

**COMING FULL CIRCLE?:  
ABORIGINAL ARCHIVES IN BRITISH COLUMBIA  
IN CANADIAN AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

by

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the past, present and future development and nature of Aboriginal archives and archiving in British Columbia, set in Canadian and international perspective. The thesis focuses on Aboriginal archives in BC because the higher number of First Nations there than elsewhere in Canada makes it one of the most prominent and important areas of Aboriginal archiving activity in the country. The thesis begins with an introduction to the holistic ways in which Aboriginal people in Canada traditionally recorded, preserved, and communicated knowledge and history over time, and thus the methods by which they “archived” up to the mid-twentieth century, in contrast to and compared with Euro-Canadian traditions of archiving. It then goes on to explore the various forces that directly and indirectly disrupted the processes by which Aboriginal culture and knowledge, and thus memory and identity, were transmitted from one generation to the next. As a result of these forces, and the inevitable intertwining of Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian cultures and worldviews, Aboriginal people increasingly found themselves having to access Euro-Canadian archives or establish their own along similar lines. In BC, where historically very few treaties were signed, the documentation created in the context of land claims and treaty negotiations in particular meant that such records were couched in occidental rather than Aboriginal people’s own cultural terms and thus demanded corresponding storage and use methods. Thus, the thesis suggests that such new approaches to Aboriginal archives and archiving were a “reactionary” or defensive response to legal, political, and social requirements and forces, rather than simply as a basis for communicating and recording a traditionally “holistic” sense of culture, memory, and identity. And, as will be seen, this reactionary response was not

limited to BC, but would reveal itself concurrently in the rest of Canada, and in other colonised countries such as Australia and the United States. With the results of a questionnaire responded to in Australia, Canada, and the U.S., the thesis then presents comparative national and international approaches to, experiences with, and views on Aboriginal archives and archiving. With these explorations in hand, the thesis concludes with the suggestion that Aboriginal archiving is now coming full circle, returning to its holistic roots, having been positively influenced by the power inherent in the reactionary approach, but also newly challenged with varying issues. At the same time, Aboriginal archiving has challenged and contributed to a redefinition of traditional, Euro-Canadian notions of archiving, and thus pushed the boundaries of archiving as we know it.

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## Introduction

This thesis examines the past, present and future development and nature of Aboriginal archives and archiving in British Columbia, set in Canadian and international perspective.<sup>1</sup> The thesis focuses on Aboriginal archives in BC because the higher number of First Nations there than elsewhere in Canada makes it one of the most prominent and important areas of Aboriginal archiving activity in the country.

The study of Aboriginal archives in BC, and in fact the world, is an intriguing and challenging one. The difficulty begins with definitions – indeed, what does “archives” mean from an Aboriginal perspective? As the first chapter will reveal, the understanding of “archives” for Aboriginal people in Canada up to the mid-twentieth century differed significantly from the Euro-Canadian understanding. Aboriginal methods and traditions of recording, maintaining and transmitting culture, memory, and identity, were traditionally holistic in nature. Archives did not reside in a building but lived, on a daily basis, among, interconnected with, and interpreted by the community, its people, the land, and an overarching spirit. Time was commonly understood in a circular fashion, and was not compartmentalised into the past, present, and the future, as with the Euro-Canadian tradition. Aboriginal archives did not reveal themselves in material documents, but had a

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, the terms “Aboriginal(s)” or “Aboriginal people(s)” will be used when referring to any of “the original peoples of North America and their descendants” – and specifically those in Canada – as defined by the Communications Branch of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada [INAC] in *Words First: An Evolving Terminology Relating to Aboriginal Peoples in Canada* (Ottawa: INAC, Communications Branch, September 2004), [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/wf/index\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/wf/index_e.html) (accessed 24 February 2008). In instances where sources refer to Canada’s Aboriginal people(s) using alternate terminology (i.e., “First Nations,” “Natives,” “Inuit,” “Metis,” etc.), the alternate terminology will be maintained when direct quotes are used. The term “Euro-Canadian people(s)” will be used to refer to those Canadians who are not the original peoples of North America and their descendants. Similarly, in instances where sources refer to Canada’s Euro-Canadian people(s) using alternate terminology (i.e., “Europeans,” “westerners,” “white,” etc.), the alternate terminology will be maintained when direct quotes are used.

strong basis in the oral tradition, with various tangible and intangible manifestations to provide provenance, reliability and authenticity.

It was these differing approaches and materials, however, which led to misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the Aboriginal “record,” and the belief that such archives were somehow inferior to Euro-Canadian archival traditions and certainly poor evidence of history. Nonetheless, despite the differences in methods and materials, it can be said that Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian archiving were actually analogous in approach as both had an underlying desire to remember and recall history, culture, knowledge, and identity, using set processes to ensure reliability and authenticity. Indeed, the desire to be recognised, remembered, and understood was certainly the same, even if the methods, protocols, and materials used to arrive at these goals varied significantly.

As Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian societies and cultures became ever more enmeshed, and particularly over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, stronger obstacles arose to question and challenge traditional Aboriginal ways of recalling and recording history and culture. Indeed, a number of external forces began to disrupt and threaten the processes and flow of cultures and knowledge systems, and thus memory and identity, from one generation to the next. Such forces included the direct and indirect results of colonisation, in the form of language loss, land dispossession, deliberate assimilation policies, discrimination, diseases, residential schools, and so on. The loss of culture meant a loss of identity, and thus a diminished or even completely lost understanding of Aboriginal records, traditions, and history.

As Canada approached the mid-twentieth century, there began a period of Aboriginal revival, which would lead into the current era of reconciliation and renewal. Governments began to change attitudes and policies, dismantle old assimilationist infrastructures, transfer services back to Aboriginal communities, provide economic support, and generally allow Aboriginal people to regain a sense of self-determination. With this came a renewed sense of identity and voice for Aboriginal people, who began to demand their rights be respected, their dispossessed lands be returned, and their voices be heard. At the same time, however, the nature of Aboriginal archiving and the resulting records began to change. After the devastating disruption to the transmission of their culture and knowledge systems, Aboriginal people increasingly found themselves having to access materials in Euro-Canadian archives (or establish their own along similar lines) in order to rebuild their identities, reinterpret misconceptions about their cultures, and in particular, prove in courts of law (where their oral histories continued to be misunderstood) that their title to their traditional lands and their rights continued to exist. In BC, where historically very few treaties were signed, the documentation created in the context of land claims and treaty negotiations in particular meant that such records were couched in occidental rather than their own cultural terms and thus demanded corresponding storage and use methods.

Therefore, through examples and discussion, chapter two will reveal that this shift resulted in a more “reactionary” response to remembering and archiving for Aboriginal people – quite apart from their traditionally holistic approach. Particularly as a result of the evidentiary (and, therefore, occidental) demands of court cases and the transfer of responsibilities and services to Aboriginal individuals, groups, and organisations, but also



due to the emergence of a stronger (and increasingly acknowledged) Aboriginal voice, efforts towards self-determination, and the reclamation and reassertion of cultural identities, Aboriginal people found themselves accessing, creating, and maintaining Euro-Canadian-derived documentation. Indeed, it is no coincidence that Aboriginal-run and -created archives (as derived from and influenced by the Euro-Canadian definition of this term) have predominantly appeared over the past thirty to forty years – not only in BC, but nationally and internationally as well.

This “reactionary” response to remembrance became a collection of all manner of documentation in defensive response to legal, political, and social requirements, rather than simply as a holistic and daily approach to creating, maintaining, and transmitting memory. As will be seen, this reactionary response was not limited to BC, but would reveal itself concurrently in the rest of Canada, and in other colonised countries, including the United States and Australia. And, of course, this reactionary response has brought with it a new set of issues, thus affecting not only traditional Aboriginal ways of “archiving,” but Aboriginal identity itself and its related cultures and worldviews.

With the results of a questionnaire responded to in Australia, Canada, and the United States, by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal archivists, librarians, community historians, and other scholars, the final chapter presents comparative national and international approaches to, experiences with, and views on existing models of Aboriginal archives and archiving. This chapter also reveals the other main challenge of studying Aboriginal archives in BC and the world – namely, their low visibility and the lack of literature on the topic. Although writing on Aboriginal archives has increased in the past thirty to forty years – coinciding, it seems, with the appearance of “reactionary”

archives – very little has been written from the perspective of Aboriginal-run and -created archives. Indeed, in a now more complex archival setting – one in which both Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian type records are being created, utilised, and stored – what roles are Aboriginal-run and -created archives playing and which directions are they taking?

After exploring the results of the questionnaire, additional information gathered from archives with a web presence, and through discussion of various innovations and protocols that have been developed in each of the three countries, the thesis concludes with the statement that Aboriginal archives are in fact beginning to come full circle, and returning to their holistic roots, whether through the use of new technologies, the adaptation of Euro-Canadian methods to suit local needs, or simply their integration into larger heritage centres. The future of Aboriginal archives and archiving in BC, and indeed the world, lies in innovation and adaptability – the ability of Aboriginal people to take Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal archival methods and make them their own, push boundaries, and adapt and shift. Indeed, this innovation and adaptability has had the added benefit of challenging and pushing the boundaries of Euro-Canadian archiving methods as well. While this thesis did not allow for an exhaustive study of Aboriginal archives and archiving throughout the world, it is hoped that it will inspire the future archivist or knowledge keeper with the tools to maintain and not compromise the very existence of traditional or contemporary Aboriginal memory, culture, and identity.

## Chapter 1

### Holistic Memory: An Introduction to Aboriginal Archival Traditions in Canada

“I think Mr. Cook [sic] will find that the existing records of the Indian tribes in Canada are meagre and not of much importance.”<sup>1</sup>

Despite the fact that this comment was made over a century ago and that, today, numerous Canadian archives at all levels maintain material about Aboriginal people, still very few of these records have been created by or obtained directly from Aboriginal people, let alone housed in uniquely Aboriginal archival institutions. Among the reasons for this are the marginalisation of Aboriginal peoples and their different recording, remembering, and archiving traditions, which have often been viewed as inferior to Euro-Canadian traditions and even irrelevant to an understanding of the key features of the past, if not misunderstood outright. There are numerous examples of uniquely Aboriginal methods of recording information and types of “records,” such as pictographs, totem poles, mapping, oral history, and so on. What is also clear is that Aboriginal people’s

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<sup>1</sup> National Archives of Canada [NAC] RG 10, Volume 3081, File 270000-1, Reel C-11321, Letter to the Honourable Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior, from Duncan Campbell Scott [Department of Indian Affairs’ accountant], Ottawa, 29 January 1904, quoted in Brendan Frederick R. Edwards, *Paper Talk: A History of Libraries, Print Culture, and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada before 1960* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 93. Charles Angus Cooke, a Mohawk who began work in the Records Branch of the Department of Indian Affairs as a clerk in 1893, was responsible for the translation and classification of records in the Iroquois dialects. Ten years on, Cooke was also gathering information for a history of Aboriginal cultures and languages, which prompted him to write a letter to the Hon. Sifton, suggesting that the Department bring order to its disorganised library and develop an “Indian National Library,” which would collect literature and records not only about but also by Aboriginal people, and that the contents should be readily accessible to, and a portion could circulate among, Departmental staff and status Indians. Sifton passed the suggestion of the Indian National Library on to Scott, who dismissed outright both the idea that Aboriginal people could contribute literature and records to such an institution, as well as the notion that the contents might circulate. Scott did, however, act on the idea of bringing order to the library, and also suggested that older records about Aboriginal history that were being (or had been) transferred to the Dominion Archivist be copied and kept as part of the library. Unfortunately, Euro-Canadians created these records, and the contents of the library remained inaccessible to all but a select few Departmental staff members for many years to come. See Edwards, 89-95.

methods of “archiving,” and indeed their worldviews, are traditionally holistic in nature, considering the tangible along with the intangible, linking memory and history to people and the land, and interrelating the past, present, and future – quite apart from, though no less valid than, the more narrowly-defined, Euro-Canadian archival traditions and “Western” worldviews. This chapter will therefore be an introduction to the ways in which Aboriginal people in Canada have traditionally communicated over time, and thus the unique and holistic methods by which they have “archived” (recorded, maintained, and passed on information about culture, memory, identity, etc.) up to the mid-twentieth century, in contrast to and compared with Euro-Canadian traditions of archiving. It will also introduce the beginnings of a transition from this holistic approach as Aboriginal culture, society and, thus, their ways of understanding and transmitting knowledge and history, were challenged and interrupted by external forces, including attempted assimilation through deliberate policies and the overwhelming presence of Euro-Canadian society.

Historically, types of evidence of Aboriginal peoples most often found their way into museums rather than archives because they “were not considered ‘archival’ in either their nature, purpose, or form. Rather, they were ‘ethnographic’ ... [and] fast on [their] way to misrepresentation.”<sup>2</sup> Art galleries eventually followed in a similar vein, giving rise to an uneasy dichotomy between Aboriginal materials as iconic (or symbolic of a more general identity or larger culture) in the museum context and aesthetic (an item or experience in and of itself) in the gallery.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, equally troublesome has been the

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<sup>2</sup> Laura Millar, “Subject or Object? Shaping and Reshaping the Intersections between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Records” *Archival Science* 6, nos. 3-4 (2006): 341.

<sup>3</sup> See Ruth B. Phillips, “Indian Art: Where do you put it?” *MUSE* 6(3) (Autumn 1988): 64-67.

collection of Aboriginal records (and especially records about Aboriginal people) in the context of Euro-Canadian archives where such materials have been arranged, and most often created, from a Western point of view. As a result, a tension, or differentiation, between Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal traditions of recording, recalling, and archiving, was established early on. From the Euro-Canadian archival perspective, Aboriginal records were better accepted as ethnographic, aesthetic, highly suspect, and certainly poor evidence of history, especially *Canadian* history. Indeed, when faced with issues related to the dispossession of Aboriginal lands, for example, it was often more convenient for many Euro-Canadians to dismiss Aboriginal traditions of recording, recalling, and archiving outright.

Perhaps the best way to explore the tension between Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian traditions of recording, recalling, and archiving, is to begin with an examination of what “archives,” as a multi-dimensional word, means in the Euro-Canadian sense. At the most basic level, “archive” is defined as “a collection of records of an institution, family, etc.,” and as “a place where such records are kept.”<sup>4</sup> The Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) further defines archives as follows:

An archives works to acquire, preserve, and make available material collected under the terms of a particular mandate - whether that be to document a community or business, to reflect government policies, or many other reasons. Archival evidence is based around the concept of a record - which can be a paper document, a photograph, a map, a film, sound recordings, an electronic diskette, documentary art, or an architectural drawing. ... Archives ensure that the records of today are preserved for future generations. People can then use the records to study and understand the

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<sup>4</sup> “Archive,” in *Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus*, general consultant J.M. Sinclair (Glasgow: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 57.

life, ideas and thoughts of their original creators, linking the past, present and future.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, “archives” is understood as the edifice in which collections of records are kept and, in turn, as the term used to describe the records themselves, which can encompass a variety of media and preferably originals. In the Euro-Canadian understanding of the term, these records are also tangible evidence documenting the functioning and organisation of a community, business, government, or individual, and are central to, and reflective of, the mandate of an archives. Beyond this immediate evidential value, the records also have informational value from the perspective of research and study. And, a Euro-Canadian archives follows a linear sense of time, considering the past, the present, and the future as separate, but related notions of time. Of course, archives are more complex than this, and certainly more subjective than these brief definitions impart. However, right into the twentieth century, using the archival tools of *respect des fonds*, original order, diplomatics, the Canadian concept of “total archives,” and so on, archivists and archives believed they could objectively “preserve records as evidence of the functional-structural context and actions that caused their creation.”<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, there is power and subjectivity behind the creation and selection of every record and, indeed, behind the history of every record. Sometimes this power can be intensified by the very choice the archivist makes to include a record in an archives or exclude it.

Such is the case with Canada’s archival tradition, beginning with the “total archives” concept, which has espoused the ideal of collecting all types of Canada-related

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<sup>5</sup> ACA, Public Awareness Committee, “What is an Archives?” January 2005, <http://archivists.ca/downloads/documentloader.aspx?id=4161> (accessed 24 February 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Terry Cook, “Archives, Evidence, and Memory: Thoughts on a Divided Tradition,” *Archival Issues* 22, no. 2 (1997): 177.

records, regardless of medium and source, whether public or private, and documenting all aspects of human life.<sup>7</sup> Beginning in the late nineteenth century, this also meant the meticulous copying of numerous original documents, predominantly housed in British institutions. These efforts aimed to establish a distinct identity for a newly formed nation. Aboriginal-related records also found a place in these archives, but only in textual and documentary records created, selected, and filtered through Euro-Canadian eyes. Thus, while it may have seemed wholly neutral and objective for Canadian archives to collect all Canada-related records in all media, the simple choice to exclude or selectively include Aboriginal-created records was in fact a subjective and powerful act. Furthermore, the collection and use of specific archival records to form and uphold a Canadian identity was also subjective because, although it was believed to be tangible proof of the “legitimacy and authenticity”<sup>8</sup> of the fledgling nation’s identity, it can be more readily argued that it was largely a “social fiction constructed culturally for political and historical reasons.”<sup>9</sup> What was most important in the total archives tradition, however, was that evidence was documentary and tangible in nature. While oral history and recordings eventually took their (modest) place in Canadian archives, they were not appreciated as evidence in and of themselves, and were often viewed as reliable and authentic only when backed-up by textual evidence, or “provenance.” Knowing the provenance of a record assists in determining the reliability and authenticity of a record, but Aboriginal provenance was almost always viewed as suspect.

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<sup>7</sup> For an overview of the “total archives” idea, see Wilfred I. Smith, “‘Total Archives’: The Canadian Experience,” in *Canadian Archival Studies and the Rediscovery of Provenance*, ed. Tom Nesmith (Metuchen, NJ and London: Scarecrow Press, 1993), 133-150.

<sup>8</sup> Elisabeth Kaplan, “We Are What We Collect, We Collect What We Are: Archives and the Construction of Identity,” *The American Archivist* 63, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2000): 149.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

Further to the subjectivity of archives (and archivists), postmodernism has revealed, and leading Canadian archivist Terry Cook has argued that, “there is not one narrative in a series or collection of records, but many narratives, many stories, serving many purposes for many audiences, across time and space. Documents are thus dynamic, not static. And the archivist as much as the creator or researcher is one of the narrators.”<sup>10</sup> Further to this line of thinking, leading Canadian archivist Tom Nesmith points out that “some of what makes a record meaningful is inscribed within it, but often much of what makes it intelligible is not. Thus most of a record’s ‘recordness’ lies outside its physical borders within the context of its interpretation.”<sup>11</sup> And, this interpretation is ever-shifting because records are organic and constantly evolving as context changes, despite archivists’ noble efforts to keep records “static.” In addition, sometimes the narrative (or record) that is deliberately or inadvertently excluded (the “gaps”) can reveal as much information as the narrative that has been included. This builds upon the concept that archives collect and preserve not only evidence (and information) but also memory (or collective identity), and the two must coexist because, “without reliable evidence set in context, memory becomes bogus, or at least is transformed into imagination, [and] without the influence of and need for memory, evidence is useless and unused.”<sup>12</sup>

Memory, like identity, is also subjective and limited because society (as with archives) is more apt to remember the famous and the infamous, “privileging ... certain

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<sup>10</sup> Terry Cook, “Fashionable Nonsense or Professional Rebirth: Postmodernism and the Practice of Archives,” *Archivaria* 51 (Spring 2001): 26.

<sup>11</sup> Tom Nesmith, “Still Fuzzy, But More Accurate: Some Thoughts on the ‘Ghosts’ of Archival Theory,” *Archivaria* 47 (Spring 1999): 144.

<sup>12</sup> Terry Cook, “Archives, Evidence, and Memory,” 179.



records and records creators, and ... marginalizing or silencing ... others,”<sup>13</sup> as in the case of records created by Aboriginal people. This is not only because “with memory comes forgetting” but, since over the course of the twentieth century there has been a growing volume of records created, archives have had to select a small portion of them that can and must be kept.<sup>14</sup> Thus, even textual records can be fallible – like memory or the oft-accused oral history tradition – when decisions are made about what will be kept or discarded, who will be included or excluded.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, even if all records about a particular event were maintained, they would still only provide a partial glimpse of the event. Add to this the unintentional (and sometimes intentional) destruction of those records that do exist, it is hardly surprising that ultimately “archives offer researchers a sliver of a sliver of a sliver.”<sup>16</sup> And, unfortunately, for contemporary students who consult existing records which interpret, observe or report on Aboriginal people from a non-Aboriginal perspective, these slivers are often viewed as “primary sources and they carry weight.”<sup>17</sup>

While methods and traditions of recording, remembering, and archiving – and, indeed, worldviews – are certainly not uniform among Aboriginal peoples, there are some areas of commonality. But what exactly is the definition of “archives” in the Aboriginal sense? Is “archives,” as explored above, even the correct term and notion to reflect traditional, much less contemporary, Aboriginal ways of knowing? The definition of “archives” was in fact the first question addressed on the questionnaire conducted for this

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> William T. Hagan, “Archival Captive – The American Indian,” *The American Archivist* 41, no. 2 (April 1978): 136.

<sup>16</sup> Verne Harris, “Claiming Less, Delivering More: A Critique of Positivist Formulations on Archives in South Africa,” *Archivaria* 44 (Fall 1997): 137.

<sup>17</sup> Hagan, “Archival Captive,” 137.

thesis (see Appendix D). When asked what she thought archives meant from an Aboriginal perspective, Kirsten Thorpe, an archivist of Aboriginal and European descent at the State Records Authority of New South Wales in Australia, was quite clearly identifying non-Aboriginal archives when she defined them as “evidence of Government Acts that had affects [sic] on Aboriginal communities through discriminatory policies,” as well as “biased versions of history/opinions.”<sup>18</sup> When responding to the same question, Sul’ma’ejote (Dr. Darryl Babe Wilson), a retired professor and Aboriginal person from northeastern California, noted, “the old ones say the mind is all of the knowledge and experiences of previous generations that have come to you. The mind then would be the archives.”<sup>19</sup> This definition is certainly quite apart from the non-Aboriginal notion of archives as edifice and tangible record. A third definition, from an anonymous BC Aboriginal archives respondent who is also of Aboriginal and European descent, reasserts the fact that there are indeed numerous Aboriginal cultures and groups in existence, and thus there can be many ways to define “archives” in terms of both contents and setting:

If traditionally we look at ‘archives’ as an historical record of an individual or an organization, we could also think of archives as the oral tradition(s) of a Nation; or collectivity of Nations. The oral tradition could be written in narrative, song, dance, ceremony, oratory, fine art, potlatch witnessing, winter counts (Blackfoot), sacred scrolls (Ojibwe). From Aboriginal perspectives it could also be carried in digital formats, tapes, interview transcripts, as well as organizational and individual record collections. The location where the archives is kept could be a quanset [sic] hut, a library, a band office, cultural centre etc.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Completed questionnaire to author, 1 April 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Completed questionnaire to author, 8 March 2008.

<sup>20</sup> Completed questionnaire to author, 23 July 2008.

In Canada, Aboriginal history, stories and knowledge were not only largely maintained in an oral tradition, but they were often holistically connected with and inseparable from what Euro-Canadians viewed as ethnographic, aesthetic, and suspect: such tangible and intangible items as witnesses, regalia, family crests, totem poles, songs, dances, and so on. Oral tradition was the responsibility of those specially appointed or chosen to act as historians or bearers of different kinds of knowledge for the community. The act of passing on history, memory and knowledge (especially the clarification of family ties and rights to land) was in itself a complex affair and bound up in its own traditions, methods and protocols. In fact, all of these elements tied together ensured a sense of “provenance” and reliability for Aboriginal people.<sup>21</sup>

Although oral tradition played a significant role in Aboriginal cultures and societies, this does not mean literacy (or reading and writing) did not also have a place, as will be discussed later. Tangible items such as totem poles and regalia can actually be seen as forms of “visual literacy” or “material manifestations of orality.”<sup>22</sup> In fact, along with oral tradition, visual and written literacy were both important to and had a role to play in the unique knowledge systems that each Aboriginal culture possessed.<sup>23</sup> Nonetheless, because Aboriginal cultures have been predominantly centred on the oral tradition, literate cultures have historically considered themselves and their ways of knowing superior, as has often been the case from the popular, Eurocentric view.

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<sup>21</sup> Jennifer Vallee, “Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Tribal Council Archives: Archives and the Oral Tradition,” *AABC Newsletter* 7, no. 4 (Fall 1997): 8.

<sup>22</sup> Kimberley L. Lawson, “Precious Fragments: First Nations Materials in Archives, Libraries and Museums” (M.L.I.S. thesis, University of British Columbia, 2004), 3, 3n3.

<sup>23</sup> “There is not a single knowledge system shared by all First Nations: each nation develops its own system incorporating its own language, worldview, values, art symbols, culture and intellectual property. ... These systems are the ways in which knowledge is developed, shared, transmitted, authenticated, made meaningful and kept reliable.” Quoted from Lawson, “Precious Fragments,” 2.

However, orality can be viewed as simply another path to the same destination as reading and writing, complete with analogous steps that ensure knowledge is developed and passed on reliably and authentically. The main difference, as Sul'ma'ejote has commented, is that for Aboriginal culture, "oral literature usually has the universe and the landscape for proof," while "the establishment has the printed word for proof."<sup>24</sup> And, just as interpretations of records in Euro-Canadian archives have constantly shifted, changed, and revealed (or obscured) a multitude of narratives, so too have oral histories and traditions. Indeed, it was the constant passing on of history, memory and knowledge by Aboriginal cultures in oral form that allowed for their "records" to be continually reinterpreted. This fluidity and organic quality shares the same "purpose ... [with] written history," which is "to allow people to interpret the past and present in new ways."<sup>25</sup> For instance, the Dane-zaa of northeastern British Columbia have passed on songs and stories from one generation to the next using oral tradition and, by doing so, "each new oral performance authorizes the song or story anew."<sup>26</sup> And, it was through the "regular recitation of oral narratives (familiar stories, histories, genealogies, mythologies, and legends)," along with the observation of elders and received instruction, that Salish people of southern BC not only gained their education, but also allowed their oral history and the act of narration to perpetuate and flourish.<sup>27</sup>

Aboriginal worldviews and, thus, archiving and ways of remembering were holistic in nature. Indeed, as noted above, when it came to oral tradition, it included "the

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<sup>24</sup> Sul'ma'ejote, "WAHACH," *Hay'dutsi'la* (weblog), 13 January 2008, <http://www.haydutsila.com/2008/01/wahach.html> (accessed 8 October 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Julie Cruikshank, "Oral Tradition and Oral History: Reviewing Some Issues," *The Canadian Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (September 1994): 410.

<sup>26</sup> Robin Ridington and Jillian Ridington, "Archiving Actualities: Sharing Authority with Dane-zaa First Nations," *Comma: International Journal on Archives* 2003.1:66.

