashoona, quoted in Igliolorte, 2009, 130.
183 Quvi Taylor, 2019.
With their support, Indigenous writing is changing the landscape. I think the small sample of initiatives summarized in this section reflect the sense I received from interviewees that Indigenous-led writing, editing, and publishing initiatives are opening new ways for us to strengthen our communities from within by furthering the legacies passed down to us.
Part Three: Relationships and Responsibilities

A story from Warren Cariou reminds me that in confronting Canada’s colonial history, we are always already in the relationships we are trying to strengthen. He writes about the first time I asked my students how many of them had been to an Aboriginal community. Two hands went up at the back, behind a forest of blank faces. [...] ‘No more than that?’ I said. ‘Are you sure?’ [I ask them] again at the next class, and again every few days, all term. [...] I’m going to keep asking that question until it becomes something of a poem, a line recited again and again until it echoes in the right way, pushes at the edges, jostles an opening. [...] That day, in my dream, the hands will all go up at once and their voices will announce: ‘We live in one!’

Because of this lesson, my first recommendation is to read and listen to Indigenous writers and storytellers. Cariou writes,

For me, one of the important functions of poetry in an Indigenous context is to help decolonize the imagination by bridging the ideological boundaries that often separate the beneficiaries of colonialism from those who are objectified and impoverished by it.

Bridging these boundaries and incorporating these relationships into our work in a meaningful and not tokenistic way involves learning about how to reach out and find Indigenous people from a particular community who may be interested in working on a particular project. Préfontaine advises,

Don’t be afraid to make mistakes. We all do. But learn from them; listen. Listen to what the community tells you. If you stop listening, then you have no business being in this line of work. [...] When you go in there with preconceived notions, then things can go south in a hurry.

Similarly, Clark shared with me how as a white settler editor, when she reaches out, she makes sure she knows “why I’m phoning this particular person, or asking this scholar. Why them? And that my intentions are right. I’m not trying to push someone into a corner,

185 Warren Cariou, “Edgework: Indigenous Poetics as Re-placement,” in Indigenous Poetics, edited by Neal McLeod (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014), 31–8. Cariou is a Métis scholar and artist from Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan. He is the Canada Research Chair in Narrative, Community and Indigenous Cultures at the University of Manitoba where he teaches in the Department of English, Film and Theatre.


or manoeuvre, or get something out of them, or take their story.”¹⁸⁸ For publishing professionals, avoiding tokenism involves reflecting on our own agendas and on the ways Indigenous people have been used for publishers’ ends, and avoiding repeating these mistakes.

Hill told me about a time she was asked to be involved in a project led by a team of settlers, at least in part because they needed an Indigenous person involved to access reconciliation grant money. Once the working relationship was underway, this particular project turned out well in that she did not feel tokenized, and had a lot of power over the process.¹⁸⁹ This is not always the case. Hill says,

I often feel that academic projects are driven by funding, and then they’re like “Okay, who do we know that can do this?” So it’s people that they’re already working with—often who already have access to academic stuff, often who are settlers as well or working in teams. I really tried to go beyond that circle of people into people who weren’t accessing that money already. [...] I tried to find other people and to make the conversation bigger.¹⁹⁰

If we approach only those we already know, it risks reinforcing insulated “networks of privilege”¹⁹¹ or echo chambers that neither challenge the status quo nor share the benefits of projects to wider Indigenous communities. This is a risk I took in approaching interviewees for this project, and I learned it can be difficult to “skip over” those you do have relationships with to reach out to others. Weighing these decisions made me think about how to balance honouring the relationships I am already in while avoiding creating echo chambers. It also made me think about the ways our decisions implicate us in the bigger picture. For example, Hill made an effort

... to spread the money out [...] and we also made all the proceeds of the book go to the Unist’ot’en land defenders. It benefited what I think the opposite of the government’s intents are [with reconciliation], which is to stop people fighting over land and to accept an apology.¹⁹²

My discussion with Hill, and my experience working at Redwire Native Youth Media Society with other Native youth from 2002-2007, taught me how and why Indigenous

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¹⁸⁸ Clark, 2019.
¹⁸⁹ Hill, 2019.
¹⁹⁰ Hill, 2019.
¹⁹¹ Quvi Taylor, 2019.
¹⁹² Hill, 2019.
people can feel very conflicted about accepting grant money, sometimes refusing to be involved. This is all the more relevant with the surge in monies put forward by institutions and organizations in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Hill says, “I really have strong politics against reconciliation, and even stronger politics against any sort of reconciliation that doesn’t address land redistribution and land title.” While co-editing a book with Sophie McCall titled *The Land We Are: Artists and Writers Unsettle the Politics of Reconciliation*, she says,

