

**PARTICIPATORY ARCHIVING:  
Exploring a Collaborative Approach to Aboriginal Societal Provenance**

**By**

**Michelle Rydz**

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**Department of History (Archival Studies)  
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University of Manitoba/University of Winnipeg  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis argues for the development of a participatory approach to uncovering the societal provenance of records related to Aboriginal people that have been created by non-Aboriginal people. The recognition of the societal creation of records and the resulting re-conceptualization of provenance have recently taken a prominent place in the archival literature, which has been greatly influenced by the postmodern shift and in many countries, by postcolonial realities. Based on an analysis of this literature, this thesis asks the question, if records are a creation of community and society, then should not community and society be more involved in their archiving?

The first chapter of the thesis outlines the history of thinking about archival provenance in the archival profession, focusing specifically on the emergence of the concept of societal provenance and its implications for Aboriginal societal memory. The second chapter presents various ways in which the archival profession is currently involved in participatory projects, both physical and digital, for the public at large, and for Aboriginal communities in particular. These projects reveal that participation from outside the archival profession is already a reality, albeit in an ad hoc manner. The thesis then explores the guidelines and proposals adopted by the Australian and American archival communities as well as the Canadian museum profession as possible models for the Canadian archival community to draw from to address the issues affecting collaboration between archivists and Aboriginal communities.

The third chapter then presents the findings of a small survey of archivists, researchers, and Aboriginal people regarding the possibilities for and challenges of a participatory approach to archiving records about Aboriginal people created by non-

Aboriginal people and institutions. This chapter highlights several series of records and historical events that should be considered first priority for participatory archiving projects based on the age of the records and the consequent age of the people related to the records available for participation. The thesis concludes with a brief examination of the current state of Aboriginal employment in the archival profession, and a discussion of the future of participatory archiving in Canada. The thesis calls on archivists to advance the practice of participatory archiving by continuing to engage in collaborative projects, to open dialogue between the archival profession and Aboriginal communities as a means of establishing relationships of trust, and to embrace ways of remembering that challenge and unsettle the traditional archival application of provenance.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Aboriginal Societal Memory and Its Implications for the Broadening of the Concept of Archival Provenance**

The conventional archival understanding of provenance identifies the creator of the record first and foremost as its literal inscriber or inscribing institution, and secondarily as the actual recipient and custodian of such records. The Canadian Council of Archives' *Rules for Archival Description* (RAD) defines provenance as "the person(s), family(families), or corporate body(bodies) that created and/or accumulated and used records in the conduct of personal or business life."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the Society of American Archivists (SAA) describes provenance as "a fundamental principle of archives, referring to the individual, family, or organization that created or received the items in a collection."<sup>2</sup> While these understandings of provenance have been essential to the fulfilment of core archival functions, they present archivists with a notably limited definition of record creator. Records are not simply the product of a singular creator or act of creation and/or accumulation, but are inescapably affected by the society in and for which they are created, and therefore possess a societal provenance. While a contextual approach to archives has been the focus of both archival theory and practice for over thirty years, only recently has the archival profession begun to embrace the realities of society's place in records creation. The recognition of societal creation and the re-conceptualization of provenance have taken a prominent place within the archival

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Council of Archives, *Rules for Archival Description*, Appendix D "Glossary" Revised Version – July 2008, p. D-7. Available at: [http://www.cdncouncilarchives.ca/RAD/RAD\\_Glossary\\_July2008.pdf](http://www.cdncouncilarchives.ca/RAD/RAD_Glossary_July2008.pdf) (Accessed 20 March 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Society of American Archivists, "A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology, 2005." Available at: [http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term\\_details.asp?DefinitionKey=196](http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=196) (Accessed 20 March 2010).

literature, which has been greatly influenced by the postmodern shift and in many countries, by postcolonial realities. Based on an analysis of this literature, this thesis asks the question, if records are a creation of community and society, then should not community and society be more involved in their archiving?

Many archivists have called for an increased inclusion of societal perspective in the archival process, but have not explicitly suggested a collaborative approach. In many ways, participatory archiving already exists within archives. Individuals and institutions possessing status and influence within society participate in the creation of laws, policies, and mandates that shape the manner in which records are valued. However, the farther from the centre of power one goes, the less opportunities one has to participate in this decision-making. Despite the immense quantity of records held by archives that document their lives and experiences, Aboriginal people exist primarily on the periphery of archival power. In spite of this paucity of power, there has been increasing attention focussed on Aboriginal issues in Canada over the last forty years, and subsequently to the records related to these issues housed in Canadian archives. Land claims, status and identity issues, residential school claims, self-government initiatives, and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples have resulted, both directly and indirectly, in the creation of projects and programs targeted at records related to these issues. This increased attention has brought to the fore the inadequacies of non-Aboriginal created records in representing Aboriginal history and ways of knowing. Despite the intellectual realization of the importance of societal knowledge and efforts being made to include Aboriginal perspectives, little has changed in the ways in which archivists actually approach Aboriginal records. While Aboriginal memories, carrying new and different

historical perspectives, are being encouraged, the accepted forms and treatment of these records have remained the same. For example, the recently released *Guide to Aboriginal Archives* published by the Association of Canadian Archivists states that “Canadian Aboriginal documents are composed of two types of records: the written record and the oral tradition, each providing a different perspective on a particular event or activity.”<sup>3</sup>

The dichotomization of these records into two separate spheres is reflective of the manner in which archivists have approached Aboriginal archives over the last thirty years, and serves to elucidate the deficiencies in the current approach. Archivists welcome the inclusion of new perspectives, but expect Aboriginal people to present their societal memory in prescribed forms. While the *Guide to Aboriginal Archives* provides a neat categorization of Aboriginal records, not all records or forms of communication fall into one or the other. To encourage the inclusion of different archival perspectives, but to limit their presentation does a great disservice to Aboriginal communities and to the archival record as a whole. In order to create the most representative record of Aboriginal society, archivists must re-conceptualize their understanding of records to include not only perspectives that complement the written record, or that fit into Western epistemologies of history regarding what should be recorded and remembered, but also Aboriginal ways of knowing that unsettle this mindset, and which above all, represent Aboriginal concepts of memory preservation.

Although a good deal of Aboriginal cultural knowledge is transmitted orally, its full contextual expression and understanding is often contingent on the presence of other objects, media, and spiritual settings. Moreover, oral traditions do not simply contain

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<sup>3</sup> Association of Canadian Archivists, *Guide to Aboriginal Archives*. Public Awareness Committee 2005, p. 5.



facts about the past; they are often used as guidelines for understanding change, and are embedded in the social lives of Aboriginal communities.<sup>4</sup> Anthropologist Julie Cruikshank lived and worked with Tlingit elders in the Yukon Territory for over ten years and has written extensively on the nature of oral tradition and its meaning within Aboriginal communities. When she began her work with Tlingit elders in the 1970s, Cruikshank “expected that by recording life histories we would be documenting events and compiling accounts that could be stored, like archival documents, for later analysis.”<sup>5</sup> She soon found that instead of answering her questions pertaining to specific events, the elders would briefly answer her, but suggest that she write down a particular, seemingly unrelated story that they wanted her to know.<sup>6</sup> Only later, after listening to and recording many stories did Cruikshank realize that the Tlingit elders were using these narratives as reference points to discuss their life experiences.<sup>7</sup> In order to get answers to the questions that Cruikshank posed, she first needed a contextual knowledge base – the stories that the elders told her. Within this cultural framework, a single narrative is rendered meaningless without its accompanying context.

Such contextual and personal connection to the transmission of traditional knowledge and history is also central to Cree culture. According to Cree professor Winona Wheeler, “in the Cree world, everyone’s personal, family, and regional histories interconnect and overlap; all are extensions of the past.... Our histories are infused in our

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<sup>4</sup> Julie Cruikshank, “Oral History, Narrative Strategies, and Native American Historiography: Perspectives from the Yukon Territory, Canada” in *Clearing a Path: Theorizing the Past in Native American Studies*. Nancy Shoemaker, ed. (New York, 2002), p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

daily lives – they are lived experiences.”<sup>8</sup> Despite the fact that history plays such a dynamic role in Cree life, Wheeler does not think that the recording of their stories and teachings de-spiritualizes or renders them void of meaning. Instead, according to Wheeler, it is when historians “have no relationship with the storyteller, or lack the lived experience, or have no personal investment in the histories they study, or do not understand the nature, quality, and role of indigenous oral histories ... that [they] become de-spiritualized, sanitized, amputated.”<sup>9</sup> While both Cruikshank and Wheeler focus their attention on historians, these issues are paramount for archivists. Obtaining the knowledge necessary to contextualize Aboriginal oral narratives, knowledge that is often very personal and varied, presents a serious challenge to the archival profession. How do we adequately describe, present, and contextualize records that are centred on lived experiences, and the intimate beliefs and practices of individual communities?

This challenge is further complicated when oral narratives are accompanied by physical objects or places that are central to the meaning and transmission of the tradition. Wampum collars or belts, consisting of cylindrical, coloured beads made from marine shells were used by First Nations in the Great Lakes and northeastern areas of North America to document political and diplomatic relations with the French and British, as well as with other First Nations throughout the early colonial period.

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<sup>8</sup> Winona Wheeler, “Social Relations of Indigenous Oral Histories,” in *Walking a Tightrope: Aboriginal People and Their Representations*. Ute Lischke and David T. McNab, eds. (Waterloo, 2005), p. 196.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Wampum was used to convey “voice and word, and its purpose was, in a ritualized way, to affirm and validate the message transmitted.”<sup>10</sup>

Another example of a communication system that is rooted in non-oral, non-textual expression is First Nations tree art. In *Faces in the Forest*, Michael J. Blackstock documents the history of culturally modified trees, and provides a discussion of their possible meanings and uses within First Nations societies. First Nations tree art, which is found from the lower mainland of British Columbia, to as far east as Manitoba, has been interpreted as a visual communication system that was universally understood by individuals from different linguistic backgrounds.<sup>11</sup> Although like wampum belts, tree art is no longer used as a means of communication within and between Aboriginal nations, the knowledge contained within the carvings has in many instances been maintained through the stories and traditions of community elders.<sup>12</sup> This shift to an oral transmission of the record’s meaning has added an additional layer of contextual knowledge to the initial carvings, resulting in the creation of a multi-media record centred on orality and physical location, unique to each community.

An example of a “traditional” multimedia-based Aboriginal record-keeping system that has recently undergone an additional contextual layering through textual expression is the legal and land tenure system of the Gitskan nation of the Nass

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<sup>10</sup> Gilles Havard, *The Great Peace of Montreal of 1701: French-Native Diplomacy in the Seventeenth Century* Translated by Phyllis Aronoff and Howard Scott, (Montreal, 2001), p. 23.

<sup>11</sup> Michael J. Blackstock, *Faces in the Forest: First Nations Art Created on Living Trees* (Montreal & Kingston, 2001), p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. As Blackstock writes, “a review of the ethnographic record shows that tree art was created in British Columbia at least up until 1910 or 1920 ... the twentieth century is relatively barren of accounts of tree art. This void or lack of awareness of tree art by the First Nations and non-First Nations community is an effect of colonialism.” (p. 35).

Watershed region in British Columbia. In an effort to prove the inaccuracy of territorial claims of the neighbouring Nisga'a nation to certain portions of the Nass River watershed, the Gitksan authorized the publication of a book entitled *Tribal Boundaries in the Nass Watershed*. Published in 1998, this book presents “the Gitksan tradition, in which evidence of territorial ownership is formally validated, and the Euro-Canadian academic tradition, in which evidence from documentary sources is researched and analyzed.”<sup>13</sup> The Gitksan land tenure system described in their oral histories is known through the *adaawk*. The *adaawk* tells of the ancient migrations of the house,<sup>14</sup> its acquisition, and defence of its territory, major events in the life of the house, such as natural disasters, epidemics, war, the arrival of new peoples, the establishment of trade alliances, and major shifts in power.<sup>15</sup> The oral tradition of the Gitksan also contains ancient songs that describe events in which their people endured great hardship or loss. The events described in the *adaawk* are also depicted on poles and ceremonial regalia, which serve as a visual record of the information and its transmission.<sup>16</sup> Every generation of Gitksan chiefs is responsible for enabling the full transmission of the *adaawk* and their visual and aural manifestations through a series of feasts through which both are made public and are validated by other chiefs.<sup>17</sup> Although the transmission of the tradition from generation to generation is centred on this holistic presentation of knowledge, the Gitksan have also now validated its diffusion as a written record, and have added another contextual layer through the inclusion of Euro-Canadian perspectives.

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<sup>13</sup> Neil J. Sterritt, Susan Marsden, Robert Galois, Peter R. Grant, and Richard Overstall, *Tribal Boundaries in the Nass Watershed* (Vancouver, 1998), p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> A house, or house group is a matrilineal kin group and the fundamental landowning and political unit in Gitksan society, taken from Chapter 1: Introduction, footnote 5, p. 272.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

Although this is only a brief discussion of the ways in which Aboriginal communities have communicated and recorded their societal memory, it succeeds in complicating the assertion that the Aboriginal documentary record is composed of two types of records. While the use of oral tradition as a means of enhancing and contextualizing the non-Aboriginal written record is important, and does present the only means of determining Aboriginal perspective for certain historical events or periods, to emphasize one particular meaning, use, or manifestation of oral tradition over others misrepresents and limits the rich contextual and multimedia nature of Aboriginal communication. Furthermore, the dichotomization of written/oral communication is a categorization that for many First Nations communities no longer exists. In a 2005 article addressing the interconnectedness of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures and forms of communications in British Columbia, archivist Laura Millar states, “Today, oral and written have blended together, ... We are moving into a world that is neither oral nor written: a post-documentary society, a cyberspace society.”<sup>18</sup> She further acknowledges, quite validly, that an attempt to return to a pure oral tradition would be “just as illusory as trying to return to quill pens and rag paper.”<sup>19</sup>

In order for Aboriginal knowledge and memory systems to be included in mainstream archives, the archival profession must embrace and put into practice a definition of provenance that is inherently societal. Concurrently, societal provenance cannot be fully realized without the input of the society that it serves to represent. While societal provenance exists for all records, its value is especially visible when considering records arising from intercultural relations, such as the records of Aboriginal-European

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<sup>18</sup> Laura Millar, “Subject or object? Shaping and reshaping the intersections between aboriginal and non-aboriginal records,” *Archival Science* 6 (December 2006), p. 348.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

interactions. A definition of provenance based on the singular and literal inscriber and/or custodian of records has meant that Aboriginal people have had little or no active power in the archival representation of records that document intimate aspects of their daily lives, including records created by the Canadian government and the Hudson's Bay Company.

This thesis argues that a participatory approach is necessary to uncover the societal provenance of records related to Aboriginal people. The first chapter will discuss the evolution of a contextual approach to archives by the archival profession that provides the basis for the adoption of societal provenance by mainstream archives as well as key examples of the application of societal provenance within the archival sphere.

In the second chapter, the case for the viability of a participatory archiving approach to uncovering societal provenance will be made through a discussion of the collaborative projects in which the archival profession is currently engaged with the public at large and Aboriginal communities in particular. The collaborative protocols established by the Canadian museums profession for interaction with Aboriginal people will also be considered as a possible model for the archival profession to follow.

An exploration of the viability of a participatory approach to uncovering societal provenance would not be complete without an attempt to solicit the opinions of those who would be most affected by its implementation. The third chapter will present the findings of a questionnaire undertaken to seek out the opinions of Aboriginal people, archivists, and researchers regarding the concept of participatory archiving and the possibilities and challenges inherent in such an approach. This chapter will also present key records series and historical events related to Aboriginal-federal government and

Aboriginal-fur trade relations that should be considered first priorities based on the age of the records and the consequent age of possible participants with first-person knowledge and experience with the suggested records and events.

The thesis will conclude with an analysis of the future of participatory archiving in the Canadian archival community and will discuss the fundamental changes to core archival theory and practice that are necessary to allow for the full expression of the societal provenance of Aboriginal records, as well as all types of archival records.

## CHAPTER ONE

### The Evolution of Societal Provenance

Provenance is the cornerstone of archival work. It is the basis upon which all archival functions rest, and without it, records have no meaning as evidence and no foundation upon which to express context. A discussion of the evolution of provenance, based on changing attitudes amongst archivists, as well as changing realities in record creating environments is essential in order to understand the broadening of provenance to include the concept of societal provenance in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This chapter will highlight the importance of societal provenance in the archiving of records related to individuals and groups existing outside the sphere of archival power and will argue for the inclusion of their voices through a broader understanding of what constitutes an archival record and through their active participation in the archiving process.

### The History of Provenance in North America

Provenance has been central to the work of European archivists since the mid-nineteenth century. The European ‘discovery’ of a contextual approach to archives was, according to Tom Nesmith, “the most important intellectual development in the history of the archival profession.”<sup>1</sup> The notion that “archival documents could only be understood in context, or in relation to their origins and to other documents, not as self-contained, independent items, to be reorganized along new subject, chronological, or geographical lines” placed provenance at the centre of this approach, and accompanied by respect des

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<sup>1</sup> Tom Nesmith, “Archival Studies in English-speaking Canada and the North American Rediscovery of Provenance,” in *Canadian Archival Studies and the Rediscovery of Provenance*. ed. Tom Nesmith (Metuchen, N.J., 1993), p. 1.



fonds and original order, “became the foundation of the European archival approach to recorded communication.”<sup>2</sup> The 1898 publication of the *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives*, otherwise known as the Dutch Manual, by Samuel Muller, Johan Feith, and Robert Fruin, was the first widely accepted work to codify this contextual approach into fundamental archival principles.<sup>3</sup>

Despite its prominence in Europe, the concept of provenance was not initially accepted by North American archivists. American archivist Francis X. Blouin has argued that the use of provenance as the central tenet of archival work was a necessity for European archivists, who had to trace the more complex origins of records over a much longer period of time than their North American counterparts.<sup>4</sup> Canadian and American archivists had, on the other hand, a much shorter, less complicated time span through which to determine the relationship of a particular document to a particular function or creator.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the Dutch Manual, as well as the writings of British archival pioneer Sir Hilary Jenkinson were based on their experiences with and focus on “medieval and early modern records, with their closed series, their stable and long-dead creators, and their status as inherited records from the past.”<sup>6</sup> Conversely, North American archivists were faced, from the beginning of their professional endeavours, with an ever-increasing volume of records, as well as complex, ever-evolving administrative bodies.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Terry Cook, “What is Past is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas Since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift,” *Archivaria* 43 (Spring 1997), pp. 20-21.

<sup>4</sup> Francis X. Blouin Jr., “Convergences and Divergences in Archival Tradition: A North American Perspective,” in Judy Koucky, ed. *Second European Conference on Archives. Proceedings*. (Ann Arbor, 1989), p. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Nesmith, “Archival Studies in English-speaking Canada,” p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Cook, “What is Past is Prologue,” p. 24.

In the 1950s and 1960s the American archival profession, spearheaded by Theodore R. Schellenberg, turned the European tradition on its head and introduced an archival discourse focused on the appraisal of records based primarily on their research and subject matter values. Schellenberg's use-based appraisal model was predicated upon the determination of primary and secondary values of records. The primary value of records reflected their importance to their original creator for on-going operational needs; secondary values, on the other hand, reflected the importance of records for research by consequent users – mainly academic historians.<sup>7</sup> It was these secondary values upon which appraisal was focused. Accompanying this reconceptualization of archival processes was Schellenberg's espousal of the record group concept. Schellenberg introduced the record group concept as a means of dealing with the massive volumes of records of complex administrations and departments within the United States government.<sup>8</sup> According to Schellenberg, the European fonds d'archives concept and Jenkinson's archive group were inadequate for the arrangement and description of these modern records, as the activities of these departments were interrelated and were rarely completely independent of each other in the completion of their business transactions.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Schellenberg believed that the main task of the archivist "was the provision of information to those that had not created it," and that "the intellectual basis of the archival profession ought to be the knowledge of the subject interests of researchers and the subject information in the records."<sup>10</sup> Therefore, Schellenberg's focus on record volume, use, and provision of access resulted in the entrenchment of an archival model

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Nesmith, "Archival Studies in English-speaking Canada," p. 3.

that obscured the complex provenance that existed within his record groups. While Schellenberg accepted provenance as the sole means of ensuring the integrity of information in records, his use-based approach served to intellectually remove “records from their organic context within the activities of their creator and impose[d] criteria on both appraisal and description that [were] external to the record and its provenance.”<sup>11</sup>

Despite their limited use of provenance, it was American archivists who helped introduce the concept to the Canadian profession in the 1950s.<sup>12</sup> Before the 1950s, as Nesmith points out, there exists little evidence of interest in the concept of provenance within the Canadian archival tradition.<sup>13</sup> From the appointment of the first federal archivist in 1872, the records of the Public Archives of Canada (PAC) were arranged and described according to subject, chronological, and geographical categories, and not unlike the Schellenbergian model, focused on the subject interests of academic historians.<sup>14</sup> Plagued with the same records volume and departmental complexities facing the American archival profession, the PAC adopted the record group concept and over the next two decades focused its energies on the provision of more direct access to information in archival records, based on the subject requirements of specialized researchers.<sup>15</sup>

By the 1980s, however, North American archivists were beginning to express a renewed interest in the concept of provenance. The continued growth and complexity of modern administration, as well as the explosion of the electronic records environment

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., and Cook, “What is Past is Prologue,” p. 29.