<sup>27</sup> Bruce Granville Miller, "Salish," in *Aboriginal Peoples of Canada: A Short Introduction*, ed. Paul Robert Magocsi (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 247.

universe and the landscape for proof.” Holism, or the interconnectedness and interdependency of all things, was not just an Aboriginal notion but a universal belief among most traditional societies. Indeed, knowing that everything was related brought with it the understanding that whatever one did would have “consequences and therefore [carried] responsibilities.”<sup>28</sup> Traditional societies understood themselves to be a part of a greater whole, and that they had a role to play and were embedded in and inseparable from the greater context of nature and the earth, which was considered sacred, revered and respected. Working with and understanding local conditions and resources led to a variety of diverse cultures that knew how to survive in and interact with their immediate surroundings in a mutually beneficial way. With modern science, however, the “Western” world has separated and compartmentalised life and nature into various parts – indeed elevated humans above and in control of nature – moving from observing the whole to experimenting on the parts, and consequently losing the ability to see how its actions and interactions with the parts affect the whole.<sup>29</sup> As Erica-Irene Daes describes it, “present-day Western ways of thinking [have separated] arts, religion, political organization, kinship, nature, and science.”<sup>30</sup> This has resulted in the loss of diversity in cultures and nature itself, and led to a more globalised, homogeneous “monoculture.”<sup>31</sup>

This separation into parts versus the holism of traditional cultures is clearly seen in the differences between Aboriginal notions of time and the Euro-Canadian, linear standard. The notion of circles of time was a common element in all Aboriginal

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<sup>28</sup> David Suzuki and Peter Knudtson, *Wisdom of the Elders: Native and Scientific Ways of Knowing about Nature*, 1<sup>st</sup> Greystone ed. (Toronto: Stoddart, 1992; Vancouver/Toronto: Greystone Books, 2006), xxv. Citations are to the Greystone edition.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, xxii, xxiv, xxv, xxviii, 13.

<sup>30</sup> Erica-Irene A. Daes, “Defending Indigenous Peoples’ Heritage” (keynote address at Protecting Knowledge: Traditional Resource Rights in the New Millennium, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, Vancouver, BC, 23-26 February, 2000), <http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/files/PDF/Keynote.pdf>, 4 (accessed 18 May 2008).

<sup>31</sup> Suzuki and Knudtson, *Wisdom of the Elders*, xxviii.

societies. For instance, the sun and its course symbolically represented a day, and thus its continued cycles represented the infiniteness of time.<sup>32</sup> The sun was understood as “[giving] life, [destroying] and [recreating] without end the reality in which ... [humankind moves and thinks]’.”<sup>33</sup> For the Dunne-za (an alternate spelling of Dane-zaa noted above) of BC, for example, the circular course of the sun is but one of many connections this First Nation has to the concept of circles of time, as their lives “have always moved to a circular rhythm,” informing even the passing of knowledge from elder to youth.<sup>34</sup> Building on this circular concept, David T. McNab has suggested that, in general, the notion of “circles of time is a representation of Aboriginal history that is not bounded by time or by place.”<sup>35</sup> Echoing this, he goes on to uphold the idea that Aboriginal traditions of recording, remembering, and archiving were holistic in nature:

The European, so-called scientific western tradition of history has seen, sometimes in its crudest forms, the relationship between people and the land and its uses as a separate category and process. From Aboriginal traditions these categories are wholly artificial and do not really exist. These have a holistic view and see land and man and nature and the uses that one makes of the lands and waters as one within a circle of time. They come from a single source – from the Creator who made all living things and nature. It is not enough to analyze each separately. The sum of the parts does not in this instance comprise the whole.<sup>36</sup>

Therefore, unlike the Euro-Canadian tradition of remembering and archiving that demands textual and documentary back-up and evidence, and sees the past, present, and

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<sup>32</sup> David T. McNab, “The Spirit of *Delgamuukw* and Aboriginal Oral Traditions in Ontario,” in *Beyond the Nass Valley: National Implications of the Supreme Court’s Delgamuukw Decision*, ed. Owen Lippert (Vancouver, BC: Fraser Institute, 2000), 274 and 279n6.

<sup>33</sup> Miguel Leon-Portilla, *Time and Reality in the Thought of the Maya* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 1988), 18-19, quoted in *Ibid.*, 279 n. 6.

<sup>34</sup> Suzuki and Knudtson, *Wisdom of the Elders*, 148.

<sup>35</sup> McNab, “Spirit,” 274.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 281-82 n. 14.

future as linked, but separate categories, “First Nations remember and understand, through their stories, their internal and external landscapes of being and becoming. There are no boundaries and no beginning or end points. In short, there is no periodization of history.”<sup>37</sup> As historian Gerald Friesen confirms:

European conventions that divide the human actor from the environment, and this world from the next, do not prevail in the traditional Aboriginal depiction of life’s dimensions. The sharp contrast between the two visions constitutes powerful testimony to the distinctive character of time-space relations in traditional Aboriginal culture.<sup>38</sup>

Further to the notion of circles of time are the concepts of “ecological” and “structural” time. Ecological time is determined by patterns in nature, which not only follow the solar cycle, but also the lunar and seasonal. This is not unlike contemporary notions of time in which a year is divided into the four seasons. For the Huron and the Stó:lō-Coast Salish, for instance, months were named according to observable changes in nature, and people organised their lives and economic activities around changes in the weather, physical environment, animals, vegetation, food source availability, and so on.<sup>39</sup> The additional concept of “structural time” was also used by Aboriginal people to “[mark] the passing of the generations and [explain] the interaction of groups within them.”<sup>40</sup> Among the Blackfoot and Dakota Sioux, for example, “winter counts” operated much like the Euro-Canadian structural (or linear) calendar year, but followed “the longer rhythms of the annual cycle of winter and summer to record a structural time representing

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>38</sup> Gerald Friesen, *Citizens and Nation: An Essay on History, Communication, and Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 220-21.

<sup>39</sup> Friesen, *Citizens and Nation*, 35, 37. *Sqwé lqwels ye Stó:lō*, a newsletter produced by the former Stó:lō Nation (Chilliwack, BC), includes unique monthly names on its covers. For instance, April is “Temk wik wexel: Time for Baby Sockeye Salmon,” as seen in *Sqwé lqwels ye Stó:lō* 5, no. 1 (April 2002).

<sup>40</sup> Friesen, *Citizens and Nation*, 35.

a chronology that extended over several generations, each ‘year’ associated with a memorable event,” rather than by a date or cyclical number.<sup>41</sup> For the Dakota Sioux, winter counts took the form of ““a sequence of picture writings on buffalo hide: the inundation, the war, the great snowfall, the disastrous hunt, the construction of a new town by the whites, and so on. . . . In the Dakota Sioux’s calendar, time and history appear to be the same.””<sup>42</sup>

In addition to time and history appearing to be the same, in Aboriginal experience there is also a connection between the past, present, and future, between the spiritual world and the real world, between dreams and reality.<sup>43</sup> All of these elements work together simultaneously to shape and inform Aboriginal history and they are, in a sense, understood to be one and the same. In fact these “links are the product of a person’s power or knowledge.”<sup>44</sup> Thus, “Indigenous artists and scholars share a worldview that privileges cultural knowledge over information and *place* as the primary reference point for meaning and creative work.”<sup>45</sup> And, further to the notion of interconnectedness, “every living thing has a relationship to every other and the events that occur in one’s lifetime have an immediate impact on one’s children and grandchildren. The seventh generation is immediate and close.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, it is evident that Aboriginal ways of

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>42</sup> Anthony Aveni, *Empires of Time: Calendars, Clocks, and Cultures* (New York: Kodansha International, 1995), 122, quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Friesen, *Citizens and Nation*, 35-39.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>45</sup> Tressa Berman, “Indigenous Arts, (Un)Titled,” in *Safeguarding Traditional Cultures: A Global Assessment of the 1989 UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore*, edited and webbed by Peter Seitel (UNESCO; Washington, DC: Centre for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Smithsonian Institution, 1999), <http://www.folklife.si.edu/resources/Unesco/berman.htm> (accessed 24 February 2008). Emphasis in original.

<sup>46</sup> McNab, “Spirit,” 280n9. See also Keith Thor Carlson, “Expressions of Collective Identity,” in *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, ed. Keith Thor Carlson; Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, cultural advisor; Jan Perrier, graphic artist/illustrator (Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre; Seattle: University of Washington Press; Chilliwack: Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 2001), 28, for a brief description of the connection



knowing, remembering, and being are holistic and collective in nature: “They emphasize community-wide discussion, the necessity of collective readiness for action, the absence of coercion, and the evaluation of intangible as well as tangible factors that might shape events.”<sup>47</sup> Thought, action and relations with the environment are inseparable.

Further to this holistic nature, it has been suggested that “far from the objectivity, precision, and lessons that are the goal of Europe’s literate history, the Aboriginal narrative will lay no claim to being better or worse than another account.”<sup>48</sup> This can be observed within Stó:lō-Coast Salish collective culture and identity, which includes narratives and notions that might often be contradictory from one community or family to the next, despite sharing a common language. While there may be an unspoken acceptance of one story over another or of all stories as important in their own ways, or less frequently, efforts made to “reconcile difference in historical narratives[,] ... differences are accepted and celebrated as contributing to the richer fabric of the collective whole.”<sup>49</sup> It is understood that different communities and families have their own roles to play and bear varying narratives, and therefore “such apparent contradictions [in narratives and notions] actually form healthy strategies for community prosperity.”<sup>50</sup> Here again, the diversity of Aboriginal cultures can be observed.

While the notion of actually maintaining varying narratives (or records) for the same story may seem an archivist’s nightmare in the Euro-Canadian tradition (despite the

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with relatives (past and future) up to seven generations apart from current living relatives in Stó:lō-Coast Salish culture. A similar concept for the Seneca Nation of Indians (eastern United States) is described in David George-Shongo, “Tribal Archives and Records Management,” *The Records Manager: The Newsletter of the Society of American Archivists Records Management Roundtable* 2, no. 2 (March 2008), <http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/recmgmt/RMRTMar2008.pdf>, 16. (accessed 18 October 2008).

<sup>47</sup> Friesen, *Citizens and Nation*, 49.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>49</sup> Carlson, “Introduction,” in *Stó:lō-Coast Salish*, 1.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, and Carlson, “Expressions,” in *Stó:lō-Coast Salish*, 24.

postmodern understanding that there are several narratives within a series or collection of records, though one narrative may be favoured over another), provided the appointed historian within an Aboriginal community or family maintains provenance, their narratives will be considered reliable and authentic. Indeed, in Stó:lō-Coast Salish society, deliberate tampering with narratives that have been handed down from historian to historian will not only tarnish the historian's reputation, but that of their story and their family. It is believed that such action will also bring "physical harm" to the listeners themselves.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, unlike the Euro-Canadian understanding of "archives" as an edifice or centrally held collection of tangible records, it seems that Aboriginal traditions of recording, remembering, and archiving understood and embraced early on that "archives" are subjective and multi-layered, and that all elements have a part to play, thus resulting in a more holistic approach.

Aboriginal notions of archives seem to indeed be multi-faceted. It exists in the form of "community knowledge"<sup>52</sup> and the embeddedness of culture, life and nature, rather than simply as tangible information, records, and evidence. It reveals and sustains itself in oral traditions, songs, and objects, but also in actions without words, in such a way that "a group's survival skills and sense of life's meaning are passed on to those who follow"<sup>53</sup> by the people themselves and seemingly as a part of daily life.<sup>54</sup> The Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Tribal Council Archives in Cranbrook, southeastern British Columbia, serves as an excellent illustration of the unique aspects of the Aboriginal archival edifice. While

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<sup>51</sup> Carlson, "Introduction," in *Stó:lō-Coast Salish*, 1.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>54</sup> Adele Perry, "The Colonial Archive on Trial: Possession, Dispossession, and History in *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*," in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, ed. Antoinette Burton (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 336.

this tribal council does indeed boast an archives (in the Euro-Canadian sense of the term), the community and reference policy view the archives as more of a springboard or messenger, pointing the researcher to the true record, the preferred record, the “heritage authority,” which is the oral source, found physically outside of the archives in the community and in the form of an Elder. Even if the record or information also exists in tangible form in the archives, the oral record is the first and preferred choice so that the importance of the Ktunaxa Nation’s oral tradition is maintained and perpetuated.<sup>55</sup> This is not to say that the tangible, written and recorded material in the archives is considered suspect or unimportant. In fact, these items are considered to have some measure of reliability and completeness, but recording removes the “context of the oral tradition,” and writing and transcription involves the conversion of this Nation’s language into the English language, which can be troublesome as “different languages have different worlds.”<sup>56</sup>

The Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Tribal Council Archives has as its “basis ... the administrative records of the Tribal Council,” but in its attempts to maintain the importance of the oral tradition and record and, faced with the “increase in a literate tradition[,] ... the Archives [realistically] serves as an intersection along the heritage continuum where oral and written elements converge to reflect a heritage reality.”<sup>57</sup> Therefore, the archives plays a dual role. On the one hand, it is the main and reliable source “when the informational content is used for purposes other than traditional Ktunaxa activities (communications with the federal and provincial government or

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<sup>55</sup> Vallee, 7.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 7.

transactions with a forestry company, for example).”<sup>58</sup> On the other, when used for traditional Ktunaxa purposes, it acts as a “record that heritage exists” and certainly that it exists beyond the physical walls of the archives.<sup>59</sup> As a result, it could be surmised that this Aboriginal archives (as edifice and contents) primarily exists to serve the needs of the Euro-Canadian community – and likely also to maintain tribal council records that have been created using Euro-Canadian records management methods – while the Aboriginal way of archiving and remembering is quite fully integrated into and a part of the community and oral tradition itself.

Returning to the Euro-Canadian definition of “archives” presented earlier, in which it is noted that archives allow people to “use the records to study and understand the life, ideas and thoughts of their original creators, linking the past, present and future,” there are regulations and legislation that protect such records in Euro-Canadian as well as Aboriginal “archives.” The difference is that such protection is for the individual in the former, and for individuals, families, and even communities in the latter. For the Ktunaxa, private topics such as religion and sacred sites are protected by being maintained strictly in the oral tradition and discussed among community members only. Such topics will never be recorded and made available through a Euro-Canadian-style archives, “so when making Ktunaxa heritage services available, the Archives inevitably hits an impassable wall which surrounds those parts of the heritage experienced only by its participants.”<sup>60</sup>

As noted above, while the oral tradition plays the most significant role in traditional Aboriginal ways of communicating, recording, maintaining, and passing on

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 9.

information, culture, memory, and identity, there are also tangible items that may supplement oral tradition and can be compared to the Euro-Canadian understanding of the “record.” For instance, west coast Aboriginal “crest art ... [in the form of] a totem pole, dancing headdress, house-frontal painting, or decorated blanket,” not only acted as artistic representations of the real and mythic worlds, but also as “evidence” of “the owner’s mythic origins,” thereby “[verifying] and [validating] the social system.”<sup>61</sup> In fact, despite their aesthetic aspects, it is believed that these tangible items primarily served symbolic purposes among Aboriginal societies of the west coast. Kinship was most commonly represented by paintings and sculpture, lines of descent were represented by poles (totem, house, and mortuary), and paintings, carvings, tattoos, and clothing generally represented clan affiliation.<sup>62</sup>

It is of course tempting to surmise that, since they represented and held Aboriginal history and information, some of these objects may have actually been created as “records” unto themselves and apart from the oral tradition. However, it was the oral tradition that was the “principal method of communication and documentation” for Aboriginal people up to the mid-twentieth century, and thus tangible objects “were neither created nor kept primarily to capture documentary information or evidence.”<sup>63</sup> Indeed, sometimes tangible records were simply ephemeral. For instance, oral descriptions were central to the Inuit mapping process and did not result in physical maps for posterity, as in the Western tradition. Indeed, as with Aboriginal people in the rest of

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<sup>61</sup> Peter L. Macnair, Alan L. Hoover, and Kevin Neary, *The Legacy: Tradition and Innovation in Northwest Coast Indian Art* (Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre; Published in Co-operation with The Royal BC Museum, 1984), 23.

<sup>62</sup> Robert J. Muckle, *The First Nations of British Columbia: An Anthropological Survey*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 56.

<sup>63</sup> Millar, “Subject or Object?” 335.

Canada, Inuit societies relied on memory and the oral tradition to maintain and pass on knowledge. (In the case of Inuit mapping, this also had much to do with the dearth of media onto which mapping or other graphic marks could be recorded.) Nonetheless, maps were sometimes drawn into sand or snow to accompany the oral mapping tradition, but these were fleeting and simply used as aids to supplement the oral description and help the learner visualise and learn the route in question. And, unlike the Western tradition of mapping in which terrain and details are accurate, complete and to scale, Inuit mapping (whether oral or graphic) instead focused on providing details about four crucial elements: distance, difficulty of travel, resource locations, and travel time, all interconnected with memorised place names and orienting landmarks. Thus, it was not as important for maps to be scaled accurately so much as the desired route was clearly conveyed (and in the case of the visual additions, marked). Having the details for areas beyond the route in question was extraneous and unnecessary because oral tradition naturally requires memorisation, and it was easier and more sensible to commit to memory only those details that were required to reach the destination.<sup>64</sup>

As discussed above, it is not a fair assumption that traditional Aboriginal ways of remembering and recalling were “pre-literate” (that is, without reading and writing before the arrival of Euro-Canadians). In fact, if writing is defined more generally as “any graphic means of preserving and communicating information,” rather than specifically as alphabetic in form and “designed exclusively for the transcription of speech,” then it can be said that Aboriginal people already had literacy in place before the arrival of Euro-

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<sup>64</sup> Renée Fossett, “Mapping Inuktitut: Inuit Views of the Real World,” in *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, eds. Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2003), 111-12, 118, 129.

Canadians.<sup>65</sup> Granted, they placed greater significance on the oral tradition to maintain and pass along knowledge, but they also maintained “libraries” of sorts (and, by extension, recorded knowledge as “archives”), whether in oral or tangible form. Indeed, Aboriginal history “is altogether different than just history with the written documents left out.”<sup>66</sup>

With the oral tradition, “memory acted as a kind of living library,”<sup>67</sup> as did several tangible objects. The winter count, as one example, has already been discussed above, and was utilised by certain Aboriginal peoples on the Plains as a means of recording community history in a graphic or pictorial manner, making note for posterity events that not only affected their immediate community, but other Aboriginal groups as well.<sup>68</sup> Another example arises from northwestern BC, where traditional Gitksan society includes four hereditary clans, each of which contains several houses, related among familial lines. Each named house has its own identity, history and traditional territory, which are tangibly and visually represented in their “ayuks” or traditional crests. History and significant events are in turn maintained in each house’s own “ada’ox,” or “verbal repository” of songs and stories. These repositories can be seen as “living archives” because the oral records are believed to have originated from ancestors, and thus, having been passed down through time, the performance of songs or the oral transmission of stories allows house members to directly connect with their past.<sup>69</sup> “Ayuks” and the “ada’ox,” together, represent reliable and authentic “records” that both tangibly and intangibly confirm a house’s title to and authority over their traditional territory. And,

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<sup>65</sup> Edwards, *Paper Talk*, 4.

<sup>66</sup> McNab, “Spirit,” 275.

<sup>67</sup> Edwards, *Paper Talk*, 5.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>69</sup> Suzuki and Knudtson, *Wisdom of the Elders*, 127, 128.

totem poles, which also visually display a house's history, tangibly represent house members' spiritual connection to their lands, with its rooting in the ground and vertical reach bringing together as one a house, its territory, and the spirits from above.<sup>70</sup> Thus, these "living archives" allow Gitksan people to know, learn, and continue to live their history both orally and tangibly.

Further to the notion of literacy, contemporary Aboriginal people often refer to petroglyphs (rock carvings) and pictographs (rock paintings) as "picture-words," but their meaning and purpose are open to interpretation, and could be referencing items of religious or clan significance or could simply be records of important events.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, the purpose of petroglyphs and pictographs found throughout British Columbia (usually in difficult to reach places) is equally unclear.<sup>72</sup> While some may be a record of events or the identification of territory, they "could be the work of shamans attempting to influence supernatural beings or of individuals on vision quests."<sup>73</sup> Interestingly, pictographs are frequently painted one over the other, and with their simple designs, it has been suggested that the process held more significance than what resulted.<sup>74</sup> Inuit inukshuks, in turn, can be viewed as a form of "rock words," guiding the traveller's path and assisting the caribou hunter. And, arising from the petroglyph and pictograph heritage, Mi'kmaq hieroglyphs in eastern Canada are considered to be the closest to the Euro-Canadian understanding of writing as any other Aboriginal graphic marking. These were in place and used in the creation of maps and tribal records even before the arrival of Euro-

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>71</sup> Edwards, *Paper Talk*, 11.

<sup>72</sup> Muckle, *The First Nations of BC*, 56.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.



Canadian people.<sup>75</sup> As another example of tangible (and literate) records, wampum belts were widely used among Aboriginal people to record important information, such as speeches, negotiations, significant events, and most notably, treaties. Utilising shells and pictographic and graphic symbols, the belts served as tangible and visual aids to memory, reminding all parties involved (Aboriginal or otherwise) of the details of the significant event, especially of treaty agreements. To accept a wampum belt meant both parties agreed to what was recorded on the belt, but to return it meant it was unacceptable.<sup>76</sup> Thus, the physical act of accepting or rejecting the belt was closely connected to the tangible elements of the belt itself.

Another tangible Aboriginal record is the birch bark manuscript or scroll, ranging in length from centimetres to several metres. Used by the Ojibwe of the Great Lakes area, the inside surface of the bark of the white birch tree was used as the medium and marked with pictorial symbols, sometimes with added colour. It was predominantly used by societies of physical and spiritual healers at all levels of initiation as an instructional tool and guide. In fact, the documents were considered sacred, and strict protocol governed when these records could be accessed and by whom – a reminder, once again, of the regulations and legislation inherent in both Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal “archives.” Beyond their spiritual and sacred purpose, however, the birch bark records also preserved information on Ojibwe people’s history and traditions, and served as visual aids to the oral tradition. Most notably, however (and quite unlike the Euro-Canadian archival tradition which favours the original record), the documents were

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<sup>75</sup> Edwards, *Paper Talk*, 11.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

replicated when additional copies were required or existing records wore out.<sup>77</sup> This certainly echoes the notion of archives as “living.”

It is evident that Aboriginal “archiving” in Canada was traditionally holistic in nature and, in fact, seemingly analogous in process with Euro-Canadian archiving traditions. Indeed, both sought to capture, maintain, and transmit history, culture, identity, and knowledge in reliable and authentic ways using their own set protocols and methods. However, it was the Aboriginal reliance on the oral tradition as the primary means of preserving and transmitting history that was most misunderstood and mistrusted by Euro-Canadian archives and society. The use of unusual objects (that is to say, items other than paper and writing) as “material manifestations of orality” that enforced, supplemented or clarified the oral tradition, further differentiated Aboriginal ways of recording and recalling history and knowledge. Yet Aboriginal people in fact saw memory-making and -keeping in a wide variety of things, both tangible and intangible. Archives were indeed kept, though not in the Euro-Canadian understanding of the word. The “archives” did not reside in an edifice but lived, on a daily basis, among and interconnected with the community, its people, the land, and an overarching spirit. Every action had a consequence; every understanding developed through careful observation and experience. History and knowledge were communally understood and lived.

As Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian societies became ever closely entwined, however, and particularly over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, challenges to Aboriginal archiving and ways of knowing began to emerge. External forces began to disrupt and threaten the processes and flow of culture and knowledge systems, and thus memory and identity, from one generation to the next.

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 11, 12, 19n26.

Such forces were manifest as the direct and indirect results of colonisation, which included deliberate assimilation policies (i.e., via Canada's *Indian Act* and related legislation), literacy, print, Christianity, criticism, discrimination, racism, Euro-Canadian education, residential schools, disease, loss of language, dispossession of lands, geographic displacement, and so on.<sup>78</sup>

Interference in the passing on of cultural context and understanding would soon come to affect the complete understanding of Aboriginal records, and consequently Aboriginal culture and identity, because a “familiarity or literacy on behalf of their creator and the reader or listener” – a context or provenance – is required if records are to continue to be understood and accessible.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, all of the oral and tangible “records” discussed in this chapter required a set juridical and cultural understanding and context on the part of the Aboriginal people involved. Thus, “the creation, transmission, and preservation of records, whether this is achieved orally or materially, are deeply embedded in social process,” and “should be expected to differ between societies,” though there is a “seemingly *universal* human necessity for truthful memory.”<sup>80</sup> Therefore, if there is any interference in the inheritance of culture and social process, then the understanding of juridical and knowledge systems (and consequently ways of knowing, communicating, and remembering) of an Aboriginal community or group are at risk of being misunderstood, misinterpreted, deliberately or inadvertently abused, and ultimately lost. And, unfortunately, Aboriginal people throughout Canada would suffer interference with and the consequent loss of culture and identity in great measure.

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<sup>78</sup> Friesen, *Citizens and Nation*, 45-47.

<sup>79</sup> Edwards, *Paper Talk*, 12.

<sup>80</sup> Shauna McRanor, “Maintaining the Reliability of Aboriginal Oral Records and Their Material Manifestations: Implications for Archival Practice,” *Archivaria* 43 (Spring 1997): 66 (emphasis in original).

One of the greatest challenges and threats to Aboriginal methods of archiving, recalling, and ultimately identity, has been the loss of traditional territories. Indeed, given the close ties that Aboriginal people's culture, history, and archives have with nature, it is hardly surprising that "the continuity and integrity of their lands are important to their survival as an indigenous people."<sup>81</sup> As Gerald Friesen has noted, "First Nations people once experienced the basic dimensions of life, the dimensions of time and space, in terms of their relations with the natural world. They did so in specific, identifiable places in northern North America."<sup>82</sup> Another significant challenge and threat has been the loss of Aboriginal languages. Residential schools especially, but also the overwhelming presence of Euro-Canadian society, literacy, and print, have certainly contributed to a loss of language. And language, like so many interdependent aspects of Aboriginal worldviews, is woven into the fabric of culture. It plays a crucial part in ceremonies and rituals, and "must be delivered with precision."<sup>83</sup> As Lou-Ann Neel, a Kwakwakw'wakw of British Columbia asserts, "[i]f you can't speak your language, it's hard to speak for your rights."<sup>84</sup>

With the influence of the numerous direct and indirect forces noted above, it is hardly surprising that a differentiation has also arisen in attitude towards culture and memory from one generation to the next, from one social group to another, even within

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<sup>81</sup> McNab, "Spirit," 275. See also Lisa Klopfer, "Oral History and Archives in the New South Africa: Methodological Issues," *Archivaria* 52 (Fall 2001): 105, and Millar, "Subject or Object?" 335: "To remove aboriginal people from their land was, in effect, to deprive them of their identity, their ancestors, and their heritage."