> I was getting paid for my hours, and that for me was a huge responsibility because it was reconciliation money. I felt compromised in a way, or I felt this huge responsibility that I had to do the subject service if I was going to accept that money.\(^{194}\)

Pam Palmater points out that after the release of the TRC’s Final Report, educational institutions began referring to many campaigns, initiatives, and basic fulfilment of equity requirements as “reconciliation.”\(^{195}\) Palmater offers a helpful “Not Reconciliation List”\(^{196}\) that I think illuminates how reconciliation has become a buzzword. While of course not all Indigenous people will agree on what should or should not be called reconciliation, this is just one example of how Indigenous people working on a given project may feel their values are at risk of being compromised.

Agreeing to work on a project is an act of trust. Préfontaine told me that GDI Press being a Métis organization and following protocols helps community members trust them: “Most of the Métis community members had a great reluctance to work with non-Métis agencies and non-Métis publishers. Not universally, but there was a lot of suspicion, because so much was taken.”\(^{197}\) This speaks again to the need for the publishing industry to work with more Indigenous storytellers and train and hire more Indigenous editors and publishing professionals.\(^{198}\)

\(^{193}\) Hill, 2019.

\(^{194}\) Hill, 2019.


\(^{196}\) Palmater, 2019.

\(^{197}\) Préfontaine, 2019.

\(^{198}\) Akiwenzie-Damm, 2016, 32–3; Reder, 2019; Janke, 2007, 19.
This advice also extends to hiring designers and typesetters, proofreaders, language experts, Elders, staff and technicians, illustrators, and knowledge keepers. It also applies to freelancers because, as Reder notes, “You can have a fantastic publishing team, but if they outsource to a copy editor who doesn’t understand, then you’re back to square one.”

Finally, as settler/Dene editor Rhonda Kronyk pointed out, publishers should hire Indigenous people for all kinds of projects, not only works by Indigenous authors or about Indigenous community interests.

I have heard many settler publishing professionals (faculty and guests in my Master of Publishing courses and at the Indigenous Editing Circle) talk about how they got their start in publishing with no training at all. Several referred to it as being “thrown in green.” Reflecting on this, my first thought was: If there is such a recognized need for Indigenous representation in publishing, why aren’t First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people hired without training all the time too? In part, I know it’s because publishing, like academia, operates on “networks of privilege” that many cannot access. In any case, my second thought was that I don’t want Indigenous people thrown in if it means setting them up to fail with no support.

I think one approach is for publishing houses and training programs to embrace mentorship in addition to hiring qualified and experienced Indigenous staff. However, the mentorship should as much as possible be non-hierarchical, provide stability, and be framed as a mutual learning relationship. The benefits to the publishing or academic institution can be profound, and the mentee’s contribution to that should be acknowledged and compensated accordingly. I asked Reder about this approach vs. throwing people in “green.” She said,

People can’t imagine what they can do. Sometimes when you throw them in, you give them an opportunity they can’t imagine, and that’s great. I never [start with] a job description and then go looking for the person who can follow it. You find somebody, and then if they’re not good at something, then you give them something slightly different. They’re gonna have talent.
She also cautions against overburdening people: "You have to calculate in the emotional cost that it all covers, and how exhausting it is."  

My understanding of non-hierarchical relationships began when I worked at Redwire Native Youth Media Society in various positions including outreach coordinator, copy editor, and arts director. The society was entirely staffed by Native youth, and our magazine Redwire was a free quarterly created by and for Native youth. Hill describes how Redwire as an organization “was supporting this whole community of people who were youth at that time to just go on and make a huge impact on the world in all these different ways; through activism, through arts, through continuing in publishing.” Hill and I both view Tania Willard, an accomplished and celebrated Secwepemc artist and curator who was editor of Redwire for most of my time there, as a mentor (even though we are all around the same age). Like Reder, she prioritized making the work meaningful, interesting, and fulfilling for the person involved.

One shortcoming was that Redwire was supported by various grants and did not provide true stability. The concerns of Indigenous and non-Indigenous poor and working class people overlap in these kinds of employment conditions. Poverty and income insecurity is a huge barrier for many Indigenous people, especially in a profession where you are expected to have time and resources of your own. With these considerations in mind, Hill also suggests offering to pay contractors and employees up front “so they don’t have to ask.” An example of this policy is in place at GDI Press, where author royalties are paid up front. The worst case scenario might be a situation where a person is paid nothing until the job is done. This policy, says Hill, can be common when you’re doing contract work, but doesn’t work for broke people. It doesn’t work for me. It’s sometimes pretty humiliating to have to ask for an advance. [...] I’ve seen a lot of writers complain about this, Indigenous writers, but I’m sure other writers too.