<sup>12</sup> Nesmith, “Archival Studies in English-speaking Canada,” p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 5, and Danielle Lacasse and Antonio Lechasseur, *The National Archives of Canada 1872 to 1997*, Canadian Historical Association, Historical Booklet No. 58 (Ottawa, 1997), p. 26.

began to showcase the inadequacies of the use-driven model.<sup>16</sup> The first Canadian archivist to clearly articulate a means by which to manage this new archival environment was Hugh A. Taylor. In the mid-1970s, Taylor introduced the concept of a contextual approach to archives, a theory based on the acquisition of “knowledge of the context in which information is recorded rather than the knowledge of the information contents of records.”<sup>17</sup> The contextual approach espoused by Taylor focuses on the analysis of the history and contemporary activities of records creators, as well as a contextual study of the records themselves – “the characteristics of their media ... the immediate circumstances of their creation, their uses prior to entering archives, [their] organization in records-keeping systems, and relationships with other records and systems.”<sup>18</sup> The contextual analysis then addresses the “archival theory, functions, and institutional structures required to appraise, arrange, describe, make available for use, and preserve these records.”<sup>19</sup> It is the basis of graduate archival education in Canada.<sup>20</sup>

In line with the contextual approach advocated by Taylor, in his 1982 article “Archives from the Bottom Up: Social History and Archival Scholarship,” Tom Nesmith examined the changing relationship of academic historians and archivists accelerated by the advent of the “new” social history within academe. Nesmith argued that social historians were now using a wider range of sources in archives than their predecessors and, increasingly, outside archives. And because of both the ever-broadening scope of

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<sup>16</sup> For an analysis of the evolution of the modern office from a Canadian perspective, see Graham S. Lowe, ““The Enormous File”: The Evolution of the Modern Office in Early Twentieth Century Canada,” *Archivaria* 19 (Winter 1984-85), pp. 137-51.

<sup>17</sup> Tom Nesmith, “Hugh Taylor’s Contextual Idea for Archives and the Foundation of Graduate Education in Archival Studies,” in *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor*, ed. Barbara Craig (Ottawa, 1992), p. 16.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

historical study, driven by social history mainly, and the ever-expanding volume of government and other archival records, it was becoming impossible for archivists to continue to provide topic-specific information for all records and all researchers.<sup>21</sup>

Instead, Nesmith argued for the development of an archival scholarship, based not on the subject matter of the records in their care, but on the study of the records themselves – their media, their custodial history, their relationships to their creators and the society in which they were created – a history of the record, or in other words, their contextual provenance. Furthermore, this “history of the record” approach, a term coined by Nesmith, emphasized the importance of considering “anything in the history of society” as possible context for the history of archival records and communication systems.<sup>22</sup>

This defence of the importance of historical knowledge in the archival profession's work was also taken up by Terry Cook, who argued that such knowledge is not only important, but is an essential characteristic of the archivist. Echoing Nesmith, Cook explained that it is the research skills, not the subject matter specialization of the historian that the archivist requires in order to develop an “*archival* understanding of the history and nature of records.” Without these skills, “the level of archival acquisition, selection, arrangement, description, and public service would be woefully superficial,” as archivists would not only be unable to provide traditional provenancial context, they would also be unable to determine the informational value of specific records and fonds,

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<sup>21</sup> Tom Nesmith, “Archives from the Bottom Up: Social History and Archival Scholarship,” reprinted in Tom Nesmith, ed., *Canadian Archival Studies and the Rediscovery of Provenance*, p. 178.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

and would be unable to contribute to the development of archival theory, through the study of historical themes within the (record keeping) profession.<sup>23</sup>

The literature and debates regarding the importance of a contextual approach to archives in the profession made it clear that provenance, a concept whose meaning and place within archives had previously seemed settled, was in fact being questioned, resulting in a theoretical blossoming of the concept. As a result of the intellectual ferment that grew out of these debates, in 1985 *Archivaria* (the journal of the Association of Canadian Archivists) established the “Studies in Documents” section of the journal, which encouraged, and continues to encourage, archivists to embrace “a modern diplomatic” through which the history of records and their place in society can be explored.<sup>24</sup>

Another key challenge to the traditional understanding of the concept of archival provenance in North America came from American information management specialist David Bearman and archivist Richard Lytle. Arguing for both an expanded understanding and a wider application of the principle of provenance in archival retrieval systems, Bearman and Lytle provided a strong critique of the North American approach to provenance. According to Bearman and Lytle, the limited understanding of the concept of

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<sup>23</sup> Terry Cook, “From Information to Knowledge: An Intellectual Paradigm for Archives,” *Archivaria* 19 (Winter 1984-85), pp. 40-46.

<sup>24</sup> See Editor’s Note in Studies in Documents, *Archivaria* 20 (Spring 1985), p. 127. One of the first articles selected for this section was Mark Walsh’s “By Packtrain and Steamer: The Hudson’s Bay Company’s British Columbia District Manager’s Correspondence, 1897-1920” through which Walsh highlights the importance of this set of HBC post records, not just for their informational content, but for what the organization of the records (by the HBC) tells us about the history of the company. As Walsh states “To understand fully the archives of the company, it is necessary to study the history of its records in their contemporary setting ....” (p. 128). The other article included in the premiere edition of the section was John Stuart Batts, “Fishing for Identity: Establishing Authorship of a Mid-Nineteenth Century Manuscript Diary” through which Batts traces the provenance of an anonymous diary acquired by PAC.

provenance was reflected in the overemphasis of the importance of a mono-hierarchical records structure, in which the provenance of institutional records, for example, is given as one organizational creator, and its manifestation in the continent-wide adoption of the record group concept.<sup>25</sup>

Bearman and Lytle argued that archivists' key contribution to information management was to be found in their unique perspective on records based on the principle of provenance as it illuminates organizational activity and function; however, based upon responses to drafts of their paper, they discovered that a large number of archivists often directly equated the record group with the concept of provenance.<sup>26</sup> In response to these provenancial inadequacies, Bearman and Lytle argued for the adoption of a retrieval system that would replace the distorted mono-hierarchical structure with one based on authority records, with series of records that would consequently be linked to them in an automated environment. By separating the information about the record creators from the information about the records, archivists could then link records to their many creators, and vice versa -- thus eliminating the artificial mono-hierarchical structure inherent in the record group and allowing for the retrieval of "present, as well as past information created by organizations" all the while capturing "the full richness of provenance information ...."<sup>27</sup>

Almost twenty years earlier, Australian archivist Peter Scott came to very similar conclusions while developing an archival control system for the records of the Australian government. Working in an unautomated environment, Scott argued for the abandonment

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<sup>25</sup> David Bearman and Richard Lytle, "The Power of the Principle of Provenance," *Archivaria* 21 (Winter 1985-86), pp.19-20.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

of the record group concept and the adoption of a series-based system. Like Bearman and Lytle, Scott considered the record group concept to be a deficient application of the idea of provenance for both the intellectual description and physical arrangement of records.

In 1964, as a solution to the inadequacies of the record group concept, the Commonwealth Archives Office in Canberra introduced the record series system as a pilot project, and shortly thereafter it was adopted as its primary method of classification and arrangement.<sup>28</sup> The basis of Scott's series system rested on the adoption of the record series as the primary object of classification (instead of the record group or fonds), and the item as the secondary one.<sup>29</sup> Establishing the varied (or multiple) provenance of each series became the main aim of archival description. The administrative context was captured in the authority record – on paper in Scott's time.<sup>30</sup> In this system, relationships between records and records creators were not static, one-to-one linkages, but instead existed “between many series and one creator, between many creators and one series, between many creators and many series, between creators and other creators, between series and other series, and between series and creators to functions and the reverse.”<sup>31</sup> Through the development of the series system, Scott illuminated the multifaceted relationships that exist between records and their creators and, as Cook argues, “shifted the entire archival description enterprise from a static cataloguing mode to a dynamic system of multiple interrelationships.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Peter Scott, “The Record Group Concept: A Case for Abandonment,” *The American Archivist* 29 no.4 (October 1966), p. 497.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Cook, “What is Past is Prologue,” p. 38.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.38-39.



Both Scott's reinterpretation of provenance in the 1960s and the work of Canadian archivists in the early 1980s provided the basis for a continued reexamination and exploration of the concept of provenance, with a concerted focus on criticism of the fonds system. Canadian criticism of the fonds system noted its limited reflection of provenance, or its insistence on linking records to one creator, with all such records comprising that creator's fonds. Canadian archivists Debra Barr, Terry Cook, and Laura Millar argued for recognition of the multiple origins of a fonds as a means of better representing the complex history (or provenance) of its records and the realities of contemporary, electronic records creation, where such complexities were becoming increasingly obvious.<sup>33</sup>

According to Cook, the 'one creator, one fonds' definition of the fonds concept "reflects the profession's 'custodial' or 'curatorial' past rather than its 'post-custodial' or 'knowledge-oriented' future."<sup>34</sup> While supportive of a virtual application of the fonds concept, Millar contends that, at a fundamental level, "the fonds implies a wholeness, a completeness, a totality" of the records of an individual or creating agency that can never be fully represented by any archives.<sup>35</sup> As an alternative, Millar argues for a redefinition

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<sup>33</sup> See also Debra Barr, "The Fonds Concept in the Working Group on Archival Descriptive Standards Report," *Archivaria* 25 (Winter 1987-88) and Barr, "Protecting Provenance: Response to the Report of the Working Group on Description at the Fonds Level," *Archivaria* 28 (Summer 1989). In the latter article, Barr called for a reconsideration of the principle of provenance by Canadian archivists. She argued that the classic definition of provenance based on respect for fonds and original order was inadequate; furthermore, Barr argued that, "as any gallery curator or rare book specialist knows, the provenance of an item – a painting, a rare book, a document – is the entire history of its origin, use, and custody." (p.141) While Barr adamantly argued for a descriptive system that allowed for the holistic presentation of the provenance of all records, independent of their physical location, her conception of provenance was still very much focused on the discrete, physical aspects of provenance, with no discussion of its societal and contextual dimensions.

<sup>34</sup> Cook, "What is Past is Prologue," pp. 38-39.

<sup>35</sup> Laura Millar, "The Death of the Fonds and the Resurrection of Provenance: Archival Context in Space and Time," *Archivaria* 53 (Spring 2002), p.6.

of the concept of the fonds, through which the fonds is no longer defined as the *whole* of all the records created, accumulated, or used by an individual or institution, but instead, is defined as the *remains* of all the records created, accumulated, or used by someone.<sup>36</sup>

Through this reconceptualized approach, archivists would focus their descriptions not only on the creator of the records (as is the current practice), but would also include contextual information on how and why the records were accumulated and used.<sup>37</sup> Such an approach would in essence put into practice the ‘history of the record’ approach proposed by Nesmith, providing a holistic, contextual understanding of archival records, regardless of their physical location.

### **The Emergence of a Societal Approach to Archives**

Although archivists in various places were broadening the notion of provenance, the first direct call for a societal approach to it for archives came from (West) German archival philosopher Hans Booms. In 1972, writing against the backdrop of Soviet-controlled East Germany, Booms argued that it is the society in which records are created, not the state or the historical profession that should determine the value of archival records. According to Booms, the concept of society was incomprehensible if

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.7.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.8. For a similar critique of the fonds concept see Peter Horsman, “The Last Dance of the Phoenix, or The De-discovery of the Archival Fonds,” *Archivaria* 54 (Fall 2002) pp.1-23. Like Millar, Horsman argues that the definition of the fonds as an original whole is something that rarely (if ever at all) exists in reality, and that “all too often such a reconstruction (by archivists) of a whole actually distorts the original recordkeeping reality, thereby weakening provenance.”(p.21). Instead, Horsman argues that, “if any principle should govern archival theory, it is not the *fonds*, but rather the visualization through description of functional structures, both internal and external: archival narratives about those multiple relationships of creation and use so that researchers may truly understand records from the past. If that is called the principle of (virtual) provenance, I shall not object, for it is the best continuation of the archival tradition of respecting the context of records.” (p.22-23).

not limited by reference to a specific social system, and “regardless of whether the society is viewed as a socialistic class structure, or a liberal competitive structure, or a technocratic industrial structure . . . , it always develops its own recognizable system of coordinating norms and values, of special control and behavioural models, which influence the life and thought patterns of its members.”<sup>38</sup> Based on this understanding of society, Booms argued that the foundation of archival appraisal should be based on a measurement of the societal significance of past facts, attained through the analysis of the value that the contemporaries within that society attach to them.<sup>39</sup> In order to accomplish this, Booms advocated for the development of a documentation plan, which would be participatory in nature, and would be subject to the criticism of “an advisory council composed of individuals from different areas of life such as administration, science, the media or economics.”<sup>40</sup> Booms envisioned the final product of the documentation plan to be a published document, which would be part of the archival record itself, and above all, would serve as a “concrete orienting principle for ascribing value through an appraisal process of positive value selection” that “is sanctioned and controlled by society at large.”<sup>41</sup>

By the beginning of the 1990s, however, Booms’ vision for an appraisal model had changed. In the 1991-92 volume of *Archivaria*, Booms published an article in which he openly reflected upon the history of archival thought in Germany throughout the Soviet period, as well as criticized his own conception of the documentation plan as the solution to the eternal problem of archival appraisal. Booms argued that the

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<sup>38</sup> Hans Booms, “Society and the Formation of a Documentary Heritage: Issues in the Appraisal of Archival Sources” *Archivaria* 24 (Summer 1987), p. 74.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

documentation plan that he proposed in 1972 was too complicated, too theoretical, and too impractical as a useable appraisal model.<sup>42</sup> Based on these reflections, as well as a decade of experience working on appraisal within the German Federal Archives, Booms presented a modified version of the documentation plan.

Booms no longer considered the basis of his documentation plan to be “a firmly sketched plan containing a kind of grid of the contemporary historical scene,” but instead, a contemporary chronicle that would “alert archivists to important and essential events of the time in which the records originated - what was debated, what was controversial, what provoked society, and what moved it.”<sup>43</sup> This ‘contemporary chronicle’ would be drafted first, as a working document for archivists, and later would be included in archival finding aids as a contextual history.<sup>44</sup> The next step in the modified documentation plan would be the creation of an administrative history of each record creating function. The creation of administrative histories of record creating departments was, according to Booms, an essential step in “connecting the documentary needs identified in the contemporary chronicle with the records themselves,” as the context of the records’ creation forms the fundamental basis of the appraisal process.<sup>45</sup> Further stressing the importance of provenance to the process of appraisal, Booms stated,

Archival appraisal, as a practical method, can only be completed according to and in the context of the provenance of records. If this does not happen, archival appraisal inevitably risks becoming unstructured and amorphous. Records may become divorced from the context of their creation, and the result will be a useless collection of sources .... Subject-related documents, tied to specific events, answer only the particular research questions for which they were collected. They hardly have anything to offer to other researchers, who might

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<sup>42</sup> Hans Booms, “*Überlieferungsbildung: Keeping Archives as a Social and Political Activity*,” *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-92), p. 31.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

require material while examining other topics. And, of course, the formulations of historical questions are subject to constant change. *This is why provenance must remain the immutable foundation of the appraisal process* [Emphasis added].<sup>46</sup>

While Booms' influence on the Canadian archival profession was profound, it was the development of the concept of macroappraisal, spearheaded by Terry Cook, which brought the importance of a societal approach to provenance to the forefront, resulting in a fundamental shift in theory and practice, both in Canada and internationally. Concerned as others were with the inadequacies of the fonds and record group systems, the ever increasing volume of institutional records, and above all, the overwhelming presence of electronic communication, Cook recognized that the traditional bottom-up approach to appraisal was woefully inadequate, both physically and intellectually. Cook argued that if appraisal theory was to be able to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, a conceptual version of provenance would have to be adopted.<sup>47</sup> Cook argued that as electronic communication continues to grow and evolve to the point where "[t]he [original] electronic record itself is no longer a concrete object such as archivists have traditionally encountered," the physical document or record might offer "less meaning as 'evidence' of a function than could be gained by studying its broader 'evidential' or 'conceptual' context."<sup>48</sup> In response, Cook proposed the adoption of an appraisal theory that focused neither on the research value of archival records, nor on the physical records themselves, but instead, on "the articulation of the most important societal structures, functions, records creators, and records creating processes, and their

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>47</sup> Terry Cook, "Mind over Matter: Towards a New Theory of Archival Appraisal," in *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor*, ed. Barbara L. Craig (1992), p. 38.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

interaction, which together form a comprehensive reflection of human experience.”<sup>49</sup>

This “macro” approach “assumes that values are not found in records ... but rather in theories of value of societal significance which archivists bring to the records.”<sup>50</sup>

Through this approach to appraisal, archivists “seek to understand why records were created rather than what they contain, how they were created and used by their original users rather than how they might be used in the future, and what formal functions and mandates of the creator they supported rather than what internal structure or physical characteristics they may or may not have.”<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, Cook explains that “archivists would look at the reasons for and the nature of the communication between the citizen and the state – or any other institution for that matter – rather than at what was communicated.”<sup>52</sup> It is this intellectual link to the creator in the macroappraisal approach which shifts the central importance of provenance from the physical origin of the records to their original conceptual purpose.<sup>53</sup>

While a functional analysis of the record creating institution is essential, the key to macroappraisal’s holistic documentation of society is the focus on citizen-state interaction. Explaining the co-creation of records by both the state and society, Cook states,

It is essential to remember that the formal corporate records creator (structure) interacts for some purpose (function) with citizens, clients, or customers, and *together* as a result of this interaction (which is often only implicit) they *co-create* through various recording processes the actual records which the archivist will eventually appraise. It is at these points of sharpest *interaction* of the structure, function, and client that the best documentary evidence will be found.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

While in many cases, these points of interaction will be obvious, they are not always representative of all facets of society. Marginalized groups that do not belong to the dominant democratic consensus are often, as Cook explains, “reflected poorly (if at all) in the programmes of public institutions. The voice of such marginalized groups may only be heard (and thus documented) – aside from chance survival of scattered private papers – through their interaction with such institutions, and hence the archivist must listen carefully to make sure these voices are heard.”<sup>55</sup>

### **Archival Power and Justice**

By the mid-1990s, the influence of postmodern thought among archivists began to extend and enrich the continuing ‘rediscovery’ of provenance. Postmodern scholars such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida have suggested that “our means of communicating mediate reality, or provide particular ways of interacting with reality which powerfully shape our understanding of it.”<sup>56</sup> Recorded communication is one way in which we interact with the world in order to understand it, and as Nesmith argues, “the result of this mediation is not contact with the world simply as it is or was in the past, but the world as conveyed in human interaction with it.”<sup>57</sup> Such considerations are of central importance to archivists, as these general processes of communication are the same processes which create records and archives.<sup>58</sup> Contrary to the traditional scientific and objective modernist view of the archive as a natural accumulation of fact-based records,

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Tom Nesmith, “Still Fuzzy, But More Accurate: Some Thoughts on the “Ghosts” of Archival Theory,” *Archivaria* 47 (Spring 1999), p. 143.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

the postmodern perspective represents archives as creations of communications, generated by the multiplicity of interactions between archives and the surrounding society; as a result, archives help create reality, rather than simply document it.<sup>59</sup> Based on these theoretical views, Nesmith, like Cook, argues that archivists are co-creators of archives, who “do not passively receive, protect, preserve, and retrieve records and knowledge, which others are entirely responsible for creating,” but instead perform functions which “are better conceived as communications processes, or as interactions with participants in recording activities and with the various users and sponsors of archives – these functions taking place within a given formative context of a social, historical, and material character.”<sup>60</sup> As a result, a record, which Nesmith defines as “an evolving mediation of understanding about some phenomena ... created by social and technical processes of inscription, transmission, and contextualization,” is always changing, or is subject to change, based on the power of the archivist in decisions surrounding the meaning-making context of records description and interpretation.<sup>61</sup>

Power is central to the relationship between archives, records, and society. Despite this, many archivists deny this power, continuing to insist that they are neutral, objective keepers of unproblematic, pristine records. However, as Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook assert, when archivists deny, overlook, or leave unchallenged the power that they wield, the result is “misleading at best and dangerous at worst.”<sup>62</sup> In response to this passive attitude, Schwartz and Cook assert that “power recognized becomes power that can be questioned, made accountable, and opened to transparent dialogue and enriched

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., pp. 144-45.