<sup>82</sup> Friesen, *Citizens and Nation*, 31.

<sup>83</sup> Holly Pattison, "Before It's Too Late: Traditions and technology are being brought together to save Salish languages," *UVic Torch Alumni Magazine* 26, no. 2 (Autumn 2005): 23.

<sup>84</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 24.

the same Aboriginal communities.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, Sul'ma'ejote (the retired professor and Aboriginal person from northeastern California first introduced above) laments that, “there is not one of my young people interested in our history and legends. At times that alone is difficult to realize. ... Today young natives are too confused by technology and progress to care about the ‘real way’[;] so much vanishes when someone ‘goes on ahead.’ It leaves a vacuum that will never be filled.”<sup>86</sup>

Therefore, faced with numerous challenges and threats to their cultures and ways of knowing, Aboriginal people in Canada, and in fact internationally, increasingly found themselves having to turn to records in Western archives or establish their own archives (both edifice and contents) using Western archival methods. The beginnings of self-determination and decolonisation in the latter half of the twentieth century certainly saw the start of this process, as Aboriginal people sought to regain control and understanding of their cultures and identity by consulting and obtaining copies of records about themselves held in non-Aboriginal archives. Indeed, “there is an inextricable link between identity and culture and access to knowledge. As the colonial process has effectively fragmented many Indigenous families and they have on occasion been denied access to their cultural knowledge, many have turned to the materials housed in archives and libraries [that are] relevant to their own histories.”<sup>87</sup> But, it was the requirements demanded by land claims and treaty negotiations in the Canadian judicial setting that

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<sup>85</sup> Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 3. Electronic version of publication consulted via Simon Fraser University library catalogue: <http://troy.lib.sfu.ca/> (accessed 18 October 2008).

<sup>86</sup> Cover letter to completed questionnaire, 8 March 2008.

<sup>87</sup> Lynette Russell, “Indigenous Knowledge and Archives: Accessing Hidden History and Understandings” (paper presented at Colloquium 2004: Libraries and Indigenous Knowledge, held at the State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW, Australia, 9-10 December 2004), [http://www.sims.monash.edu.au/research/eirg/trust/Russell\\_AARL\\_Format1a.pdf](http://www.sims.monash.edu.au/research/eirg/trust/Russell_AARL_Format1a.pdf), 2 (accessed 13 October 2008).

soon began to intensify the transition to reliance on Euro-Canadian archives and archiving.

As noted above, Aboriginal culture, identity and knowledge systems were inherently and holistically linked to the land. Dispossessed of their traditional territories, Aboriginal people in Canada sought to recapture this missing link, but were forced to do so in occidental terms and courtrooms. The mistrust of Aboriginal oral traditions and ways of remembering in the context of Canadian courts and juridical systems instead forced Aboriginal people to seek out Euro-Canadian records to prove their rights to and use of their traditional territories. And, since the records created over the course of such litigious processes arose from Euro-Canadian knowledge systems, their storage and access would thus demand Euro-Canadian methods of records management and archiving. As a result, it seems Aboriginal “archives” began to transition from a holistic sense of memory to a more “reactionary” form of remembering – reactionary and defensive in response to legal, political, and social requirements, rather than simply as a basis for communicating and recording a “holistic” sense of culture, memory, and identity. It is this transition to the “reactionary,” the increased reliance on Euro-Canadian archival traditions, and the resulting challenges to Aboriginal traditions of archiving, and indeed their cultures, identities and worldviews, that will be explored in the following chapter.

## Chapter 2

### **Reactionary Remembrance: “Cultural Decolonization” and Aboriginal Archives in British Columbia**

Native people in Canada, and elsewhere, are involved in a foot race to preserve their cultural knowledge and geographic identity before time erases the historical threads to an immediate and practicing past. It seems, in many ways, that it is both an imposed and desperate race. Not only does cultural/spiritual identity hang in the balance, but the physical survival of Native bands are at risk requiring the garnering of enough ‘cultural identifiers’ to give concrete empirical and legal evidence of their attachment to place.<sup>1</sup>

Over the course of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, as Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian societies became even more closely entwined, the need for Aboriginal individuals, groups, and organisations to access Euro-Canadian archives, employ Euro-Canadian methods of archiving, or establish their own archives along similar lines, intensified. Aboriginal people also increasingly found themselves having to use Euro-Canadian methods to establish their own records management programs, consisting of conventional, Euro-Canadian-style legal, administrative, and operational records. As introduced in the first chapter, the forced conversion to Euro-Canadian ways, whether directly via residential schools or indirectly due to the overwhelming presence of Euro-Canadian society, had initiated this transition. Requirements demanded by land claims and treaty negotiations – having to prove in the context of the Canadian justice

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<sup>1</sup> Christine Elsey, “Embodied Versus Disembodied Identities – Shifting Markers of the Native Experience” (paper prepared for the Canadian Anthropological Society 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference, University of Western Ontario, London, May 2004), 2. Kindly provided to the author in December 2007.

system that Aboriginal rights and title<sup>2</sup> do indeed exist – soon began to force and intensify this transition. Indeed, the documentation created by Aboriginal people in such contexts, by default, meant that such records were couched in occidental rather than their own cultural terms and thus demanded corresponding storage and use methods.

This chapter will present the various contexts in which Aboriginal people have had to access Euro-Canadian archives or establish their own along similar lines, and suggests that such Aboriginal archives have been developed as a “reactionary” or defensive response to legal, political, and social requirements (such as Euro-Canadian misconceptions or negative perceptions, treaty and land claim processes, legislation, politics, or other negative issues), rather than simply as a basis for communicating and recording a “holistic” sense of culture, memory, and identity. And it seems this reactionary response, combined with an increased use of Euro-Canadian archives and archiving methods, has resulted in a new set of issues rising to the forefront, not only for Aboriginal ways of “archiving,” but for Aboriginal identity itself and its related cultures and worldviews.

In the early 1990s, Mary Ann Pylypchuck characterised “a good deal of the recent documentary heritage of the Aboriginal peoples in Canada [as having been] created in the

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<sup>2</sup> “Aboriginal rights refer to practices, traditions and customs that distinguish the unique culture of each First Nation and were practiced prior to European contact. The rights of certain peoples to hunt, trap and fish on ancestral lands are examples of Aboriginal rights. Aboriginal title, as currently defined by the courts, is a right in the land itself - not just the right to hunt, fish and gather from it.” Quoted from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada [INAC], “Backgrounder – Aboriginal Title in Canada’s Courts,” November 2007, <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/info/tcc-eng.asp> (accessed 22 May 2008). “Aboriginal title is a property right that goes much further than aboriginal rights of usage. ... Permitted uses of aboriginal lands are no longer limited to traditional practices,” although there are limitations as “aboriginal title is based on a First Nation’s relationship with the land, [so] these lands cannot be used for a purpose inconsistent with that continuing relationship.” Quoted from BC Treaty Commission, “A Lay Person’s Guide to Delgamuukw,” November 1999, [http://www.bctreaty.net/files\\_3/pdf\\_documents/delgamuukw.pdf](http://www.bctreaty.net/files_3/pdf_documents/delgamuukw.pdf), [2] (accessed 11 July 2008).



context of law offices and law courts.”<sup>3</sup> She went on to assert that an increase in the creation, use, and volume of records created by and about Aboriginal people since 1969 was the result of a succession of significant events, including landmark court decisions, the transfer of services from the federal government to band councils, and so on.<sup>4</sup> Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) has identified the period 1946 to 1969 as an “Aboriginal revival,” and 1969 to the present as a period of “reconciliation and renewal,” in the context of Aboriginal-government relations and the evolution of federal policy on Aboriginal people in Canada.<sup>5</sup> Thus, it is during the so-called revival period that the intensification appears to have emerged, with the start of the transfer of services noted above, the beginning of a change in the federal government’s attitude towards and policies for Aboriginal people (including amendments to the Indian Act in 1951) and, just as influential, the emergence of Aboriginal leaders who demanded their rights be respected and considered and Aboriginal policies amended. This resulted in the “dismantling of assimilationist policies, programs and supporting infrastructure (e.g., residential schools), the granting to Aboriginal people of citizenship and the right to vote in federal and provincial elections ... and enhanced economic support.”<sup>6</sup>

The advent of the reconciliation and renewal period for Canada is marked by the 1969 launch in British Columbia of the Nisga’a First Nation’s court claim (known as the Calder case) that they had legal title to their traditional lands.<sup>7</sup> This case is noteworthy as

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<sup>3</sup> Mary Ann Pylypchuck, “The Value of Aboriginal Records as Legal Evidence in Canada: An Examination of Sources,” *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991): 51.

<sup>4</sup> Pylypchuck, “A Documentary Approach to Aboriginal Archives,” *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-92): 118.

<sup>5</sup> INAC, *Resolving Aboriginal Land Claims: A Practical Guide to Canadian Experiences* (Ottawa: INAC, 2003), [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/rul/rul\\_e.pdf](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/rul/rul_e.pdf), 2, 4, 5. (accessed 27 April 2008)

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>7</sup> The Nisga’a, who live in northwestern British Columbia, had already formed their own Land Committee as early as 1890 to seek out a treaty and settle land claims. However, they were unable to do so

it was the first court action that would contribute to an understanding of and legal definition for the notion of Aboriginal rights and title in Canada. With a decision rendered in 1973, the case acknowledged that Aboriginal title had initially existed, but left questions about whether title continued to exist. Indeed, was Aboriginal title satisfactorily or properly extinguished? The Calder case was also significant because the decision prompted the establishment of the Native Claims Office by the federal government in 1973 to assist in negotiations with Aboriginal groups nationwide who had either never signed treaties (particularly in BC, but also in Québec, Newfoundland and Labrador, the Yukon, and parts of the Northwest Territories, including the area from which Nunavut was established) or had issues relating to treaty entitlement and other legal disputes to be settled.<sup>8</sup> Today these two areas of negotiation are known as “comprehensive land claims” in the former situation and “specific claims” in the latter.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, 1969 and the Calder case marked the beginning of several landmark court cases, and, not surprisingly, continued litigation throughout Canada has resulted in an ever-growing volume of documentation. Combined, all of these events also resulted in

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between 1927 and 1951 because Canadian law forbid Aboriginal people from raising funds to pursue or even organise to discuss land claims. The Nisga’a Tribal Council (formed from the Land Committee in 1955) eventually settled a treaty with the BC and Canadian governments, and it came into effect in May 2000, thus establishing the Nisga’a Lisims Government. INAC, “Fact Sheet: The Nisga’a Treaty,” [last updated 23 April 2004], [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/info/nit\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/info/nit_e.html) (accessed 10 May 2008) and Terry Eastwood, “The Archives of the Nisga’a Nation” (presentation, School of Library, Archival and Information Studies Colloquium, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, 23 January 2008). PowerPoint presentation (19 slides with notes) kindly provided to the author in March 2008.

<sup>8</sup> INAC, *Resolving Aboriginal Land Claims*, [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/rul/rul\\_e.pdf](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/pub/rul/rul_e.pdf), 1, 5, and Eastwood, “The Archives of the Nisga’a Nation,” slide 6.

<sup>9</sup> “Comprehensive land claims are based on the assertion of continuing Aboriginal title to lands and natural resources. The Comprehensive Land Claims Policy stipulates that land claims may be negotiated with Aboriginal groups in areas where claims to Aboriginal title have not been addressed by treaty or through other legal means.” “Specific claims are claims made by First Nations against Canada relating to the administration of land and other Indian assets or the non-fulfilment of historic treaties.” Both quoted in INAC, Comprehensive Claims Branch, Claims and Indian Government Sector, “General Briefing Note on the Comprehensive Land Claims Policy of Canada and the Status of Claims,” March 2007, [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/clm/gbn/index1\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/clm/gbn/index1_e.html) (accessed 13 October 2008).

the establishment, by 1980, of numerous Aboriginal political organisations at all levels from local to national. These new organisations soon found themselves having to manage an increasing volume of administrative and operational records, not least of which included the records contributing to and resulting from litigation.<sup>10</sup> Adding to this in the 1980s, the federal government began providing funding to Aboriginal groups “to conduct research into claims and, in the process, to obtain the services of lawyers, negotiators, and historical researchers [who were] ... tasked with the job of extracting evidence from the abundance of historical, archival, ethnographic, anthropological, and archaeological sources available.”<sup>11</sup> Not surprisingly, the volume and variety of documentation for Canada’s Aboriginal groups continued to grow.

Although it does not specify what “rights” are, section 35 of Canada’s Constitution recognises and protects the “existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada” where the term “‘treaty rights’ includes rights that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired.”<sup>12</sup> This means that the Constitution protects Aboriginal rights that were obtained under both historic treaties and modern settled land claims. Despite the expectation by the British government, with its passing of a Royal Proclamation in 1763, that land procurement in Canada be settled by the colonisers through treaties with Aboriginal people, British Columbia in particular saw only a very few treaties signed.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, in order to have their rights recognised

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<sup>10</sup> Pylypchuck, “Documentary,” 118, 119.

<sup>11</sup> Millar, “Subject or Object?” 344.

<sup>12</sup> Canada, Department of Justice, “Rights of the Aboriginal Peoples of Canada,” *The Constitution Act, 1982*, sched. B, part II, sect. 35, [http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/const/annex\\_e.html#II](http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/const/annex_e.html#II) (accessed 21 May 2008).

<sup>13</sup> See Millar, “Subject or Object?” 332, as well as Lawrence D. Berg, “Aboriginal Rights, Aboriginal People and Ideology: The Aboriginal Land Question in British Columbia,” in *Indigenous Land Rights in Commonwealth Countries: Dispossession, Negotiation and Community Action, Proceedings of a Commonwealth Geographical Bureau Workshop*, eds. Garth Cant, John Overton, and Eric Pawson

under the Constitution, those Aboriginal groups in Canada without treaties (the majority of which are in BC, as this province also has the highest number of Aboriginal groups in the country) must provide “legal proof of ... ancestral pre-sovereign occupancy, exclusivity of ownership and continuous aboriginal, territorial use-patterns.”<sup>14</sup> Such a necessity, as well as the results of landmark court cases, has resulted in a forced shift away from traditional and existing Aboriginal ways of knowing and culturally identifying themselves, and “closer to a (rationalist) Euro-Colonial ‘ideal-type’ of land ownership and identity, where occupancy and aboriginality is now subject to a highly litigious, statistical and factually scientific process of occupational evidence rather than being based on First Nations will, community experience and real human needs.”<sup>15</sup>

To translate meanings from one culture to another can involve complications and result in misinterpretations, even with the best of intentions and the greatest awareness of difference and context. To judge one culture with the litigious tools of another can only serve to further complicate understanding and do an injustice to and disrespect the culture being judged. As Erica-Irene Daes has noted:

Indigenous peoples, in my experience, think of their laws as inherently arising from their lands and territories – as inseparable from their territories – while it has become commonplace for Europeans to think that laws can be carried around and applied to any place and any people.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, in the “race” to have their rights and title recognised, clarified, and affirmed under the Canadian Constitution and in the context of Canadian courts, it seems

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(Christchurch, New Zealand: Dept. of Geography, University of Canterbury and the Ngai Tahu Maori Trust Board for the Commonwealth Geographical Board, 1993), 134.

<sup>14</sup> Elsey, “Embodied Versus Disembodied Identities,” 4-5.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Daes, “Defending Indigenous Peoples’ Heritage,” 5.

Aboriginal people in Canada have had (and in a sense been forced) to turn away from their holistic understanding of the land and their relationship with it, to occidental definitions and processes of exclusive land ownership and economics. This, despite the fact that lands and resources have also often been jointly shared and used with other Aboriginal groups. Indeed, the “methods of negotiating and agreeing upon differing levels of terrestrial access, between groups, have tended to be informal, highly familial, reciprocal and cyclic in nature,” and “such patterns are not reflected in the current Constitutional process that tends (by alternative) to perceive boundaries as firm and unbending.”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, in order to obtain recognition of (and the resulting benefits from) their rights and title, Aboriginal people in Canada have had to set aside their own notions of identity, culture and ways of knowing in favour of the needs of government and the law. With a focus on such evidentiary proof and the need for expert witnesses (such as archaeologists, historians, anthropologists, the tangible documentation found in Euro-Canadian archives, etc.), it is hardly surprising that Aboriginal people have sought out, created, and ended up with volumes of Euro-Canadian-style documentation, and have thus recognised the need or have had to establish Euro-Canadian-style repositories to manage these records accordingly.

While the Calder case was significant in that it set the stage for the legal pursuit (and underlying meaning) of Aboriginal rights and title in Canada, it was the Delgamuukw decision of 1997 that marked another milestone and would have an effect on court cases to come.<sup>18</sup> Although this particular land claim was not actually decided

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<sup>17</sup> Elsey, “Embodied Versus Disembodied Identities,” 6. Not surprisingly, this “exclusivity of ownership” is also included in and an expectation of the BC treaty process (*ibid.*, 5.).

<sup>18</sup> BCTC, “A Lay Person’s Guide to Delgamuukw,” [http://www.bctreaty.net/files\\_3/pdf\\_documents/delgamuukw.pdf](http://www.bctreaty.net/files_3/pdf_documents/delgamuukw.pdf), [2].

upon, it was the first time a Canadian court made “comprehensive statements on, and established a legal test for, Aboriginal title” noting, among other things, that title was considered an Aboriginal right, and therefore protected under section 35 of the Canadian Constitution.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, while the case also indicated an ever more evidentiary, process-oriented, and litigious approach, it also marked the “significant recognition of oral history” – and in this case the oral archives of the Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en people – “as admissible evidence in land-claims cases throughout Canada,” although this Aboriginal evidence would still be interpreted in a Euro-Canadian context.<sup>20</sup>

The Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en, two First Nations in northwestern BC (northeast of the Nisga’a Nation), first launched their court case in 1984 when fifty-four of their hereditary chiefs (the first chief named being Delgamuukw) “asked the court to acknowledge their continued ownership and jurisdiction over a substantial part of British Columbia.”<sup>21</sup> With very few treaties in BC, there was a long history of Aboriginal (and even some settler) demands to formally resolve Aboriginal title through treaties:

The precise vehicles changed to reflect prevailing patterns of organization and communication, ranging from the localized complaints of the mid-nineteenth century, to the lobbying of the 1880s, to the first province-wide Aboriginal organizations of the twentieth century and the large, relatively powerful Pan-Indigenous groups of the late twentieth century. But the message – namely that Aboriginal people deserved and required recognition and settlement of their territorial claims and this recognition should be acknowledged in an official archive – remained tellingly consistent.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> INAC, “Backgrounder,” <http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/info/tcc-eng.asp>.

<sup>20</sup> Perry, “The Colonial Archive on Trial,” 327.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 330, quote from 331.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 330.

Thus, Aboriginal people in BC actively attempted to have their rights and title acknowledged very early on and using whatever tools were most effective, necessary, and available. But, it was not until 1951 that Aboriginal people throughout Canada were finally able to legally organise and raise funds to move forward with settling their land claims. And interestingly, prior to the 1990s, “a holistic and experiential notion of aboriginal identity politically, aesthetically and terrestrially loomed large,” and this was particularly evident with the collaboration between Aboriginal and environmental groups in the 1980s, both of whom saw the land not as a commodity, but as something to be preserved and having “aesthetic and experiential value.”<sup>23</sup>

The judgement of the Delgamuukw case at the provincial Supreme Court level in 1991 ruled against the Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en. The judge had initially accepted that the oral archive and oral history would be admissible for the Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en to provide as evidence because “a court case primarily about the past of an oral culture” could not expect there to be much documentary evidence to satisfy the “hearsay rule.”<sup>24</sup> However, in his final judgement, the judge rejected this oral archive and upheld the supposed value, trustworthiness, and objectivity of “expert” witnesses, historical methodologies and documentary evidence of archives, as sufficient and acceptable proof to reject the Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en’s claims. This despite the fact that, as noted above, there were very few treaties signed in BC by the colonial government, and this was no exception – the colonial archives held no documentary proof that Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en title had been extinguished, and these First Nations argued their case from

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<sup>23</sup> Elsey, “Embodied Versus Disembodied Identities,” 7.

<sup>24</sup> Perry, “The Colonial Archive on Trial,” 334.

this basis.<sup>25</sup> The judge had found that “Indigenous modes of narrating and preserving history pose a genuine challenge to the form, content, and character of history as it is understood in the western tradition and used in the courts.”<sup>26</sup> Indeed, as previously noted, it is difficult to judge one culture with the litigious tools of another, which has led at least one writer to suggest that the solution is to simply settle disputes of a culture using the laws of that same culture.<sup>27</sup> However, if there are two different cultures at odds, it may be a difficult prospect, which is why such resolutions must take into account all sides of the dispute, including their methods of knowing, remembering, and thus “archiving.”

On appeal, the provincial judgement was overturned in 1997 by the Supreme Court of Canada, although the question of Aboriginal title in this case was ultimately not settled, and a new trial was recommended because it was decided the original judge had not given due consideration to the oral archive.<sup>28</sup> Ironically, despite the fact that the Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en peoples did not have an “archive” in a Euro-Canadian sense when they began their court proceedings, they certainly had one by the end with the overwhelming volume of documentation that resulted from the case. Indeed, as historian Adele Perry has argued, the provincial judgement “thus produced the opposite of what it putatively used the power of the law to do. It brought into being a legal system willing to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Aboriginal oral archive, and it produced an Indigenous archive that even [the provincial judge] would acknowledge as such.”<sup>29</sup> Furthermore,

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 331.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 335.

<sup>27</sup> Daes, “Defending Indigenous Peoples’ Heritage,” 6.

<sup>28</sup> BCTC, “A Lay Person’s Guide to Delgamuukw,”

[http://www.bctreaty.net/files\\_3/pdf\\_documents/delgamuukw.pdf](http://www.bctreaty.net/files_3/pdf_documents/delgamuukw.pdf), [2].

<sup>29</sup> Perry, “The Colonial Archive on Trial,” 345.



while the overturning of the 1991 decision appeared to signal a move towards the greater acceptance of the oral tradition in Canada's courts, in fact this Aboriginal form of record and evidence "has not moved centre stage. Ultimately, written documents have incorporated oral evidence, and oral testimony includes evidence found in written sources."<sup>30</sup> In fact, by upholding Aboriginal oral tradition, the 1997 decision further "[shifted] identity markers of aboriginality into the domain of court proceedings and routinized legislative processes ... [where] aboriginal rights ... are either denied or affirmed on the basis of abstract (rationalist) constitutional definitions and evidential proofs of claims."<sup>31</sup> Therein lies the challenge of judging one culture with the litigious tools of another and ultimately affecting, and potentially altering, the understanding of the culture being judged.

Therefore, it appears a shift occurred in the development and form of Aboriginal records in the latter half of the twentieth century, particularly as a result of the evidentiary demands of court cases and the transfer of responsibilities and services to Aboriginal individuals, groups, and organisations, but also due to the emergence of a stronger (and increasingly acknowledged) Aboriginal voice, efforts towards self-determination, and the reclamation and reassertion of cultural identities. The shift was also no less affected by the indirect and direct results of assimilationist policies, as well as the presence, influence of, and need to navigate an overwhelming Euro-Canadian cultural majority. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Aboriginal-run and -created archives (as derived from and influenced by the Euro-Canadian definition of this term) have predominantly appeared over the past thirty to forty years – not only in BC, but nationally and internationally as

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<sup>30</sup> Millar, "Subject or Object?" 347.

<sup>31</sup> Elsey, "Embodied Versus Disembodied Identities," 8.

well. And, if such archives have largely been a reaction to, and established as a result of, these various issues and changes, then it can be said that Aboriginal archival collections and settings, their reasons for being, and no less their holistic nature, have been affected.

These reactionary repositories can also be viewed as “a duplication of the mainstream Canadian ‘total archives’ tradition ... [as they] collect and preserve all types of records, copies and originals, paper documents and microfilms, photographs and maps and drawings and sound recordings: anything related to native land claims, regardless of origins or source.”<sup>32</sup> Aboriginal people have begun to use “the tools of contemporary society,” and, ironically, “in some cases the very tools that have been used against” them in order to improve and take greater control over their lives.<sup>33</sup> In fact, it has been suggested that, from the 1960s on, Aboriginal people began using the court system and, consequently, Euro-Canadian archives (or, the “colonial” archives) as a weapon.<sup>34</sup> Not surprisingly, these Western archives are now “entangled in the reassertion of identities, as much as they are implicated in colonial pasts.”<sup>35</sup> As a result, it seems the Aboriginal “approach to archives [has become] the Euro-colonial one,” with Aboriginal people copying records and other archives to “document a particular issue” (such as for treaty or land claims), while simultaneously trying to regain control over their own histories, cultures, and knowledge.<sup>36</sup> Aboriginal people are not only attempting to prove in courts of law that their rights and title exist and continue to do so, but are also “racing” to recover and preserve what they can of their very cultures and identities. Are such

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<sup>32</sup> Millar, “Subject or Object?” 345.

<sup>33</sup> David Neel, *Our Chiefs and Elders: Words and Photographs of Native Leaders* (Vancouver: UBC Press; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 19.

<sup>34</sup> Perry, “The Colonial Archive on Trial,” 330.

<sup>35</sup> Evelyn Wareham, “From Explorers to Evangelists: Archivists, Recordkeeping, and Remembering in the Pacific Islands,” *Archival Science* 2, nos. 3-4 (2002), 199.

<sup>36</sup> Laura Millar, personal interview, 26 May 2005.

archives true, holistic reflections of their communities and cultures, or are they simply storehouses of records that react to and serve legal, political, or social ends, using Euro-Canadian-derived archival methods?

As will be more fully discussed in chapter three, the visibility of and literature about existing Aboriginal-run and -created archives in BC, and in fact within Canada and internationally, is extremely limited and scattered, making their study particularly difficult. Nonetheless, it seems the colonisation and decolonisation experience in the U.S. and Australia (and, indeed, in places such as South Africa, New Zealand, and the surrounding Pacific Islands) is very similar in timeline and scope to Canada's. As a result, the holistic aspects of traditional Aboriginal ways of archiving, along with the reactionary responses in face of self-determination, "cultural decolonization,"<sup>37</sup> and a renewed sense of power for Aboriginal people in each of these countries, seem markedly similar. The main challenge, of course, is the study of these existing reactionary Aboriginal archives, whether nationally or internationally.