The expectation to be available for long hours around deadlines is also a challenge for employees of all backgrounds who are parents or caretakers and particularly those who are

204 Reder, 2019.
205 Hill, 2019.
206 Hill, 2019.
207 Préfontaine, 2019.
208 Hill, 2019.
more likely to have cultural and familial responsibilities outside of work. Doyon and my brother Quvi both told me how Indigenous family responsibilities are often misunderstood by outsiders. Doyon explains, “It’s not just the nuclear unit as in Western society. You’re an auntie, you’re a mother, you’re a grandmother. You have all these connections in family. It needs to be respected, because family really comes first in our culture.” These conversations clarified for me why the values I learned about in this project often feel at odds with the capitalist commodity-based business of publishing. Quvi told a story of a coworker who had ceremonial obligations in her community that conflicted with work. He added,

If settler publishers want us, they have to want all of us, not just our colourful stories and our wise insights and stuff like that. They have to want us taking off because a seemingly distant relative died. [...] HR can think it makes us troublesome, or absentee, but it’s just our stories. And our connection to community comes with responsibilities.

Hill notices a trend toward contract work: "I think that really fucks over everybody, moms included, because there’s no benefits and no security." Hill also emphasized the importance of having a child-friendly workplace or classroom and providing daycare or other support for childcare. I hope that as publishing professionals learn about Indigenous experiences, we can find ways to communicate clearly and transparently, and to accommodate Indigenous people's concerns and respect their community responsibilities, while also respecting privacy and avoiding making assumptions.

In our discussion, Reder and I noted the emergence of a number of great resources for publishers, most notably Younging’s *Elements of Indigenous Style*. At the same time, we shared a concern that if settlers in publishing rely only on written resources for their learning, this could lead to ossification. Some might think that reading a guide or attending a course like *Editing Indigenous Manuscripts* will teach them all they need to learn. I hope that publishers don’t try to check boxes, and don’t shy away in fear, but

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209 Quvi Taylor, 2019; Doyon, 2019.
210 Doyon, 2019.
211 Quvi Taylor, 2019.
212 Quvi Taylor, 2019.
213 Hill, 2019.
215 Reder, 2019.
commit to continuously exploring ways to centre Indigenous perspectives, needs, and goals. As my brother Quvi says, “I think employers have to not just care about Indigenous people and stories, but also about our justice, too.” This requires more than including us in business-as-usual. These conversations reinforced for me that there is no list of recommendations or specific rules that I can prescribe to future learners like me. The way Archibald describes storywork, it is done with others.

“Writing Back, Writing Home, and Writing Beyond”

*For a long time I explained to my students, or I tried to explain, the oral tradition by saying, “The oral tradition tells people who they are, where they come from, who the others are, and how we must live so that we have a good life.” And then only a couple of years ago, I thought hey, that’s what literature is about! To teach us how to be human.* – Hartmut Lutz

Indigenous storytelling and publishing agendas tend to recognize this power of stories. Lutz told me about three of the many things he has observed Indigenous writers doing with their stories: “writing back” to the colonizer; “writing home” to each other; and “writing beyond” to the world. For Indigenous people and Peoples today, part of what we are re-learning about how to be human is how to heal. Stories carry knowledge about community and environmental healing and wellness, physical and mental health, medicine and illness prevention. Stories that survived generations of attempted genocide also heal in their telling, by reminding us of our Peoples’ resilience in the face of unimaginable challenges. Working to recuperate these stories, and to tell our own stories, helps us heal ourselves as we feel our own capabilities and strengths. As my sister has taught me, we don’t have to do it all ourselves or all at once. When we learn together we share the privilege of being responsible to each other.

I think this sentiment is felt strongly in my family of storytellers. We are driven to share our experiences in a way that I feel is specifically Iñupiaq. To me, as my mother Rose

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216 Quvi Taylor, 2019.
218 Lutz, 2018.
220 Rebecca Taylor, 2019.
has taught me, this means a deep respect for others’ autonomy and experiences. 221 Stories of who we are and how we should live, like the ones shared with me by my family during this project, and like the ones my niece Makayla has begun to write, can help reverse the shame we are taught, help us protect each other, and help us be proud. This is what I learned in my work to gather knowledges about Indigenous storytelling protocols. Whether Indigenous storytellers are writing back, home, or beyond, when our stories are told in a good way, we strengthen our connectedness with all our relations.

221 Rose Taylor, 2019; Quvi Taylor, 2019.
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