<sup>62</sup> Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, “Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory,” *Archival Science* 2 (2002), p. 2.



understanding.”<sup>63</sup> In order for such recognition and questioning of archival power to be realized, a reconsideration of the relationship between archives and the societies that create and use them is necessary.<sup>64</sup> At the heart of this relationship is power, but, as Schwartz and Cook contend,

Power to make records of certain events and ideas and not of others, power to name, label, and order records to meet business, government, or personal needs, power to preserve the record, power to mediate the record, power over access, power over individual rights and freedoms, over collective memory and national identity – is a concept largely absent from the traditional archival perspective.<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, “the refusal of the archival profession to acknowledge the power relations embedded in the archival enterprise carries a concomitant abdication of responsibility for the consequences of the exercise of that power ....”<sup>66</sup> Despite failure in the past to address these power relations, the ‘archival turn’ in post-colonial scholarship and postmodern perspectives have brought these issues to the fore, and have resulted in a renaissance of self-reflection and societal awareness within the profession, leading to “the rediscovery of the power reflected *in* the records and of the power *of* [archival] records.”<sup>67</sup>

It must be recognized, nonetheless, that archives and archival records are not only about power, nor are archivists power tyrants. It does, however, mean that despite the best efforts of the archivist, not all individuals can afford to create and maintain records, nor among those that can, will all voices be heard. As a result, despite of the work of the

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Eric Ketelaar, “Recordkeeping and Societal Power,” in *Archives: Recordkeeping in Society*, eds. Sue McKemmish, Michael Piggott, Barbara Reed, and Frank Upward (Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, 2005), p. 285.

archivist, certain records and views about society will be privileged and others will be marginalized.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, as Schwartz and Cook argue, archivists must “(re)search thoroughly for the missing voices, for the complexity of the human or organizational functional activities under study during appraisal, description, or outreach activities, so that archives can acquire and reflect multiple voices, and not, by default, only the voices of the powerful.”<sup>69</sup> According to South African archivist Verne Harris, archivists who hear this calling for archival justice, understand the archival record to be but a sliver of both social memory and the documentary record, and as a result of this understanding “will always be troubling the prevailing relations of power.”<sup>70</sup> As Harris explains, these archivists “listen intently for the voices of those who are marginalised or excluded by prevailing relations of power.” This is, however, a difficult undertaking, as Harris asks, “How to invite in what is always beyond the limits of understanding? How to avoid the danger of speaking for these other voices? How to avoid reinforcing marginalisation by naming ‘the marginalised’ as such?”<sup>71</sup> Echoing the words of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Harris calls on archivists to “arrest the understandable need to fix and diagnose the identity of the most deserving marginal” and to “also suspend the mood of self-congratulation as saviors of marginality.”<sup>72</sup> “Otherness” must not be romanticized. It should be feared as much as it is respected, and, as those archivists that embrace this mentality know, “as much as it is ‘outside,’ [‘the marginalized’] is also already ‘inside’ as the converse spectre of power”; ultimately, however, as Harris concludes, these archivists

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<sup>68</sup> Schwartz and Cook, p. 14.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>70</sup> Verne Harris, “The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory, and Archives in South Africa,” *Archival Science* 2 (2002), pp. 64 and 85

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

know only that it is justice that calls upon them to engage “otherness” – “continually, honestly, and openly, without blueprint, without solution, without answers.”<sup>73</sup>

Reading archival records ‘against the grain’ to unearth the voices of the marginalized embedded as this converse spectre of power has been the most accepted critical approach to the study of colonial regimes in recent years. Such an approach has resulted in an engagement with colonial archives that “was devoted to a reading of upper class sources upside down” in order to reveal the language of rule and the biases inherent in statist perceptions.<sup>74</sup> As anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler suggests, analytical tactics of inversion and recuperation are applied in “an effort to re-situate those who appeared as objects of colonial discipline as subaltern subjects and agents of practice who make – albeit constrained – choices of their own. Within this frame, archival documents were counterweights to ethnography, not the site of it.”<sup>75</sup> But, as Stoler argues, “colonial authority, and the practices that sustained it, permeated more diverse sites than those pursuing this ‘romance of resistance’ once imagined.”<sup>76</sup> The recognition of how much the personal was political in colonial societies has transformed the scope of what colonial scholars consider to be archival and worthy of analysis from a singular focus on state records to more commonplace records such as house-keeping manuals, child-rearing handbooks, and medical guides.<sup>77</sup> Despite this opening of sources, Stoler contends that regardless of how such colonial studies are framed, the issues continue to be built “on

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance,” *Archival Science* 2 (2002), p. 99.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

readings of the archives [that are] based on what we take to be evidence and what we expect to find.”<sup>78</sup> For Stoler, such an enterprise is problematic, as she asks,

How can students of colonialisms so quickly and confidently turn to readings ‘against the grain’ without first moving along their grain? How can we brush against them without a prior sense of their texture and granularity? How can we compare colonialisms without knowing the circuits of knowledge production in which they operated and the racial commensurabilities on which they relied? If a notion of colonial ethnography starts from the premise that archival production is itself both a process and a powerful technology of rule, then we need not only to brush *against* the archive’s received categories. We need to read for its regularities, for its logic of recall, for its densities and distributions, for its consistencies of misinformation, omission, and mistake – *along* the archival grain.<sup>79</sup>

Reading ‘along the archival grain’ is a fundamental aspect of the macroappraisal approach. As discussed earlier, through this approach, archivists do not attempt to document the definitive reality of state activity, which is ultimately unknowable, but instead focus on the means by which this reality is formed.<sup>80</sup> Such means, as Cook explains, “are quite knowable, involving societal functions and structures, and the citizens who create or generate and interact with both ... [and] through research on the processes and functions of records creators, the archivist can determine where the best documentary evidence of that reality will most likely be found, and the central factors or participants that shape that evidence.”<sup>81</sup> Despite the merits of a focus on and analysis of citizen-state interaction, there are many voices, many stories, and much contention between citizen and state (especially those that have been disempowered by the state), that cannot be unearthed through this approach, or even by reading ‘against the grain.’

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Cook, “Mind Over Matter,” p. 49.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

According to Cook, once institutional records have been carefully appraised, the resulting 'image' of state reality should be "further supplemented by personal, private records in all media by use of the documentation strategy to identify who or what has fallen through the cracks; furthermore, the image can be enriched still further (although not necessarily by archivists) by the use of oral history and other heritage and cultural sources."<sup>82</sup> While the supplementation of the image of the state by records created by private individuals or communities can be a fruitful way in which to achieve this goal, it is not the only option for archivists, nor can it guarantee an enriched understanding of records or issues directly related to the state. If the means by which the image of state reality is created are inherently societal, then archivists must embrace a truly societal approach to provenance in order to do justice to the image.

### **Societal Provenance and Its Importance for Aboriginal Records**

As has been made evident through the above discussions, provenance has been an essential element of the thinking of the archival profession for over a century; however, it is clear that the contexts and ideas behind the concept of a societal approach to

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p.51. The term 'documentation strategy' was coined by a group of American archivists in the early 1980s and is best known through the writings of Helen Samuels. The Society of American Archivists defines documentation strategy as "a methodology that guides selection and assures retention of adequate information about a specific geographic area, a topic, a process, or an event that has been dispersed throughout society." It also notes that "documentation strategies are typically undertaken by collaborating records creators, archives, and users. A key element is the analysis of the subject to be documented; how that subject is documented in existing records, and information about the subject that is lacking in those records; and the development of a plan to capture adequate documentation of that subject, including the creation of records, if necessary." Society of American Archivists, "A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology," 2005. Available at: [http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term\\_details.asp?DefinitionKey=225](http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=225) (Accessed 20 March 2010).

provenance make for a departure from the traditional definition of provenance as a singular and unique origin of records. It therefore must be asked, what is societal provenance?

According to Nesmith, societal provenance is a feature of all records and of all layers of provenance information.<sup>83</sup> It is not simply another element of provenance, such as the title of the creator or the organizational function. According to Nesmith, “the societal dimension infuses all the others.”<sup>84</sup> He goes on to say,

Document creation, use, and archiving have social origins. People make and archive records in social settings for social purposes. They do so with a concept of how their social setting works, where they fit into it, and might change it ... [Their values and conditions] shape what is deemed trustworthy, authentic, reliable, worth remembering or forgettable, and how and when it was used, and by whom. A society is a kind of information gathering and processing phenomenon ... More needs to be known about that if archivists are to employ societal provenance.<sup>85</sup>

To elaborate further, social values and conditions influence what people do or do not document, how they do so – the recording technologies, language and conventions of representation they use – and what they do with the records – keep, label, disperse, ignore, destroy, or archive them in formal public archives. These evolving societal contexts shape the creation of records all across their history and are thus part of their societal provenance.

While societal provenance exists for all records, its value is especially visible when considering records arising from intercultural relationships, such as the records of

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<sup>83</sup> Tom Nesmith, “The concept of societal provenance and records of nineteenth-century Aboriginal-European relations in Western Canada: implications for archival theory and practice,” *Archival Science* 6 nos.3-4 (December 2006), p. 352. This article was originally presented as a paper to the Second International Conference on the History of Records and Archives (I-CHORA), University of Amsterdam, 2 September 2005.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 352-53.

Aboriginal-European relations. According to Nesmith, in order to better understand such intercultural dimensions, “a move in archival thinking about provenance away from its limited, surface level characteristics” is required, as these dimensions cannot be explored without greater understanding of the societal origins of records and archives.<sup>86</sup> When a limited understanding of provenance is employed, “Aboriginal people have no real role in the provenance of many government, church, or business records because they were not their literal inscribers;” however, as Nesmith points out, much information in these records was obtained from Aboriginal people.<sup>87</sup> “Aboriginal people provided technological, agricultural, military, cartographic, economic, medicinal, weather, and wildlife information. They are named, described, and extensively quoted (sometimes [even] in their own languages) in such records.”<sup>88</sup> As Nesmith states, “the archives of Aboriginals’ knowledge helped create the archives of the Europeans they encountered.”<sup>89</sup>

Societal contexts in place at the time of a record’s creation are not the only conditions that contribute to its societal provenance. According to Nesmith, the “overall history of the record *is* the provenance of the record.”<sup>90</sup> Accordingly then, anyone or anything that has played a role in causing the record we see today to exist is part of its societal provenance.<sup>91</sup> These factors include records custodians – both private individuals and organizations who had the records prior to their deposit in an archives, as well as the archival institution(s) in which the records are donated. Subsequent interpretations of the record also form part of its societal provenance. In such cases, the form and medium of

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 352.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 353.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 359.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 358

the interpretation should be considered, along with an analysis of the interpreter's social context in relation to the record's provenance.<sup>92</sup>

Lori Podolsky Nordland recently addressed the issue of such subsequent interpretations of a record's medium and context, using as a case study 'Ac ko mok ki's map' in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives' map collection.<sup>93</sup> Hudson's Bay Company fur trader and surveyor Peter Fidler drafted this map from information provided to him by Siksika chief Ac ko mok ki in 1801. As one of the first maps depicting the Siksika (Blackfoot) territory, east of the Rocky Mountains in present day Alberta, Ac ko mok ki's map was relied upon by Fidler and other HBC servants for the valuable physical and human geographical knowledge that it imparted, and was of such value that it was sent to British cartographer Aaron Arrowsmith to be incorporated into his 1802 updated map of British North America, which helped guide Lewis and Clark's 1804-06 expedition.<sup>94</sup>

Nordland argues that the use and re-use of Ac ko mok ki's map has given it particular value, or context, and because of this value, "it has been the subject of several publications relating to the history of the fur trade, and Canadian and American history."<sup>95</sup> The subsequent reproductions and re-interpretations of Ac ko mok ki's map both in printed and digitized form are identified by Nordland as 'transmedia shifts.' According to Nordland, "with each 'transmedia shift,' the provenance of the record has shifted or acquired new layers of meaning" which need to be re-examined for many

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Lori Podolsky Nordland, "The Concept of "Secondary Provenance": Re-interpreting Ac ko mok ki's Map as Evolving Text," *Archivaria* 58 (Fall 2004), pp. 147-59. The map, commonly referred to as Ac ko mok ki's Map is: HBCA G.1/25 [An Indian Map of the Different Tribes that inhabit on the East & West Side of the Rocky Mountains with all the rivers & other remarkable Places, also the number of Tents etc. Drawn by the Feathers or Ac ko mok ki – a Blackfoot chief – 7 Feby. 1801].

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.



possible provenances, “instead of the concept of a unique provenance derived from the older theories of Samuel Muller, Johan Feith and Robert Fruin, and early- and mid-twentieth century archivists Sir Hilary Jenkinson and T.R. Schellenberg.”<sup>96</sup> In line with this concept, Nordland argues that, while the overall content of a record having undergone a transmedia shift remains relatively constant, “new meanings or layers are added to the record’s context and structure, in a continual evolution of the history of the record, even after it is ‘fixed’ in archival custody. In turn, the record is reinterpreted to suit the new media and that author’s wishes.”<sup>97</sup>

While Nordland argues that the “original” provenance of a record remains with the creator of the original record, in the case of Ac ko mok ki’s map, and many other records, the finding aid for the map contains limited information on its original context. As a result, when viewing the map for the first time in a book or on a website, “the researcher is only exposed to the context presented in that book or Web site, not necessarily to the connection of the record to its creator, the creating processes, and the original uses by that or by successor creators.”<sup>98</sup> As a result, Nordland argues that in many cases the original provenance of a record is “forgotten or buried, replaced by another set of circumstances, or a secondary provenance.” She further contends, like Nesmith, that “the successor creators’ and later authors’ reuses of the record become important dimensions of the record’s context, but this is often overlooked in defining an enlarged, more nuanced view of provenance.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., pp. 153-54.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

In his work with immigration records, American archivist Joel Wurl has also recently concluded that the concept of provenance should be widened to include ethnicity as a key element. According to Wurl, “as we contemplate the task of fully representing the experiences of immigrant peoples and their descendents ... we have to begin with [the] fundamental awareness that ethnicity is manifested in interpersonal and interdependent frameworks ... that need to be understood and respected as embodiments of provenance.”<sup>100</sup>

A further example of growing interest in societal provenance is reflected in the concept of parallel provenance developed by Australian archivist Chris Hurley. According to Hurley, “the stories we tell about provenance reflect a necessary choice to exclude contested narratives.”<sup>101</sup> We as archivists justify this choice by legitimizing our point of view according to archival principles that we claim require taking a single view of provenance.<sup>102</sup> However, Hurley believes that records are dynamic, and are best understood and described by “contextualizing different ... narratives ... into a single ambient description that does not detract from, but rather enriches, the evidential meaning of the records ....”<sup>103</sup> According to Hurley, parallel provenance exists when there is “ambiguity over what ‘creator’ means or from an inability to see it from a different point of view;” furthermore, parallel provenance “only exists in a world of confused, undocumented, or improperly documented context. It disappears when coterminous creative (or otherwise contextualizing) acts are correctly depicted as different ways in

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<sup>100</sup> Joel Wurl, “Ethnicity as Provenance: In Search of Values and Principles for Documenting the Immigrant Experience,” *Archival Issues* 29 no. 1 (2005), pp. 67-76.

<sup>101</sup> Chris Hurley, “Parallel Provenance: (1) What, if Anything, is Archival Description?” *Archives and Manuscripts* 33 no. 1 (May 2005), p. 110.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 111. Ambience is defined by Hurley as the context of provenance (p. 122).

which records are created,” referred to by Hurley as simultaneous multiple provenance.<sup>104</sup>

To explain further, parallel provenance can be eliminated and converted into

simultaneous multiple provenance in three ways:

By disentangling confusion over different meanings of ‘creation’ to allow for different statements to be made about whose records they are,

By broadening the ambience of the records to encompass a single overarching view of other participants in the generation process – different creation stories,

By structuralizing the provenance to establish creation relationships at different ‘levels.’<sup>105</sup>

Applying this approach to the records of Australia’s “Stolen Generation” through the means of “broadening the ambience of provenance,” Hurley argues that the context of the forced government removal of Aboriginal children from their families is to be found in the “official agencies of government, in the churches and welfare agencies that participated, and in the people to whom that policy was applied.”<sup>106</sup> According to Hurley, these records “belong to the narrative of the people to whom the [policies] were *applied* as well as the narrative of those who wrote them and set them aside.”<sup>107</sup> It is essential to understand that such a concept does not purport to impart the impression that the “records relating to the stealing of children have been ‘created’ by those whose children were stolen or by the children themselves;” as Hurley asserts, it is, instead about recognizing that the entirety of the records documenting these events constitutes a legitimate archival whole pertaining to the experiences of those involved in the events and circumstances

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid, p. 123.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

which the records document.<sup>108</sup> In addition, Hurley argues that the dissolution of parallel provenance into a form of simultaneous multiple provenance is not about taking a different view of the same thing, nor is it so much about the identification of different creators, but is instead about the recognition of the manifold, ambient context of record creation.<sup>109</sup> Seen in this way, the experiences of all involved in the events surrounding the stealing of Australia's indigenous children "produced units of description whose context can only be described by identifying all of those entities whose context can only be described by identifying all of those entities whose involvement was necessary for the process to occur and by delineating their respective functions and activities within the story we tell about it. The life of those records continued into a period of reports, reversals, rectifications, apologies, and recriminations, so their provenance becomes mired in overlapping and contested ambient views deriving from Australian society and politics also."<sup>110</sup>

A comprehensive and succinct expression of societal provenance, and an excellent example of parallel provenance, can be found in the work of archivist Jeannette Bastian. In 1917, the Danish West Indies were transferred from Denmark to the United States of America, and were renamed the U.S. Virgin Islands. Over the next forty years, the archival records of this 250 year old colonial society were quietly transferred from the Virgin Islands to both the Danish National Archives and the National Archives of the United States, and by the 1960s, the only government records that remained on the

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 137.

Islands were property and local police records.<sup>111</sup> In her book, *Owning Memory: how a Caribbean community lost its archives and found its history*, Bastian examines the history of the removal of these records from their source of creation, based on political treaties, the interpretation of archival principles, climatic influences, and the conditions of colonialism and the consequences of the loss of these records to the identity and memory of the community, “investigated from the perspective of written histories of the islands, popular commemorations of historical events, and interviews with Virgin Islanders themselves.”<sup>112</sup> Like government records in Canada, these records contain massive amounts of information about their societies' indigenous people. According to Bastian, the Virgin Islanders lost both control of and ready access to their recorded history because of the narrow interpretation of provenance as the actual inscriber of records or their office of creation. Applied in this way, the records were not considered to be *the society's* records, but instead, the records of their inscribers. As a result of the removal of the colonial records from the Virgin Islands, citizens of the Islands have been unable to fully access or assess their collective history. Without access to the written archival records of their society, Virgin Islanders have been forced to rely on secondary interpretations of the history of the Islands from foreign scholars, as well as local historians, who have had limited, patchwork access to relevant archival records; as Bastian contends, “without the ability to interpret the records for themselves, Virgin Islanders are at the mercy of interpreters, [and are fundamentally] hostages to [their own] history.”<sup>113</sup> Despite the importance of free and open access to the written records of one's

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<sup>111</sup> Jeannette Bastian, *Owning Memory: how a Caribbean community lost its archives and found its history* (Westport, 2003), p. 1.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

society, collective memory is also created, preserved, and perpetuated in many other forms. For Virgin Islanders, the most vibrant and important expressions of their collective societal memory are public commemorations. According to Bastian, “the identity of a community is wrapped around the events they choose to commemorate,” and as a result, the very events that are celebrated are indicative of the values and concerns of the community.<sup>114</sup> Some of the most important annual holidays in the Virgin Islands include: commemorations of the 1917 purchase of the islands by the United States; the emancipation of the slaves in 1848; the establishment of the first free press in the islands; a day of prayer for safety through the hurricane season, and a day of thanks for its conclusion; as well as commemoration of the date of formal organization by the U.S. Congress of the local government of the Virgin Islands.<sup>115</sup> Such commemorations, while telling on the surface, are multifaceted events which consist of “both oral and physical expressions, marked by speeches, parades, presentations, monuments, and group events.”<sup>116</sup> In addition to their performative nature, these events also produce “a plethora of records, such as commemorative booklets, posters, mementos, photographs, videotape, and Web sites, all of which reflect as well as document the ways people celebrate the event.”<sup>117</sup> Still, as Bastian argues, “it is the oral, visual, and editorial spin-offs in television, newspaper, and Internet commentary that often provide the greatest insights into expressions of public sentiment and attitudes about the celebration itself,” and contribute to the evolving discourse surrounding such commemorations.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

Despite the richness of societal history inherent in local commemorations, Virgin Islanders continue to long for access to their written past. Bastian argues that in spite of the beliefs and actions of their former colonial rulers, the Virgin Islanders *are* co-creators of the written records of their society, and as a result, must be considered part of their provenance.<sup>119</sup> While the records held within the Danish National Archives “were physically created by Danish clerks and other Danish officials during the daily functioning of their offices ... these functions directly reflected the transactions and serviced the needs of the whole society. In this respect, therefore, the records were created by and within the entire colonial milieu.”<sup>120</sup> Seen from this perspective, Bastian argues that “the colonial society within the specific locale of the Danish West Indian islands, rather than the colonial offices in Denmark, constitute the larger context of the records. Equally, it could also be argued that in terms of ownership, the chain of record custody does not necessarily begin with a Central Colonial Office in Copenhagen but possibly with a small record-creating function in St. Thomas, St. Croix, or St. John.”<sup>121</sup> Employing the enriched understanding of conceptual provenance supported by Cook and Nesmith and echoing the importance of ambient context advocated by Hurley, Bastian contends, therefore, that, “all layers of society are participants in the making of records, and the entire community is the larger provenance of the records.”<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., pp. 82-83.