The low visibility of Aboriginal archives was most evident with the low response rate and specific challenges associated with the thesis questionnaire (discussed in more detail in the following chapter). For instance, after consulting the repositories list of the Archives Association of BC (AABC) – the geographical area targeted as the basis for this thesis – as well as obtaining leads from colleague referrals and by word of mouth, the author was only able to pinpoint twelve Aboriginal archives in BC. In order to widen the field and potential for response, the questionnaire was also posted to archival listservs provincially, nationally, and internationally. Ultimately, only three Aboriginal archives from BC completed the questionnaire, with information on three others obtained more

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<sup>37</sup> Wareham, "From Explorers to Evangelists," 197.

informally.<sup>38</sup> And, while nationally there was only one respondent, internationally there were four respondents from the United States and three from Australia.<sup>39</sup>

The twelve BC Aboriginal archives identified through research and contacted directly include the Chehalis Indian Band archives (upper Fraser Valley), the Heritage Department of Tahltan Central Council (Dease Lake), the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Tribal Council Archives (Cranbrook), the Haida Gwaii Museum at Kaay Llnagaay (Skidegate, Haida Gwaii), the Secwepemc Archives (Kamloops), the Stó:lō Archives (Chilliwack), the U'Mista Cultural Centre (Alert Bay), the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs Resource Centre (Vancouver), the Coqualeetza Cultural Education Centre archives (Chilliwack), the 'Ksan Historical Village and Museum (Hazelton), the Gitxsan Chiefs' Office Library (Hazelton), and the archives of the Nisga'a Nation (northwestern BC).<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> James Leon with the Chehalis Indian Band's archives, and two other Aboriginal archives that opted to remain anonymous, completed the questionnaire. Data was also gathered via interview with the Stó:lō Archives in British Columbia (represented by Tia [Patricia] Halstad, Librarian, and Tracey Joe, a Supervisor and Research Assistant), via email response from the Haida Gwaii Museum at Kaay Llnagaay (represented by museum Director, Nathalie Macfarlane), and via a recent presentation (kindly provided to the author) by Professor Terry Eastwood of the University of British Columbia's archival studies program based on his personal experience with the archives of the Nisga'a Nation.

<sup>39</sup> The respondent from Canada was Erin Suliak, an archivist from Yellowknife, NWT, who did not speak on behalf of any institution. Rather than respond to the questionnaire, Suliak provided comments and opinions via email on the thesis topic that were reflective of her personal experience working with Aboriginal materials in various contexts. The US respondents included Sul'ma'ejote (Dr. Darryl Babe Wilson), who is a retired professor and Aboriginal person from northeastern California; John D. Berry, of the Ethnic Studies Library at the University of California, Berkeley; Lynn Pankonin, with the Spokane Tribe of Indians' archives in Washington state; and Alison Harper Stankrauff, an archivist/records manager at a university in Indiana. The Australian respondents included Kathy Frankland of the Community and Personal Histories unit at the Queensland State Government; Kirsten Thorpe with the State Records Authority of New South Wales; and an anonymous respondent who is an archivist with a religious archives that holds information about Aboriginal people.

<sup>40</sup> Information on the twelve archives or Aboriginal groups identified can be found at the following websites (note that not every website specifically addresses their archives; some present information on their organisations, culture and heritage programs in general): Chehalis Indian Band [CIB], "Culture & spirituality: Key Responsibilities," [last updated 23 November 2007], [http://www.chehalisband.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=28&Itemid=59](http://www.chehalisband.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=28&Itemid=59) (accessed 12 May 2008); Tahltan Central Council, "About the Tahltan," <http://tahltn.org/about.html> (accessed 13 October 2008); Ktunaxa Nation, "Who We Are," <http://www.ktunaxa.org/who/kktc.html> (accessed 13 October 2008); Haida Heritage Centre at Qay'llnagaay, "Saving Things House: Archives," [http://www.haidaheritagecentre.com/houses\\_save4.html#archives](http://www.haidaheritagecentre.com/houses_save4.html#archives) (accessed 13 October 2008); Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, "About," <http://www.secwepemc.org/about> (accessed 13 October 2008); Stó:lō

The Chehalis Indian Band archives, Haida Gwaii Museum at Kaay Llnagaay, Stó:lō Archives, and archives of the Nisga'a Nation are discussed in more detail below and in the following chapter.

The Tahltan Central Council (TCC) was established in 1975 and, while the holdings of the archives within the Heritage Department are not indicated (nor is the archives explicitly identified, for that matter), the TCC has as its main purpose the goal of determining and protecting their Aboriginal rights and title. Thus, it could be surmised that the archives collects and maintains holdings that address these objectives.<sup>41</sup> The Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Tribal Council Archives maintains “textual records, photographs, maps, and audio tapes which document the administrative activities of the Tribal Council, the proceedings of the Treaty Council, and the culture/history of the Ktunaxa Nation,” and these holdings range from 1973 to the present.<sup>42</sup> Here again is a “reactionary” archives, documenting not only culture but the administrative and litigious proceedings of a treaty and tribal council. The Secwepemc Archives forms part of the Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, which was created in 1983, a year after seventeen Secwepemc bands of the Shuswap Nation agreed to work together in collecting,

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Resource & Resource Management, “Archives,” <http://www.srrmcentre.com/archives.html> (accessed 10 May 2008); U’Mista Cultural Society, “The U’Mista Cultural Society,” <http://www.umista.ca/about/index.php> (accessed 13 October 2008); Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC), “UBCIC Resource Centre,” <http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/department/library.htm> (accessed 13 October 2008); Coqualeetza Cultural Education Centre [CCEC], “Programs: Archives,” <http://www.coqualeetza.com/> (accessed 13 October 2008); ‘Ksan Historical Village, “Village: History,” <http://www.ksan.org/html/village/history.htm> (accessed 13 October 2008); Gitxsan Chiefs’ Office, “Library: Collections,” <http://www.gitxsan.com/html/library.htm#collections> (accessed 13 October 2008); and Nisga’a Lisims Government, “Ayuukhl Nisga’a Department [AND],” <http://www.nisgaalisims.ca/?q=ayuukhl-nisgaa-department> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>41</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the information and quotes presented about the twelve Aboriginal archives in BC in the following discussion will be drawn from the websites identified in the previous footnote (see note 40).

<sup>42</sup> AABC Guide to Archival Repositories in British Columbia [hereafter referred to as AABC Guide], “Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Tribal Council Archives,” <http://aabc.bc.ca/aabc/bcguid9.html#87A> (accessed 13 October 2008).

maintaining, transmitting, and promoting Secwepemc language, history and culture. With this aim and the mandate of creating curriculum documents and a setting to house and promote these records, the Education Society now boasts publishing and trades training departments in addition to a museum, heritage park, and archives. Therefore, the archives' holdings range as far back as the early nineteenth century, and include "documents, photographs, maps and oral history recordings relating to the history and culture of the Shuswap Indian People."<sup>43</sup>

The U'Mista Cultural Centre was created in 1980 after the formation of the U'Mista Cultural Society in 1974, which in turn had as its mandate the goal of protecting and maintaining Kwakwakw'wakw culture and heritage. In fact, the Centre was initially established in order to house the significant and well-publicized repatriation of potlatch artifacts, which were extremely important and sensitive cultural items that the government had earlier taken from the Kwakwakw'wakw people. It is to these beginnings that a modern museum and cultural education facility were later added.<sup>44</sup> Thus, the archives collects materials that reflect this seemingly "reactionary" beginning and mandate, and also the administrative records of the Society itself. The holdings mainly reflect the early and latter parts of the twentieth century in the form of audio, visual, photo, and textual records and slides.<sup>45</sup> The Union of BC Indian Chiefs Resource Centre (UBCIC) was established within the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, a collaborative organisation which had its beginnings in 1969, representing on-reserve First Nations

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<sup>43</sup> AABC Guide, "Secwepemc Archives," <http://aabc.bc.ca/aabc/bcguid14.html#133> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>44</sup> U'Mista Cultural Society, "History," <http://www.umista.ca/about/history.php> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>45</sup> AABC Guide, "U'Mista Cultural Centre," <http://aabc.bc.ca/aabc/bcguid15.html#149> (accessed 13 October 2008).

people in BC, and with a continued mandate of “[supporting] the work of [their] people, whether at the community, nation or international level, in [their] common fight for the recognition of [their] aboriginal rights and respect for [their] cultures and societies.”<sup>46</sup> Thus, the Resource Centre holdings focus on and support BC First Nations’ land claims research, reflecting the “administration of the Union, the development of publications and other communications for dissemination, policy analysis, and land claims research. Materials pertaining to issues, communities, and individuals with significance to aboriginal affairs in British Columbia are also acquired.”<sup>47</sup> While the holdings of audio and visual materials, maps, rare books, newspaper clippings, microfilm copies of INAC records, and an extensive reference library reach back to the mid-nineteenth century, the predominant dates (given the focus of the Centre) are not surprisingly from 1969 to today, and certainly of a highly litigious nature.<sup>48</sup>

The Coqualeetza Cultural Education Centre (CCEC) grew out of a land claim strategy that was a part of UBCIC’s mandate. The 1969 goal was to create a cultural education centre that would serve all Aboriginal people in BC, and in 1972 twenty-four Stó:lō Chiefs were requested to create the centre to benefit not only the Stó:lō, but Aboriginal people in general. While the CCEC belongs to the Stó:lō people, it is accessible to all other Aboriginal people, providing them with “programs and services [that] enhance self-esteem and pride while fostering effective social adjustment through the traditional way of teaching and learning from each other.”<sup>49</sup> The archives houses a

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<sup>46</sup> UBCIC, “Our History,” <http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/about/history.htm> (accessed 13 October 2008); Quote from UBCIC, “Who We Are: Our Vision,” <http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/about/> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>47</sup> AABC Guide, “Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs Resource Centre,” <http://aabc.bc.ca/aabc/bcguid15.html#150> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> CCEC, “Qw’oqw’elith’a: About Us,” <http://www.coqualeetza.com/> (accessed 13 October 2008).

variety of records, including transcripts, unpublished manuscripts, and government, church and census records, which are commonly used for genealogical and scholarly research. What is most intriguing about the CCEC is that it had its beginnings in the UBCIC, but has made great strides in developing programs that link the historical with the contemporary in Stó:lō culture.

Finally, both the 'Ksan Historical Village and Museum (KHVM) and the Gitxsan Chiefs' Office Library represent the Gitxsan, who were part of the Delgamuukw case discussed above. While the KHVM does not identify an archives specifically, it is notable that it has a nearly fifty-year history and has always focused on presenting the history and culture of the Gitxsan people, as well as provided economic opportunity for Aboriginal people. Most significantly, however, "development for the museum was directed by the fundamental principle that the economic and social problems of Hazelton would diminish if all people, both First Nations and non-First Nations, understood the stature and richness of Gitxsan culture."<sup>50</sup> Thus, through an interpretive cultural centre, both locals and visitors could be provided with the Gitxsan interpretation and perspective of their history, culture and identity. The Gitxsan Chiefs' Office Library, established in the mid-1970s, does not identify an archives, but the library "under the administration of the Gitxsan Treaty Office, has become an extensive repository for an information-based collection pertaining to the Gitxsan and other subjects with a focus on First Nations."<sup>51</sup> Indeed, although the initial focus of the library and its holdings was the detailed collection and preservation of traditional knowledge by Gitxsan Hereditary Chiefs and

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<sup>50</sup> 'Ksan Historical Village, "Village: History – Skeena Treasure House," <http://www.ksan.org/html/village/history.htm> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>51</sup> Gitxsan Chiefs' Office, "Library: General Info," <http://www.gitxsan.com/html/library.htm> (accessed 13 October 2008).



Elders, it was this collection that would become the stage upon which the Delgamuukw case was set, with all manner of media collected, including not only books, but also audio materials, photos, and a number of digital files. Therefore, as seen with this example, and in the other Aboriginal archives examples from BC discussed above, the impetus for the creation of an archives often lay in litigious and other “reactionary” circumstances such as repatriation or the basic need for Aboriginal people to preserve, protect and interpret their own culture, language, and history in face of various negative circumstances. Indeed, it is especially notable that the twelve BC Aboriginal archives discussed saw their beginnings in the latter half of the twentieth century, thus reflecting the various events that spurred the revival, reconciliation and renewal periods for Aboriginal people discussed above.

Returning to the issue of the difficulty of studying Aboriginal-run and -created archives, the lack of at least a central listing of Aboriginal archives and libraries – and even cultural centres – was especially apparent in Canada with a recent discussion on the listserv for the Special Interest Section on Aboriginal Archives (SISAA, which is part of the Association of Canadian Archivists) in which a request was made by the Aboriginal Heritage Initiatives office of Library and Archives Canada (LAC) as to whether such a listing existed. The SISAA Steering Committee indicated that no such directory existed, but had plans to develop one.<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, another member also suggested why, at least in BC, very few Aboriginal-run and -created archives were members of the AABC: “Many don't meet the criteria for membership in the [provincial organisation] (they don't have open hours, have restrictions on who can access materials, etc) and have been set up

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<sup>52</sup> Warren Sinclair, SISAA Chair, email to SISAA listserv, 24 February 2008.

partly because of research towards land claims negotiations.”<sup>53</sup> Unfortunately, it seems the low visibility of Aboriginal archives in BC is actually reflective of their inability to mesh with standards recognised by the Euro-Canadian-based AABC, rather than by any unique or innovative approaches to “archiving” that may have been developed or recognised as their own. Once again, the differentiation between Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal archives becomes apparent. Therefore, it is not difficult to surmise that this same situation might be the reason for the low visibility of Aboriginal archives in the rest of Canada, and perhaps internationally as well. As for LAC’s query and SISAA’s plans for a directory, LAC went ahead with a survey on Aboriginal archives and libraries. It was developed and distributed by an Aboriginal management company on behalf of LAC in late March, 2008, but the results have not been released to date.

Although there are currently no precise numbers for Aboriginal archives in BC, given that there are over fifty BC First Nations representing 49 separate negotiations at various stages of the treaty process at this time, there could potentially be at least fifty gatherings of litigation documents in the possession of various Aboriginal groups throughout the province, ripe for development into archives.<sup>54</sup> Add to this the few identified by the thesis questionnaire or fortunate enough to have membership with the AABC, one can surmise that there might be up to a total of sixty Aboriginal repositories or archives in BC that contain Euro-Canadian-derived documents, and are potentially reactionary in response to legal, political, and social requirements. In the rest of Canada, the numbers of Aboriginal archives are even more difficult to ascertain, but there are at least one hundred agreements, treaties and negotiated settlements in existence, and this

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<sup>53</sup> Krisztina Laszlo, SISAA Membership Secretary, email to SISAA listserv, 22 February 2008.

<sup>54</sup> BCTC, “Negotiation Update,” <http://www.bctreaty.net/files/updates.php> (accessed 10 May 2008).

does not take into account those that are still in progress.<sup>55</sup> According to INAC, there are also currently over six hundred First Nations in Canada (this does not include Métis and Inuit groups).<sup>56</sup> Despite this, after an exhaustive search for Aboriginal-run and -created archives (and even heritage centres that may contain archival collections, but perhaps no separate archives) through the membership directories of all provincial and territorial archival networks and associations, the Canadian Council of Archives, SISAA's recent *Aboriginal Archives Guide*, and an undated (and potentially out of date) "Canadian Directory of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Library Collections," the total number of archives derived was a mere fifty-one for all of Canada (which includes eight in BC).<sup>57</sup> Nonetheless, given the reality that there are numerous areas in Canada without treaties, that there are potential issues relating to treaty entitlement and other legal disputes yet to be settled, that there is a need and desire for Aboriginal people to race to recover and preserve what they can of their cultures and identities, and that there is likely a vast volume of Euro-derived and litigious documentation already in the possession of Aboriginal groups throughout Canada, the potential for these developing into "reactionary" repositories or archives, is extensive.

The fact that very few treaties were signed in BC, along with my work with Stó:lō Nation Society (SNS), an Aboriginal government in BC, was certainly a great impetus for

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<sup>55</sup> For an exploration of the agreements, treaties and negotiated settlements in Canada, see Indigenous Studies Program, University of Melbourne, "Canadian Agreements," *Agreements, Treaties and Negotiated Settlements Project*, <http://www.atns.net.au/browse.asp?Country=Canada> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>56</sup> INAC, "First Nation Profiles," [http://sdiprod2.inac.gc.ca/FNProfiles/FNProfiles\\_Search.asp?Search=FN](http://sdiprod2.inac.gc.ca/FNProfiles/FNProfiles_Search.asp?Search=FN) (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>57</sup> Canadian Council of Archives [CCA], "Directory of Archives" <http://www.cdncouncilarchives.ca/directory.html> (accessed 13 October 2008); Association of Canadian Archivists [ACA], SISAA, *Aboriginal Archives Guide*, Canadian Church Historical Society Occasional Paper, no. 8 ([Ottawa:] ACA, 2007); and INAC Departmental Library, Library and Information Needs of Native People's Interest Group of the Canadian Library Association, and University of Saskatchewan Libraries, "Canadian Directory of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Library Collections," <http://library2.usask.ca/native/directory/english/index.html> (accessed 13 October 2008).

the “reactionary remembrance” aspect of this thesis. SNS is a tribal council representing eleven Aboriginal bands in the Lower Fraser Valley, with their central offices located in Chilliwack, BC. The Stó:lō Archives was established in 1996 and has since operated in the Aboriginal Rights & Title (or AR&T) Department and, most recently, as part of the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre (or SRRMC) within AR&T.<sup>58</sup>

As the former records manager (2004 to 2005) in the Administrative Services Department, I soon discovered that the archives was not the final destination for the Nation’s full-retention, inactive administrative and operational records. Nor was the archives initially established as a basis for communicating and recording a “holistic” sense of Stó:lō culture, memory, and identity. Rather, the British Columbia Treaty Commission (BCTC) provided initial funding to launch the archives as part of Stage 2 of the BC treaty process,<sup>59</sup> and its primary collection focus was exclusively treaty requirements. It has since grown to encompass the broader mandate of Aboriginal Rights and Title, which means the archives has tried to collect as much as possible on Stó:lō and Coast Salish peoples, in a variety of media, “to illustrate the history and promote the values of Stó:lō.”<sup>60</sup> And overall, the SRRMC “[provides] professional service in the fields of natural and cultural resource management, research, facilitation and collections management – with an understanding of, and respect for, Stó:lō protocols.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> The Stó:lō Archives is run by librarian Tia (Patricia) Halstad, whom I would like to acknowledge has kindly provided me with a great deal of valuable information on the archives. I would also like to acknowledge the input of Tracey Joe, a supervisor and research assistant in the AR&T Department. Tia Halstad, personal interview (with input from Tracey Joe), 16 March 2006; Tia Halstad, email communication, 18 April 2006; Tracey Joe, telephone communication, 29 April 2008. All quotes regarding the Stó:lō Archives are Tia Halstad’s, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>59</sup> BCTC, “Six-Stages: Policies and Procedures,” <http://www.bctreaty.net/files/sixstages.php>.

<sup>60</sup> Stó:lō Research & Resource Management Centre [SRRMC], “Archives,” <http://www.srrmcentre.com/archives.html> (accessed 10 May 2008).

<sup>61</sup> SRRMC, “Stó:lō Research & Resource Management,” <http://www.srrmcentre.com/index.html> (accessed 10 May 2008).

Nonetheless, the records collected were and continue to be used primarily to keep treaty technicians and community members informed, as well as to help develop positions on treaty. And, as librarian (and keeper of the archives) Tia (Patricia) Halstad has noted, “funding limitations [have] always meant that treaty needs [have] had to come first.”

With over fifty BC First Nations now involved at various stages of the treaty process, it is hardly surprising that the Stó:lō Archives has been approached for advice by at least one BC Aboriginal group faced with the prospect of the treaty process and taking steps towards establishing its own archives.<sup>62</sup> This entailed ensuring they were well informed of archival methods and requirements before proceeding with the physical organisation of their collections. Although the assistance they sought was from the Stó:lō Archives, which for all intents and purposes is an Aboriginal-run and -created archives, the methods used by the Stó:lō Archives are couched in the Euro-Canadian tradition of archiving and remembering, not least because of its origins in the BC treaty process.

The extent to which the community was directly involved in the creation of the Stó:lō Archives is not clear, but both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal AR&T staff (including a former in-house archivist) certainly had input into the collection and selection of material, which in turn steered the nature of projects undertaken. While the BCTC does not have direct control over collection development in the Stó:lō archives, it is in the archives’ and department’s best interest to follow the spirit of treaty negotiation requirements. The BCTC does control the physical furnishings of the archives, however. Funding cannot be used to purchase shelving, for instance, so the archives must secure second-hand furniture. Fortunately, the funding does allow for the purchase of archival

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<sup>62</sup> The BC Aboriginal group discussed shall remain anonymous. I learned of their situation during my employment with Stó:lō Nation, but was unable to obtain permission to identify them.

storage media, but the expense of such items and limited funding can often make such items cost-prohibitive. Thus, the archives' collection, while not directly controlled by an external, Euro-Canadian institution, is nonetheless funded by the latter and the expectation is that the money will first be put towards treaty-related research.

The Ayuukhl Nisga'a Department (AND) of the Nisga'a Lisims Government (NLG) contains the archives of the Nisga'a Nation in northwestern BC. The AND is "entrusted by the nation to protect, preserve, and promote Nisga'a language, culture, and history," and "consists of archival, historical, and contemporary documents regarding the Nisga'a Land Question, and general Nisga'a history and culture written by academics, anthropologists, and scientists. It includes interviews with Nisga'a elders, a photo library, a map collection, historical documents, and transcripts."<sup>63</sup> AND hopes to eventually make these collections accessible to external audiences.<sup>64</sup> Due to its concerns about archival preservation and accessibility in light of freedom of information and protection of privacy laws, AND engaged Terry Eastwood, of the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia, in July 2007 to advise the department. Eastwood noted in his subsequent report that the room containing the archival collection

houses many important and valuable records of the predecessor to NLG, the Nisga'a Tribal Council (NTC). These records constitute the core of the historical archives of Nisga'a governance of its affairs. It was in the era of NTC that the Nisga'a negotiated the treaty that established NLG. ... These events are of unique historical significance to Canada and indeed the world. Thus, this core historical

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<sup>63</sup> Minister of INAC and Nisga'a Nation, *Nisga'a Final Agreement 2001 Annual Report* (Ottawa: INAC; New Aiyansh, BC: Nisga'a Nation, 2001), [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/bc/treapro/mreinf/pub/nisgaa/ar01/arwh\\_e.pdf](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/bc/treapro/mreinf/pub/nisgaa/ar01/arwh_e.pdf), 46/47 (accessed 11 May 2008).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

archives is eminently worthy of careful preservation so that it can serve the ongoing purposes of NLG and the Nisga'a people, and provide an account of events that will undoubtedly be the subject of historical investigation far into the future.<sup>65</sup>

Research materials in the archives were “accumulated in the course of NTC work to realize its land claims and other rights,” and also include copies of publications, archival records, audio and video interviews (of land ownership and use data, various NLG events and meetings, etc.), information on various Aboriginal landmark cases, and data about Nisga'a artifacts in museums, in anticipation of future repatriation. In addition to the archives room, non-current records created by the NTC during the 1980s and 1990s are housed in a separate mobile home in the same area. The non-current records consist of numerous photocopies, as well as reference material and NTC publications. Eastwood admits that, despite his limited experience with First Nations archives, he has “found that all of them have to greater or lesser degree such collections, developed for the same reasons.”<sup>66</sup> Thus, here again is an Aboriginal-run and -created archives that appears to have seen its beginnings in the political and litigious context of land claims and rights, but is moving forward with housing and making accessible the administrative and operational records of tribal councils, and also repatriating and recovering cultural identity and heritage to promote and present their own interpretation of themselves to the general public and community members.

The Chehalis Indian Band, located in the upper Fraser Valley of BC, houses not only cultural records in its archives, but also documentation relating to consultation with

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<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Eastwood, “The Archives of the Nisga'a Nation,” slide 10 notes.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., slides 12-15, quotes from slide 11 and associated notes.

government and industry.<sup>67</sup> The archives is overseen by James Leon, who fills a number of roles, including archivist, records manager, community historian, and volunteer. The archives was established in 2000, and is unique in that it encompasses a database that was developed as a result of earlier efforts to create a Chehalis history book that never came to fruition. Interestingly, the database works in connection with geographic information system (GIS) database cells. Thus, Leon notes that he “works more at the technical level for Chehalis Chief & Council, through interviews and past anthropologists and early ethnographers ... tying in all history with today’s Chehalis people, who seem to be more comfortable with computers and the internet.” A BC Ministry of Forest funding agreement was used in the creation and development of the Chehalis archives and, while the funding can be used as it sees fit,<sup>68</sup> the Chehalis Indian Band website makes clear that one of the key responsibilities for the Chehalis regarding natural resources in their traditional territory is to ensure government and external agencies are made aware of their territorial sovereignty, Aboriginal rights, and desire to protect the natural resources and environment within that traditional territory.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, with the extensive work they conduct to protect and inventory heritage and spiritual sites in their territory, it is hardly

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<sup>67</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all information and quotes about the Chehalis Indian Band archives in this thesis are from James Leon, completed questionnaire to author, 11 March 2008.

<sup>68</sup> Agreements are entered into and funding is provided to First Nations whose traditional territory and interests in that territory may be impacted by forestry activity. As discussed earlier in this chapter, existing Aboriginal and treaty rights are protected and recognized under Canada’s Constitution, and the Ministry acknowledges this fact with funding agreements. See BC Ministry of Forests and Range, Aboriginal Affairs Branch, “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ),” [http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/haa/FRA\\_faq.htm](http://www.for.gov.bc.ca/haa/FRA_faq.htm) (accessed 12 May 2008).

<sup>69</sup> Chehalis Indian Band [CIB], Aboriginal Rights & Title [AR&T] Department, “Natural Resources: Key Responsibilities,” [last updated 23 November 2007], [http://www.chehalisband.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=62](http://www.chehalisband.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=31&Itemid=62) (accessed 12 May 2008).



surprising that such funding has contributed to the development of the Chehalis archives.<sup>70</sup>

Questions about records restriction, access, and the efficacy of using Euro-Canadian methods of research and archiving to develop Aboriginal archives, quickly arise upon further examination of the Stó:lō archives. In 1997/98, the Ministry of Forests funded a number of Traditional Use Studies within Stó:lō territory, to be used to “demonstrate pre-contact aboriginal occupancy and use of the land and natural resources” as per treaty requirement. While the studies sought the input and oral memory of over 100 community members, the studies sharply reveal the difference between Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian methods of collecting history, as well as reactionary versus holistic ways of remembering. First, given that the studies were directed by Ministry and treaty requirements, the work was limited to only certain areas of traditional Stó:lō territory. Second, less than half of the required “agreement to participate” and “release forms” were properly filled out by interviewees, which Tia Halstad has described as “Aboriginal people being asked to deal with a very non-Aboriginal form.” This resulted in a great deal of valuable archival information that is restricted to the context of the studies and cannot be used for other research purposes. The situation raises the issue of how best to restrict Aboriginal records. What guidance should be followed? That of the Aboriginal community, of federal and provincial legislation, or a combination of all three? In this case, Halstad “[feels] very strongly that the [interviewee’s] restrictions must be honoured fully and that, when the speaker’s intention is not clear, the records be treated as fully restricted.” And, regarding access, there are some documents in the Stó:lō archives that

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<sup>70</sup> CIB, AR&T Dept., “Culture & Spirituality: Key Responsibilities,” [http://www.chehalisband.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=28&Itemid=59](http://www.chehalisband.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=28&Itemid=59).

must remain confidential to the treaty process and the staff working on it. In fact, the archives as a whole was initially restricted to AR&T staff, but this soon changed as the collection grew beyond the treaty focus.