## Communities of Memory

The acceptance of a mono-hierarchical definition of provenance by archivists in the Western tradition has resulted in the privileging of records creators, their contexts, world views and value systems over those of their co-creators, or more broadly, as defined by Bastian, their communities of memory. Leading Dutch archivist Eric Ketelaar has argued that to be a ‘community of memory’ is to share a common past that is “not merely genealogical or traditional, something which you can take or leave. It is more: a moral imperative for one’s belonging to a community. The common past, sustained through time into the present, is what gives continuity, cohesion and coherence to a community. To be a community, a family, a religious community, a profession involves an embeddedness in its past and, consequently, in the memory texts through which that past is mediated.”<sup>123</sup> Based on Bastian’s analysis of the experiences of the Virgin Islanders, Ketelaar argues that colonial societies are also communities of memory.<sup>124</sup> Although, according to the traditional definition of record creator, the records of the Virgin Islands were created by the colonial government, Ketelaar asserts that when considered within its societal context, “colonial archiving ‘shaped’ local communities in the colonizer’s taxonomies while these communities asserted their identity and agency in response to the authority of colonial rule. This reciprocal ‘production’ and ‘consumption’ ... of the colonial narrative of history and identity entail that former colonizers and former colonized are a community of records, sharing a joint archival heritage.”<sup>125</sup> Based on these arguments, Ketelaar also reasons that a similar community of memory exists

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<sup>123</sup> Eric Ketelaar, “Sharing: Collected Memories in Communities of Records,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 33 no. 1 (May 2005), p. 55.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.



between other mutually associated groups such as indigenous and immigrant Australians.<sup>126</sup>

If the concept of communities of memory is to be fully realized and put into practice, much work still needs to be done at the conceptual core of Western archival theory to allow for the representation of multiple record-keeping realities that encompass, or at the least accommodate, the differing and temporally-bound world views of all those involved in the activities that a given set of records document.<sup>127</sup> While there has been increasing sensitivity to these issues and the accessibility of mainstream archives to indigenous communities in post-colonial countries such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, Sue McKemmish, Anne Gilliland-Swetland, and Eric Ketelaar argue that they have not yet significantly influenced archival practice.<sup>128</sup> The emergence of the concept of societal provenance has served to highlight the inadequacies of traditional archival provenance; however, “the challenge that different memory and evidence paradigms might pose to western archival science, and the implications of acknowledging communities as co-creators of records ... in relation to appraisal, selection, preservation and description of archives”<sup>129</sup> has not yet been fully realized. Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that the relationships that exist within the communities of memory of post-colonial societies are far from purely historical.

In Canada, large numbers of records documenting Aboriginal-government interactions continue to be created on a daily basis. As vestiges of Canada’s colonial past,

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Sue McKemmish, Anne Gilliland-Swetland and Eric Ketelaar, “‘Communities of Memory’: Pluralising Archival Research and Education Agendas,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 33 no.1 (May 2005), p. 152.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

government departments continue to play a central role in intimate aspects of the lives of Aboriginal people, whether they are Status or Non-Status, Inuit, or Métis. Based on the concept of societal provenance, and an acknowledgment of Aboriginal-government interactions as a community of memory, it is obvious that the provenance of such records extends far beyond their office of creation. Over the last forty years, land claims, status and identity issues, residential school claims, self-government initiatives, transfer of control of health services, and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples have created countless government records that are currently described, like all government archival records, as products of the functions of a particular department. The records of Aboriginal-fur trade relations, such as those of the Hudson's Bay Company, represent a similar community of memory, based on the governance structure and the intimate relationships formed between employees and communities, both during the HBC's dominance of Rupert's Land during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and its presence in Northern and Arctic communities in the twentieth century. By recognizing the societal provenance knowledge about these records that has been excluded because of a limited understanding of provenance, the archival profession could provide a meaningful way of including the voices and memories of Aboriginal people who have previously have little or no active power in Canadian archival institutions. But how can this be done? If we accept the concept that records are a creation of communities or society, then it logically follows that communities should be more active in their archiving. More succinctly, a participatory approach is necessary for uncovering the societal provenance of records related to Aboriginal people and for building a true community of memory where so much misunderstanding and distrust currently exists.

The following chapter will explore ways in which participatory approaches have been undertaken in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal contexts, in the archival and museum communities, as well as more broadly through the development of Web 2.0 technologies.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Current Examples of Participatory Approaches in Archives

The concept of participatory archiving has emerged as a response to a need felt by some archivists to create and maintain culturally representative archives. While much work has been done to ensure the inclusion of the records of marginalized and underrepresented communities in mainstream archives, the type of records collected and the manner in which they are arranged and described continue to be rooted in Western archival ontologies. In order to transform these practices, American educators Katie Shilton and Ramesh Srinivasan argue that the archival functions of appraisal, arrangement, and description need to be re-envisioned “to actively incorporate participation from traditionally marginalized communities ....”<sup>1</sup> This transformation requires archivists to understand that the conventional archival tenets surrounding record authorship, arrangement, description, and original order are culturally constructed and therefore, may be specific and unique to each community.<sup>2</sup> According to Shilton and Srinivasan, including creator communities in the appraisal process gives archivists “the chance to assess the value of community records as the community understands them” as well as “the opportunity to actively learn which community representations hold the most cultural value;” furthermore, there may also be culturally differentiated understandings of what constitutes a record among different communities.<sup>3</sup>

Shilton and Srinivasan argue that in order to create truly representative archives, community participation must continue into arrangement and description and must

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<sup>1</sup> Katie Shilton and Ramesh Srinivasan, “Participatory Appraisal and Arrangement for Multicultural Archival Collections,” *Archivaria* 63 (Spring 2007), p. 90.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

actively incorporate community knowledge into their structuring. Based on the concept and methods of participatory design, Shilton and Srinivasan have begun experimenting with their hypothesis “that arrangement and description can incorporate participatory definitions of provenance and order” through the creation of a cooperative communication hub and digital archive for the South Asian diasporic community in Los Angeles called the South Asian Web.<sup>4</sup>

The participatory design movement began in post-Second World War Scandinavia as a response to the desire among unions and shop-floor workers for industrial democracy in workplace decision-making and efforts to improve the quality of working life, as well as in the broader context of the democratization of Scandinavian society.<sup>5</sup> Participatory design evolved from this specific activity to more diverse workplaces and intellectual environments through such applications as: ‘design-by-doing;’ ‘mock-up environment’; future circles; future workshops; organizational games; cooperative prototyping; ethnographic field research; and democratic dialogue.<sup>6</sup> Scandinavian-inspired participatory design methods and projects have been undertaken in North America since the mid-1980s and hold as their guiding principles the goals of mutual learning between and among designers and users and emphasize change and development of people, organizations, and practices occurring in changing socio-historical contexts.<sup>7</sup>

At the end of the twentieth century, the ability and power to create, broadcast, and publish information and knowledge to be disseminated among the general public was

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>5</sup> Judith Gregory, “Scandinavian Approaches to Participatory Design,” *International Journal of Engineering Education* 19 no.1 (2003), p. 64.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

held by a very small percentage of society. The technological changes in the accessibility of production tools and distribution media at the beginning of the twenty-first century, coupled with the emergence of affordable personal computers and Internet access has led to social, cultural, economic, and political changes in the ways people communicate.<sup>8</sup> Our society is currently immersed in a culture of digital participation. Collaborative and self-publishing sites such as Wikipedia and YouTube have given society at large the opportunity to present information and knowledge in a public form that had previously only been available to academics and professionals. Social networking sites such as MySpace, LiveJournal, and Facebook have served to further solidify the democratization of digital space. As authors Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams state, today's World Wide Web "is principally about participating rather than about passively receiving information."<sup>9</sup> Such participation has manifested itself in a set of technologies, practices, and skills known as participatory media. Participatory media includes media such as "blogs, wikis, RSS, tagging and social bookmarking, music-photo-video sharing, mashups, podcasts, video comments and videoblogs."<sup>10</sup>

While many archivists have begun to experiment with participatory media and are enthusiastic about the exciting possibilities that these technologies hold for the future of the profession, it is important to note that a participatory approach to archiving requires archivists to adopt participation as an archival concept, not simply as a tool for the attainment of other archival functions. Nevertheless, participatory media provides the archival profession with a universally accessible platform from which to begin to

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<sup>8</sup> *Participatory Media Literacy*. Available at: <http://www.socialtext.net/medialiteracy/index.cgi> (Accessed 28 June 2009).

<sup>9</sup> Don Tapscott and Anthony D. Williams, *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything* (New York: Portfolio, 2006), p. 37.

<sup>10</sup> *Participatory Media Literacy*.

understand the necessity of participation from Aboriginal communities in the archival process, regardless of the media used.

### **Participatory Projects in Archives**

Over the last decade archivists worldwide have begun to embrace collaborative and participatory processes in a variety of ways, both online and in the real world. One of the first and most common applications of public participation adopted by archival institutions has been a ‘feedback/comments’ section on the institution’s website. While client feedback forums have been in place in the form of comment boxes in reference rooms for many years, online versions provide the potential opportunity for greater volumes of researchers, from any geographical location to share their opinions about the archives.<sup>11</sup> A feature of the online comment sections that is distinct from their paper counterparts has been the request from archival institutions, not only for client service feedback, but also for client contributions to the archives’ knowledge. The Alaska State Library, Fairfield University in Connecticut and the Transcona Historical Museum in Winnipeg, among many others, have established ‘Mystery Photo’ sections on their websites or blogs that actively encourage researchers to help provide additional context for photographs in their collections that the institutions know very little about.<sup>12</sup> The Archives of Manitoba also invites online researchers to comment on its *Rearview*

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<sup>11</sup> In 2008, the Archives of Ontario commissioned Ipsos Reid to create an online customer satisfaction survey (Arcan-L list serv. Subject: [Arcan-l] The Archives of Ontario would like to hear from you! / Les Archives publiques de l'Ontario veulent savoir ce que vous avez à dire!, Monday 11 August 2008).

<sup>12</sup> Alaska Historical Collection’s Mystery Photos <http://alaskastatelibrary.blogspot.com/> (Accessed 21 November 2009); “theDARcroom bringing Fairfield University history to light” Digital Archives at DiMenna-Nyselius Library <http://digital.fairfield.edu/mystery.html> (Accessed 21 November 2009); Transcona Historical Museum Mystery Photos <http://www.transconamuseum.mb.ca/mystery-photos.htm> (Accessed 21 November 2009).

*Manitoba* exhibits through its feedback section, which often includes personal reminiscences from researchers connected to the individuals or events featured in the exhibits.<sup>13</sup> Taking this concept a step further, in January 2008, the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress developed a Flickr site that allows the public to tag, comment on, and help identify over 4,000 photographs of American life during the Great Depression and the Second World War as well as news photographs from the early 1900s.<sup>14</sup> Ten months after the pilot project began there had been over 10 million views of the photographs on the Flickr site and more than 500 archival photographs from the Library of Congress collection had been enhanced with new information provided by the Flickr community.<sup>15</sup> Additional context supplied by Flickr members have included the identification of precise locations of photographs, events, persons, dates, and in some cases, comments from individuals personally connected to the subject matter of the photographs.<sup>16</sup>

Several other archives have established Flickr sites to promote their collections and broaden their user base, but only a handful have used this technology to actively encourage participatory archiving.<sup>17</sup> Aside from providing an online ordering service and

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<sup>13</sup> Archives of Manitoba, *Rearview Manitoba: Our Heritage is Closer than it Appears* <http://www.gov.mb.ca/rearview/index.html> (Accessed 30 November 2009).

<sup>14</sup> Library of Congress Photos on Flickr. [http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/flickr\\_pilot.html](http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/flickr_pilot.html) (Accessed 30 November 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Michelle Springer, Beth Dulabahn, Phil Michel, Barbara Natanson, David Reser, David Woodward, and Helena Zinkham. "For the Common Good: The Library of Congress Flickr Pilot Project Report Summary." 30 October 2008. pp. 4-5. [http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/flickr\\_report\\_final\\_summary.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/flickr_report_final_summary.pdf) (Accessed 30 November 2009).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> See *ArchivesNext* <http://www.archivesnext.com/> by Kate Theimer for a list of national, state or provincial, local and university archives that have established Flickr sites, including: Library and Archives Canada; Archives New Zealand; The National Archives (UK); The National Archives of Australia; New York State Archives; Public Record Office Victoria; Duke University Archives; Whitby Archives; and the University of Pittsburgh to name just a few (Accessed 30 November 2009).



the ability to email a “postcard” of a photograph from their database, The Notman Photographic Archives at McCord Museum in Montreal invites researchers to comment on and tag the photographs in the collection.<sup>18</sup> This function is also available for the textual records that have been digitized from McCord Museum’s collection. Similarly, the Keweenaw Digital Archives at the Michigan Technological University Archives “encourages visitors to add their own comments and information to the photographs in the archives, and to create their own personal ‘web album’ of images of particular subjects or places” related to Michigan’s historic copper mining district.<sup>19</sup> The Slippery Rock University Archives has also used their Flickr site in an appeal to the general public to help provide additional context to the George T. Miller collection.<sup>20</sup>

Elizabeth Yakel, Seth Shaw, and Polly Reynolds of the University of Michigan have also explored the viability of incorporating social navigation features in online finding aids.<sup>21</sup> Working with the Polar Bear Expedition records of the American intervention in Northern Russia of 1918-1919, which are contained in over 60 separate collections, Yakel, Shaw, and Reynolds experimented with the use of four different mechanisms for encouraging participation in the description, contextualization, and use of the records online. They have implemented a discussion-based commenting system through which researchers may contribute knowledge and interact with other researchers,

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<sup>18</sup> McCord Museum, Collections – Search page <http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/en/keys/collections/> (Accessed 7 December 2009).

<sup>19</sup> Michigan Technological University, Keweenaw Digital Archives – Michigan’s Copper Country in Photographs <http://digarch.lib.mtu.edu/> (Accessed 7 December 2009).

<sup>20</sup> Slippery Rock University, SRU Archives – a set on Flickr <http://www.flickr.com/photos/21755494@N04/sets/72157603743008296/> (Accessed 7 December 2009).

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth Yakel, Seth Shaw, and Polly Reynolds, “Creating the Next Generation of Archival Finding Aids,” *D-Lib Magazine* 13 no.5/6 (May/June 2007). <http://www.dlib.org/dlib/may07/yakel/05yakel.html> (Accessed 30 November 2009).

as well as a collaborative filtering function through which automatic predictions are generated about the interests a user might have by collecting usage information from all site visitors. They have also employed a bookmarking feature to enable easy access to previously viewed descriptions, and a visitor awareness function, through which registered researchers can see who is also logged on to the site, much like the current instant messaging and social networking sites.

Calls for participation from archival institutions to the public at large have been not only for pre-existing collections, but also for aid in the development of new archives. In 2007, the British Library announced the creation of the first ever national email archive. The “Email Britain” campaign “asks the British public to make email history by forwarding a memorable or significant email from their sent mail or inbox, for inclusion in a digital archive that will be stored at the British Library for future generations.”<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the South Australian Library and Archives has initiated a web project entitled *South Australian Memory*, through which South Australians can add their own memories of specific themes and topics related to their region’s history by uploading their personal stories and images onto the site.<sup>23</sup> In May 2007 The National Archives (UK) officially launched the wiki “Your Archives”. This initiative provides researchers the opportunity to share their knowledge of archival sources held by the National Archives and by other archives throughout the United Kingdom by editing pre-existing pages and submitting articles about archival records, as well as by expanding and updating the research guides

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<sup>22</sup> The British Library, “First ever national email archive to be created” London. 3 May 2007 <http://www.bl.uk/news/2007/pressrelease20070503.html> (Accessed 8 June 2007).

<sup>23</sup> SA Memory South Australia: past and present, for the future. “Your story” <http://www.samemory.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=374> (Accessed 30 November 2009).

created by the National Archives.<sup>24</sup> The Public Record Office Victoria (PROV) in Australia has also developed a wiki as a means of encouraging researchers to contribute their knowledge of and research into selected collections held by PROV in order to enrich the information that they can make available to the public.<sup>25</sup>

### **Aboriginal-specific Participatory Projects in Archives**

Over the last fifteen years, many archival institutions have made great improvements to the reference guides and access tools for records related to Aboriginal people held in their institutions.<sup>26</sup> As a result, Aboriginal people have been able to more easily access records related to genealogy, land claims, residential schools, health-related issues and their interactions with governments in general. Despite these improvements in services, there has been very little attempt made by archival institutions to draw upon the knowledge of Aboriginal people to further enhance the contextual knowledge of the records. There have, however, been a few key projects that have reached out to Aboriginal communities for this type of knowledge and in turn provide concrete examples of the validity and power of the participatory archiving approach.

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<sup>24</sup> The National Archives, “‘Your Archives’ now open for contributions” in News from the National Archives, 14 May 2007. <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/news/stories/159.htm?homepage=news> (Accessed 1 January 2010).

<sup>25</sup> Public Record Office Victoria, PROV Wiki. [http://wiki.prov.vic.gov.au/index.php/PROV\\_Wiki\\_-\\_Home](http://wiki.prov.vic.gov.au/index.php/PROV_Wiki_-_Home) (Accessed 1 January 2010).

<sup>26</sup> The 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) greatly augmented academic study of Aboriginal issues – political, cultural, social and economic, and in turn resulted in greater usage of archival records related to Aboriginal people, most notably, Record Group 10, the Records of the Department of Indian Affairs at LAC. The article “Indian legacy, Aboriginal future,” (*The Archivist* 112 pp. 2-6) by then Director of Records Disposition at LAC (then PAC) Terry Cook provides an excellent example of the contemporary significance of the records related to the issues brought to light through the RCAP. One of the most notable research guides developed for records related to Aboriginal people is Bill Russell, *Indian Affairs Records at the National Archives of Canada: A source for genealogical research* (Toronto, 1998).

In 2001, a partnership was established between Library and Archives Canada (LAC), Nunavut Sivuniksavut and the Nunavut Department of Culture, Languages, Elders and Youth which resulted in the creation of *Project Naming*. The goal of the project is the identification of Inuit in photographic collections at LAC that were not identified when the photographs were taken and had remained unrecorded because the photographs were located far from Inuit communities and largely inaccessible to them. *Project Naming* was first proposed by Murray Angus, an instructor at the Nunavut Sivuniksavut Training Program, who for many years had been bringing Inuit students from his program to LAC to search for photographs from their communities. Angus proposed the project “as a way to give people from Nunavut access to the photographic collections of Inuit held at LAC, to foster dialogue between Nunavut youth and Elders, and to reclaim these ‘lost’ names.”<sup>27</sup>

The project began with the digitization of 500 photographs taken by Richard Harrington in the 1940s and 1950s of individuals from Igloolik, Kugluktuk, Taloyoak and Padlei.<sup>28</sup> Inuit youth, equipped with laptops containing digital images of the photographs, visited Inuit elders in their communities and during the first phase of the project (2001-2004) were able to successfully identify three quarters of the people in the photographs. “Many elders were able to identify their parents, other family and community members, and in some cases even themselves.”<sup>29</sup> Identification of individuals in the photographs was undertaken both in a one-on-one setting, as well as in large group settings held in public places where elders and other community members would shout out the names of

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<sup>27</sup> Library and Archives Canada, *Project Naming* “Introduction: The story behind Project Naming” <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/inuit/020018-1010-e.html> (Accessed 2 January 2010).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

people they recognized. During the second phase of the project, hundreds of additional photographs ranging in date from the early 1900s to the mid-1970s from both public and private collections held at LAC were digitized and sent to the communities. Selection of photographs to be digitized was based on a variety of factors, including preservation of the original collection, quality of the images, as well as the amount of context provided in the photographer's notes.<sup>30</sup> Photographs that were considered to be an invasion of personal privacy or degrading to the individuals photographed were not digitized or made part of the project.<sup>31</sup> An extensive website has also been developed to both showcase and further support the project. The website contains sections devoted to information on the Inuktitut language, contextual information on the photographic collections used in the project, as well as a "voices from Nunavut" section which includes written and audio material that provides personal accounts by Nunavut Elders and youth about the project. The website also includes a "the naming continues" section, which invites visitors to the website to aid in the identification of photographs still requiring additional context.

David A. Smith, Indigenous Studies Librarian from the University of Saskatchewan refers to the work done through *Project Naming* and other similar projects as a system of visual repatriation. Visual repatriation has been defined as "the use of photography to return images of ancestors, historical moments and material heritage to

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<sup>30</sup> David A. Smith, "From Nunavut to Micronesia: Feedback and Description, Visual Repatriation and Online Photographs of Indigenous Peoples" *Partnership: the Canadian Journal of Library and Information Practice and Research* 3 no.1 (2008).  
<http://journal.lib.uoguelph.ca/index.php/perj/article/viewArticle/330/792> (Accessed 3 January 2010).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

source communities."<sup>32</sup> While defining the work undertaken by *Project Naming* as visual repatriation is not incorrect, it fails to account for the entire purpose and holistic outcomes of the project, namely the further enhancement of the contextual knowledge and societal provenance of the photographs through what is better described as participatory archiving. The additional layers of the project are nonetheless acknowledged by Smith, as he writes,

Visual repatriation provides Elders and other Nunavut people with the opportunity to view photos (held in Ottawa) of their ancestors, relatives and themselves online that most would otherwise never see. The LAC, meanwhile, relies on information provided by these same Elders through the feedback system to vastly improve descriptions of their holdings.<sup>33</sup>

In 1999, a travelling exhibit of archival photographs entitled *Lost Identities – A Journey of Rediscovery: Historical Photographs of Aboriginal Peoples from Southern Alberta* was launched as a collaborative project of Alberta Community Development (including Historic Sites Services, Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre and the Provincial Archives of Alberta) and Museums Alberta. The *Lost Identities* exhibit “travelled to the Aboriginal communities where the photographs were taken and asked the people to find the voices and the stories buried in the pictures.”<sup>34</sup> It is now on permanent exhibit at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre in Alberta. The exhibit consists of unidentified photographs taken in the Treaty 7 region from the 1870s to the 1950s. Alongside the photographs are tracings of the images upon which visitors

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. Smith credits Laura Peers and Allison K. Brown with the definition of visual repatriation, found on the back cover of their book, *Museums and Source Communities: A Routledge Reader* (London, 2003).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre, *Lost Identities* <http://www.head-smashed-in.com/identity.html> (Accessed 3 January 2010).

are invited to write the names of people that they are able to identify.<sup>35</sup> The primary aim of the exhibit is the identification of people in the photographs; however, many visitors have also shared their biographical and historical knowledge related to the photographs.<sup>36</sup> *Lost Identities* has “prompted a range of educational activities within Native and non-Native communities and has encouraged visitors to talk and think about the past and how it has been visually represented.”<sup>37</sup>

Shirley Bruised Head, member of the Piikani Nation, Education Officer at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Interpretive Centre, and member of the *Lost Identities* project team is extremely critical of the implied messages embedded in published, unidentified images of Native people:

I really didn't like the idea that when I opened a book and I saw a picture of a Native person, they would either have 'Indian' [or] 'Native.' It was very general; there was *no* identification ... When I look at that and I think of these people in these photographs, they're objects. And that's how Native people have been treated. They're objects. You objectify people and you can do anything you want with them. (Bruised Head 28 November 2001).<sup>38</sup>

As she has observed through her work with the *Lost Identities* project “putting names to faces aids the recovery of a Native history and helps to restore the dignity of those who have been photographed” but as Alison K. Brown and Laura Peers explain, “it is also part of a much wider process which contributes to the continuity of a Native past in the present using names as a focus.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Alison K. Brown and Laura Peers with members of the Kainai Nation, *Pictures bring us messages: Photographs and Histories from the Kainai Nation* (Toronto: 2006), p. 107.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

Brown and Peers of the Pitt River Museum at Oxford University have also undertaken a participatory approach to the identification of a select group of photographs held in the Photograph and Manuscript Collection of the Pitt River Museum. Brown and Peers worked together with members of the Kainai First Nation in southern Alberta to identify 33 photographs of Kainai people taken by anthropologist Beatrice Blackwood on a research trip to North America between 1924 and 1927.<sup>40</sup> While their primary focus was anthropological in nature – a desire to understand how Kainai people viewed the content of the images, they also hope to learn about the potential of the photographs “as community-based historical documents, which might be used to contribute to the cross-cultural and inter-generational transmission of history.”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, throughout the project, Brown and Peers reminded the Kainai participants that the intended audience for the manuscript that would be written based on their project was museum and archival professionals and that “the purpose of the book was to encourage institutions to consult with First Nations peoples about the meanings and importance of historic materials.”<sup>42</sup> While this project resulted in the identification of the individuals in the photographs, thus providing the Pitt River Museum with much desired additional contextual information about its records, the project has also allowed the Kainai First Nation to obtain greater understanding of the community’s collective and individual family histories -- a knowledge of the past that younger generations have been ‘outsiders’ to, as a result of the former inaccessibility of these archival records to the community.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 120.



In their book *Pictures bring us messages*, Brown and Peers reflect on their experiences in undertaking a participatory approach to this anthropological work:

By adopting a collaborative, community-based methodology in which Kainai worked with us to shape the research questions and process, advised us on cultural protocol, and reviewed research findings at every step of the way, we have been able to work in a manner which serves both scholarly and community needs. We document this process as part of this book, to serve as a guide for other researchers contemplating similar projects, and we heartily endorse such participatory approaches.<sup>44</sup>

All of the Aboriginal-specific participatory projects discussed thus far have focused solely on archival photographs as source material. While visual materials such as still images are especially appealing both on a practical level (visual recognition of facial features, places and events is universal, and can transcend language barriers) and an emotional one (the recognition of family members and friends and the desire to view images to unearth and pass on memories, stories, and knowledge to younger generations among the participants), participatory approaches can be employed for all media of archival records, including textual records.

In late 2003, researchers from the School of Information Management Systems at Monash University, Public Record Office Victoria (PROV), the Australian Society of Archivists Indigenous Issues Special Interest Group, Victorian Koorie Records Taskforce, and the Koorie Heritage Trust began work on a project entitled *Trust and Technology: Building archival systems for Indigenous oral memory*.<sup>45</sup> The *Trust and Technology* project aimed to find ways to include, within archives, Indigenous

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Lynette Russell, "Indigenous Records and Archives: Mutual Obligations and Building Trust." *Archives and Manuscripts* 34 no. 1 (May 2006), p. 34.

knowledge, narratives, and records, in a culturally appropriate manner.<sup>46</sup> The project did not attempt to collect Indigenous knowledge, but instead asked Koorie people (a general term for Australian Indigenous people from Victoria and the southern part of New South Wales, meaning ‘our people,’ ‘man,’ or ‘person’) how and if they would like their material to be collected, represented, accessed, and delivered through established archival services.<sup>47</sup>

The final report of the project was released in 2009 and included a series of outcomes, based on the project’s research, that identify the directions and actions that Koorie communities, the archives sector, and other relevant parties should pursue towards implementation.<sup>48</sup> The first outcome calls for the recognition that all forms of Koorie knowledge are highly valued by Koorie communities and that the preferencing of Western expressions of memory and evidence over Koorie ones must be overcome. The second and third outcomes address the issues of Koorie rights and new approaches to these rights and responsibilities. The final report states that if it is accepted that archives contain Koorie knowledge, then the claims of Koorie people that arise from the part that archival records have played in their dispossession and in the recovery of their identity must be recognized.<sup>49</sup> The fourth outcome calls for the development of a holistic, community-based approach to Koorie archives that would bring together, either physically or virtually, all archives of a community, regardless of their source or form and would model community perspectives on the interconnectedness of Western and

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Monash University, *Koorie Archiving: Trust and Technology – Final Report* “Summary of Outcomes” (2009) <http://www.infotech.monash.edu.au/research/centres/cosi/projects/trust/final-report/2-summary.html> (Accessed 3 January 2010).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

Indigenous knowledge traditions. Other outcomes of the report include the call for university-based researchers to overhaul research methods which position Indigenous (and other) communities as the ‘subjects’ of research and to pursue a participatory model of community-based research, as well as an overhaul of professional archival education and ongoing professional development to reflect the new directions proposed in the report.

The most relevant outcome of the *Trust and Technology* project for this study is the section entitled “Setting the Record Straight.” According to Lynette Russell, Chair in Australian Indigenous Studies at Monash University and a Chief Investigator for the *Trust and Technology* project, “a constant theme within the interviews [was] the participant’s request to be able to add their own stories and versions of other stories to the records held in public archives and other institutions.”<sup>50</sup> As a means of actualizing this request, the *Trust and Technology* final report recommends the development of a Koorie Annotation System (KAS), which as proposed would be a web-based system that is separate but linked to the description system(s) that house the archival records that would be available for annotation (the records would need to be available in digital format).<sup>51</sup> According to the *Trust and Technology* project final report, the Koorie Annotation System “would enable Koorie people to comment upon the inaccuracies or limitations of institutional records, to contribute family narratives which expand upon or give context to institutional records and to present their version of events alongside the official one.”<sup>52</sup> A

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<sup>50</sup> Russell, p. 41.

<sup>51</sup> Monash University, *Koorie Archiving: Trust and Technology – Final Report* “Outcome 5: Setting the Record Straight” (2009) <http://www.infotech.monash.edu.au/research/centres/cosi/projects/trust/final-report/2-summary.html> (Accessed 3 January 2010).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

Koorie Annotation System would allow communities to comment on both archival records and the records entered into the KAS by Koorie people and all information would be presented in the form of web pages and would support the use of images, sound, video and written text, to allow the widest possible means of expression.<sup>53</sup> A primary focus of the Koorie Annotation System is the importance of control of the collection of information included in the system to be managed by the Koorie community and that the system be housed, maintained, and cared for by an organization that the community trusts.<sup>54</sup> It is important to note that a Koorie Annotation System is not primarily intended to be available to the general public, nor is it advised that it “be run by a cultural institution to document ‘its’ records”; however, the Trust and Technology project team argues that it could also be used for either of these purposes.<sup>55</sup> While the Trust and Technology project team believes in the viability of the development of a Koorie Annotation System, the final report does highlight important issues that will need to be addressed in order for the system to be realized including: ownership of intellectual property in the annotations; management of the complex rights for the creation of and access to annotations; the extent of moderation and quality control within the system; and the sustainability and management of the system itself.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Monash University, *Trust and Technology Project, Stage 3, “Koorie Annotation System Specification”* (20 March 2008), p. 4.

<http://www.infotech.monash.edu.au/research/centres/cosi/projects/trust/final-report/kas-specification-20080327.pdf> (Accessed 3 January 2010).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Monash University, *Koorie Archiving: Trust and Technology – Final Report* “Outcome 5: Setting the Record Straight” (2009)

<http://www.infotech.monash.edu.au/research/centres/cosi/projects/trust/final-report/2-summary.html> (Accessed 3 January 2010).

In April 2006, a group of nineteen Native American and non-Native American archivists, librarians, museum curators, historians and anthropologists met at Northern Arizona University to establish the *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials*.<sup>57</sup> The *Protocols* established by this group, which included representatives from fifteen Native American, First Nation, and Aboriginal communities, “identify best professional practices for culturally responsive care and use of American Indian archival materials held by non-tribal organizations.”<sup>58</sup> These best practices address the issues of: the importance of consultation with and concurrence of tribal communities in decisions and policies; the need to recognize and provide special treatment for culturally sensitive materials; rethinking public accessibility and use of some materials; the role of intellectual and cultural property rights; the need to consider copying, sharing, and/or repatriation of certain materials; the recognition of community-based research protocols and contracts; reciprocal education and training; and the need to raise awareness of these issues within the profession.<sup>59</sup> According to the *Protocols* document, “the proposed standards and goals articulated ... are meant to inspire and to foster mutual respect and reciprocity” and “institutions and communities are encouraged to adopt and adapt the culturally responsive recommendations to suit local needs.”<sup>60</sup> The *Protocols* are meant to be a work-in-progress document, subject to revisions and enhancement, as necessary.<sup>61</sup>

While this process and its resulting best practices are considered to be North American in scope, only one Canadian archivist is listed as a contributor, and the

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<sup>57</sup> Protocols for Native American Archival Materials, “The Protocols - Introduction,” (2007) <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/protocols.html> (Accessed 25 April 2010).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

protocols themselves are overwhelmingly American in content (the use of the terms ‘Native American,’ ‘American Indian,’ and ‘American Indian tribes’) and context (the reference to American legislation such as the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 and other American library and archives guidelines). Despite the current paucity of Canadian contributors and content, the *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials* has great potential as a reference point for interactions between the archival profession and Aboriginal communities, and based on the encouragement from the contributors for future revisions and enhancement, there is definite possibility for broader Canadian participation.

To date, the type of consultation and outreach to Aboriginal communities and the creation of recommendations undertaken by the *Trust and Technology* project and the *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials* have not been attempted in the Canadian archival scene. As the above research has shown, consultation and participation have been undertaken in Canada on an individual project basis; however, the question must be asked -- is such an ad hoc approach to participatory archiving the best way for the archival profession in Canada to continue to operate or should formalized frameworks and strategies be implemented? Consideration of the experiences of the Canadian museum profession in the implementation of such processes may help shed light on this question.

### ***The Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples and Its Relevance to the Canadian Archival Profession***

Published in 1992, the *Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples* was the result of several years of dialogue between members of the Canadian museums and First

Nations communities. The genesis for the creation of the Task Force was the controversy surrounding *The Spirit Sings: Artistic Traditions of Canada's First Peoples* exhibition presented by the Ethnology Department of the Glenbow Museum held in conjunction with the Olympic Arts Festival at the 1988 Winter Olympic Games in Calgary. The exhibition included 650 objects from approximately ninety national and international collections and had a budgetary cost of \$2.6 million dollars, \$1.1 million of which was donated by Shell Canada Limited.<sup>62</sup> In 1986, the Lubicon Lake Cree First Nation in northern Alberta announced a planned boycott of the 1988 Winter Olympics to draw attention to their unsettled land claim, and soon after made *The Spirit Sings* exhibit the focus of their boycott.<sup>63</sup> Later that year, Lubicon representatives met with the curatorial staff of the exhibition and “registered no objection to the content of the exhibition but only to its sponsorship and association with the Calgary Olympics.”<sup>64</sup> Despite the neutral stance taken by the Lubicon regarding the content of the exhibition, their politically charged boycott led several institutions to reverse their decision to participate in *The Spirit Sings*; moreover, many Aboriginal leaders from across the country rallied behind the Lubicon and more generally the boycott led to a broad questioning of the practices of Canadian museums in regard to Native artifacts and the rights of Aboriginal peoples to their material and cultural heritage.<sup>65</sup>

In the summer of 1988, *The Spirit Sings* exhibition moved to Ottawa where it was on display for five months at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. When it was

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<sup>62</sup> Julia D. Harrison, “Completing a Circle: The Spirit Sings,” in *Anthropology, public policy and native peoples in Canada*, eds. Noel Dyck and James B. Waldram. (Montreal and Kingston, 1993). pp. 337-38.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 338.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

announced that the exhibit would be moving to Ottawa, the Assembly of First Nations requested a conference with members of the Canadian museum community to discuss the issues that had arisen through the exhibit and subsequent boycott.<sup>66</sup>

The “Preserving Our Heritage” conference took place in November 1988, with numerous Aboriginal individuals and organizations in attendance, and addressed the issues of repatriation of artifacts, strategies for working together, the role of elders, access of Native peoples to collections, the role and place for contemporary Native art, as well as the issues of sponsorship and funding.<sup>67</sup> The results of this conference led to the creation of the *Task Force on Museums and First Peoples*, which held as its guiding principle the intention “to develop an ethical framework and strategies for Aboriginal Nations to represent their history and culture in *concert with cultural institutions*.”<sup>68</sup>

The three major issues identified by the *Task Force* were: increased involvement of Aboriginal peoples in the interpretation of their culture and history by cultural institutions; improved access to museum collections by Aboriginal peoples; and, the repatriation of artifacts and human remains.<sup>69</sup> Discussions focused on these three issues and resulted in a call to museums and First Peoples to work together to correct the inequities that characterized their relationships in the past and to develop an equal partnership that involves mutual appreciation of the conceptual knowledge and approaches characteristic of First Peoples as well as the empirical knowledge and approaches of academically-trained workers. The principles also call on First Peoples and

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 351.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Museums Association, “Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships Between Museums and First Peoples” 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (Winnipeg, 1994) 1. Mission Statement.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 1.



museums to recognize mutual interests in the cultural materials and knowledge of the past, along with the contemporary existence of First Peoples, accept the philosophy of co-management and co-responsibility as the ethical basis for principles and procedures pertaining to collections related to Aboriginal cultures contained in museums, and, as an expression of this, agreement that appropriate representatives of Aboriginal peoples will be involved as equal partners in any museum exhibition, program, or project dealing with Aboriginal heritage, history, or culture. These principles also recognize the commonality of interest in the richness, variety, and validity of Aboriginal heritage, history and culture, and the need for First Peoples to be fully involved in the development of policies and funding programs related to Aboriginal heritage.<sup>70</sup>

Aside from the development of the above principles, The *Task Force* report also made several recommendations on the issue of training, for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal individuals. The report recommended that Canadian museum community and First Nations associations should promote the development of professional and technical training initiatives for Aboriginal people according to community needs and in a culturally appropriate manner and that priority should be given to funding for training programs run by Aboriginal-controlled educational institutions and cultural centres.<sup>71</sup> The report also states that non-Aboriginal museum professionals should be trained in Aboriginal cultural knowledge and approaches relevant to their profession, and that museums and other cultural institutions should recognize the legitimate credentials of certain individuals and groups within Aboriginal communities who possess knowledge of

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

the particular culture.<sup>72</sup> Overall, the Task Force report achieves a good balance between the obvious need to increase the representation and participation of Aboriginal peoples in the museum environment, with a recognition of and respect for the responsibilities of museums to the objects in their holdings, other stakeholders, and the principles of their profession.

While the recommendations of the Task Force have been welcomed by both museum representatives and Aboriginal communities, progress towards fulfillment of the principles laid out in the report has been slow. This is not to say that the findings of the Task Force have been unsuccessful. Nevertheless, as Michael M. Ames, professor of anthropology and director of the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia points out, there are structural factors within museum organization that inhibit significant change. Ames argues that “museums are complex social organizations composed of intertwined layers of routines, obligations, schedule, and competing interests that frequently inhibit prompt or consistent responses to new initiatives.”<sup>73</sup> This statement could easily also be applied to archival institutions, and while the Task Force proceedings and recommendations are specifically addressed to the museum community, any archival institution in possession of records related to Aboriginal peoples could find relevance to their work and responsibilities in this document.

The archives at the UBC Museum of Anthropology (MOA) is one such archival institution for which the *Task Force* report carries significant importance. In line with the guidelines established by the *Task Force* report and the MOA’s own policy

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., pp. 9-10.

<sup>73</sup> Michael M. Ames, “Are Changing Representations of First Peoples Challenging the Curatorial Prerogative?” in *The Changing Presentation of the American Indian: Museums and Native Cultures*, National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution (Washington, D.C. and New York, 2000), p. 85.

document, which states that the Museum is “committed to respecting the values and spiritual beliefs of the cultures represented in its collections” and that it “recognizes that these objects have a non-material side embodying cultural rights, values, knowledge, and ideas which are not owned or possessed by the museum, but are retained by the originating communities,” the MOA archives provides internship opportunities for members of indigenous communities and in some cases restricts culturally sensitive images.<sup>74</sup> As Krisztina Laszlo, archivist for the MOA explains, the internship opportunities are mutually beneficial, in that aside from providing meaningful professional training for Aboriginal students, they provide an opportunity for the museum and Aboriginal communities to build trustful and respectful relationships with one another, which are “essential to help the archives formulate policies concerning its holdings and to let individual communities know what records are held that pertain to them.”<sup>75</sup> The restriction of culturally sensitive records is much more problematic from the perspective of the archival profession. As Laszlo points out, “restricting culturally sensitive images can appear contrary to the proviso of the Association of Canadian Archivists’ Code of Ethics that states that archivists should “encourage and promote the greatest possible use of the records in their care, giving due attention to personal privacy and confidentiality, and the preservation of records.”<sup>76</sup> However, Laszlo argues that culturally sensitive material that has important sacred and ritual properties “should be regarded on equal footing with ‘personal privacy’ and ‘confidentiality’” and explains that Aboriginal-related records should not be restricted based on outdated forms of ethnic or

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<sup>74</sup> Krisztina Laszlo, “Ethnographic Archival Records and Cultural Property,” *Archivaria* 61 (Spring 2006), pp. 304-306.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 306.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 305. Association of Canadian Archivists, *Code of Ethics*, available at: <http://archivists.ca/about/ethics.aspx>. (Accessed 25 April 2010).

racial representation.<sup>77</sup> While the MOA has made good progress in formulating ways to better support the principles of the *Task Force on Museums and First Peoples*, Laszlo states that there is much work still to be done to develop guidelines for handling ethnographic archival records in regard to the moral and ethical responsibilities the archives has to all its clients. Importantly though, Laszlo insists that archives “need to be pro-active and establish contacts with communities, and let them know that we hold records that pertain to them. We should not wait for them to come to us.”<sup>78</sup>

The next chapter further explores the viability of participatory archiving approaches for archives, through an analysis of questionnaire findings and the possibilities and potential challenges to participatory archiving processes. The third chapter will also highlight particular record series and events which should be considered first priority for participatory archiving projects. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the state of Aboriginal archival education and employment in Canada, as it relates to long-term participation in the archival profession.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 307.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Possibilities and Challenges for Participatory Archiving**

An exploration of the viability of a participatory approach to uncovering the societal provenance of records related to Aboriginal peoples requires not only discussions of its theoretical viability and demonstration of its current use within the profession, but also requires an attempt to solicit the opinions of the individuals and professions that would be directly involved in and affected by its adoption as a fundamental archival activity. In the fall of 2007, I appealed to a select group of individuals and professionals to respond to a short questionnaire (see Appendix A) in order to get a better sense of their opinions and perspectives on the possibilities and challenges of a participatory approach. This chapter will present the results of this questionnaire and make recommendations for records that should be considered top priority for participatory archiving projects.

### **Questionnaire Methodology**

The purpose of this questionnaire exercise was not to obtain quantitative results based on numbers and percentages related to each question and respondent, but instead to obtain a qualitative sense of the understanding of, reaction to, and sense of the viability of a participatory archiving approach within the target audience. The target audience of this exploratory study consisted of members of the archival profession, users of archival records related to Aboriginal people, and Aboriginal people with a connection to the archival community (Aboriginal archivists, researchers, historians etc.). This target audience was selected in an attempt to obtain the most relevant responses possible, as an understanding of the concept of participatory archiving requires at least a basic

familiarity with the general practices of the archival profession in order to recognize the fundamental shifts that external participation in archival functions would require. As many members of this target audience fall into more than one category of respondent (i.e. archivist, Aboriginal person, researcher), the decision was made to distribute the same questionnaire to all respondents. Basic definitions were supplied for archival terms to provide additional context for respondents outside of the archival profession and all respondents were encouraged to contact me if they had any questions or concerns regarding the questionnaire. All participation in the study was voluntary and the questionnaire was approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board of the University of Manitoba.