For the Chehalis archives, access for researchers and community members alike is also somewhat restricted, and federal and provincial legislation is followed when determining what materials can be made available. It appears the Nisga'a archives are bound by federal and provincial freedom of information and protection of privacy laws as well, at least with regards to interactions between the NLG and the Canadian and BC governments. However, since this archives is in its infancy, it remains to be seen how such legislation will work in the context of cultural records and external researchers because, as noted above, their plan is to eventually allow external audiences access to their collections. One of the anonymous BC Aboriginal archives has noted that they utilise community-imposed restrictions, in addition to federal and provincial legislation, when determining what materials can be made available. And, access to the archives itself must be arranged ahead of time, whether that visitor is an external researcher or community member, simply because it is beyond their means to be open to the public, particularly in terms of staffing.<sup>71</sup> The other anonymous BC Aboriginal archives, which is still under development, also indicated the use of legislation and community-imposed restrictions. In addition, they noted their intention to develop policies and procedures with their “communities of users.”<sup>72</sup>

Among community users of the archives, there is uncertainty as to what the Stó:lō archives actually contains, and how to access and use it. Halstad has noted that some

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<sup>71</sup> Completed questionnaire to author, 29 March 2008.

<sup>72</sup> Completed questionnaire to author, 23 July 2008.

believe the archives to contain a duplication of INAC's historical records that relate to Aboriginal affairs and administration by INAC and its predecessors. Certainly the archives does include some of these, but not all. In fact, in general, the archives actually contains more copies of records than originals. The same is true for the Chehalis archives, with the majority of holdings being maps, and then photographs and textual records. The Spokane Tribe of Indians' archives in Washington state in the United States also contains more copies than originals, with the majority of their holdings being textual records and artifacts, the latter because the archives is not only a repository for records, but also cultural objects.<sup>73</sup> One of the anonymous BC Aboriginal archives respondents, however, notes an even amount of original and copied records, with artifacts being the most numerous record type in their archives.<sup>74</sup> The notion of copying records and archives harkens back to the suggestion above that Aboriginal archives are replicating the "total archives" tradition as they seek out evidence to document significant issues and back-up specific claims. Given that the holdings of many Aboriginal-run and -created archives are more copies than originals, does it make them more research centres than genuine archives? And to what extent are they still reactionary and gently being nudged by treaty requirements or other issues? Perhaps this is simply a natural progression for Aboriginal archives as they develop methods and systems that work for their particular situations.

Issues relating to copies, and in particular copies of INAC historical records, as well as records restriction and access to such copies, are similarly intriguing and

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<sup>73</sup> Lynn Pankonin, completed questionnaire to author, 10 March 2008. The Spokane Tribe of Indians' archives was established in 2005 to house tribal council and cultural records. Like James Leon with the Chehalis archives, Pankonin fills a number of roles, including Archivist, Records Manager, and Community Historian.

<sup>74</sup> Completed questionnaire to author, 29 March 2008.

troubling, especially when it comes to the question of such records held in Aboriginal-run and -created archives. The Regional Service Centre of Library and Archives Canada (LAC) in Burnaby, BC, maintains the permanent records of the federal government created in BC and the Yukon, and the majority of the researchers to the Centre are, not surprisingly, those conducting research into land claims and traditional use studies. Furthermore, it is the records created by INAC that are most requested by these researchers, and these records contain a substantial amount of personal information in comparison to other federal records. The Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act play a fundamental role in the handling and release of these federal records by LAC to its researchers, and with numerous researchers accessing these records, “issues relating to the collection of information and control of its dissemination must be addressed by all institutions of governance regardless of form, as well as by community-based organizations.”<sup>75</sup> Therefore, while the regional centre does its due diligence by reviewing these records under the requirements of the Acts before allowing researchers access to them, it is another question entirely as to what researchers specifically working on behalf of Aboriginal land claims and traditional use studies may do with the information they copy from the INAC records and take with them, potentially for deposit within these communities’ repositories or archives. And this is because, within the Privacy Act, there are specific exceptions to the disclosure of personal information when it is to an institution of Aboriginal people, an Aboriginal band or Aboriginal government, or people acting on behalf of such groups “for the purpose of researching or validating the claims,

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<sup>75</sup> Marnie Burnham and Jana Buhlmann, [untitled] (presentation for “Privacy, Access & Storage Issue” panel at the Implementing Delgamuuk’w: Legal Implications for Aboriginal Title Research Conference, Union of BC Indian Chiefs, Vancouver, BC, 1-3 March 1999), <http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/files/PDF/034-MBURNHAM.pdf>, 1 (accessed 15 May 2008).

disputes or grievances of any of the aboriginal peoples of Canada.”<sup>76</sup> These researchers must have written accreditation that they are conducting research for such purposes on behalf of these Aboriginal associations, and they must indicate in writing on a research application “not to use the information for any other purpose than for that which access is granted.”<sup>77</sup> Researchers thus gaining access to personal information under this exception clause are responsible for continuing to protect that information as per their research application obligations. Therefore, in addition to this level of protection, if such documentation comes to reside in an Aboriginal-run and -created archives, “it is up to each nation to develop ... policies and procedures ... [that] respond to community-specific privacy concerns, as well as internal mechanisms of accountability.”<sup>78</sup> Consequently, despite the fact that copies of such INAC records are provided to the Aboriginal communities and individuals to whom they pertain, requirements of occidental law appear to continue to dictate access to them even after they have been deposited in respective Aboriginal repositories and archives – and, it seems, ahead of the needs and desires of the Aboriginal community.

While questionnaire respondents were not asked specifically about the physical setting of their archives but rather their opinions on what settings they felt Aboriginal archives would suit (e.g., as part of a larger heritage centre, as a separate entity, etc.), the Stó:lō archives is known to be located in a Stó:lō Nation Society administrative building,

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<sup>76</sup> Section 8.2(k) of Canada’s Privacy Act states that personal information may be disclosed “to any aboriginal government, association of aboriginal people, Indian band, government institution or part thereof, or to any person acting on behalf of such government, association, band, institution or part thereof, for the purpose of researching or validating the claims, disputes or grievances of any of the aboriginal peoples of Canada.” See Canada, Department of Justice, “Where personal information may be disclosed,” *Privacy Act*, RS 1985, c. P-21, sect. 8.2(k), [http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/showdoc/cs/P-21/bo-ga:s\\_7/en#anchorbo-ga:s\\_7](http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/showdoc/cs/P-21/bo-ga:s_7/en#anchorbo-ga:s_7) (accessed 16 May 2008).

<sup>77</sup> Burnham and Buhlmann, Implementing Delgamuuk’w presentation, 3.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

the setting for which holds a troubling “emotional connection” for some community members. The building housing the archives was once a TB hospital, and the grounds occupied by current SNS offices and this particular building were once the site of a residential school. The Nisga’a archives are housed in a windowless and lockable room in a legislative and administrative building. However, as noted above, non-current records created by the Nisga’a Tribal Council in the 1980s and 1990s are housed in a separate mobile home in the same area, having previously resided in an unheated storage facility.<sup>79</sup> There are plans to construct a Nisga’a museum, but determining the best site and securing funding have been a politically-charged process, resulting in delays and the reality that the archives might not necessarily have a place in such a museum. Indeed, Halstad has noted that an “integrated library, archives, and museum” along with an Elders’ centre “has been a long term goal” for Stó:lō Nation Society’s AR&T as well. However, the archives has also been affected by political upheaval. In 2004, the original Stó:lō Nation government, representing 19 bands (and providing services to 24 bands overall), split into SNS and Stó:lō Tribal Council (STC).<sup>80</sup> Given this political unrest, funding from the BC Treaty Commission was not forthcoming over the following year, thus leading to a severe impact on the operations of the archives and treaty negotiations as well. In 2007, the Stó:lō Xwexwilmexw Treaty Association (SXTA) was incorporated, representing 7 of the 11 bands that remained with SNS, with the intention

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<sup>79</sup> Eastwood, “The Archives of the Nisga’a Nation,” slide 10 notes, slide 14.

<sup>80</sup> Fraser Valley Regional District [FVRD], Fraser Valley Treaty Advisory Committee, “Sto:lo Nation,” <http://www.fvrd.bc.ca/About%20the%20FVRD/FraserValleyTreatyAdvisoryCommittee/Pages/StoloNation.aspx> (accessed 18 May 2008); Paul J. Henderson, “Treaty Talks Hampered by Sto:lo Split,” *Chilliwack Times*, 28 March 2008, <http://www.canada.com/chilliwacktimes/news/story.html?id=67ce285e-e868-4ab7-9aa5-06768f6bba02&p=1> (accessed 18 May 2008).

of moving ahead once more with treaty negotiations.<sup>81</sup> Fortunately, the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre (SRRMC) has entered into agreements with SNS and STC, and is also contracted to do work for SXTA, which means BCTC funding is now available again under the new arrangements. Thus, the SRRMC represents the Stó:lō people as a whole, not just specific bands, and treaty is now only a portion of the work they actually do.<sup>82</sup>

Improving and taking greater control over their lives has not only meant an increased need for Aboriginal people to access (and thus copy) Euro-Canadian archives, employ Euro-Canadian methods of archiving, or establish their own archives along similar lines. It has also meant regaining control over their culture and memory through repatriation. What “residues” of their own history have Aboriginal people demanded be returned, kept in their own archives, and so on? Further, how have Aboriginal people dealt with these residues once they have been repatriated? In the film *Totem: The Return of the G'psgolox Pole*,<sup>83</sup> the Haisla people of northwestern British Columbia faced the task of repatriating a mortuary pole, which was removed from near their village in 1929 and eventually came to reside in the Stockholm Museum in Sweden. The whereabouts of the pole was unknown until this Aboriginal group discovered it pictured in a book in the 1990s. Facing strong claims by the Haisla that the pole had been wrongfully removed, the Swedish government agreed to return the pole on the condition that a suitable, climate-controlled edifice be constructed in Kitimat to house it. Despite the Haisla

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<sup>81</sup> FVRD, “Sto:lo Nation,”

<http://www.fvrd.bc.ca/About%20the%20FVRD/FraserValleyTreatyAdvisoryCommittee/Pages/StoloNation.aspx>.

<sup>82</sup> Tracey Joe, telephone communication, 29 April 2008

<sup>83</sup> *Totem: The Return of the G'psgolox Pole*, directed by Gil Cardinal (Montreal: National Film Board of Canada, 2003) ; 116 min., 40 sec.; QuickTime file, <http://www.onf.ca/enclasse/doclens/visau/index.php?mode=view&language=english&filmId=51162&PHPSESSID=e21c73ea98df6a4f2b5ef0f2e249a859> (accessed 27 April 2007).

peoples' gesture of good faith, in which they provided an exact replica to replace the original pole at the museum, the Swedish government held firm to its requirement before proceeding with repatriation. For the Haisla, the major issue at stake was that many of their people believed the pole should be returned to its original location near the village and exposed to the elements, as originally intended from a cultural perspective.

The pole eventually made its way back to Canada by ship and settled in Kitimat in the summer of 2006, where it was officially welcomed, feasted and celebrated. At that time, it was to be housed in a local school, in anticipation of the construction of a cultural centre to house the pole for public display.<sup>84</sup> Which approach should be considered most appropriate as a means of “remembrance”? That which follows the Euro-Canadian method of preserving artifacts or respects the cultural needs and values of the Aboriginal people? And, who decides what “appropriate” handling of repatriated items is in the first place? Indeed, from the archival perspective, leading American archivist Frank Boles pointedly asks, “why is it that when one of us owns it he or she can close it, or even burn it, and the archival community merely ‘regrets’ the action, whereas when Native Americans assert that they might have a similar communal right, some among us reject the claim out of hand? Is it truly that different?”<sup>85</sup> The following passage by the Haisla Nation clearly notes the alternative (and indeed, holistic) way they view their repatriated heritage:

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<sup>84</sup> Mattia Karen, “Sweden returns totem pole taken from B.C. native band,” *The Vancouver Sun*, 15 March 2006, A3.

<sup>85</sup> Comment 39 by Frank Boles, January 9, 2008, p. 138 in Frank Boles, David George-Shongo, and Christine Weideman, “Report: Task Force to Review *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials*,” Society of American Archivists Council Meeting, February 7-10, 2008, Washington, DC (agenda item III.A.), <http://www.archivists.org/governance/taskforces/0208-NativeAmProtocols-IIIA.pdf> (accessed 11 July 2008).



This totem represents so much more than just a monument; it is symbolic of our character, our integrity, our fortitude, and our identity as a nation. We are no longer frozen in time or put on display for others to see; this repatriation process reminds all that as a nation, we are present and active participants in our societies today. ... The return of the G'psgolox totem pole is definitely a catalyst for cultural revival and renewal ...<sup>86</sup>

Nonetheless, it seems simply repatriating or gaining control over their own archival records does not guarantee that Aboriginal people will be “liberated from ethical dilemmas that now face archivists elsewhere, since native archives are presumably free to manage information according to their own rules ... [as] they, too, are forced to wrestle with difficult ethical questions.”<sup>87</sup> And, considering this repatriation example and that of the copied INAC records discussed above, are Aboriginal archives truly free to manage records about themselves (once copied or repatriated) as they see fit?

When it comes to the control over or the outright repatriation of Aboriginal cultural materials, the question best asked is who has the right to own such material? As seen with the story of the G'psgolox pole, not every Aboriginal community, much less a family or individual, about whom – and especially *by* whom – such material is created, is in a position to financially support its arrangement, description, preservation, access, etc. Nor do their notions or knowledge of archival custodianship necessarily mesh with Euro-Canadian archival standards, as discussed throughout the thesis thus far. And, yet, are Euro-Canadian archives the better custodian, given that materials in these settings are arranged according to their own archival standards and are, more often than not, physically (and potentially intellectually) inaccessible to these Aboriginal communities?

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<sup>86</sup> Na na kila Institute, Haisla Nation Totem Pole and Cultural Centre Project, “G'psgolox Totem Repatriation Process,” <http://www.nanakila.ca/pole.html> (accessed 5 May 2008).

<sup>87</sup> Michael F. Brown, *Who Owns Native Culture?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 32.

It seems there are fears about how Aboriginal archival materials will be handled or even represented if returned to the control or ownership of Aboriginal communities. As prominent American archivist Mark A. Greene aptly points out, “the reason why this question of literal ownership is so important is that it strongly affects the figurative ownership of history.”<sup>88</sup> Indeed, repatriated materials could potentially result in an entirely new interpretation of history, one that includes the Aboriginal point of view and might differ quite dramatically from popular understandings of the past.

Another issue associated with repatriation, and indeed the copying of records, is the presumption that cultural items and knowledge can be readily identified with one Aboriginal group over another, which is not always the case. In fact, cultural items and ideas may “belong” to more than one cultural group. There is also the issue of disagreement within Aboriginal groups, as well as between them – the ethical issues noted above. There are differing opinions about the appropriateness of allowing public access to materials or knowledge, and differing opinions among younger and older generations, as well as between those who have converted to Christianity and those who have not. In the case of the pole, there were divisions within the community itself as to the appropriateness of placing the pole back out in the elements, or preserving it indoors. Thus, Aboriginal people once again find themselves caught between two rationales or worldviews as they attempt to find the best ways to protect, maintain and pass on their cultural heritage.<sup>89</sup> Thus, it is hardly surprising that Aboriginal people have had to react quickly and defensively as soon as they were able to do so.

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<sup>88</sup> Mark A. Greene, “Protocols for Native American Archival Materials,” *Archival Outlook* (March/April 2008): 3.

<sup>89</sup> Brown, *Who Owns Native Culture?*, 21, 27.

It is evident that Aboriginal people very quickly realised that, in the context and the eyes of legislation, courts of law, and Euro-Canadian society itself, to be taken seriously, to make headway, to be recognised, to simply prove they did in fact exist and occupy certain lands before the arrival of Europeans, they had to develop (or at the very least, access) Euro-derived archives. There is also a need on the part of Aboriginal people to present how they see and understand themselves in their own way, to dispute and show an alternative view to Euro-derived representations of Aboriginal people, to improve and regain control over their lives, history, culture, and identities. And, returning to or reconnecting such items with the community that created it can result in positive gains and advantages, such as a recontextualising of the material and knowledge, the correcting of misrepresentations and misunderstandings, and the revitalisation and healing of the community in question.<sup>90</sup> After all, who better understands its cultural materials than the culture that is responsible for its creation?

And, thus, is reactionary so bad? Certainly if it is to the exclusion of the holistic, the bigger picture, but with so-called reactionary archives established, it seems that Aboriginal people have begun to take their archives further, making use of the opportunity and their ability to present themselves with a “new and equally legitimate historical interpretation.”<sup>91</sup> Indeed, “we have tended to see [Aboriginal] culture as a throwback that must be preserved by the dominant culture, rather than as an active culture capable of collecting and telling its own story.”<sup>92</sup> Thus, it seems the intensification of the use of Euro-derived archiving methods was both forced, but also a

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<sup>90</sup> Lawson, *Precious Fragments*, v.

<sup>91</sup> Greene, “Protocols,” 3.

<sup>92</sup> Amy Cooper, “Issues in Native American Archives,” *Collections Management* 27, no. 2 (2002):

means to work in and with contemporary culture – to be an active part of society, to have their own culture and identity continue to grow and move forward. Aboriginal people are now in a timely position to not only collect and interpret their own contemporary records, but also the records of their past, in whatever form they see as authentic and reliable in the context of their own cultures. Thus, the following chapter will be a look at these existing models of archiving in Canada, the U.S., and Australia, to see how they are integrating Western, culturally-specific, unique or innovative combinations of archival methods and approaches in their archives, and to learn from their challenges and successes for the future of Aboriginal archiving.

### Chapter 3

#### Coming Together: Aboriginal Archives Beyond British Columbia

The lack of accessible, shared vocabulary within the information profession which respects the complexity, relevance and reliability of orality and First Nations knowledge systems presents a challenge for research about the management of First Nations knowledge and addressing First Nations information needs.<sup>1</sup>

This quote suggests that there are no easy answers for Aboriginal, much less Euro-Canadian archives. Indeed, Aboriginal records, remembering and “archiving” face a number of challenges and issues as Aboriginal people forge ahead, intertwined with, influenced by, and immersed in other worldviews. In a now more complex archival setting – one in which both Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian type records are being created, utilised, and stored – what roles are Aboriginal-run and -created archives playing and which directions are they taking? It is apparent that the future of Aboriginal archiving must tread carefully, being mindful of and taking into consideration a great deal of issues, not least of which is the suggestion that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people have “intertwined their communities, their cultures, and their documentary systems to the point that today neither society exists in isolation.”<sup>2</sup> Therefore, is it even possible to establish archives that maintain memory and culture in a purely Aboriginal tradition? Have Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian ways of archiving become so interwoven as to no longer allow for a clear distinction between the two? Does the future of Aboriginal – and perhaps even Euro-Canadian – archives instead demand a fusion of both non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal methods of remembering? Can lessons be learned from Aboriginal

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<sup>1</sup> Lawson, *Precious Fragments*, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Millar, “Subject or Object?” 330.

methods and applied to the future of Aboriginal “archives” and even Euro-Canadian archival settings and their Aboriginal and other holdings?

While archives are a seemingly appropriate place for Aboriginal records created in current legal and administrative contexts, to what extent will non-Aboriginal archiving methods hinder the proper handling and remembering required by traditional and cultural community records? Indeed, in order to maintain Aboriginal culture and knowledge (versus simply data and information), is an *archives* even the right choice for both record types? What efforts have been made or are underway by Aboriginal people to create “archives” unique to and respectful of their situation, and as a way of maintaining and celebrating their memory and identity, rather than as simply a reaction to legal, political, social or other pressures?

Increasingly, Aboriginal organisations appear to be moving towards the development of holistic, all-encompassing, cultural centres that may contain museums, archives, libraries, community gathering and sharing places, and so on, linking the tangible to the intangible, memory and history to people and the land. In British Columbia, examples include the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Tribal Council Archives in Cranbrook (as explored in the first chapter), and the more recent Doig River First Nation Cultural Centre in Rose Prairie (northeastern BC) or the multi-complex setting of the Haida Heritage Centre at Kaay Llnagaay in Skidegate, Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands). Perhaps this is the future of “archives” created by and for Aboriginal people – places to gather, learn, share knowledge, and heal, and where perhaps Aboriginal holistic worldviews can be rejuvenated, understood, and once again lived. These multi-purpose

centres are also likely a practical reflection of the reality of fiscal restraints faced by Aboriginal communities that prevent creation of separate memory institutions.

But can an edifice contain the whole of a culture's knowledge and remembering? Sul'ma'ejote has suggested that "oral literature and legends are not designed to live in a square room or in print translation," and he has noted that his own archives exists in his "mind and heart" because "the old ones say the mind is all of the knowledge and experiences of previous generations that have come to you. The mind then would be the archives."<sup>3</sup> Were it to successfully represent a community's history, memory, culture, etc., can an Aboriginal archives truly and best be contained within four walls? As seen with the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Tribal Council Archives, however, Aboriginal people can also make the notion of "archives" or cultural centres their own, in this case using the edifice as a touchstone or springboard from which the full experience of Aboriginal knowledge can be drawn, linked to the tangible and intangible outside of its walls in the community and beyond – a more holistic, rather than reactionary, experience that could even be seen as having come full circle from its beginnings.

In order to move forward and consider the future of Aboriginal-run and -created archives, this chapter will be an examination of existing models of archiving nationally and in the U.S. and Australia, whether Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, integrating culturally-specific, unique or innovative combinations of archival methods and approaches. It is hoped that what can be learned from these other models may provide or inspire the future archivist or keeper of knowledge (be they Aboriginal or not) with the tools that will maintain and not compromise the very existence of traditional or contemporary Aboriginal memory, culture, and identity. Whether such recommendations

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<sup>3</sup> Completed questionnaire to author, 8 March 2008.

result in a move away from the very notion of conventional, Western-style archives remains to be seen. Indeed, “the archive has become a liminal space, in which received Eurocentric professional wisdoms are challenged and in some cases turned inside out.”<sup>4</sup>

### **The Questionnaire**

One of the most significant challenges – and certainly from the perspective of this thesis – is the study of existing Aboriginal-run and -created archives. Indeed, nationally and internationally, a great deal more has been written about the issues involving Aboriginal records in non-Aboriginal institutions than about the experiences and perspective of archival settings created by and for Aboriginal people themselves. Furthermore – and not surprisingly, given the previous chapter’s discussion – such writing has only become more prominent in archival and interdisciplinary literature in the past thirty to forty years.

The difficulty of studying existing Aboriginal archives also became apparent with the surprisingly low number of responses to the questionnaire developed for this thesis. At the most basic level, this was perhaps due to the length of the survey, which ultimately took respondents anywhere from twenty to over forty minutes to complete. Indeed, time and the lack of staff and resources to fully – or even attempt to – respond to the questionnaire were most often cited as obstacles by otherwise predominantly enthusiastic, worldwide respondents to the initial message soliciting participants. There were also some minor misunderstandings with the use of the term “Euro-Canadian” when

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<sup>4</sup> Verne Harris and Adrian Cunningham, “Foreword: Finding the ‘indigenous,’” *Comma: International Journal on Archives* 2003.1:10.



encountered by international respondents, despite clarification in the questionnaire to address this term.

At a more complex level, however, there were a small number of respondents who had reservations about the questionnaire and the topic itself, and ultimately did not complete the questionnaire for submission, despite my willingness to discuss further their concerns. Some took issue with terminology or the notions explored. Others requested that I abide by their researcher codes of ethics, as well as submit to them for final approval any writing that centred on their data. While I was more than willing to respect and adhere to the process required by each community or organisation, ultimately not every such respondent took part in the questionnaire, whether because of time constraints on both parts or simply because they chose to drop further pursuit of the matter altogether. Finally, there was also a concern and wariness among a very few that seemed to reveal a tension between Aboriginal people and outside researchers, quite clearly and understandably resulting from a lack of respect by past researchers towards the Aboriginal communities they were studying.

The means of distribution, which predominantly entailed posting a message on archival listservs to solicit interested parties, may have also played a factor in the low response rate to the questionnaire.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, an unforeseen benefit of this method was the kind offer by a number of respondents to pass on the message to other interested parties not on the lists or present on other related lists, such as Aboriginal-specific interest groups, whether archival in focus or not. Distribution via archival listservs also presumes that Aboriginal archives maintain a presence on such forums, are

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<sup>5</sup> The message was posted to archival listservs in Canada (including SISAA, the Special Interest Section on Aboriginal Archives, which is part of the Association of Canadian Archivists), the United States, Australia, and an internationally-based system.

members of archival organisations or, at the very least, navigate or interact with the World Wide Web to some extent. Adding to this was the low visibility of Aboriginal archives associated with archival organisations, and a lack of formal, centralised directories in BC and abroad. Indeed, over the course of the research for this thesis, additional BC Aboriginal archives that were not necessarily “official” or stand-alone (i.e., they may form part of a larger community heritage centre or museum), and neither well-known nor advertised, emerged through colleague referrals or mere coincidence, rather than through any central listing or forum. Those that emerged were often the “pet” projects of individuals in the community – unofficially, informally or even hastily gathered repositories of records – the residues of larger issues or projects. Indeed, as discussed in the previous chapter, this situation is very clearly seen with the various archives whose impetus was “reactionary.”

Thus, requests for responses to the thesis questionnaire were also sent via email directly to known and existing Aboriginal archives in BC – the geographical area targeted as the basis for this thesis. Unfortunately, of the twelve BC Aboriginal archives identified through research and contacted directly, only six responded and requested, or expressed interest in, the questionnaire and ultimately only three of these six completed it, despite gentle reminders after the response timeframe had passed.<sup>6</sup> The Stó:lō Archives in British Columbia (represented by Tia Halstad, Librarian, and Tracey Joe, a Supervisor and Research Assistant) was a fourth respondent, though the data gathered was drawn from interviews conducted two years earlier, supplemented by minor updates

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<sup>6</sup> These were James Leon with the Chehalis Indian Band’s archives (completed questionnaire to author, 11 March 2008), and two other Aboriginal archives that opted to remain anonymous (completed questionnaires to author, 29 March and 23 July 2008). Leon is Chehalis and the anonymous respondents are of First Nations descent.

via personal communication and visiting their website. Thus, the Stó:lō archives did not specifically respond to the questionnaire since the interview had solicited most of the answers sought with the survey itself. A fifth respondent was the Haida Gwaii Museum at Kaay Llnagaay (represented by museum Director, Nathalie Macfarlane), which now forms part of the new Haida Heritage Centre at Kaay Llnagaay.<sup>7</sup> Due to time constraints relating to preparations for the official grand opening of the new centre in the summer of 2008, Macfarlane was only able to provide a brief overview of the museum's archives, rather than complete the questionnaire itself. And finally, a sixth example was the archives of the Nisga'a Nation. Although this archives was not contacted directly and, therefore, was not an actual respondent to the questionnaire either, data was kindly provided to the author by Professor Terry Eastwood of the University of British Columbia's archival studies program from his recent presentation and personal experience with this fledgling archives.