Two main approaches were undertaken to distribute the questionnaire to the target audience. I presented conference papers based on my thesis proposal at the University of Manitoba History Graduate Students' Fort Garry Lectures in May 2007, at the Association of Canadian Archivists Annual Conference held in Kingston in June 2007 and in a work-related setting for co-workers at the Archives of Manitoba in the winter of 2008. At the end of each of these presentations, I invited interested individuals to respond to the questionnaire. The other, more widespread method undertaken was the appeal via Canadian, American, Australian, and African archival list-servs for respondents. This was considered to be the best method of reaching the largest number of interested archivists, as the list-servs within the archival profession, both in Canada and internationally are read and contributed to by a significant portion of the profession. Through these sources, and through comments made by thesis proposal reviewers, I was also able to reach potential respondents by word of mouth and on an individual basis. I also sent emails to

several history and native studies departments at universities throughout Canada, focusing on institutions that had strong Aboriginal history and native studies departments.<sup>1</sup> At the end of my research period, I had received twenty responses. In total, I provided 46 individuals with copies of the questionnaire. Approximately two months after distributing the questionnaire, I sent a reminder email to those who had not yet replied, which provided me with a few more responses, but the majority of responses were received within a few weeks of each respondent having access to the questionnaire. While the number of respondents was lower than anticipated, I made the decision to not apply for an extension of the Research Ethics Board approval, as I felt additional time would not significantly increase the number of respondents. I consider the low number of respondents to be the result of the relatively passive nature of a voluntary mail/email questionnaire. Based on the low number of respondents, it is difficult to make generalizations or assumptions based on their identification or credentials; because of this, I decided to only include reference to the self-identification of participants in the footnotes to their comments. A chart outlining the self-identification and dates of response of participants is included as Appendix B.

### **Initial Questions**

Four of the twenty individuals who responded to the questionnaire identified themselves as archivists, one person self-identified as an Aboriginal person, and five as researchers (within the latter group four individuals were historians). The rest of the respondents identified with more than one category: one Aboriginal archivist; one

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<sup>1</sup> I sent emails to various individuals in the history and native studies departments of the following universities: University of Manitoba, University of Winnipeg, University College of the North, University of British Columbia, and the University of Saskatchewan.

Aboriginal archives assistant; two Aboriginal researchers; four archivist-researchers; and two respondents self-identified as all three categories.<sup>2</sup> Twelve respondents were Canadian, four were international respondents (one respondent from Africa, New Zealand, Australia and the United States, respectively) and the other four made no reference to their particular locale in their survey response.

All participants have used records about Aboriginal people. Thirteen respondents were satisfied with the service they received while doing this research, while four were somewhat satisfied and two did not provide an applicable response. Fourteen out of the twenty participants responded “no” when asked if there is enough information in archival finding aids, websites, exhibits, and publications about the role of Aboriginal people in the creation of records, five respondents were unsure, and one felt there was adequate information provided.<sup>3</sup>

When asked how more information about Aboriginal involvement in record creating processes could be included in the types of archival descriptions they have consulted, participants offered many possibilities for the inclusion of additional context.<sup>4</sup> One respondent suggested that corrections to archival records where the character of a relative has been unjustly blemished by a figure of authority could be made by placing a written insert alongside the original record.<sup>5</sup> Another respondent felt as though links to external sources of information, such as published writings and websites, which offer differing or further contextualizing views of the subject of the record could be linked to

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<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A, Question 1.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A, Question 2.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix A, Question 2, follow-up.

<sup>5</sup> Participant #1 (Self-identification: Aboriginal person and archivist), 20 May 2008.



the record or its description.<sup>6</sup> Several participants suggested that links to oral histories/interviews be included with the records and records descriptions. One respondent argued that Aboriginal people and groups should be included as part of the provenance of such records, with the inclusion of a second category of administrative/biographical histories.<sup>7</sup> Another participant felt more direct contact with Aboriginal groups was necessary in order to attach a better understanding of Aboriginal perspectives to such records.<sup>8</sup> Other respondents stressed the need for the Aboriginal people who have contributed to the uncovering of additional context of records or who are included in the records to be named in their descriptions. Suggestions for such naming included the inclusion of a ‘copyright-like sticker’ with information gathered by Aboriginal people and the addition of statements such as ‘Reviewed by/Created by \_\_\_\_\_ member of \_\_\_\_\_ First Nation.’<sup>9</sup> Another participant argued that the best way, in the long run, to have more information about Aboriginal involvement in record creating processes included in the descriptive process is to encourage First Nations to get an archival education.<sup>10</sup> One respondent felt the question of ‘record-creator’ was a non-issue, based on the simplicity of record creation being the act of inscription. This participant also thought such information should only be mentioned if the same is done for all ethnic communities.<sup>11</sup> The above questions were included in the questionnaire as a way to elicit a sense of the level of familiarity of each respondent with records related to

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<sup>6</sup> Participant #6 (Self-identification: archivist and historian), 6 October 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Participant #7 (Self-identification: Aboriginal person, archivist, and researcher), 14 December 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Participant #12 (Self-identification: researcher), 7 November 2007.

<sup>9</sup> Participant #11 (Self-identification: researcher), 12 October 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Participant #19 (Self-identification: Aboriginal person and archival assistant), 28 February 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Participant #10 (Self-identification: Aboriginal person, archivist, and historian), 27 October 2007.

Aboriginal people, as well as get participants thinking about the ways in which such records have been presented to them through archival descriptions.

### **Response to the Viability of Participatory Archiving**

When asked if Aboriginal people should be involved in the archiving of records created by the Canadian federal government that document significant aspects of the lives of Aboriginal people, the majority of participants responded yes.<sup>12</sup> Two participants responded both yes and no and one respondent felt that such involvement was not necessarily required. One participant who responded yes felt that Aboriginal people should only be involved if they are qualified archivists. As a follow-up, participants were asked to explain why they responded as they did. The majority of participants wrote that such involvement would result in more balanced, less biased archival records, with a better representation of Aboriginal perspectives. One respondent argued that it is only through sustained interaction with archival institutions that Aboriginal organizations will be able to obtain access to the collections that will enable their communities to defend their constitutional rights and to develop in appropriate and healthy ways.<sup>13</sup> In a similar vein, some respondents thought that Aboriginal involvement in the archiving of records about them would encourage the creation of oral histories by Aboriginal people to be donated to archives and would also encourage Aboriginal communities to make other community records more accessible to the public. Another respondent wrote that such involvement is necessary so that Aboriginal people are not seen as the passive objects of the actions taken by governments and organizations and that their involvement would

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<sup>12</sup> See Appendix A, Question 3.

<sup>13</sup> Participant #4 (Self-identification: archivist and researcher), 19 December 2007.

positively contribute to self-determination and the self-creation of identity. This participant also argued that such involvement would help counter the debilitating effects of being “institutionalized” by federal government policies.<sup>14</sup> One participant felt that the involvement of First Nations in archiving would encourage them to get the education necessary to become archivists.<sup>15</sup> Another respondent suggested that all records should be reviewed by qualified First Nations groups, but offered no explanation of who might be considered “qualified.”<sup>16</sup>

The following question asked participants to select the archival functions in which they felt Aboriginal people should participate.<sup>17</sup> The choices included: staffing of archival positions; appraisal; arrangement and description; public programming; and preservation. An additional place was also included for participants to add a means of participation that they felt should be added. The majority of respondents chose the first four functions (17 respondents checked both staffing and appraisal, 16 respondents chose arrangement and description, and 18 respondents checked public programming). Twelve participants felt that Aboriginal people should be involved in the process of preservation. Four additional forms of participation were suggested including: repatriation of records; co-operative description; the development of skills necessary for Aboriginal people to do oral history; and the staffing of Aboriginal people in senior levels of archival management. The following question asked respondents to explain how they thought Aboriginal people should participate in each of the functions they had selected in the previous question.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Participant #6 (Self-identification: archivist and historian), 6 October 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Participant #19 (Self-identification: Aboriginal person and archival assistant), 28 February 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Participant #13 (Self-identification: researcher), 17 October 2007.

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix A, Question 4.

<sup>18</sup> See Appendix A, Question 5.

Only a few participants answered the question in accordance with the archival functions they had selected in Question 4. One respondent suggested that cooperation between Aboriginal people and archival institutions in the creation of exhibitions, both physical and virtual, would be a good way of including Aboriginal people in the archiving process. This respondent also suggested that knowledgeable people from Aboriginal communities could speak about their perspectives and experiences with the records, either publicly or among the archivists involved in their appraisal and description. In addition to these suggestions, this participant said there could be a place for involving Aboriginal people in the description/redescription of records (especially those relating to traditional names), but that such participation should be mediated by people with archival training rather than communicated directly to the public.<sup>19</sup>

Another respondent laid out specific means of participation for the functions of staffing, appraisal, and arrangement and description. This participant suggested that Aboriginal individuals from the band or corporate body to which the records are connected could be hired on a contractual basis to work specifically on such records, as these individuals would have contextual knowledge that the archivist would not have. For the function of appraisal, this participant simply stated that Aboriginal people should be involved in the selection process, as their input is necessary to ensure that certain records are not lost. When discussing the possibilities for participation in the function of arrangement and description this respondent suggested that preliminary descriptions, created at the fonds and series levels by Aboriginal individuals could be incorporated into the final descriptions of the fonds. This participant also suggested that such individuals could write the biographical/administrative histories of important Aboriginal

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<sup>19</sup> Participant #5 (Self-identification: archivist), 12 October 2007.

individuals/corporate bodies.<sup>20</sup> Another respondent recommended that Aboriginal people take part in setting policies for staffing, arrangement and description and public programming by being a part of advisory boards and governing bodies. This respondent also proposed that Aboriginal people participate in the appraisal process by becoming official external appraisers.<sup>21</sup>

One participant argued that Aboriginal individuals with specific sets of knowledge such as historians and elders could be consulted on appraisal and public programming decisions as a means of ensuring the proper treatment of potentially sensitive information and the proper naming of individuals, nations and other culturally specific knowledge. This respondent suggested that general Aboriginal awareness workshops could be implemented for archivists working with records related to Aboriginal people as a way of introducing basic cultural protocols. While supportive of Aboriginal involvement in these functions as a means of avoiding misinterpretation, this participant argued that Aboriginal cultural knowledge is not universal and that, for example, a Wendat archivist or curator would not automatically be aware of Haida realities; therefore, according to this participant, simply being 'Aboriginal' is not the key solution to the issue of Aboriginal representation in archives.<sup>22</sup>

Several respondents suggested that one of the most important ways in which Aboriginal people could participate in the descriptive and public programming functions would be through the 'naming' of previously unidentified or improperly identified individuals, places, and cultural markers. Another suggestion, voiced by a number of

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<sup>20</sup> Participant #7 (Self-identification: Aboriginal person, archivist and historian), 14 December 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Participant #9 (Self-identification: Aboriginal person and professor), 5 October 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Participant #10 (Self-identification: Aboriginal person, archivist and historian), 27 October 2007.

respondents yet again, was the need for Aboriginal individuals to participate in all archival functions as fully trained archival professionals. One participant argued that it is crucial to have Aboriginal people involved at all levels within archival institutions from administrators to archivists to archival assistants.<sup>23</sup> While extremely supportive of such education and wholehearted participation, another respondent cautioned that the archival community must also be open to resistance from Aboriginal people to such participation.<sup>24</sup>

### **Possible Positive Outcomes of Participatory Archiving**

The sixth question of the survey asked participants to share their opinions regarding the benefits/advantages of implementing a participatory approach to archiving records about Aboriginal people that are created by non-Aboriginal people.<sup>25</sup> Several respondents stated that the creation of more balanced and accurate archival records would be one of the most significant benefits of the adoption of a participatory approach. A number of respondents felt as though archival descriptions and finding aids would be enhanced through this process. A few respondents commented specifically on the importance of the enhancement of the provenance of records through the inclusion of multiple contexts. One respondent argued that such participation could lead to the further development of archival theory and practice by incorporating indigenous knowledge systems, which would allow new means of demonstrating interconnections (context) and would ultimately result in more respectful record-keeping.<sup>26</sup> Another participant

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<sup>23</sup> Participant #20 (Self-identification: archivist), 19 October 2007.

<sup>24</sup> Participant #3 (Self-identification: archivist and researcher), 19 November 2007.

<sup>25</sup> See Appendix A, Question 6.

<sup>26</sup> Participant #2 (Self-identification: archivist and researcher), 7 December 2007.

discussed the possibility of the evolution of a definition of archiving that is not so bound to Western ontologies, which currently elevate textual record keeping above aural, photographic, geographic, artefactual, and ritual forms.<sup>27</sup>

A number of respondents commented on the ways in which a participatory approach would benefit Aboriginal people and enhance their relationships with archival institutions. One participant argued that more inclusive and accurate descriptions of records relating to Aboriginal people would allow for greater use of the records in the support of land claims and constitutional and treaty rights, as well as a return to communities of irreplaceable cultural knowledge.<sup>28</sup> Another respondent suggested that participation could foster a beneficial spirit of inclusion, cooperation and mutual learning between the archival and Aboriginal communities.<sup>29</sup> Other participants felt as though such interaction would result in less mistrust and, in turn, Aboriginal people would be more comfortable sharing their stories with archival institutions. One participant also felt that one of the benefits of involvement in archives would be an increased capacity to influence the protection of culturally sensitive information and images.<sup>30</sup> Another respondent suggested that perhaps the sense of ownership of records may change if citizens are given the opportunity to contribute to the archiving process.<sup>31</sup>

Few participants commented on the specific types of records they felt should be highlighted through a participatory approach. One explanation for this can be found in the wording and focus of the survey questions, as the means by which participation should be

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<sup>27</sup> Participant #6 (Self-identification: archivist and historian), 6 October 2007.

<sup>28</sup> Participant #4 (Self-identification: archivist), 19 December 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Participant #5 (Self-identification: archivist), 12 October 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Participant #10 (Self-identification: Aboriginal person, archivist and historian), 27 October 2007.

<sup>31</sup> Participant #3 (Self-identification: archivist and researcher), 19 November 2007.

*undertaken* as opposed to the specific records that should be *used* was the driving force of the questionnaire. While any records for which additional Aboriginal societal provenance can be uncovered are worthy candidates for participatory archiving, there are many records that are approaching a critical stage for the involvement of participants based on the age of the individuals in possession of relevant knowledge. The average lifespan of Canadians is currently 81 years of age. The life expectancy of First Nations men is on average seven years less than other Canadian men, and for First Nations women, five years less than other Canadian women.<sup>32</sup> Life expectancy statistics for the Inuit population have been more difficult to determine because of a lack of Aboriginal identifiers on death registrations; however, a study published in 2008 based on geographic indicators, found that the life expectancy of Inuit residents is 64.2 years, or approximately 15 years less than for Canada as a whole.<sup>33</sup> Based on these statistics, it is clear that the timeframe for illuminating the societal provenance of records relating to Aboriginal people through a participatory approach is limited. Taking these statistics into account, records from the late 1930s to the early 1940s would be the oldest possible records available for inclusion in a first-person participatory archiving project. The following section will discuss key events and record series related to federal government policies and the fur trade during this critical period that should be considered first priorities for participatory archiving projects.

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<sup>32</sup> Health Canada, "Health Canada Fact Sheets: Aboriginal Health," *First Ministers' Meeting on the Future of Health Care: A 10 Year Plan to Strengthen Health Care* (2004). Available at [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/delivery-prestation/fptcollab/2004-fmm-rpm/fs-if\\_02-eng.php](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/delivery-prestation/fptcollab/2004-fmm-rpm/fs-if_02-eng.php) (Accessed 28 April 2010).

<sup>33</sup> Statistics Canada, "Study: Life expectancy in the Inuit-inhabited areas of Canada," *The Daily* (23 January 2008). Available at: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/080123/dq080123d-eng.htm> (Accessed 28 April 2010).



## Key Priorities for Participatory Archiving Projects

### Federal Government Records

The naming of unidentified or incorrectly identified photographs is to date, the most common type of participatory archiving that has been undertaken by archival institutions. The naming of people and places, as well as the inclusion of additional situational context in descriptions of photographs in the at-risk period of time sensitivity should be made a priority for descriptive work in all archival institutions containing records related to Aboriginal people. Unlike other forms of remembering, visual recognition is an entirely individualistic activity. Without a pre-existing memory of a particular facial or spatial image, such information cannot be known and cannot be passed down through written or oral history, greatly increasing its time sensitivity. The work undertaken by Library and Archives Canada and the Nunavut Sivuniksavut Training Program through *Project Naming* provides an excellent template for collaboration that any archival institution across Canada could adapt to their own specific needs.

Building upon the partnerships and trust formed through *Project Naming*, LAC should consider developing a participatory archiving approach for documenting the societal provenance of the effects of the disk number system and the subsequent “Project Surname” on the Inuit. The disk number system was implemented in 1941 by the Canadian federal government as a means to facilitate the maintenance of all governmental and administrative records related to the Inuit including records concerning

hunting, education, hospitalization and relief.<sup>34</sup> The federal government found it difficult to administer the Inuit population on an individual level based on the significant differences between European and Inuit naming conventions; the latter followed the practice of not taking a surname, as well as the conveyance of several different names throughout different stages in one's life.<sup>35</sup> The identification disks, modeled after army identification tags were assigned to the Inuit who were instructed to wear them and to memorize the particular number assigned to them.<sup>36</sup> The disk identification system led to great confusion and misidentification within Inuit communities and the Arctic in general. In many communities (in the Western Arctic in particular), ethnic relationships were much more complex than the federal government had anticipated, with many individuals in possession of identification numbers considered non-Inuit by the federal government.<sup>37</sup> While the purely numeric nature of this system allowed some individuals to take advantage of some of the benefits associated with Eskimo status, for many Inuit the result was devastating. During the tuberculosis evacuations of the 1940s and 1950s many Inuit were sent to southern hospitals with few attempts made to keep their families informed of their whereabouts or well-being. In many cases, families were not informed of the death of relatives until many years later, and in some instances this information was never communicated.<sup>38</sup> When patients were deemed well enough to return home, many had been in the south so long that they could not adjust to traditional Inuit ways of life and

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<sup>34</sup> Derek G. Smith, "The Emergence of "Eskimo Status": An Examination of the Eskimo Disk List System and Its Social Consequences, 1925-1970." in *Anthropology, Public Policy and Native Peoples in Canada*, Noel Dyck and James B. Waldram, eds. (Montreal & Kingston, 1993), p. 41.

<sup>35</sup> Valerie Alia, "Inuit Women and the Politics of Naming in Nunavut," *Canadian Woman Studies* 14 no.4 (Fall 1994), pp. 11-12.

<sup>36</sup> Smith, p. 56.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>38</sup> James B. Waldram, D. Ann Herring and T. Kue Young, *Aboriginal Health in Canada: Historical, Cultural, and Epidemiological Perspectives* (Toronto, 1995), p. 169.

through the gross inadequacies of the disk identification system, many were returned to the wrong community, hundreds of kilometers away from their home, with little recollection of their own families.<sup>39</sup> In other cases, children were not returned to the north at all, and were adopted by southern families or died in hospitals.<sup>40</sup>

By the early 1970s, it was clear that the disk identification system was a failure and the government introduced “Project Surname” in an effort to have all Inuit adopt a surname and standardize spellings of all names.<sup>41</sup> While this initiative was considered by the federal government to be a source of empowerment for the Inuit – a way to make them more like other Canadians, it did neither. As Valerie Aria explains, “in a culture without gender-specific naming, titles, or other status designations, surnaming was absurd. Despite assurances that all was ‘voluntary,’ many people had no say in their renaming. In fact, many of them were not even present for the program in which they presumably participated.”<sup>42</sup>

Another key participatory archiving priority must be the recognition of the Aboriginal societal provenance of the residential school experience. This process is currently underway through the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). The TRC is a component of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (overseen by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada) and its mandate is to inform all Canadians about what happened in Indian Residential Schools (IRS) and to document the experiences of survivors, families, communities, and anyone personally

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>42</sup> Alia, p. 13.

affected by the IRS system.<sup>43</sup> The commission will prepare a comprehensive historical record of the policies and operations of the schools and produce a report that will include recommendations to the Government of Canada concerning the IRS system and its legacy, host national events in different regions across Canada to promote awareness and education about the Indian Residential School system, support community events designed by individual communities to meet their unique needs, and establish a national research centre that will house the TRC's archives and be a lasting resource about the IRS for all Canadians long after the TRC's five-year mandate expires.<sup>44</sup>

The commission is still in a preparatory stage and states that it is “currently looking at ways to ensure people can describe their experience in a safe, respectful and culturally appropriate manner. A person might share his or her experience through a one-on-one interview, in a written statement, or in a public forum.”<sup>45</sup> The commission recognizes the need for specific strategies, as the experiences of survivors varied from region to region and that differences in culture, language, and geography must also be recognized. As a means of ensuring the voices of survivors are represented, a ten-member Indian Residential Schools Survivor Committee, consisting of residential school survivors from across Canada, serves as an advisory body to the TRC.<sup>46</sup> The mandate document of the TRC (Schedule N of the Indian Residential Schools Agreement) states that in addition to educating the Canadian public about the history of the residential school system and providing an important opportunity for residential school survivors to share their experiences, the federal government and the churches that were involved in

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<sup>43</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, “Frequently Asked Questions” Available at: <http://www.trc-cvr.ca/faqs.html> (Accessed 27 February 2010).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

the residential school system must participate in the commission's national or community events, if requested by survivors. These institutions are also required to provide the TRC access to all relevant documents in their possession or control, subject to applicable privacy legislation.<sup>47</sup> The first TRC national event is scheduled for June 15-19, 2010 in Winnipeg. This event is the first of seven national events to be held across Canada over the following five years.<sup>48</sup>

Like the ambient provenance of Australia's Stolen Generation, the records created, the memories recorded, and commemorations undertaken by the TRC, as well as the establishment of a research centre for the use of survivors and the public are part of the societal provenance of the residential school experience and are prime examples of participatory archiving within a community of memory. In addition to contributing to the healing process of survivors, the work of the TRC also has the potential to introduce a new and innovative means of involving a large segment of Canadian society in a healing, remembering, and ultimately, record-creating process that is, at its core, participatory.