With a low response rate from BC, the bulk of the participants arose from international sources. One exception was an archivist in Yellowknife, NWT who, rather than respond to the questionnaire, preferred to provide comments and opinions on the thesis topic that were reflective of her personal experience working with Aboriginal materials in various contexts.<sup>8</sup> Beyond Canada, there were four respondents from the United States, three of whom represented Aboriginal-run and/or -created archives, with a fourth being an archivist/records manager at a university in Indiana who answered the questionnaire based on her own interest in Aboriginal archives and, like the archivist in

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<sup>7</sup> Nathalie Macfarlane (Director, Haida Gwaii Museum), email communication with author, 17 March 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Erin Suliak, email communication with author, various dates February-April 2008. Suliak did not speak on behalf of any institution.

Yellowknife, indicated that her opinions and comments were her own and not the official views of any institution.<sup>9</sup> And, finally, there were three respondents from Australia, two of whom represented government archives and, the third, a religious archives, with all three settings holding information created about, relating to, or documenting the lives of Aboriginal people and their communities.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Canadian Scene**

As indicated in the previous chapter, no formal, centralised directory of Aboriginal archives exists in Canada. There have certainly been attempts to produce lists, and the member directories of provincial and territorial archival associations are useful starting points. Yet, not one comprehensive directory has been developed and, as seen in the previous chapter, Aboriginal archives may not mesh with standards recognised by archival associations and thus be ineligible for membership and representation in directories. Furthermore, the study and comparison of the various existing lists (member directories and otherwise) revealed duplication, differences in title

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<sup>9</sup> The US respondents: Sul'ma'ejote (Dr. Darryl Babe Wilson), who is a retired professor and Aboriginal person from northeastern California, is keeper of the history and legend bearer for his tribe (email communication with author, 4 March 2008; completed questionnaire to author, 8 March 2008); John D. Berry, who has a Choctaw/Cherokee/Scots-Irish/German cultural background, is Native American Studies Librarian in the Ethnic Studies Library at the University of California, Berkeley (completed questionnaire to author, 4 March 2008); Lynn Pankonin, who is American, is the archivist/records manager/community historian for the Spokane Tribe of Indians' archives in Washington state; and Alison Harper Stankrauff, who has a European cultural background, is an archivist/records manager at a university in Indiana (completed questionnaire to author, 11 March 2008).

<sup>10</sup> The Australian respondents: Kathy Frankland, who has a European cultural background, is Manager (archivist by trade) of the Community and Personal Histories unit within the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, which is in the Department of Communities of the Queensland State Government (completed questionnaire to author, 2 April 2008); Kirsten Thorpe, who has an Aboriginal (descendant of the Worimi people of New South Wales) and European cultural background, is an archivist/Aboriginal liaison with State Records Authority of New South Wales (NSW) within the NSW State Government (completed questionnaire to author, 1 April 2008); and an anonymous respondent, who has a European cultural background, is an archivist with a religious archives that holds information about Aboriginal people (completed questionnaire to author, 2 April 2008).

for the same archives or heritage institution, the presence of repositories on some lists but their notable absence on others, and the inclusion of Aboriginal-run and -created archives alongside Euro-Canadian archives holding records about Aboriginal people. Some lists were also not completely up to date as they rely on the repositories themselves to provide current information. And, attempts to search out additional data on listed repositories, whether through noted websites or search engines, often turned up little or no additional data, and sometimes none at all. Of course, some archives could very well not have a presence on the World Wide Web – an indication, once again, of unofficially, informally or even hastily gathered repositories of records, or simply the lack of technical or fiscal resources or even the need to develop a web presence.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Aboriginal Heritage Initiatives office of Library and Archives Canada (LAC) conducted a survey on Aboriginal archives and libraries in March, 2008.<sup>11</sup> While the results have not yet been released, an examination of the archives portion of the survey revealed questions very similar in scope to those found in the thesis questionnaire. Notably, the LAC survey went beyond these, asking additional questions that addressed the existence of special programs and outreach events, availability of computers for patrons, user demographics, hours, how they advertise their existence, and their awareness of LAC. It is hoped that the response to the survey was widespread, and the results will just be the beginning of a continued and fruitful focus on Aboriginal archives and their structures in Canada.

Unlike in the U.S. and Australia, Canada has not yet developed a set of protocols outlining culturally appropriate ways for non-Aboriginal archival, library and information

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<sup>11</sup> The survey was developed and distributed by an Aboriginal management company on LAC's behalf: Mi'kmwesu Management, "Library and Archives Canada – Aboriginal Peoples [sic] Libraries Survey," [March 2008]. In author's possession.

service settings to engage with Aboriginal communities, provide services to Aboriginal patrons and handle records by and about Aboriginal people in their collections. Nonetheless, the need for such guidelines is understood and being acknowledged through various initiatives in the Canadian archival community. Indeed, there has been great interest in the U.S.'s recent "Protocols for Native American Archival Materials" (discussed in more detail below), which archivist Terry Reilly of the University of Calgary describes as having been "drafted as a North America wide standard." In fact, the group that developed the Protocols included two archivists from Canadian First Nations. Reilly has also suggested that "to further develop and implement the Protocols, the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) needs to develop a process for adopting these or similar focused initiatives," using wording and context that are relevant to the Canadian experience.<sup>12</sup>

While the Canadian archival community has not yet established or adopted its own relevant protocols, there has been recognition of and movement towards developing consultative and collaborative relationships with Aboriginal communities. (In Australia, as will be seen, collaboration and reciprocal relationships are especially prominent and supported.) In particular, the Aboriginal Heritage Initiatives (AHI) office of LAC was recently established so that, "in consultation and in partnership with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities, [it can seek] to identify universal issues and concerns of Aboriginal peoples in order to develop collections and improve services ... [while also providing] a focus for the management and development of library and archival

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<sup>12</sup> Terry Reilly to ACA's SISAA, "Memo: Draft response to SAA Protocols for Native American Archival Materials," 4 January 2008, in author's possession.

programs.”<sup>13</sup> An especially significant example of a collaborative project between LAC and Aboriginal communities is *Project Naming*, which began in 2001.<sup>14</sup> The project has involved the digitisation of images held at LAC that depict Inuit people from the late 1800s to the mid-twentieth century. Since very few of the Inuit are identified in the images, the project was initiated to bring scanned copies of the photographs to northern communities where Nunavut youth could engage their Elders and ask them to help identify those pictured. This has allowed youth to connect with their Elders and learn about their past, while also building a connection between Nunavut and the more populated south, both culturally and geographically. The project has been so successful that it is now in its second phase and, along with the digitised images included on the project website, will eventually include educational resources such as classroom modules targeted to intermediate and secondary students. The project also acknowledges the value of language and is presented in both official languages along with Inuktitut.<sup>15</sup> Most significantly, this project is allowing for additional context or provenance to be added to the imagery, thus filling the “gaps” in the “official” or existing narrative. It also has the added benefit of rekindling memories in the communities that the pictures represent.

Like the U.S. and Australia, Canada boasts a special interest group on Aboriginal archives (SISAA, established in 1997) in connection with its national Anglo-archival

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<sup>13</sup> Mi’kmwesu Management, cover letter to “Library and Archives Canada – Aboriginal Peoples [sic] Libraries Survey,” [March 2008]. In author’s possession. While the AHI does not appear to have an official web presence, it seems the following website is a portal for AHI initiatives: LAC, “Aboriginal Resources and Services: Introduction,” <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/aboriginal/index-e.html> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>14</sup> LAC, “Introduction: The Story Behind Project Naming,” <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/inuit/020018-1010-e.html> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>15</sup> LAC, “Phase II – Introduction: The Story Behind Project Naming,” <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/inuit/index-e.html> (accessed 13 October 2008), and LAC, “What You Will Find on this Website,” <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/inuit/020018-1060-e.html> (accessed 13 October 2008).

association (the ACA). SISAA's most recent accomplishment was publication of the *Aboriginal Archives Guide* in 2007, developed with the input of SISAA members of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal background.<sup>16</sup> The *Guide* is not meant to be a how-to manual, but does provide basic archival advice and references to relevant resources. SISAA hopes it will encourage the creation (and further growth) of archives in and for Aboriginal communities, as well as improve accessibility to Aboriginal-related records that are held by existing archival institutions.<sup>17</sup> Thus, although Canada has not established protocols as comprehensive as the U.S.'s and Australia, the *Guide* is a step in that direction.

While the *Guide* provides Euro-Canadian-derived archival advice, it is notable that Aboriginal "records" are given due consideration, particularly the oral tradition, which is described as "[preserving] other details, new information to fill gaps in the written records."<sup>18</sup> Indeed, it even describes the inclusion of oral tradition alongside Euro-Canadian-derived records in an Aboriginal archives setting as a "total archives."<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, the *Guide* goes on to acknowledge that "documents have taken the place of a person's word of honour. Even the new generation of Aboriginal scholars has begun to give more weight to the written record."<sup>20</sup> As a result, because the "fight for the rights of Aboriginal peoples requires that all their records be well preserved ... informed choices must be made on what is vital and historical to our Aboriginal communities as well as what is expected by external governments and organizations."<sup>21</sup> Thus, the *Guide*

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<sup>16</sup> ACA, Public Awareness Committee [PAC], "Aboriginal Archives Guide."

<sup>17</sup> Warren Sinclair, SISAA Chair, email to SISAA listserv, 4 April 2006.

<sup>18</sup> ACA, PAC, "Aboriginal Archives Guide," 7.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 8, 9.



recognises the dual roles that Aboriginal archives must play, as well as the dual record types they will likely contain. Finally, although access to information and privacy rights regarding records are discussed in terms of occidental law, the *Guide* does acknowledge the reality that Aboriginal records and knowledge can have communal rights and ownership associated with them. And, significantly, like the U.S. and Australian protocols, it also notes the prime importance of culturally appropriate handling and use of Aboriginal materials and knowledge, and particularly when in the custody of Euro-Canadian archives.<sup>22</sup>

While the *Guide* values Aboriginal “records” and their appropriate handling and use, it still couches them in the Euro-Canadian approach to organising and housing records for long-term preservation and accessibility, alongside their Euro-Canadian-derived records. There is no discussion of how Aboriginal archives might make or utilise their own methods of archiving. INAC’s *A Community Guide to Protecting Indigenous Knowledge*, however, takes just this approach. This step-by-step guide was designed to assist Aboriginal communities in developing their own models for protecting indigenous knowledge, emphasising the community-based approach that “relies on traditional values and systems” and thus allows for “the familiar concepts of community processes, consensus building and empowerment.”<sup>23</sup> Indeed, it quite clearly encourages communities to develop their own processes for “[cataloguing]” their indigenous knowledge and “[transmitting it] to future generations.”<sup>24</sup> At the same time, it recognises that such models might vary from community to community, just as culture varies from

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 26-28.

<sup>23</sup> Simon Brascoupé and Howard Mann, *A Community Guide to Protecting Indigenous Knowledge*, ed. Edwinna von Baeyer (Ottawa: INAC, Research and Analysis Directorate, 2001), <http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/R2-160-2001E.pdf>, 9 (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 39.

one Aboriginal group to another. In fact, as will be seen, this recognition is also acknowledged in the application of the U.S. and Australian protocols.

It is significant that archives are rarely mentioned in the INAC guide, and certainly not in terms of an edifice. Even more significant is the definition of indigenous knowledge that the guide provides: “It is an ancient, communal, holistic and spiritual knowledge that encompasses every aspect of human existence,” and is, furthermore, “unique to each tradition and ... closely associated with a given territory.”<sup>25</sup> And, as discussed in the thesis thus far, the guide in turn acknowledges the uniqueness and value of these traditional Aboriginal “records,” that they must be preserved and passed along, but that this process has been interrupted by various forces and even misused by others, and these elements have thus presented a challenge to their preservation and protection. And, “too often, [indigenous knowledge] issues are examined from the perspective of researchers and policy makers. Glaringly absent is a community perspective that focuses on community control and management, even though it is the communities, no one else, that are responsible for guarding and transmitting this knowledge.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, the guide emphasises the need for the community to develop its own model, encouraging not only the management of indigenous knowledge for social and cultural benefit, but also economic. Finally, the only significant drawback of the INAC guide is that there are no references provided, nor is the work prefaced with biographies of the writers or a discussion of why the work came about. Nonetheless, it is an extremely important document, as it appears to have established an action plan for what the U.S. and Australian protocols broach, but do not necessarily explicitly outline.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 1.

While no Canadian-based Aboriginal archives outside of BC responded to the thesis questionnaire, apart from the email communication with archivist Erin Suliak in Yellowknife, NWT, there are Aboriginal archives that maintain a web presence, and much intriguing information can be gleaned from them. For instance, the Membertou First Nation in the Cape Breton area of Nova Scotia boasts a research department that was established in 2005, after their Chief and Council recognised a “need to ensure that the collective history of Membertou is documented in some type of written format.”<sup>27</sup> While it does not call itself an archives, and despite the reference to the “written,” the department certainly appears to be taking the “total archives” approach: The Membertou are seeking out records on Mi’kmaq culture and history, not only from Euro-Canadian archives, such as LAC or local repositories, but also from Elders via the documentation and preservation of their oral knowledge. Recognising the value of preserving and passing on their culture, language and history, the Membertou also acknowledge the collective nature of their history. Thus, while this archives has “reacted” to a need to ensure this history is not forgotten, the community is taking a holistic approach to its preservation by acknowledging the Membertou’s place both in the present and in the past, in records from Euro-Canadian archives and “archives” within their community.

The Inuttigut Pirusiit Documentation and Archival Centre in Nunavik (northern Québec) had its basis in a 1983 project launched by the Inuit of this area to research Nunavik history through the collection of oral histories in their villages, photographs, and documentation in government archives.<sup>28</sup> The archives forms a part of the larger Avataq

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<sup>27</sup> Membertou First Nation, “Research Department,” [http://www.membertou.ca/department\\_research.asp](http://www.membertou.ca/department_research.asp) (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>28</sup> Avataq Cultural Institute [ACI], “Documentation and Archives: History,” <http://www.avataq.qc.ca/en/departement/131/> (accessed 13 October 2008).

Cultural Institute (ACI), which was established in 1980 in order to protect and promote the language and culture of Nunavik Inuit.<sup>29</sup> As with other Aboriginal people in Canada, the Inuit of this region found themselves re-establishing their identity and gaining self-determination in the 1960s and 1970s, and the ACI developed from these significant changes.<sup>30</sup> What is especially interesting about this Institute is that it “receives its mandate directly from Nunavik Inuit at the biennial Nunavik Inuit Elders’ Conferences,” and was created to benefit Inuit youth through the knowledge and teachings of their Elders.<sup>31</sup> And, while the archives is run by a trained archivist using Euro-Canadian archival methods, the overall direction of ACI is community-oriented and thus seemingly holistic in nature. For instance, local cultural committees have been set up in the various Nunavik communities to promote and preserve cultural traditions and needs, thus recognising that traditions and needs are individual to and can vary from community to community.<sup>32</sup> And, interestingly, the ACI website even includes a page dedicated to thanking nature, thus acknowledging their place in the greater whole.<sup>33</sup>

Although the Gwich’in Social & Cultural Institute (GSCI) in the Northwest Territories does not specify the inclusion of an archives (it is, however, listed on the Canadian Council of Archives directory), the GSCI was established “in response to concerns about the decline of Gwich’in culture and language and the need to implement heritage resource issues identified” in the Gwich’in Comprehensive Land Claim

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<sup>29</sup> ACI, “Avataq Cultural Institute: About Us,” <http://www.avataq.qc.ca/en/institut/5/> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>30</sup> ACI, “Inuit in Nunavik: The Region of Nunavik,” <http://www.avataq.qc.ca/en/inuits/4/> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>31</sup> Quote from ACI, “ACI: About Us,” <http://www.avataq.qc.ca/en/institut/5/>; ACI, “ACI: Background Information,” <http://www.avataq.qc.ca/en/institut/6/> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>32</sup> ACI, “ACI: Local Cultural Committees,” <http://avataq.qc.ca/en/institut/7/> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>33</sup> ACI, “Inuit in Nunavik: Thanks to Nature,” <http://avataq.qc.ca/en/inuits/240/> (accessed 13 October 2008).

Agreement signed in 1992 with the Canadian government.<sup>34</sup> Thus, this example harkens back to the notion of reactionary archiving in that it has its basis in and is driven by a juridical situation, as well general loss and encroachment. Indeed, the “Institute reviews land use permits for possible impacts on heritage resources, provides input on policies and legislation that concern Gwich’in heritage resources, identifies culturally significant sites, records Gwich’in place names and provides information for the development of Gwich’in Land Use Plans.”<sup>35</sup> Nonetheless, it is significant that research by GSCI combines work by staff using modern (or “Western”) research methods, and by Elders with traditional knowledge, thus resulting in a more holistic, all-encompassing approach to heritage and culture that “showcases the best of both” methods.<sup>36</sup>

Also listed in the Canadian Council of Archives directory is the Toronto Native Community History Project (TNCHP), which was established in 1995 through the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto in order develop a cross-cultural understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people living in the traditional Aboriginal territories of the Toronto area. Most significantly, however, the TNCHP is mandated to “research and record more accurate Native history” in order to “generate resources and materials ... aimed at countering Native stereotypes and racism.”<sup>37</sup> Here again is a reactionary response to misconceptions or negative perceptions of Aboriginal people. The TNCHP is unusual in that the focus of its resource centre’s holdings is on “urban Aboriginal history and contemporary issues,” and includes the archives of the Native Canadian Centre of

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<sup>34</sup> Gwich’in Social & Cultural Institute [GSCI], “About the Gwich’in Social & Cultural Institute (GSCI),” <http://www.gwichin.ca/AboutGSCI/aboutGSCI.html> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>35</sup> GSCI, “The Gwich’in: Legislation and Policy,” <http://www.gwichin.ca/TheGwichin/legislation.html> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>36</sup> GSCI, “Research,” <http://www.gwichin.ca/Research/research.html> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>37</sup> Toronto Native Community History Project [TNCHP], “TNCHP Information: Mandate & Goals,” [http://www.nativehistoryprogram.com/index\\_1.html](http://www.nativehistoryprogram.com/index_1.html) (accessed 13 October 2008).

Toronto.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, this intriguing collection focus has given rise to various projects that connect the past with the present. One such project was “Living History Circles,” which involved video recordings in 2001 (accessible through the website) of various Aboriginal people providing firsthand accounts of growing up and working in the Toronto area, how they overcame discrimination and were involved in the establishment and development of Aboriginal organisations in the city, as well as helped to “foster a positive space for the understanding and strengthening of Aboriginal culture in Toronto.”<sup>39</sup> Thus, TNCHP appears to seamlessly combine the needs and holdings of an archives with the contemporary, “living” Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures of Toronto.

### **The International Scene**

As noted above, there is a lack of literature about existing Aboriginal-run and -created archives both nationally and internationally, with a great deal more written about issues involving Aboriginal records held by non-Aboriginal institutions. In addition to this dearth, a lack of Aboriginal-focused archival organisations or even comprehensive, centralised listings has posed a challenge to the study of and research into Aboriginal-run and -created archives. Nonetheless, it seems the tide is changing and interest in the topic is growing. Its value and concern about it are being recognised not just regionally, but worldwide. Indeed, the International Council on Archives recently published an issue of its journal dedicated entirely to the topic of archives and Indigenous people.

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<sup>38</sup> TNCHP, “Resource Centre: Resource Centre,”

[http://www.nativehistoryprogram.com/index\\_1.html](http://www.nativehistoryprogram.com/index_1.html) (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>39</sup> TNCHP, “Special Projects & Collections: Living History Circles,”

[http://www.nativehistoryprogram.com/index\\_1.html](http://www.nativehistoryprogram.com/index_1.html) (accessed 13 October 2008).

Nonetheless, the two internationally-renowned archivists who spearheaded this project (Verne Harris of South Africa and Adrian Cunningham of Australia) also faced obstacles, admitting that “finding the addressee in this complex realm is a formidable challenge.” Only ten articles were ultimately published, half of which were from the same country. Their “attempts to solicit contributions other than scholarly essays” (and on the topic of non-textual documentation as well), like the questionnaire for this thesis, received a limited response. Harris and Cunningham ultimately concluded that “the project’s shortcomings should be seen as further evidence of the degree to which – systemically – ‘the indigenous’ is marginalized in dominant global discourses.”<sup>40</sup> Beyond this, it could also be an indication that Aboriginal people and organisations were simply unaware of the project or chose not to participate because of a lack of interest or a means to do so.

### *United States*

In the United States, it has been suggested that the lack of writing on Aboriginal archives is not due to lack of interest in the subject, but because such information is difficult to acquire<sup>41</sup> – as this author’s Canadian experience echoes. The U.S. also shares a similar history with Canada regarding the Aboriginal archiving experience in the latter half of the twentieth century, with Aboriginal-run and -created archives “[playing] an important role in the Native Americans’ fight for control over their own written material, history, and culture.” This results in reinterpretations, clarifications of inaccuracies,

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<sup>40</sup> Harris and Cunningham, “Foreword: Finding the ‘indigenous,’” 13.

<sup>41</sup> Lotsee Patterson, “History and Status of Native Americans in Librarianship,” *Library Trends* 49(1) (2000) paraphrased from Brooke M. Black, “Freeing the ‘Archival Captive’: A Closer Look at [Native American Indian] Tribal Archives,” *Provenance* 7 (2005), <http://www.provenance.ca/2005-vol7/libraries-archives/native-american-archives-2005-black.html> (accessed 24 June 2008).

empowerment, celebrations of cultural survival, the collection of records in the fight for the recognition of their existence, rights and title, and more community-centered institutions accessible to the people the records (both Aboriginal- or non-Aboriginal-created) are about.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, as in Canada, changes in U.S. legislation in the 1970s allowed Aboriginal people more self-determination and independence, along with the opportunity to obtain government funding to improve and strengthen communities, after years of effort by the U.S. government to assimilate or even completely obliterate Aboriginal peoples through boarding schools, land dispossession, and so on. The provision of government funding to help improve and strengthen Aboriginal communities often included the creation of libraries from which, in the U.S., Aboriginal archives saw their start.<sup>43</sup>

In the U.S., there is also very little writing about Aboriginal records held by non-Aboriginal institutions, although many of the larger institutions with significant Aboriginal holdings have made efforts to publish guides and develop online resources detailing their collections. Even so, tribal archives have become more common and numerous since the mid-1990s,<sup>44</sup> and the literature and Aboriginal-focused archival organisations and conferences appear to be on the rise. With regard to organisations, the Society of American Archivists (SAA) includes a Native American Archives Roundtable (NAAR), formed in 2005.<sup>45</sup> In addition to NAAR, but unaffiliated with the SAA, is the

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<sup>42</sup> Black, “Freeing the ‘Archival Captive,’” <http://www.provenance.ca/2005-vol7/libraries-archives/native-american-archives-2005-black.html> (accessed 24 June 2008).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Prior to NAAR’s formation, Native American archival issues were addressed in the Archivists & Archives of Color Roundtable, formed in 1987. NAAR’s mission statement is “to serve as a forum to educate archivists on the complexities and beauty of Native American archives of the western hemisphere and as a source of communication and inspiration for archivists working with Native American collections,” <http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/nat-amer/> (accessed 2 August 2008).



First Archivists Circle (FAC) based in Salamanca, New York. Although the FAC website reveals very little about its activities, membership, or even date of establishment, it appears to have similar goals to NAAR, and also hosts the “Protocols for Native American Archival Materials,” which will be discussed in more detail below.<sup>46</sup> It is unclear, however, whether working ties exist between FAC and NAAR, and thus whether or not they are conducting similar work independently or collaboratively.

Prominent early writings continue to be referenced in contemporary American literature on Aboriginal records and archives. These include William T. Hagan’s 1978 article entitled “Archival Captive – The American Indian,” which explored the notion that Aboriginals are held “captive” by non-Aboriginal archives and those who create records about and research them because, even today, the majority of records on or about Aboriginal people reside in such institutions or at least outside the Aboriginal communities they relate to. This seminal article also called for more Aboriginal people to develop their own archives as well as become archivists and librarians themselves.<sup>47</sup> At a more general level, John A. Fleckner’s *Native American Archives: An Introduction* (Chicago, 1984) was the first basic guide for the Aboriginal group or organisation developing its own archives in the U.S.<sup>48</sup> Finally, Brooke M. Black’s 2005 online article

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<sup>46</sup> The FAC, “an organization of Native American archivists, provides leadership and support for the preservation and culturally sensitive use of tribal documentary materials. The organization’s goals are to provide training and professional development, advise funding agencies on the needs of tribal repositories, promote professional archival practices and standards in tribal communities, and cultivate opportunities for outreach, recruitment, networking, and collaboration.” <http://www.firstarchivistscircle.org/about.htm> (accessed 2 August 2008; link not working as of 2 November 2008).

<sup>47</sup> William T. Hagan, “Archival Captive – The American Indian,” *The American Archivist* 41, no. 2 (April 1978).

<sup>48</sup> John A. Fleckner, *Native American Archives: An Introduction* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1984).

has provided the most comprehensive overview to date of the historical and current issues and trends in U.S. tribal archives.<sup>49</sup>

Adding to these humble beginnings is the more recent “Protocols for Native American Archival Materials” drafted at a conference in 2006 by nineteen Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal archivists, librarians, museum curators, historians, and anthropologists, from Canada and the U.S. Recognising that much Aboriginal documentation continues to reside in non-Aboriginal institutions throughout North America (and, indeed, worldwide), the Protocols are intended to be a starting point for discussion and a platform from which mutually respectful relationships can be developed between Aboriginal people and these non-Aboriginal institutions regarding the proper and ethical care, use, handling and treatment of Aboriginal documents.<sup>50</sup>

The Protocols “urge archivists and librarians to consider Native American perspectives on professional policy and practice issues” that are culturally sensitive and respectful of the rights and laws of Aboriginal people, as well as the unique needs of the individual Aboriginal tribes concerned.<sup>51</sup> The Protocols build upon existing ethics, protocols and international declarations that address and recognise these very rights and laws. The authors claim the Protocols to be a “work in progress – subject to revision and enhancement,” expecting it will serve as the basis for discussion between Aboriginal people and the non-Aboriginal, archival profession<sup>52</sup> – and, one might add, could also serve as a valuable touchstone to guide Aboriginal archives setting out to establish

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<sup>49</sup> Black, “Freeing the ‘Archival Captive,’” <http://www.provenance.ca/2005-vol7/libraries-archives/native-american-archives-2005-black.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Kathryn “Jody” Beaulieu et al., contributors, “Protocols for Native American Archival Materials,” 4 September 2007, <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/PrintProtocols.pdf>, 1-2. (accessed 11 July 2008).

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

themselves. After its presentation by the SAA's Native American Archives Roundtable (NAAR) to the SAA Council in 2007, the council formed a task force to gather comments on the Protocols from the archival community and produce a report that would include the comments and the task force's response.<sup>53</sup>

While certainly garnering much reaction, both positive and negative, the Protocols are an excellent first step in a difficult, but long overdue discussion. As American archivist Mark A. Greene has noted, "the Protocols challenge not only traditional archival practice but the heuristics on which it is built. The Protocols raise such questions as whether traditional Western norms of study and knowledge are the only legitimate ones. In a postmodern and pluralistic world, is it tenable to assert that there is only one true way of knowing the past?"<sup>54</sup> And, returning to the notion presented in Chapter 1 of "gaps" existing in the holdings of traditional, Western archives, reflecting deliberately or inadvertently excluded narratives, Greene rightly describes today's archivist as the "social justice archivist," who is building relationships with Aboriginal and other under-documented communities, and even returning control over materials to the rightful owners or communities. This more mutually beneficial and less-exclusionary relationship can be seen as a kind of holistic approach, a step beyond what Greene terms the "activist archivist" of the recent past, whose reactionary response to the gaps was to accommodate and "make room for [the] under-documented communities in existing archives,"<sup>55</sup> rather than also working directly and in tandem with such communities.

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<sup>53</sup> For the task force's full report, see Boles, George-Shongo, and Weideman, "Report: Task Force to Review *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials*," <http://www.archivists.org/governance/taskforces/0208-NativeAmProtocols-IIIA.pdf>.

<sup>54</sup> Greene, "Protocols for Native American Archival Materials," 25.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

If any detail exists about Native American archives from the perspective of the archives themselves, this can predominantly be gleaned from websites developed by various tribal archives, as well as a growing number of conferences that have brought together Aboriginal people working in archives, libraries, and museums. Specifically, the ongoing national “Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums” conference series<sup>56</sup> funded by federal sources and launched in 2002 (with earlier state and regional versions) has brought together Americans, as well as Canadians, working in Aboriginal archives, libraries and museums, to network, build relationships (especially with non-Aboriginal archives, libraries and museums), encourage collaborative projects, and share experiences unique to their work. Unfortunately, literature resulting from such conferences does not appear to be readily available either in print or on the web, save for a directory of Aboriginal archives, libraries, and museums in the U.S. compiled at the 2005 conference in Mesa, Arizona,<sup>57</sup> as an update to the 2002 conference’s participant directory. The 2005 directory<sup>58</sup> appears to continue to be the central U.S. listing and is now kept online as an interactive and somewhat searchable website hosted by the University of Arizona.<sup>59</sup> The website allows listed or new institutions to update their information or add themselves. The 2005 directory noted that over 170 organisations from the U.S. (with some from Canada) responded to the directory’s questionnaire sent to past and current

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<sup>56</sup> See <http://www.tribalconference.org/> (accessed 2 August 2008).

<sup>57</sup> Institute of Museum and Library Services National Leadership Grant, “Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums: Preserving Our Language, Memory and Lifeways National Conference II” (Mesa, Arizona, national conference hosted by Arizona State Library and Arizona State Museum, May 24-27, 2005), <http://www.statemuseum.arizona.edu/aip/leadershipgrant/natlconf/index.shtml> (accessed 14 July 2008).

<sup>58</sup> Arizona State Library [ASL], Arizona State Museum [ASM], and Institute of Museum and Library Services [IMLS], “Tribal Archive, Library, and Museum Directory,” [http://www.statemuseum.arizona.edu/frame/index.asp?doc=/aip/leadershipgrant/directory/tlam\\_directory\\_03\\_2005.pdf](http://www.statemuseum.arizona.edu/frame/index.asp?doc=/aip/leadershipgrant/directory/tlam_directory_03_2005.pdf) (accessed 14 July 2008).

<sup>59</sup> Arizona Native Net (University of Arizona), “Tribal Archive, Library, and Museum Directory,” <http://www.arizonanativenet.com/language/directory.cfm?sect=lan> (accessed 22 July 2008).

conference participants. According to the new website, however, there now appear to be 250 institutions listed.

Examining both the 2005 and updated directories, the data in the former (a PDF document) is divided by state and includes a separate section for Canada, which lists a total of seven organisations from BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario. The updated, web-based directory includes the same seven Canadian institutions, with no other Canadian representation having been added. Indeed, the data provided by each of these seven also remains the same in the web-based setting. Organisations in both the 2005 and web-based directories are identified as libraries, museums, archives, tribal college libraries, tribal cultural organisations, non-tribal organisations, or combinations of these.<sup>60</sup> Additional information noted for each organisation in the 2005 directory includes tribal affiliation(s) of the institution (where appropriate), coordinates, telephone and web information, main contact's name and position, number of staff, years in existence, current projects or challenges, and goals. In the web-based directory new categories (while quite often not filled out) have been added to supplement these additional categories, including mission statement, funding sources, accomplishments, needs, and even a picture of or logo for the institution itself. The main contact's name and position category have been dropped in the new directory, and the number of years in existence has been changed to year founded.

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<sup>60</sup> Tribal cultural organizations are noted to be “those organizations that did not fit into the more obvious category of a library, museum or archive but were nevertheless operating some kind of cultural program,” while non-tribal organizations were defined as “those organizations that may have a significant partnership with a tribal community or have special collections or programs that focus on the Native American community. Usually these organizations are governed and funded by universities, municipalities, local, state, or federal governments,” in ASL, AMS, and IMLS, “Directory,” [http://www.statemuseum.arizona.edu/frame/index.asp?doc=/aip/leadershipgrant/directory/tlam\\_directory\\_03\\_2005.pdf](http://www.statemuseum.arizona.edu/frame/index.asp?doc=/aip/leadershipgrant/directory/tlam_directory_03_2005.pdf), 7.

Focusing on the web-based directory (because it is the latest update, the listings can easily be sorted by institution name, type, tribe, or state, and the data under these sortable headings are keyword searchable), there are a total of nineteen U.S. and one Canadian organisation (the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket Tribal Archives) identified as archives alone while, beyond this, twenty-one American and one Canadian organisation (the First Nations University of Canada in Regina, SK) are identified as including an archives in combination with a museum, library, or other element. Since the web-based directory is, unfortunately, not keyword searchable in the categories beyond institution name, type, tribe or state, the 2005 directory was used to determine that a further eighteen organisations (one of which is the Chiefswood National Historic Site, a Six Nations museum in Ohsweken, ON), while not identified as archives or combinations thereof by the directory (in fact, the majority of these eighteen are listed as museums), actually noted the presence of an existing archives or archival collection as part of their current projects or challenges. In addition, approximately four of these eighteen expressed, as future goals, their desire to establish or develop an archives or archives program. Given all of these numbers, it seems that, of the over 250 organisations listed in the web-based directory, over a quarter boast at least an archival collection or desire for one, if not exclusively an archives in and of itself. It should be noted that, although the directory can be updated on the web-based version, a brief review of a sampling of the listings revealed that updates have not been made by the original institutions participating. However, despite the fact that much of the data is at least three years old, it provides a brief but interesting look at Aboriginal archives in the U.S.

Of the organisations identified exclusively as archives, the main challenge they note is a lack of funds, which directly contributes to the difficulty in supporting projects, hiring more staff (especially qualified archivists), providing basic or professional training, obtaining new or expanding existing space, purchasing archival supplies and equipment, and arranging collections for access. Many archives also identify the need for community awareness of their archives, especially in hopes that community members will donate their collections or, at the very least, that the community and the general public will make use of the archival collections for research and learning. The Samish Indian Nation Research and Archives in Anacortes, Washington, is the oldest institution, at over 50 years in existence, while the Historical Club of the Tonawanda Reservation (Seneca Nation of Indians) in Basom, New York, boasts fifteen staff, despite being established in 2001. And, of the eighteen archives, only five list an archivist on staff (the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket being one of the five), with the majority of the other titles listed as “director.”

In spite of their challenges and varied histories, many of the tribal archives appear to have established, or are working towards, unique and innovative approaches and needs for their organisations. The Ramah Navajo School Board Inc., of the Ramah Band of Navajo Nations in Pine Hill, New Mexico, for instance, hopes to focus on sacred geographical areas as one of its tribal preservation projects, while the Historical Club (noted above) plans to preserve historic homes as part of its future goals. And, the Lakota Tribal Archives and Historic Preservation Office (Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe) of Eagle Butte, South Dakota, would like to expand its outreach by establishing satellite locations at its other tribal offices and scanning records as part of this sharing. Only five

(including the First Nations University of Canada) mention records management or related issues, including the Pueblo of Zuni Tribal Archives & Records Management's (Zuni, New Mexico) plan to develop a retention and disposition schedule. And, as an extension of the need to obtain new or expand existing space, many of the archives express the desire to add library, museum, learning programs or other elements to establish a cultural centre.

Turning now to the U.S. responses to the thesis questionnaire, three of the four respondents (Berry, Pankonin, and Sul'ma'ejote<sup>61</sup>) believed Aboriginal archives (whether contemporary or traditional) should be run as part of a larger heritage centre, museum, etc., while the fourth respondent (Stankrauff) was uncertain, noting instead that this was a decision best guided by the needs of the institution and the Aboriginal community involved. Berry, Pankonin, and Sul'ma'ejote's holistic stance is best summed up by Pankonin:

Within the Native (Tribal) community one cannot separate cultural traditions [into] segments. Culture and traditions are the life of The People – they live it everyday. Their daily lives are the cultural, spiritual, in the confines of a modern, Euro dominated society. A heritage center or museum is an integral part of the community that provides a place to visit the ancestors, listen to their voices and to continue to add those voices. Again, one cannot separate the words, the objects, the tradition or the spirituality of the Native people.

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<sup>61</sup> There was some email correspondence received (4 March 2008) from Sul'ma'ejote prior to his completing the questionnaire, as well as a cover letter accompanying his completed questionnaire. Unless otherwise indicated, all information and quotes from Sul'ma'ejote (and about his archives) are from the completed questionnaire to the author, 8 March 2008. Similarly, unless otherwise indicated, all information and quotes from John D. Berry (and about the Ethnic Studies Library, UCB), Pankonin (and about the Spokane Tribe of Indians' archives), and Stankrauff are from their completed questionnaires to the author of 4, 10, and 11 March 2008, respectively.



At a more practical level, Berry added that “to avoid redundancy and excessive fiscal burden,” a larger centre would be most sensible, though he admits that if fiscal considerations were not an issue, his answer would be quite different. He goes on to state, however, that “in an academic setting like ours this may require unit autonomy to avoid being swallowed up by the greater dominant culture unit(s).”

With regard to archival methods, Berry, Pankonin, and Stankrauff acknowledged that simply using Euro-based methods is not sufficient to run an Aboriginal archives, with Pankonin and Stankrauff indicating that a combination of Euro, Aboriginal, and unique archival methods (i.e., a blend of Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian archival methods, or something new and innovative) should be followed. Berry concluded that methods followed by Aboriginal archives are “situationally dependent,” noting that “what is suitable for a Tribal Archive might not be suitable for the Tribe next door and either or both would not be acceptable by mainstream archival methodology.” This harkens back to the U.S. Protocols discussed above which, in addition to recommending that Aboriginal ways of recording, remembering, and archiving be placed on an equal footing with Western archival methods, also encourage “institutions and communities ... to adopt the culturally responsive recommendations to suit local needs.”<sup>62</sup> Thus, archival methods and needs may vary and develop differently from one Aboriginal community to another, as has been seen with earlier examples.

The notion that there is a single archival standard is inconceivable to many Aboriginal archives. Nonetheless, as the U.S. Protocols suggest, elements of Western archival methods and the needs of an Aboriginal community could be utilised simultaneously and harmoniously to establish a satisfactory situation for each Aboriginal

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<sup>62</sup> Beaulieu et al., “Protocols,” <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/PrintProtocols.pdf>, 2..

archives. In the case of the Spokane Tribe of Indians' archives, for example, standard, Western archival methods are used in the service of "recall and finding of archives and collections ... [while] culturally related standards determine how the collections are handled and how they are honoured and respected." Thus, Pankonin differentiates between the physical arrangement of the archives as Euro-based and the accessibility, handling and respect as culturally-specific:

Any Native run archives and repository must have accepted archiving and curation techniques for tracking, finding, and retrieval of collections. At the same time those collections are viewed, in a tribal setting, as more than just archives and objects – they are the voices of the ancestors personified in the oral histories, the beaded bags, the pre-contact arrow points, and mortars & pestles. Each must be treated as one would if the maker were there with them – as they are in spirit. Most museums and archives do not view their collections as living breathing people but as things. Not so within the Tribal community.

This differentiation is echoed by Halstad with the Stó:lō Archives in that, while she feels it is important that the gathering and handling of memory and records be taken care of in ways that respect Aboriginal tradition (and thus, holistic memory), she also believes the organisation of these records will likely fare better using non-Aboriginal methods. And, while Pankonin admits that cataloguing can be time-consuming, she recognises that there are more advantages than disadvantages in utilising both Western- and culturally-guided archival approaches.

One of the anonymous BC Aboriginal archives respondents also indicated that they use Western archival methods to make the records easily understood and accessible to all researchers, and these methods are followed exclusively, the only exception being

the use of community-imposed restrictions in combination with federal and provincial legislation in decisions on access.<sup>63</sup> The other anonymous BC Aboriginal archives, while still under development, did state its desire to hire a professional archivist, but also indicated its use of Aboriginal archiving methods such as (recorded) oral traditions and maps with traditional place names.<sup>64</sup> Leon of the Chehalis Indian Band's archives concurred with the importance of using widely-understood Euro-Canadian archival methods, but he also emphasised the needs of the Aboriginal community: "The place where archives are held needs to be understood [by] European systems (court case related matters) but also [by] First Nations [systems] (seemingly oral traditions) with some council [members] who are 50 years old and don't understand the new technology of today." Indeed, as discussed in the first chapter, these same needs were taken into consideration in the example of the Ktunaxa-Kinbasket. And, finally, the Haida Gwaii Museum at Kaay Llnagaay has taken it one step further, combining Euro-Canadian and Aboriginal research needs by "incorporating specific Haida interests" into its "museum's archives and cataloguing systems." Macfarlane, Director of the museum, goes on to provide the example of "[including] matrilineal clan affiliation as a field in [their] collections database, allowing for searches based on Haida lineages."

Sul'ma'ejote who, with the exception of photographs of landscape and rock art, maintains his tribe's archives in his "mind and heart," indicated that he does not use any Euro-based archival methods. Instead, he uses both Aboriginal and unique ways of remembering and archiving, which includes "haydutsila," "itspo'e'otisi," and memory

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<sup>63</sup> Completed questionnaire to author, 29 March 2008.

<sup>64</sup> Completed questionnaire to author, 23 July 2008.

from his Aboriginal standpoint,<sup>65</sup> and the “[application of] legends and ancient history in literature of today,” as well as in “classroom study,” as a unique take on remembering and recalling. He does admit that, while his distinctly Aboriginal and unique ways of archiving have their advantages, one over the other, they also each pose challenges: “[Memories] are fleeting and often fly away, forever. Writing causes a permanence but much legend loses intent, flavor, attractiveness when translated then written.” And, while he feels that “knowledge, wisdom and legend should be kept by a native person trained for this honor[,] not many are being trained in culture/tradition anymore,” and so he “[concedes] that any archival tactic is a life saver for so much native that is so very near extinction.” Thus, while Sul’ma’ejote hopes his children will continue the work that was passed to him, he also recognises the value of Western archival methods when he states that “today young natives are too confused by technology and progress to care about the ‘real way’.”<sup>66</sup> In fact, Sul’ma’ejote notes that “mine is not a knowledge gathered from a variety of sources, only from my Elders. The Elders are no longer with us, so there is not a source left, not one, to ask for guidance and correction, or greater knowledge. I am a wolf all alone in a vast wilderness created by education, progress, and technology.”<sup>67</sup>

Berry and Pankonin shared similar perspectives with Sul’ma’ejote regarding “archives” as the setting for records created by and for Aboriginal people. All three conceded that the ideal would be to have members of Aboriginal communities running

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<sup>65</sup> Haydutsila, defined by Sul’ma’ejote as “thought alive and in motion with results,” seems to reflect the maintenance and passing on of culture and language through continued use and evolution. See also Sul’ma’ejote’s blog at <http://www.haydutsila.com/> for a more refined definition (accessed 28 July 2008). Itspo’e’otisi, is defined as: “when the eyes of my heart look into the eyes of your heart seeing only good and the eyes of your heart look into the eyes of my heart seeing only good then the words between us can only be genuine.” This second term seems to be a form of diplomatics, an assurance of the authenticity and reliability of a given record. The definitions arise from Sul’ma’ejote, cover letter to completed questionnaire, 8 March 2008.

<sup>66</sup> Sul’ma’ejote, cover letter to completed questionnaire, 8 March 2008.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

their own archives, but they seemed to recognise the situation as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the adoption of Western ways has affected knowing, and even the desire to know, Aboriginal histories, traditions and culture, especially among Aboriginal youth. On the other hand, there are very few Aboriginal people professionally trained to run archives in a Western sense, so there is a need to employ non-Aboriginal professionals to ensure cultural knowledge and records are protected and not lost. Indeed, as Sul'ma'ejote suggests above, intervention in any archival form is welcomed and needed. Thus, in an ironic twist of fate, the influence of Western ways plays a hand in simultaneously destroying and maintaining Aboriginal culture and memory, and in both cases, the Euro-based worldview seems to command the direction. Indeed, while none of the three Aboriginal archives respondents claim their settings were established specifically to support issues such as Aboriginal rights and title, it is clear their archives exist because of an underlying desire to maintain (or react to) what they perceive as cultures, traditions, and histories that are quickly being lost.

With regard to access, support, and the input of community in Aboriginal archives, Pankonin noted that a Cultural Council, composed of “traditional tribal members,” exists to provide advice and “instruction [in] cultural handling and preparedness when working with cultural collections.” And, while she noted that “the community, as a whole, sees the needs of an archives and records center ... their involvement, at present is minimal with only a handful of Elders participating – with plans to grow.” Thus, Pankonin acknowledged the use of federal legislation and formal policies in her archival work, but gave equal weight to community-guided direction, particularly when determining restrictions on access to records. Given that the Spokane

Tribe of Indians' archives is fairly new, Pankonin indicated that they work independently, with some ties to tribal libraries through the librarian at the Spokane Tribal College Library. This has helped to some extent with direction for their archives. Pankonin's connections with non-Aboriginal college and university archives, established over her own lengthy career, have also been useful in securing copies of tribal records and photographs to help build the archives collection.

Berry noted that it was "the Urban Native American community in the San Francisco Bay area and Northern [California] at large [that] had much to do with the Academic program being established ... [with the University of California, Berkeley] Native students themselves [starting] the Library/Archives collection" in 1969. That being said, he indicated that the archives follows general archival standards reflective of the SAA, and does not maintain working relationships with other Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal archives. And, access to archival materials is not determined by community-imposed restrictions.

Sul'ma'ejote's approach, as seen thus far, is certainly more holistic and internally- or, one might say, subjectively-based than the other more Western-influenced Aboriginal archives. He states that "Elders sang to me before my birth and guided me until just recently" in the creation and development of his archives. With respect to working relationships with the Aboriginal archival community, Sul'ma'ejote noted he connects with elder California Natives at gatherings or visits them at their homes. And, when it comes to restrictions on accessibility to the archives and its contents, there is no set standard Sul'ma'ejote follows. In fact, he allows access to only himself, to Elders, and to other "history bearers," and makes decisions on accessibility by determining the

“‘feeling’ at a gathering.” Thus, his approach is more subjective, less standardised, more holistic, and some archival purists might argue “suspect” in nature, given his reliance on “feeling” over formal policies or legislation.

An innovative and culturally-sensitive take on the records management aspects of recordkeeping arises from the Seneca Nation of Indians’ Archives Department. It is another example of an Aboriginal organisation that has strived to combine the needs of Aboriginal and Western ways of maintaining memory, thus attempting to simultaneously reside in and embrace two different worldviews, and create a seemingly fluid movement between each approach. Indeed, Seneca Nation archivist David George-Shongo describes this effort as attempting to “walk that fine line in creating a department that both encompasses records management practices along with” the maintenance of their “traditional practices.”<sup>68</sup> He notes that traditional recordkeeping systems in fact reveal the existence of a type of records management, citing the use of “pictographs, wampum, oral stories, canes, and many more techniques ... [to] maintain [their] system of documentation.”<sup>69</sup>

George-Shongo also discusses his innovations surrounding the transfer of records, the establishment of records retention schedules, and the determination of varying levels of security and access. It is notable that elders, as with the examples above, are once again included in the discussions and decisions, along with other Seneca Nation units, such as the language department, when deciding upon the Seneca term “Dëwödi:snye’ Oiwaga:yöhshö’öh” for “archives,” which is roughly translated as “caretakers of old

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<sup>68</sup> David George-Shongo “Tribal Archives and Records Management,” *The Records Manager: The Newsletter of the Society of American Archivists Records Management Roundtable* 2, no. 2 (March 2008): 15.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

words/customs,” although “Dëöwödi:snye” holds far greater honour and significance than “caretaker” because it is only used “when a young person is taking care of an elder(s).”<sup>70</sup> The metaphor of “archives” as a young person caring for an elder provides for a beautiful image!

George-Shongo also renamed with Seneca terms and made more interactive a number of his forms, including the records transfer form, and the form that documents the context of those records. His creation of “7G” in place of what he perceives as the more troubling permanent disposition category in Western records management is especially thoughtful. As George-Shongo notes, “I feel that I do not have the right to speak for all generations to come. We within our traditional society do not ask our leaders to think of how their decisions will effect [sic] all generations to come. It is only asked that our leaders think seven generations ahead.” This notion is thus reflected by “7G,” or seven generations, with a generation equalling 80 years, or the average age to which it was determined most of their chiefs live. Seven multiplied by the length of a generation equals 560 years, at which time an archivist can revisit the classification and retention of the record.<sup>71</sup>

Most significant – and certainly holistic – is his establishment of security and access levels based on the circle, an ever-present and powerful symbol in most Aboriginal cultures, as seen in the first chapter of this thesis. Recognising that existing legislation was based on hierarchical systems, George-Shongo based security levels on the idea of the village at the centre, with concentric rings expanding out from this centre, where the rings furthest from the village represent information with a high level of

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 15 and 16.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 16.



security, and the centre representing information that can be shared with all, right in the middle of the village. Each ring is named with traditional political terms such as “in the bush” or “one dish,” each of which has symbolic meaning.<sup>72</sup> A further layer to the idea of the concentric circles is the visual representation of the leaders in the centre, with faith keepers, women, the whole community, and so on, representing the expanding rings, where “open communication is based on the other ... layers of communication holding it up if it starts to break down.”<sup>73</sup>

There are also numerous examples of innovative collaborations between non-Aboriginal institutions and tribes to have records, whether held in the former or both, more accessible to, better contextualised by, and provide previously unknown information to the Aboriginal people to whom they pertain – certainly reflective of the spirit of the U.S. Protocols. This in turn allows, if not outright repatriation, at least greater control and influence over the records in order to supplement and attempt to provide a more balanced understanding of their meaning, context, and history, especially for those records created by non-Aboriginals about Aboriginal people. An excellent example of collaboration, which has also brought new meaning and attention to existing archival records is the project started in 2004 between the Cline Library at Northern Arizona University (Flagstaff, AZ) and the Hopi Cultural Preservation Office.<sup>74</sup> As part of the project, the partners developed lesson plans about Hopi history for use in the kindergarten through grade 12 curriculums on the Hopi Reservation and in the

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<sup>72</sup> “In the bush” represents the “political term for a ... [confidential] meeting,” while “one dish” represents the “political term for openness, [equality], etc.” Therefore, “one dish” represents the centre of the concentric rings and thus is in the centre of the village, while “in the bush” is situated further from the centre, on the border between village and forest. *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>74</sup> Northern Arizona University [NAU], Cline Library, Special Collections & Archives Department [SC&AD], “Hopi History Curriculum,” <http://library.nau.edu/speccoll/exhibits/hopitg/index.html> (accessed 12 August 2008).

surrounding communities. The online lesson plans were created from the Hopi perspective and focus on aspects of tribal history that are of importance to them, including boarding school experiences, contemporary achievements, and even the significance of running in Hopi culture. Notably both the archival and published collections held by the Cline Library and the Hopi Tribe were used to create the lesson plans, and archival materials that were deemed publically accessible were also digitised for inclusion in the Colorado Plateau Digital Archives to supplement the lessons.<sup>75</sup>

Another example of collaboration is the “Picturing the Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Umatilla Tribes” project between the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute (TCI) of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the University of Oregon Libraries (UOL), and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, “an organization committed to helping educators reach underserved communities through the use of technology.”<sup>76</sup> The TCI had begun digitising and describing images of their people in a database of their own, and knowing that UOL had an extensive, but physically inaccessible (both in terms of distance and fragility), collection of images depicting their people, the TCI approached UOL in 2001 and agreed to establish an online digitisation and collaborative description project that would be accessible to the tribes, the university, and the general public. The project began in 2002 and is predominantly based on the images found in the Moorhouse Collection at the UOL. Major Lee Moorhouse was an Indian Agent and photographer who, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, photographed Native American life, and especially the

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<sup>75</sup> NAU, Cline Library, SC&AD, “Colorado Plateau Digital Archives Search,” <http://library.nau.edu/speccoll/index.html> (12 August 2008).

<sup>76</sup> University of Oregon Libraries [UOL], “Picturing the Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Umatilla Tribes: About the Project,” <http://boundless.uoregon.edu/digcol/mh/project.html> (accessed 12 August 2008).

Aboriginal people of Umatilla County in Oregon.<sup>77</sup> The project allows for a “culturally balanced context” for the images by including not only UOL descriptions, but also “rich image descriptions and subject and class terms” from the TCI<sup>78</sup> and especially the descendants of the people pictured, who can contribute their memories and perspectives. Indeed, the images, which are chosen by the TCI for their cultural significance, have proven to be useful in that many Umatilla have “literally [been able to] trace their family history and ceremonial clothing passed down through the generations from Moorhouse’s photography.”<sup>79</sup> The collaborative project allows for additional and new descriptions to be added by Umatilla tribal people, and an offline version will be provided to TCI to continue cultural preservation work within and for the exclusive use of the community. Moorhouse’s images of tribal dwellings have also been included in the project, to which contemporary images have been added to show then and now.<sup>80</sup> Thus, this project makes use of archival collections to not only understand the past, but to continue to show the relevance of the Umatilla tribes in the present.