### **Fur Trade Records – Hudson's Bay Company**

While the administrative control and dominance of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in most of Canada ended in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the HBC's presence in the Arctic and in the lives of its Inuit inhabitants was not well established

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., "Our Mandate" Available at: <http://www.trc-cvr.ca/overview.html> (Accessed 27 February 2010). "Canada and the churches are not required to give up possession of their original documents to the Commission. They are required to compile all relevant documents in an organized manner for review by the Commission and to provide access to their archives for the Commission to carry out its mandate."

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., Media Room "Truth and Reconciliation Canada announces details for first National Event" 11 December 2009. Available at: [http://www.trc-cvr.ca/annocement\\_e.html](http://www.trc-cvr.ca/annocement_e.html) (Accessed 27 February 2010).

until the twentieth century. The demand for high-priced luxury furs such as the arctic fox as well as major improvements in the northern transportation and communication systems made a trading presence in the Arctic both possible and profitable.<sup>49</sup> Over one hundred posts and outposts were established by the Hudson's Bay Company in the 1920s, with many of them remaining in operation as part of the Northern Stores Department until the late 1980s (when the department was sold). While these posts and stores produced far less textual records than their nineteenth-century counterparts, many photographic collections documenting life and the people in these Arctic communities are in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA) in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Photographs taken at communities such as Frobisher Bay (Iqaluit), Eskimo Point, Povungnetuk, Cape Dorset, and Chesterfield Inlet document life in these settlements and activities at the HBC store between the 1930s and late 1970s.<sup>50</sup> Like the photographs selected for LAC's Project Naming, many of these photographs contain images of unidentified Inuit people, as well as other Aboriginal groups from Northern Canada. In addition, some of these photographs were taken by Richard Harrington, whose photographs comprised the first phase of *Project Naming*. These photograph collections are prime candidates for participatory archiving. Unlike the photographs held by LAC, the images held in the HBCA hold the potential for uncovering of additional layers of societal context – those of the non-Aboriginal HBC employees. The additional possibility of obtaining the societal provenance of all groups present in these photographs, which often include a mix of Inuit

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<sup>49</sup> Arthur J. Ray, *I Have Lived Here Since the World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People* Revised Edition (Toronto, 2005), p. 269.

<sup>50</sup> HBCA 1987/363-F-80 Frobisher Bay – HBC Post, 1939-[ca.1970].; HBCA 1987/363-E-13 Eskimo Point, 1924-1961; HBCA 1987/363-P-42 Povungnetuk, 1938-1968; HBCA 1987/363-C-33 Cape Dorset – HBC Post, 1915-1963; HBCA 1987/363-C-28 Chesterfield Inlet, 1928-1978.

community members, non-Aboriginal HBC employees, and Inuit HBC employees is an opportunity that must not be wasted.

The illumination of Aboriginal societal provenance through a participatory archiving approach should not be limited to graphic records. While the textual records for Arctic and other northern HBC establishments in the mid-twentieth century are more sparse than those of earlier eras, the information contained in the journals, accounts, reports, and birth, marriage and death registers have the potential to unlock a great deal of contextual information about the interaction between the HBC and Aboriginal communities; moreover, it is also possible that simply seeing a particular type of record could trigger memories of particular events and more general societal recollections. Between 1989 and 1992, Flora Beardy and Robert Coutts interviewed twelve Cree elders who lived at York Factory in the first half of the twentieth century regarding their memories of family, community and daily life at the fur trade settlement. These interviews were translated, transcribed, and published in the book *Voices From Hudson Bay: Cree Stories from York Factory*.<sup>51</sup> While Beardy and Coutts did not directly employ HBC textual records from York Factory as memory aids or to structure specific questions, overcoming the limitations of these records was the overarching purpose of this project. While the Hudson's Bay Company Archives holds nearly three centuries of records for York Factory that record the social and economic interactions of the fur trade, Beardy and Coutts highlight the fact that these records offer very limited views of Cree life and history and that few are written from the perspective of Native people.<sup>52</sup> The records of the HBC, such as post journals, district reports, account books, and

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<sup>51</sup> Flora Beardy and Robert Coutts, *Voices from Hudson Bay: Cree Stories from York Factory* (Montreal and Kingston, 1996), pp. xiii-xiv.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xiii-xiv.

correspondence were created for the business and accounting purposes of the company, and aside from documenting the weather, daily activities, and results of trade, very little information is included about the daily lives of the Aboriginal people with whom they did business.<sup>53</sup> According to Beardy and Coutts, the goal of this project was to expand upon ethnographic and economic analyses of the textual records of York Factory through first-person oral accounts of Cree elders who lived their lives at this post. Cree perspectives regarding life at York Factory are essential for creating a multivocal historical record that includes the societal history and everyday events of the fur trade community; as Beardy and Coutts argue, “like the company journal, or the missionary record, these testimonies present complex and many-sided histories. Most important, they enlist new voices in the reconstruction of the historical past.”<sup>54</sup> While Beardy and Coutts employ different terminology, the desire to enrich the “official” HBC records with a societal history that presents new voices is simply another way of emphasizing the importance of uncovering its societal provenance.

While this project was not undertaken by the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives, it is stated in the preface of the book that the oral recordings are to be deposited in the Archives of Manitoba (which holds the HBCA) and that copies of the interviews are to be

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<sup>53</sup> Some HBC records, such as district reports from the early nineteenth century, provide more detailed and descriptive accounts of the local inhabitants, climate and surrounding environment. For examples of these reports see: HBCA B.239/e/1 York Factory District report, 1815; HBCA B.97/e/1 Thompson’s River District report, 1827; and B.200/e/1 Mackenzie River District report, 1822-23. District and post/store level reporting in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries were written as inspection reports, with standardized questions which reported on buildings, stock, furs, accounts, personnel, expenses, and some general information regarding the business of the post.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xiv.



given to the participants, their children and various other First Nations.<sup>55</sup> The potential descriptions of these recordings, which would be entered in the Archives of Manitoba's Keystone Archives Descriptive Database,<sup>56</sup> could be linked to the Hudson's Bay Company Archives descriptions of records related to York Factory for the time periods represented in the oral recordings, along with information about the book, formally acknowledging the societal provenance of the oral recordings. Despite the absence of the participation of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in this project, the goal of which was to highlight the societal provenance of a time period and way of life for which the institution holds the "official" records, this type of project could be a model for another way of uncovering societal context through a less direct means of participation. In instances where the various restraints of governmental or institutional administration, budgets, staff, and time do not allow for the undertaking of such projects, extending the concept of participatory archiving to include the acceptance of contextual information published by individuals or groups outside of the institution to be incorporated into archival descriptions could be a successful alternative.

Archival educator Tom Nesmith has discussed the possibilities for the enhancement of conventional descriptive systems through the addition of such contextual knowledge. Nesmith has suggested the inclusion of essays written by archives' staff outlining different forms of contextual information available about the records, as well as information about other archival functions that affect the records including appraisal,

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. xii. Based on a search of the Archives of Manitoba's *Keystone Archives Descriptive Database* (see footnote 55) and the Private Records finding aids in the Archives of Manitoba's Research Room, the oral recordings are not yet available for public consultation.

<sup>56</sup> Archives of Manitoba, *Keystone Archives Descriptive Database*, available at: <http://pam.minisisinc.com/pam/search.htm>

public programming and preservation.<sup>57</sup> Such essays or reports could include links or references to literature by other scholars and could allow for participation from researchers and scholars outside of the institution through the annotation of the essays or even the creation of new essays.<sup>58</sup> According to Nesmith, these essays would not be the actual descriptions of the records, but instead, a means of providing researchers with “a possible ‘narrative,’ or history of the records to take into the search for information in the actual descriptions of particular records.” I would argue that the model for the enhancement of descriptions and contextual information about archival functions through the inclusion of both in-house and published literature suggested by Nesmith could be used as a platform for participatory archiving in cases where archival institutions are unable to undertake such projects themselves.

While it could be argued that archives should only concern themselves with the collection of primary records and leave interpretation to the researchers who consult these sources, based on the discussions presented in the first two chapters of this study, archivists are constantly interpreting and shaping the contextual understanding of the records, from appraisal, to arrangement and description, to public programming. While clear guidelines and terms of reference would have to be developed by each institution, there is little reason why the type of work undertaken by Beardy and Coutts, which has been presented in a methodologically sound manner, and the oral recordings created and

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<sup>57</sup> Tom Nesmith, “Reflections on Appraisal as a Process: Theory, Practice, Ethics,” paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Association of Canadian Archivists, Montreal, May 2004, p. 5. This paper is being published in 2010 as “Documenting Appraisal as a Societal-Archival Process: Theory, Practice, Ethics,” in Terry Cook, ed., *Documenting Society and Institutions: Essays in Honor of Helen Willa Samuels* (Society of American Archivists, forthcoming). For a similar discussion by Nesmith, see “Reopening Archives: Bringing New Contextualities into Archival Theory and Practice,” *Archivaria* 60 (Fall 2005), p. 272.

<sup>58</sup> Nesmith, “Reflections on Appraisal as a Process,” p. 5.

then donated to the institution holding the related records, should not be included in the descriptions of both the oral histories and the related contextual records. A truly participatory approach should be open to contextual knowledge about records presented in a wide variety of forms and by a broad range of participants. Discussing the need for an enriched archival provenance based on local context and embedded tradition in Inuit communities in Nunavut, archivist Terry Reilly argues that “we need to search for and recognize all participants in the creation of an archive as authors and sources of provenance. This may require acknowledging the multiple points of origins for our collections. We are already used to storing archives in different places in differing formats. We may well agree to describe records differently in different physical and virtual locations to more accurately reflect their multiple contexts.”<sup>59</sup> Perhaps the enhancement of societal provenance lies not only in the dichotomy of oral/textual, but also in the realm of performance, commemoration, or art. Maybe Aboriginal societal provenance is wrapped up in all of these forms and cannot be fully represented as a link to an essay, or a website, or a sound recording and cannot be fully expressed simply through the identification of previously unnamed individuals or places. The fact that this type of contextual knowledge does not fit into traditional archival systems does not mean that it is invalid, nor does it mean that it should be excluded from the archival realm. It is, perhaps, the archival profession that needs to change and reconceptualize what it means to be “archival.”

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<sup>59</sup> Terry Reilly, “From Provenance to Practice: archival theory and ‘return to community.’” Presented at the International Canadian Studies Conference, Edinburgh Scotland, May 2005 and Special Interest Section of the Association of Canadian Archivists, June 2005. Available at: [https://dspace.ucalgary.ca/bitstream/1880/47398/1/Reilly\\_From\\_Provenance.pdf](https://dspace.ucalgary.ca/bitstream/1880/47398/1/Reilly_From_Provenance.pdf) (Accessed 8 May 2010).

### **Possible Challenges for Participatory Archiving**

While the challenges to achieving a completely holistic approach to uncovering Aboriginal societal provenance strike at the heart of archival theory and practice, there are many practical concerns that must be addressed in regards to implementing participatory approaches within the current archival atmosphere. The seventh question of the survey asked respondents to discuss what problems they could see arising as a result of implementing a participatory approach to archiving records about Aboriginal people that are created by non-Aboriginal people.<sup>60</sup> Responses to this question fell into two general categories: concerns regarding the administration of such an approach and its effects on the archival profession; and the challenges of navigating cross-cultural expectations and relationships. The issue of the allocation of time and resources (staff and funding) was noted by several respondents. Specifically, a few respondents commented on the length of time necessary for training and review of collaborative archiving as real challenges to the implementation of such an approach. However, another participant stated that such arguments are more demonstrative of a resistance to change through a lack of knowledge and understanding, as opposed to simply an issue of resources.<sup>61</sup> Other respondents commented on the importance of retaining control over the archiving process and the challenges of deciding whose points of view and memories would be included and whose would be excluded. One respondent drew attention to the fact that Aboriginal people are not a monolithic group, and therefore, how does an archival institution decide which communities should be involved?<sup>62</sup> Issues surrounding differing ideas of representation based on divergent world-views were also discussed. One respondent was

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<sup>60</sup> See Appendix A, Question #7.

<sup>61</sup> Participant #18 (Self-identification: Aboriginal person), 10 March 2008.

<sup>62</sup> Participant #6 (Self-identification: archivist and historian), 6 October 2007.

concerned with contradictory opinions on the treatment of sacred knowledge between Aboriginal participants and the archival profession.<sup>63</sup> Another participant expressed fear that disagreements concerning what should or should not be presented could lead to problems, hard feelings and possibly negative publicity for and hostile public opinion on the archives.<sup>64</sup>

This was the situation the Canadian War Museum found itself in during the winter of 2006-2007. The Canadian War Museum became embroiled in a politically-charged clash with Canadian veterans regarding a text panel describing the World War II Allied bombing campaign. The panel, entitled “An Enduring Controversy,” highlighted the strategic bombing campaign led by the Royal Air Force Bomber Command and American air force, which resulted in the death of over 600 000 German civilians. The original text panel read:

The value and morality of the strategic bomber offensive against Germany remains bitterly contested. Bomber Command’s aim was to crush civilian morale and force Germany to surrender by destroying its cities and industrial installations. Although Bomber Command and American attacks left 600 000 Germans dead and more than five million homeless, the raids resulted in only small reductions in German war production until late in the war.<sup>65</sup>

This interpretation of the campaign led to outrage by veterans and veterans’ organizations such as the Royal Canadian Legion, claiming that the War Museum was “taking sides in regards to the morality and effectiveness of the bombing campaign” and “implies negative judgement on those who participated ....”<sup>66</sup> In response, the Canadian

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<sup>63</sup> Participant #8 (Self-identification: Aboriginal person and researcher), 30 November 2007.

<sup>64</sup> Participant #5 (Self-identification: archivist), 12 October 2007.

<sup>65</sup> Robert Bothwell, Randall Hansen and Margaret MacMillan, “Controversy, Commemoration, and Capitulation: The Canadian War Museum and Bomber Command,” *Queen's Quarterly* 115 no.3 (Fall 2008), p. 368.

<sup>66</sup> Editorial, “Display of Intransigence,” *Legion Magazine* (May/June 2007), p. 4.

War Museum asked four prominent Canadian historians to review the exhibit and made recommendations regarding possible changes to the panel. The historians were split in their recommendations, with two historians offering significant criticisms of the wording of the panel. Despite this, all four historians “agreed that the overall exhibition was commendable” and the War Museum concluded that no further changes were necessary.<sup>67</sup> This resulted in outrage from Canadian veterans, who took their cause to both the media and Parliament's Senate Sub-Committee on Veterans Affairs. As a result of the recommendations of the sub-committee and pressure from veterans’ groups, by the fall of 2007 the Canadian War Museum had worked with veterans to re-write the panel. The title of the panel was changed to “The Bombing Campaign,” and the most controversial paragraph now reads:

Allied aircrew conducted this gruelling offensive with great courage against heavy odds. It required vast material and industrial efforts and claimed over 80,000 Allied lives, including more than 10,000 Canadians. While the campaign contributed greatly to enemy war weariness, German society did not collapse despite 600,000 dead and more than 5 million left homeless. Industrial output fell substantially, but not until late in the war. The effectiveness and the morality of bombing heavily populated areas in war continue to be debated.<sup>68</sup>

While the changes to this exhibit panel were welcomed by veterans, many historians considered this to be an unjustified re-writing of history, which compromised the Canadian War Museum’s ability to present balanced, historically accurate accounts of military history.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> David Dean, “Museums as conflict zones: the Canadian War Museum and Bomber Command,” *Museum and Society* 7 no. 1 (March 2009), p. 5.

<sup>68</sup> Editorial, “Positive Change at the War Museum,” *Legion Magazine* (November/December 2007), p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> See Bothwell et al., “Controversy, Commemoration, and Capitulation” and Dean, “Museums as conflict zones” for discussion and criticism of the panel re-wording.

While the above comments all represent valid concerns regarding participatory processes, and the experiences of the Canadian War Museum demonstrate the challenging realities of the participation of the interested parties in morally and politically-charged debates, these challenges should not discourage archivists from undertaking participatory approaches to archiving. As one participant argued, tensions between archivists and participants could be solved by a lot of careful and caring consideration to tradition and cultural difference.<sup>70</sup> In addition to open lines of communication between all groups involved, solid terms of reference would need to be established by each institution, for its own unique needs based on the project at hand and the communities involved. While none of the questionnaire participants suggested the creation of national guidelines for participation between archives and Aboriginal peoples, the protocols developed by the *Taskforce on Museums and First Peoples* and the *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials* need to be further examined by the Canadian archival community as a possible means of moving forward in collaborative activities.<sup>71</sup>

### **Participating More Fully: Aboriginal People in the Archival Profession**

A recurring statement in the questionnaire responses (across several questions) called for Aboriginal people to participate in the archival process as fully trained archival professionals. While the contexts surrounding these statements were different for each participant who commented – some considered it a means of empowering Aboriginal

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<sup>70</sup> Participant #20 (Self-identification: archivist), 19 October 2007.

<sup>71</sup> See Chapter 2, p. 64 for a discussion of the *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials* and the *Taskforce on Museums and First Peoples*.

people and a way to ensure their participation was not “token,”<sup>72</sup> while others seemed to suggest it as a means of ensuring professional standards would not be compromised through collaboration.<sup>73</sup> Regardless of the reasons, its recurrence warrants a discussion of the current state of Aboriginal employment in the Canadian archival profession and its meaning for the development of participatory archiving.

I was unable to locate any statistics on the number of Canadian archivists who have self-identified as Aboriginal and an attempt to conduct a survey to obtain this information was beyond the scope of this study. The webpage of the Association of Canadian Archivists’ Special Interest Section on Aboriginal Archives does not provide any information regarding the number of Aboriginal archivists employed in Canada; however, it does invite “Aboriginal archivists, communities, and organizations to get involved and informed” in their discussions.<sup>74</sup> The University of British Columbia School of Library, Archival, and Information Studies (UBC SLAIS) offers a First Nations Curriculum Concentration to prepare information professionals to work “effectively in

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<sup>72</sup> Question #2 and #3: Participant #19 (Self-identification: Aboriginal person and archival assistant), 28 February 2008; Question #5: Participant #2 (Self-identification: archivist and researcher), 7 December 2007; Participant #4 (Self-identification: archivist and researcher), 19 December 2007; Participant #6 (Self-identification: archivist and historian), 6 October 2007; Participant #9 (Self-identification: Aboriginal person and researcher), 5 October 2007; Participant #12 (Self-identification: researcher), 7 November 2007; Participant #13 (Self-identification: researcher), 17 October 2007; Participant #14 (Self-identification: researcher), 26 June 2008; Participant #15 (Self-identification: archivist), 4 March 2008; Participant #20 (Self-identification: archivist), 19 October 2007.

<sup>73</sup> Question #3: Participant #14 (Self-identification: researcher), 26 June 2008; Participant #16 (Self-identification: historian), 27 May 2008; Question #5: Participant #3 (Self-identification: archivist and researcher), 19 November 2007; Participant #5 (Self-identification: archivist), 12 October 2007; Participant #10 (Self-identification: Aboriginal person, archivist and historian), 27 October 2007; Participant #16; Question #7: Participant #5; Participant #10; Participant #16.

<sup>74</sup> Association of Canadian Archivists, Special Interest Section on Aboriginal Archives, Available at: <http://archivists.ca/content/special-interest-section-aboriginal-archives> (Accessed 7 March 2010).



libraries and archives, both within and outside native communities”<sup>75</sup> and is the only information studies department in Canada to offer an Aboriginal-specific program. The entrance requirements for this program include a First Nations background, work experience in a First Nations setting, or previous study in First Nations cultures.<sup>76</sup> While UBC has offered this program for fifteen years, less than ten students in total have registered, and only one student with a First Nations background has graduated from the archival stream.<sup>77</sup> UBC SLAIS is currently assessing how this program can be revamped to encourage more interest from Aboriginal undergraduates.<sup>78</sup>

The *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials* encourages non-Aboriginal archives and libraries to “insist on cross-cultural training in information science programs and courses at all levels” and to “support Native American students in education and training programs – from recruitment to mentoring and study leave.”<sup>79</sup> The *Protocols* also state that “archivists and librarians need to accelerate the acceptance of different approaches to designing and deploying knowledge management systems and to welcome Native American practitioners as equal partners in caring for cultural heritage ... organizations should strive to build a staff and governing structure that reflect the composition of communities served.”<sup>80</sup> In 2004, Library and Archives Canada released the *Report and Recommendations of the Consultation on Aboriginal Resources and*

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<sup>75</sup> University of British Columbia School of Library, Archival and Information Studies, First Nations Curriculum Concentration in the MAS and MLIS Degree Programs, Available at: <http://www.slais.ubc.ca/programs/first-nations.htm> (Accessed 7 March 2010).

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Personal email communication with Terry Eastwood (Interim Director of the UBC SLAIS Program), 12 February 2010.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Protocols for Native American Archival Materials, “The Protocols – Reciprocal Education and Training,” <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/protocols.html> (Accessed 26 April 2010).

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

*Services*, which addressed the concerns of Aboriginal archival education, training, and professional development. The report highlights three main areas of concern regarding these issues including: “(1) the lack of trained Aboriginal professionals and Aboriginal people in related occupations to work in libraries and archival centres and lack of access to professional development opportunities; (2) the lack of non-Aboriginal people trained in working with Aboriginal communities and well informed about Aboriginal knowledge and perspective; and (3) the lack of training and ongoing technical support for new programs or software and adequate tools or guides to fully use the rich abundance of resources and services available through LAC.”<sup>81</sup> Based on an analysis of these issues, the report recommends that additional resources be devoted to the training of Aboriginal people through resources from LAC in the form of hiring of co-op students, the creation of an archival technician trainee program, and through mentorship programs.<sup>82</sup> The rationale given by LAC for the encouragement of Aboriginal archival technician programs, is that it is more relevant for some Aboriginal students to pursue technical training than a master’s degree in library or archival studies, and that such programs might offer other opportunities and facilitate a return to the community to work.<sup>83</sup>

There are numerous underlying factors outside of the realm of the archival profession that prevent Aboriginal people from pursuing the post-secondary education that is necessary to complete archival programs. A study of the educational achievements of young Aboriginal adults based on census data between 1986 and 1996 showed that only three percent of Aboriginal people aged 20-29 who had completed secondary school

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<sup>81</sup> Library and Archives Canada, *Report and Recommendations of the Consultation on Aboriginal Resources and Service* (Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2004), p. 23.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

had gone on to university education, as opposed to eighteen percent who had taken some form of college training.<sup>84</sup> Of the individuals who had completed post-secondary education, the fields of engineering and applied science technology were the most popular choices.<sup>85</sup> A 2002 study on the perceptions, expectations and career choices of Aboriginal youth in Canada found that the top ten ‘dream’ jobs for Aboriginal youth were: business owner; doctor; lawyer; artist/crafts person; police officer/correctional officer; professional athlete; entertainer/performer; musician; cook/chef; and teacher.<sup>86</sup>

One possible means of closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal archival professionals may be through the development of educational programs that are geared towards Aboriginal worldviews and cross-cultural diversity. An example of this type of program is the Knowledge River based in Tucson, Arizona. The Knowledge River is a program within the University of Arizona’s School of Information Resources and Library Science which “focuses on educating information professionals who have experience with and sensitivity to Hispanic and Native American populations. Knowledge River also fosters understanding of library and information issues from the perspectives of Hispanic and Native Americans and advocates for culturally sensitive library and information services to these communities.”<sup>87</sup> Knowledge River currently has over 30 students enrolled in its program and recruits annual cohorts of between 12 and 16

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<sup>84</sup> Heather Tait, “Educational Achievement of Young Aboriginal Adults,” *Canadian Social Trends* Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 11-008 (Spring 1999), p. 6.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> The Aboriginal Human Resources Development Council of Canada, “Connecting the Dots: A Study of Perceptions, Expectations and Career Choices of Aboriginal Youth,” (Saratoga, 2002), p. 5.

<sup>87</sup> University of Arizona School of Information Resources and Library Science, Knowledge River “Where the Journey Begins. Welcome!” Available at: <http://sirls.arizona.edu/KR/> (Accessed 7 March 2010).

students.<sup>88</sup> Since 2001, the program has educated over 100 Hispanic and Native American librarians.<sup>89</sup>

While the development of culturally-sensitive education programs is an important step towards making the archival profession more attractive to Aboriginal people, such initiatives are only part of the solution. If mainstream archival institutions wish to attract graduates of such programs, then the institutions themselves must be willing to actively, openly, and honestly include and adopt more holistic approaches to archiving. It must also be understood that Aboriginal communities are not looking to Western archival institutions for a source of, or replacement for their own means of remembering. As Kimberley Lawson explains, “there were and continue to be traditional First Nations specialists who are the equivalent of librarians, archivists and museum professionals” in Aboriginal communities.<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, the vestiges of colonialism, the continued presence of government control in the day-to-day lives of Aboriginal people, as well as the realities of Canadian society mean that the whole remembered past of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians can no longer simply reside within separate knowledge systems. At the intersections of these experiences, there must be compromise, understanding, and a desire to embrace the past together. It is only then that a truly participatory approach to the past can be realized.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid., “People.”

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., “About Us.”

<sup>90</sup> Kimberley L. Lawson, “Precious Fragments: First Nations materials in archives, libraries and museums,” M.A. Thesis (UBC SLAIS, 2004)., p .2

## CONCLUSION

### **The Future of Participatory Archiving in Canada**

This thesis has argued for the development of a participatory approach to uncovering the societal provenance of records related to Aboriginal people. Through an analysis of the archival literature related to the development and standardization of the concept of provenance as the literal inscriber/creator of records, through to its more recent conception as a product of societal factors, this thesis has shown that records are in fact creations of community and society and as a result, community and society should be involved in their archiving, just as much so as the literal inscriber of the records.

This thesis introduced and discussed the various ways in which the archival profession is currently involved in participatory projects, both physical and digital, for the public at large, and for Aboriginal communities in particular. These projects reveal that participation from outside the archival profession is already a reality. Such participatory projects have, however, been ad hoc, with no attempts to bring discussion of the potential of such collaborative methods to the Canadian archival community-at-large or to address the need to include Aboriginal communities in the archiving of records related to them in a more formal manner. This thesis discussed the guidelines and proposals adopted by the *Australian Trust and Technology Project*, the U.S. *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials*, and the Canadian museum profession's *Report of the Taskforce on Museums and First Peoples* as possible models for the Canadian archival community to draw from for addressing these issues.

In the third chapter, this thesis introduced the findings of a small survey of archivists, researchers, and Aboriginal people regarding the possibilities for and

challenges of a participatory approach to archiving records about Aboriginal people created by non-Aboriginal people and institutions. While the responses of questionnaire respondents were overall positive and the challenges that participants noted represent real concerns regarding the administration of such an approach and its possible effects on the archival profession, as well as the challenges of navigating cross-cultural expectations and relationships, because of the limited number of responses to the questionnaire, further assessment of the target group is necessary.

This thesis also highlighted several series of records and historical events which should be considered first priority for participatory archiving projects based on the age of the records and the consequent age of the people related to the records available for participation. Notably absent from this discussion are suggestions for possible ways of approaching collaboration. This was intentional, as the cultural frameworks for each Aboriginal community involved in the collaborative process will be unique, and only after consultation and discussion between the archival institution and the community will the best means of undertaking participation be determined.

This thesis has presented an exploratory study of the viability of a participatory approach to archiving Aboriginal societal provenance. Because of the conceptual nature of this study and the relative unfamiliarity of the concept within the Canadian archival profession, an attempt to flesh out specific methods for undertaking participatory archiving would have been premature. As this thesis has shown, a societal approach to archives as a whole, and provenance in particular has been accepted within archival literature for many years; however, this theoretical acceptance has not translated into professional practice. The Canadian Council of Archives' *Rules for Archival Description*

(RAD), which serve as national descriptive standards, still defines provenance simply as “the person(s), family(families), or corporate body(bodies) that created and/or accumulated and used records in the conduct of personal or business life.”<sup>1</sup> While institutions that use the series system (which allows for the representation of multiple creators) as their primary form of description are able to more fully represent the actuality of records creation, this representation is still linear – allowing for only one creating entity at a time, for a particular period of time.<sup>2</sup> Until societal provenance is seen as a legitimate category of description included in RAD, any attempts to undertake participatory archiving will remain at the project level – considered a means of adding additional context to unidentified records and a way to promote the institution and relationships with communities – not as an inherent archival process. Not until societal provenance is considered a legitimate category of description will Canadian archival institutions begin to embrace forms of record creation and remembering that challenge Western archival traditions, such as the multi-media, performative and commemorative memory systems of Aboriginal communities.

In order to advance this process, Canadian archivists must actively encourage discussion of the importance of societal provenance knowledge within the profession, as well as create and strengthen relationships between the archival and Aboriginal communities. While this study relied on a written questionnaire to solicit opinions, it is

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Council of Archives, *Rules for Archival Description*, Appendix D “Glossary” Revised Version – July 2008, p. D-7. Available at: [http://www.cdncouncilarchives.ca/RAD/RAD\\_Glossary\\_July2008.pdf](http://www.cdncouncilarchives.ca/RAD/RAD_Glossary_July2008.pdf) (Accessed 20 March 2010).

<sup>2</sup> Both the Archives of Ontario ([http://ao.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll?get&file=\[ARCHON\]search.htm](http://ao.minisisinc.com/scripts/mwimain.dll?get&file=[ARCHON]search.htm)) and the Archives of Manitoba (<http://pam.minisisinc.com/pam/search.htm>) have implemented archives descriptive databases based on the series system.

not an ideal means of promoting or encouraging meaningful discussion. Instead, archivists and Aboriginal people must meet face-to-face to share their thoughts, listen to each others' ideas and express concerns regarding their shared documentary past and to establish relationships of trust. The Canadian archival community must also work with Aboriginal communities to establish best practice guidelines for the use and archiving of records of mutual interest. The work of the American and Australian archival communities and the Canadian museum profession provide significant examples from which to pattern a set of guidelines that fit the unique requirements of the Canadian archival and Aboriginal communities.

Archivists must also continue to undertake participatory projects related to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal records, as it is important that there exists a wide variety of examples upon which to draw evidence of the application of both societal provenance and participatory processes. One of the greatest potential strengths of participatory archiving is its universality. When asked if they thought a participatory approach could become a way of archiving for records other than those related to Aboriginal people, fifteen out of the twenty respondents said yes.<sup>3</sup> The other five were not sure; however, their follow-up responses focused on concerns related to resources and funding, not the concept itself.<sup>4</sup> One respondent, however, wrote “it takes courage and commitment to see something like this through. It takes a lot of hard work as you are continually educating people.”<sup>5</sup> Breaking free of the norms and standards of the traditional application of provenance will be challenging and will require a great deal of commitment from

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<sup>3</sup> See Question #9 (Appendix A).

<sup>4</sup> Participant #2 (Self-identification: archivist and researcher), 7 December 2007; Participant #5 (Self-identification: archivist), 12 October 2007; Participant #11 (Self-identification: researcher), 12 October 2007; Participant #16 (Self-identification: historian), 27 May 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Participant #18 (Self-identification: Aboriginal person), 10 March 2008.



archivists and the archival profession as a whole. Actively accepting and encouraging participation from members of society that complicate and unsettle the conventionally established values and functions of the profession will take courage and will require continual education and re-education. It is, nevertheless, a necessary endeavour, as Verne Harris writes, “archivists, wherever they work and however they are positioned, are subject to the call of and for justice. For the archive can never be a quiet retreat ... It is a crucible of human experience, a battleground for meaning and significance, a babel of stories, a place and a space of complex and ever-shifting power-plays. Here one cannot keep one’s hands clean. Any attempt to be impartial, to stand above the power-plays, constitutes a choice ... to replicate if not to reinforce prevailing relations of power.”<sup>6</sup> We as archivists must work hard and tirelessly to do what is right, both for the records and our society as a whole.

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<sup>6</sup> Harris, p. 85.

## APPENDIX A



University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3T 2N2

**Research Project Title:** Participatory Archiving: Exploring a Collaborative Approach to Aboriginal Societal Provenance

**Researcher:** Michelle Rydz

**This consent form, a copy of which will be sent to you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.**

The purpose of this project is to explore the concept of participatory archiving, and how it can be used to archive records about Aboriginal people, that are created by non-Aboriginal people. Traditionally, archival records are appraised, arranged, and described according to their actual inscriber or creator. This creator-based origin of records is known in archival terms as a record's provenance. While basing provenance on the actual creator of a record or collection of records is essential for ensuring their authenticity and reliability as evidence, it also limits what archivists know about the history of records, and as a result limits how archivists can describe them, and ultimately, how they are presented to the public. My thesis explores how archivists can get at a broader knowledge of the societal context in which records are created. Specifically, I am focusing on records *about* Aboriginal people that are created *by* non-Aboriginal people. Because such records are described according to their actual inscriber or creating institution, much information about the subjects of these records – Aboriginal people – is left out of archival finding aids and descriptions. Through my thesis I will be exploring the possible use of a participatory approach to the archiving of these records, which will serve to include Aboriginal people in the archiving process and allow for richer, more representative archival descriptions, records, and processes. In order to do this, I need the input of the people who would be involved in, or have a stake in such a participatory process, namely Aboriginal people, archivists, and researchers.

You have been identified as a member of one or more of these groups. All participants will complete the same questionnaire. It will have either been mailed to you or delivered by hand. The questionnaire will be accompanied by this consent form, as well as an addressed and stamped envelope in which the completed questionnaire is to be mailed back to me (Michelle Rydz, Address removed).

There are no risks associated with participation in this study.

I will not share your completed questionnaire with anyone except my thesis supervisor and the questionnaire will not be donated to any public institution. While there is no foreseeable risk or threat associated with the use of your name in my thesis or subsequent related publications, or with the retention of your questionnaire after the completion of these projects, your wishes regarding the use of your information will be respected. Please indicate your preference for the handling of your data by answering the questions at the end of this document. You have the option to remain completely anonymous, to have your name disassociated from your data, or to have your comments cited by name. There is also a question at the end of this form which gives you the opportunity to state whether or not you would like your questionnaire to be destroyed following completion of the thesis and subsequent associated publications.

*This questionnaire does not require you to identify yourself by name or institution, however, if you so wish, you may do so by writing your name and/or institution on your completed questionnaire.*

If you would like a copy of the completed questionnaire, please indicate this in the designated space below. The final results of this research project will appear in my Master of Arts thesis and subsequent associated publications, which, once completed, will be available from the University of Manitoba Library or by contacting me personally.

There is no credit or remuneration for participants of this study.

**Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.**

Principal researcher: Michelle Rydz – Winnipeg, MB – (204)-XXX-XXXX – (Email address removed)

Supervisor: Professor Tom Nesmith – Winnipeg, MB - (204) XXX-XXXX – (Email address removed)

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB) at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at

(204) 474-7122, or e-mail [margaret\\_bowman@umanitoba.ca](mailto:margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca). A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep for your records and reference.

I want my participation in this study to be completely anonymous and confidential.

\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

If “No” to the above, my comments can be linked to my name and position/location **(if I so choose to include them)**.

\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

I want my responses to this questionnaire to be destroyed upon completion of Michelle Rydz’s thesis and any subsequent associated publications.

\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_ No

Participant’s Signature

Date

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Researcher’s Signature

Date

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**Thank you for your participation!**

## Participatory Archiving Questionnaire

Traditionally, archival records are appraised, arranged, and described according to their actual inscriber or creator. This creator-based origin of records is known in archival terms as a record's provenance. While basing provenance on the physical inscriber or compiler of a record or collection of records is essential for ensuring their authenticity and reliability as evidence, it also limits what archivists know about the complex history of how and why records were actually created, and as a result limits how archivists can describe them, and ultimately, how they are understood when they are presented to the public. My thesis explores how archivists can get at a broader knowledge of the societal context in which records are created, or in other words, their societal provenance. Specifically, I am focussing on records *about* Aboriginal people that are created (inscribed) *by* non-Aboriginal people. Because such records are described by archives as records made by their actual inscriber or creating institution, much information about the subjects of these records – Aboriginal people – is left out of archival finding aids and descriptions. Through my thesis I will be exploring the possible use of a participatory approach to the archiving of these records, which will serve to include Aboriginal people in the archiving process and allow for richer, more representative archival descriptions, records, and processes.\*\*\* In order to do this, I need the input of the people who would be involved in, or have a stake in such a participatory process, namely Aboriginal people, archivists, and researchers. The questions that follow are intended to help me further explore and develop the concept of participatory archiving, based upon what these individuals (you!) think of the concept, and how they envision it being implemented.

**\*\*\* By archiving, I mean involvement in the following functions:**

**Appraisal**, which is the process through which collections and individual records are selected for retention in an archives.

**Arrangement and Description**, which is the process through which archivists prepare records for use by researchers. This includes the creation of finding aids and descriptive information about the records and/or collections, as well as their physical arrangement in archival folders and boxes.

**Public Programming**, includes the creation of exhibits, displays and website projects, the holding of speaker sessions, as well as other activities that promote both the archives itself and specific records with the archives.

**Conservation/Preservation**, is the process through records are given either preventative or restorative attention in order to ensure their continued existence. This work is done by or with the advice of a professional conservator.

**If you require more space to respond to any of the questions, you may write on the back of the questionnaire sheets, or attach additional pages.**

Please check **all** designations that apply to you:

Aboriginal person \_\_\_\_\_

Archivist \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher \_\_\_\_\_

Other(s) (either professional or cultural – Please Identify) \_\_\_\_\_

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1. Have you used information about Aboriginal people from an archives?

**Yes** \_\_\_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, how did you obtain this information?

- \_\_\_\_\_ Visited the archives in person  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Through the Internet (i.e. used records available on the archives website)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Through email (i.e. obtained digital copies of the records)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Through regular mail (i.e. obtained photocopies of the records)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Other (s) \_\_\_\_\_

Were you satisfied with the services provided?

**Yes** \_\_\_\_\_ **No** \_\_\_\_\_ **Somewhat** \_\_\_\_\_

What were the strengths and weaknesses of these services?

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2. Do you think that there is enough information in archival findings aids, websites, exhibits and publications about the role of Aboriginal people in the creation of records? (Please consider **both** records created *by* Aboriginal people and records created by non-Aboriginal people *about* them.)

**Yes** \_\_\_\_\_      **No** \_\_\_\_\_      **Not Sure** \_\_\_\_\_

How do you think more information about Aboriginal involvement in record creating processes could be included in these types of archival descriptions?

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3. The Canadian federal government (as well as provincial and civic governments) have, and continue to create records that document significant aspects of the lives of Aboriginal people (Status, non-Status, Inuit, and Métis). Do you think Aboriginal people should be involved in the archiving of such records?

**See page one for an explanation of what is meant by archiving.**

**Yes** \_\_\_\_\_      **No** \_\_\_\_\_

Why?

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4. If you answered **Yes** to Question 3, then through which archival functions do you think Aboriginal people should participate? Check as many as you feel are appropriate:

\_\_\_\_\_ Staffing of Archival Positions





6. What benefits/advantages do you envision resulting from the use of a participatory approach to archiving records about Aboriginal people that are created by non-Aboriginal people?

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7. What problems could you see arising as a result of implementing a participatory approach to archiving records about Aboriginal people that are created by non-Aboriginal people?

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8. Have you ever been involved in any intercultural participatory activities with an archives, museum, library, art gallery, or historic site?

**Yes** \_\_\_\_      **No** \_\_\_\_

If you answered **Yes**, please describe your role in the project (s), what the goal of the project was, as well as any obstacles or problems you encountered as a result of the intercultural nature of the project.

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If you have **not** been involved in any intercultural participatory activities with any of these institutions, please describe any other participatory activities you have been involved with, or have heard about.

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9. Do you think that a participatory approach could become a way of archiving for all types of records, not just those related to Aboriginal people?

**Yes** \_\_\_\_      **No** \_\_\_\_      **Not Sure** \_\_\_\_

Why?

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10. Any further comments?

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Thank you for your participation!

**Please return completed questionnaire in the provided envelope to:  
Michelle Rydz (Address removed)**

## APPENDIX B

### Self-Identification of Questionnaire Participants

<b>Number of Respondent</b>	<b>Aboriginal Person</b>	<b>Archivist</b>	<b>Researcher</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Geographical Location</b>	<b>Date of Response</b>
1	X	X			International	20/05/2008
2		X	X		Canada	07/12/2007
3		X	X		N/A	19/11/2007
4		X	X		Canada	19/12/2007
5		X			Canada	12/10/2007
6		X	X	Historian	Canada	6/10/2007
7	X	X	X		Canada	14/12/2007
8	X		X		N/A	30/11/2007
9	X		X	Professor	Canada	05/10/2007
10	X	X	X	Historian	Canada	27/10/2007
11			X		Canada	12/10/2007
12			X		Canada	07/11/2007
13			X		Canada	17/10/2007
14			X		N/A	26/06/2008
15		X			N/A	04/03/2008
16			X	Historian	Canada	27/05/2008
17		X			International	12/11/2007
18	X				International	10/03/2008
19	X			Archival Assistant	Canada	28/02/2008
20		X			United States	19/10/2007

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