An example of an Aboriginal archives that is separate, but plays a role in and contributes to the overall cultural and historical desires of the Aboriginal community, is the Myaamia Heritage Museum & Archive (MHMA) in Miami, Oklahoma, which operates under the supervision and supports the work of the Miami Nation’s Cultural Preservation Office.<sup>81</sup> Significantly, MHMA is housed in a state-of-the-art facility, and is guided by the Culture Preservation Office’s mission which, among other things,

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<sup>77</sup> UOL, ““Picturing the Cayuse, Walla Walla, and Umatilla Tribes,” <http://boundless.uoregon.edu/digcol/mh/index.html#> (accessed 12 August 2008).

<sup>78</sup> UOL, “Picturing ... About the Project,” <http://boundless.uoregon.edu/digcol/mh/project.html>.

<sup>79</sup> University of Oregon [UO], “Photo Collection Enriches Tribal history,” *Campus News*, 13 August 2004, <http://www.uoregon.edu/newscenter/moorhousewebsite.html> (accessed 12 August 2008).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> See Myaamia Heritage Museum & Archive [MHMA] website at <http://www.mhmaok.org/> (accessed 14 August 2008).

recognises the importance of learning from elders.<sup>82</sup> MHMA maintains an especially comprehensive policy and procedure guide which outlines its goal of collecting and housing Myaamiaki material in all forms, and its plans to continue adding to the collection via “community driven research, as well as from material collected from, or supplied by, individual or institutional research efforts.” Furthermore, the guide notes a partnership with Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, which has developed a Myaamia Collection, a “sister archive” to MHMA’s repository, although with separate policy, mission and ownership of their respective collections.<sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, an intriguing agreement between the partners stipulates that any items collected or owned as part of the Collection must be shared in copy with the Miami Nation, with the same action to be reciprocated by MHMA. One has to wonder whether such reciprocation extends to any esoteric materials in MHMA’s possession. Finally, and most notably, the MHMA welcomes the deposit via loan or gift from Miami Nation members of their significant family records and objects. A similar situation exists in numerous other Aboriginal archives and cultural centres where, for instance, family regalia is safely stored and preserved for families. Overall, the Cultural Preservation Office also oversees numerous related and fascinating cultural projects, including a Myaamia landscape project and even a corn seed bank – both of which are certainly more holistic approaches to the notion of remembering and recalling culture and history.

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<sup>82</sup> The Cultural Preservation Office of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma states that it “is committed to the perpetuation of myaamia cultural identity through efforts in reclamation, restoration, revitalization and preservation. Our mission is guided by our belief that ‘knowledge is responsibility’ and in this truth we bear the important and respected task of learning from our elders today, interpreting written records through Miami cultural understanding, and disseminating knowledge gained to our people thereby ensuring that our Nation will live on.” MHMA, “MHMA Policy & Procedures,” 2, <http://www.mhmaok.org/mhmapnp.pdf> (accessed 14 August 2008).

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

An innovative addition to an Aboriginal archives exists online with the Special Collections Research Center (SCRC) of the Sealaska Heritage Institute (SHI) of Juneau Alaska. The SHI is responsible for cultural and educational programs pertaining to the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian people of southeast Alaska, and was formed nearly thirty years ago when elders at that time compared carrying wisdom to holding it in a blanket, which they had “[grown] weary of holding onto” and were ready to pass along to the new generation of leaders.<sup>84</sup> The response was the formation of the SHI, within which archival projects and the SCRC developed. Many of the collections and projects have been digitised and reside online, and the innovation is the addition of a blog contributed to and maintained by the SHI archivist as an open forum for discussion about the SCRC specifically and southeast Alaskan Aboriginal heritage and history in general.<sup>85</sup>

### *Australia*

In Australia there is also only a small body of literature about Aboriginal archives, including the experiences and perspectives of archival settings created by and for Aboriginal people themselves.<sup>86</sup> However, as with other international settings, this has begun to change. There is an awareness of this need and efforts have been made to address issues relating to records created by and about Aboriginal people. There is as

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<sup>84</sup> Sealaska Heritage Institute [SHI], “About Us,”

<http://www.sealaskaheritage.org/about/index.html> (accessed 18 August 2008).

<sup>85</sup> Zachary Jones, *SHI Special Collections Research Center Blog* (weblog),

<http://shispecialcollections.blogspot.com/> (accessed 18 August 2008).

<sup>86</sup> Regarding terminology, there are over 200 different Aboriginal groups in Australia, as well as the Torres Strait Islander peoples, and about 100 Indigenous languages continue to be spoken. For ease of writing, all further references to “Aboriginals” in Australia will be assumed to include both Australian Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islander peoples, unless otherwise noted. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Information and Resource Network Inc. [ATSILIRN], “ATSILIRN - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Information and Resource Network Inc.,”

<http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/atsilirn/home/index.html> (accessed 27 August 2008).

well acknowledgement that the prevalent means of remembering and archiving for Aboriginal people has traditionally been and, for the most part, continues to be oral. In Australia (and indeed New Zealand), where the presence of non-Aboriginal colonisers and their descendants have had a major impact on Aboriginal communities, their cultures, identities, land, and other rights, the predominant thrust has been for existing non-Aboriginal archives to develop closer relationships with Aboriginal people in order to work towards joint ownership of records. Such records are those that have been and will be created in the course of government activities affecting Aboriginal people. Indeed, there has been a great effort made to ensure that Aboriginal people (who are in the minority) are aware of the existence of records that contain Aboriginal knowledge, as well as discussion about the repatriation of such records by Aboriginal communities.

As in Canada, an increased use of and desired access to these written archives by Aboriginal people has coincided with the government's establishment of the litigious reconciliation process as Aboriginal people seek out redress for land dispossession, the reclamation of rights, and so on. Indeed, "the stronger the impact of colonization on an indigenous society, the greater the importance which recorded memory assumes in the recovery of rights and identity."<sup>87</sup> Thus, as in Canada and the United States, Aboriginal people in Australia (along with those in New Zealand and the surrounding Pacific Islands) have found the need to seek out, secure or establish records about themselves in order to affirm rights and title, or simply maintain a sense of Aboriginal identity: "Reclaiming the knowledge, and thereby recovering and releasing the power, embedded in written records is a recurrent theme in the movements for self-determination or

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<sup>87</sup> Wareham, "From Explorers to Evangelists," 198.

indigenous rights, which are as ubiquitous in the Pacific as the colonization that preceded them. ... All indigenous communities in the islands of Oceania experienced disempowerment to varying degrees after their first encounters with outsiders.”<sup>88</sup> And, as in North America, this has meant a more reactionary rather than holistic approach to remembering and thus archiving, as summed up in the following quote about New Zealand’s Aboriginal people (though equally relevant to Australia and the Pacific Islands): ““It would be difficult to overstress the depth of feeling that now surrounds this information for Maori. Whereas its importance to past generations may have been determined by the spiritual connections the information facilitated, the importance today may be better understood in terms of the tenuous retention of Maori cultural identity in the face of the multitude of devastating influences.””<sup>89</sup>

Australia has had an experience similar to Canada’s with regard to Aboriginal assimilation and loss of cultural identity through, for example, the removal of Aboriginal children from their families (referred to as the “Stolen Generations”) to be raised in non-Aboriginal homes and institutions, as well as land dispossession and so on. Indeed, regarding land, “at national and regional levels the political importance of land rights, as the focus for Aboriginal identity and expression of the need to compensate for past wrongs inflicted during Australia’s colonial history, is supreme,” with reclamation of traditional lands allowing for the reestablishment of “spiritual linkages essential to cultural stability,” as well as improved social and economic opportunities and growth for

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Bernard Makoare, “Kaitiakitanga I roto nga Whare Pukapuka – Appropriate Care for Maori Material in Libraries and Archives,” *Archifacts* (1999/2), p. 18, quoted in Ibid., 201.

Aboriginal communities.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, as in Canada, “Australian state indigenous policy ... [saw a shift] from assimilation to self-determination and then to reconciliation,”<sup>91</sup> with Aboriginal land rights legislation first being introduced in the late 1960s.<sup>92</sup>

Thus, over the last two to three decades, archives in Australia have begun to recognise and acknowledge the role they must play in reconnecting Aboriginal people to their traditional knowledge and identity, and assist with righting past wrongs and moving towards reconciliation with the help of existing records. However, “since the 1970s Aboriginal people themselves have begun to research and write their own history. In the process they have inevitably confronted the bias of the available records ... [and] have put it on record that that history is far more diverse and far more complex than the official or scientific record allows.”<sup>93</sup> This is not to say that such records cannot prove useful when examined critically, nor can records from Aboriginal sources alone tell the whole story. Indeed, the two types of records taken together can provide a more complete picture.<sup>94</sup> Danielle Wickman, for example, has examined the extant records of one institution for Aboriginal children, exploring the intentional and unintentional gaps that they reveal. She argues that while official, government records about the institution might provide part of its corporate memory, the collective memory of those who were affected by the assimilation program might be very different. Taken together, these memories can reveal

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<sup>90</sup> Elspeth A. Young, “Managing the Land: Land and Aboriginal Community Development in Australia,” in Cant, Overton, and Pawson, *Indigenous Land Rights in Commonwealth Countries*, 218.

<sup>91</sup> Povinelli, *Cunning of Recognition*, 1-2.

<sup>92</sup> Jocelyn Davies and William Harrison, “Aboriginal Land Management and Community Development in Western South Australia: A Case Study from Ceduna,” in Cant, Overton, and Pawson, *Indigenous Land Rights in Commonwealth Countries*, 208.

<sup>93</sup> Baiba Berzins, “Archivists and Aboriginal Records,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 19, no. 2 (1991): 195.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.



a clearer picture (and, thus, fill gaps in knowledge) of the activities and individuals of that institution. Wickman goes on to note the power inherent in records, and that not having control over government records about themselves has led some Aboriginal people to develop “keeping places”<sup>95</sup> – a kind of archives or cultural repository in which to preserve and promote objects and records created by and for Aboriginal people so that they might have some measure of control over their own identities, as well as be able to educate and interact with their community and beyond. Thus, as discussed in the previous chapter, the establishment of “keeping places” can be seen as the “reactionary” or defensive response to legal, political, and social requirements. Rather than just a means to communicate and record a “holistic” sense of culture, memory, and identity, “keeping places” appear to have developed as a way to take back power and control over Aboriginal identity and records about them – to correct misconceptions and avoid further loss of Aboriginal culture, traditions and history by maintaining a continued link with the past, the present, and the future.

“Keeping places” are also mentioned in Kirsten Thorpe's survey article on various Australian institutions (archives, libraries, museums, universities, etc.) and their efforts to bring their records about Aboriginal people to the attention of Aboriginals and to establish protocols that allow respectful, non-intimidating access to such records. Surprisingly, she notes that, unlike in Canada, government-funded Aboriginal organisations in Australia need to transfer their inactive records to state and federal archives. With regard to “keeping places” and other private, Aboriginal community holdings, however, no such transfer is necessary. Thorpe reveals her concern about the

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<sup>95</sup> Danielle Wickman, “The Failure of Commonwealth Recordkeeping: The Stolen Generations in Corporate and Collective Memory,” *Comma: International Journal on Archives* 2003.1:127.

welfare of such records and suggests that archivists offer to assist such groups with archival practice.<sup>96</sup>

The Australian archival community has been especially cognizant of the value of reciprocal relationships with Aboriginal communities. It has not only been proactive about bringing attention to Aboriginal records in non-Aboriginal institutions, but also about encouraging Aboriginal people to get involved in the archival profession as regular or community liaison staff, establishing protocols for handling Aboriginal records and respectfully working with Aboriginal researchers and patrons, encouraging the establishment of Aboriginal community archives or “keeping places,” developing working relationships with Aboriginal communities, and even establishing Aboriginal-focused units within (or committees associated with) government archival institutions. Indeed, in Australia there seems to be a strong effort and desire to establish relationships with Aboriginal communities to work on collaborative projects for mutually beneficial and respectful outcomes.

As with the U.S., Australia boasts two special interest groups pertaining to Aboriginal archiving and information services. The Indigenous Issues Special Interest Group of the Australian Society of Archivists (the ASA, the equivalent of Canada’s ACA and the U.S.’s SAA) formed in 1996, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Information and Resource Network, founded in 1993 and connected to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.<sup>97</sup> Australia has also had numerous conferences focused on the topic of Aboriginal archives and records,

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<sup>96</sup> Kirsten Thorpe, “Indigenous Records: How Far Have We Come in Bringing the History Back Home?” *Archives and Manuscripts* 29, no. 2 (2001): 29.

<sup>97</sup> See their websites <http://www.archivists.org.au/indigenous-issues-sig> (accessed 2 October 2008) and <http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/atsilirn/home/index.html> (accessed 27 August 2008), respectively.

including the most recent ICHORA (International Conference on the History of Records and Archives) conference held in Perth, Western Australia in August 2008. The central theme of this conference was Indigenous and minority community voices in archives, and included international speakers addressing a wide range of issues, but most significantly what archives and archiving mean from an Aboriginal perspective.<sup>98</sup>

Australia also established protocols early on, publishing them in 1995 and updating them a decade later as the “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Resources Network Protocols” (ATSILIRN protocols).<sup>99</sup> The update was deemed necessary after it was recognised that little was known about the extent to which the ATSILIRN protocols were being used in library and information service settings or how valuable and effective they were when actually applied. A collaborative research project that included a survey and interviews was conducted in order to explore these questions, and the revised ATSILIRN protocols were part of the result. Both versions of the protocols were endorsed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Resource Network, an organisation similar to the First Archivists Circle of the U.S., but seemingly more extensive in its activities, purpose, and length of existence. As in the U.S. (where the Australian protocols were referenced for their own protocols), the ATSILIRN protocols were established to help non-Aboriginal archives and institutions to respect and recognise the cultural and specific needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities they serve, as well as the needs of the records these

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<sup>98</sup> ICHORA, “ICHORA4 Conference,” ASA, <http://www.archivists.org.au/ichora/ICHORA4/index.html> (accessed 2 October 2008). The conference proceedings will be published in the journal *Archival Science*.

<sup>99</sup> For the Australian protocols, see ATSILIRN, “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Resources Network Protocols,” <http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/atsilirn/protocols.atsilirn.asn.au/ATSILIRNprotocols.pdf> (accessed 30 September 2008).

institutions hold which contain Indigenous knowledge. And, as with the U.S. protocols, the ATILIRN protocols are touted as a “guide to good practice which will need to be interpreted and applied in the context of each organisation's mission, collections and client community.”<sup>100</sup>

While both the Australian and U.S. protocols are predominantly similar, there are some significant differences, including the fact that even the 1995 version of the ATILIRN protocols was endorsed by the ASA. However, a decade later, only eight percent of respondents to the survey and interviews (approximately 40 institutions of the over 200 contacted responded to the survey) claimed they had formally adopted the ATILIRN protocols. This low percentage was not due to a lack of interest as much as it primarily had to do with being bound by policy and procedure as dictated by governing bodies. In fact, a higher percentage of respondents indicated that they had found the protocols to be a useful guide, and had referenced and even managed to apply a selection of the elements by working within the parameters of legislative and other requirements.<sup>101</sup> And, certainly, the follow up on the extent and value of the first protocols a decade after they first appeared has been most significant in revealing the reality and usefulness of the ATILIRN protocols, a factor that has not yet put the more recent U.S. protocols to the test. Indeed, overall, the results of the Australian survey and interviews “confirmed progress in a number of areas, inertia in others, and inadequate and inconsistent awareness of the Protocols across the sector,” but also positively revealed “evidence of increasing innovations in practice developed in the course of

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., [1].

<sup>101</sup> Martin Nakata et al., research team and project reference group, “Mapping the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives & Information Services,” 16 August 2006, [http://asset0.aiatsis.gov.au:1801/webclient/StreamGate?folder\\_id=0&dvs=1225663962108~558](http://asset0.aiatsis.gov.au:1801/webclient/StreamGate?folder_id=0&dvs=1225663962108~558), 5, 6, 10. (accessed 29 September 2008).

implementing the Protocols and emerging from a general increase in awareness of Indigenous issues.”<sup>102</sup> However, the overarching issue that respondents made clear was that to develop and maintain best practices for Aboriginal information management and services, solid relationships with Aboriginal individuals, groups and communities was key.<sup>103</sup>

Most notably, unlike the U.S. protocols, the ATSILIRN protocols also place more emphasis on archives and libraries assisting Aboriginal groups with the establishment of keeping places to properly house records (particularly those repatriated, but also those copied) within their communities or even potentially separate sections within these libraries and archives. The ATSILIRN protocols are also not just targeted towards archives and their associated materials, but the library and information resource sectors as well. Significantly, besides ensuring resources and services that Aboriginal people want are in place, there is also a strong focus on non-Aboriginal libraries and archives providing welcoming and non-intimidating physical settings and contents for their Aboriginal patrons (i.e., having Aboriginal staff visible at the front lines, regional Aboriginal artwork as part of the decor, the creation of focused finding aids, etc.).<sup>104</sup>

A significant aspect of both the U.S. and Australian protocols is that they address the development of respectful and appropriate classification and description terminology to improve arrangement and retrieval of Aboriginal records. The ATSILIRN protocols go further, and suggest the addition of geographic, language and cultural identifiers to

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>104</sup> ATSILIRN, “ATSILIRN Protocols,”

<http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/atsilirn/protocols.atsilirn.asn.au/ATSILIRNprotocols.pdf>, [3, 8, 9].

increase access points, and thus improve and expand upon the usual search tools.<sup>105</sup> This is similar to what the Haida Gwaii Museum has done with the fields in its collections database. The U.S. protocols, however, challenge standard archivy altogether by noting that “some documentary collections may need to be kept together based on content, rather than segregated by format” (or medium) as a means of “[respecting] traditional and customary practice.”<sup>106</sup> This suggests physically keeping related records together, regardless of medium (e.g., documents, photographs, artifacts, etc.), rather than separating them according to their differing preservation needs and keeping them “together” intellectually (or virtually) as per standard archival practice. It also seems to challenge the Western approach of splitting up such media into separate institutions, such as museums, libraries and archives. And, finally, while both protocols address digitisation and the Internet, the U.S. guide is concerned that enough context is presented with digital Aboriginal records, while the Australian guide looks to the Internet as a useful solution for accessibility issues to records for remote communities, but also expresses concern over ensuring cultural protocols are respected in the presentation of Aboriginal records, and recognises that increased access could also affect and complicate intellectual property considerations.<sup>107</sup>

Turning now to the Australian responses to the thesis questionnaire, while none came from Aboriginal keeping places, all three are non-Aboriginal archives (two state

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., [10, 11].; Beaulieu et al., “Protocols,” <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/PrintProtocols.pdf>, 12, 13.

<sup>106</sup> Beaulieu et al., “Protocols,” <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/PrintProtocols.pdf>, 8.

<sup>107</sup> ATSILIRN, “ATSILIRN Protocols,” <http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/atsilirn/protocols.atsilirn.asn.au/ATSILIRNprotocols.pdf>, [27].; Beaulieu et al., “Protocols,” <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/PrintProtocols.pdf>, 10.

government, and one religious)<sup>108</sup> that contain records pertaining to and about Aboriginal people, and are most notably representative of the ATSILIRN protocols' elements and the overall desires and actions of the Australian archival community regarding Aboriginal records. For instance, Kirsten Thorpe identified herself as "Archivist – Aboriginal Liaison," which echoes the ATSILIRN protocols' accessibility and use recommendation that non-Aboriginal archives employ Aboriginal people as liaison officers to work with Aboriginal people and the communities they serve, thus providing for reciprocal input, awareness of records held by the archives and, at a most basic level, visual familiarity and approachability in the archival setting.<sup>109</sup> Kathy Frankland's Community and Personal Histories unit has a number of Aboriginal people on staff in various capacities, and also reflects the overall thrust of the ATSILIRN protocols to provide "culturally appropriate" access to records created about Aboriginal people by "past Queensland State Government departments responsible for Indigenous affairs." Similarly, the anonymous archivist of the religious archives, while acknowledging that the archives exists primarily to serve members of the religious community itself, does provide access to the Aboriginal people their holdings are about. Furthermore, the archivist is mindful of arranging, describing, or simply handling such records in culturally appropriate ways (especially artifacts and images of sacred or secret places), and hopes to involve the relevant Aboriginal people in exploring Aboriginal ways of archiving. Thus, the desire to involve the Aboriginal community and form reciprocal relationships is strong.

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<sup>108</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all information and quotes from Kirsten Thorpe (and about the New South Wales [NSW] State Government records repository), Kathy Frankland (and about the Queensland State Government Community and Personal Histories unit), and the anonymous respondent (and the religious archives they represent) are from their completed questionnaires to the author, 1 and 2 April 2008, respectively (Frankland and anonymous respondent both submitted April 2).

<sup>109</sup> ATSILIRN, "ATSILIRN Protocols," <http://www1.aiatsis.gov.au/atsilirn/protocols.atsilirn.asn.au/ATSILIRNprotocols.pdf>, [8].

All three respondents noted a variety of policies and legislation that govern their work with records about Aboriginal people, and in particular accessibility to such records. While all three stated that they follow various federal and state laws in the course of their work, the religious archives is also bound by the laws of the religious group and an access policy, which restricts records access to members of the religious community, as well as the Aboriginal people their records document. Thorpe revealed that, among other legislation, access to Aboriginal records is determined by “direction of the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs in consultation with the Aboriginal community and Aboriginal community organisations who are stakeholders.” And, Frankland noted that an internal access policy determines access to restricted records and, certainly, with a unit in which at least fifty percent of the staff are Aboriginal, it is clear that such policies are given consideration in a setting that takes into account the Aboriginal perspective.

It can be said that these three archives are in a sense both reactionary and holistic, reflecting the desire to involve Aboriginal people in their own history and make them aware of records that exist about them in order to right past wrongs and to fill the “gaps” in a more holistic approach to history that includes the Aboriginal perspective. And, while all three make use of non-Aboriginal archiving methods, the anonymous archivist hoped to involve the Aboriginal community in developing culturally appropriate archival approaches. Thorpe also indicated their attempts to use oral history in a current photography exhibition “to record the names of Aboriginal people and places that were documented in the photographs.” The exhibit also included an Aboriginal advisory



group.<sup>110</sup> Both Frankland and Thorpe noted that Aboriginal archives should use a combination of non-Aboriginal, Aboriginal, and unique archival methods, with Frankland indicating that this would “[depend] on the nature of the archives,” and Thorpe stating “where oral tradition has been lost due to Government policy, recorded information can be reclaimed from State archives and other records holding agencies,” in a mutually beneficial way of filling the gaps. The anonymous respondent, having left this question unanswered, in fact cautioned that Aboriginal people “see their community history in a different way, so should we place our ‘archival’ ideas on their community[?]”<sup>111</sup>

Unlike the majority of the U.S. respondents, who believed Aboriginal archives (whether contemporary or traditional) should be run as part of a larger heritage centre, museum, etc., all three Australian respondents noted their uncertainty. Nonetheless, echoing the U.S.’s John Berry who cited fiscal considerations for his choice of response, Thorpe stated that a decision on setting for Aboriginal archives would “[depend] on funding to ensure that a distinct Aboriginal archive would be able to sustain itself and operate at the level of best practice.” Frankland, on the other hand, pointed out that it would depend on the type of records in question, as many Aboriginal people are depositing their private records in “larger mainstream archives,” but alternatively could direct them into separate archives. And, with an increase in keeping places, copies of records about Aboriginal people held in government archives have been making their way in to Aboriginal archives, resulting in increased accessibility for the communities to

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<sup>110</sup> The focus of the exhibition, “In Living Memory,” is a series of photographs from the records of the former NSW Aborigines Welfare Board. “The exhibition is helping to create a new purpose and place for the photographs within contemporary Indigenous life.” State Records Authority of NSW, “In Living Memory,” [http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/whats\\_on\\_at\\_the\\_state\\_records\\_gallery\\_8327.asp](http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/whats_on_at_the_state_records_gallery_8327.asp) (accessed 3 October 2008).

<sup>111</sup> Anonymous respondent (archivist, Australian religious archives), email communication with author, 8 April 2008.

which they pertain. Most significantly, however, Frankland points out the shift in traditional notions of archival setting and accessibility with the advent of the Internet and digitisation, both of which have brought new benefits and challenges to the forefront.

While Frankland stated that Aboriginal archives should be run by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, Thorpe felt that they should be run by Aboriginal people themselves. Yet both acknowledged the need for Aboriginal people trained to fill such roles, an issue raised by the U.S. respondents as well as by one of the anonymous BC Aboriginal archives.<sup>112</sup> Thorpe went on to state that, even if an Aboriginal archives were run by non-Aboriginal people, it would be necessary to have Aboriginal people provide their cultural perspectives in the operations of the institution, and be “trained and supported to manage their own cultural heritage,” so that they might eventually take over the archives themselves. Frankland noted that it would be “ideal” to have Aboriginal archives run by Aboriginal people, but recognised the dearth of Aboriginals in the archives profession. Similar to the U.S. and Australian respondents, Leon of the Chehalis Indian Band’s archives, along with one of the anonymous BC respondents, indicated their belief in dual responsibility for Aboriginal archives, but the second anonymous BC respondent was uncertain. In order to approach the question of who should be running Aboriginal archives, this respondent felt it more important to “step back from the idea of an Archive as a setting/institution and look at it as fulfilling a role that supports some type of Aboriginal interest or purpose.”<sup>113</sup> Thus, the role of an Aboriginal archives and the people it serves should be understood before considering the question of physical setting. And this understanding might best come before and inform the choice of archival

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<sup>112</sup> Completed questionnaire to author, 23 July 2008.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

methods used. Suggesting that “the blending and co-opting of techniques is the wisest and best of ways,” archivist Erin Suliak of Yellowknife, NWT, goes on to explain that “it’s all information to me. The thing is to have a good understanding of how information works and how people like to use/find it no matter what it is or where it is, and to recognize a good tool when you see it.”<sup>114</sup> Thus, perhaps it is not about Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal archival methods, archival setting or not, but about what works for and is required by the people to whom the records, memories, and the knowledge are significant.

With a look to the future, Thorpe hopes to have Aboriginal stories and oral history included alongside “official” government records since the “two histories can often be very different” and the latter has often been mistaken for the “truth.” The idea of such inclusion is explored in some of the Australian archival models to be presented below. The anonymous Australian respondent indicated a desire to provide records to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in equal measure. And, as seen in the ATSI LIRN protocols, Frankland raised the issue of providing a non-intimidating physical setting for Aboriginal patrons in non-Aboriginal archives. While the Queensland State Archives had been fortunate enough to offer a separate room for consultation with Aboriginal people away from the main research room, she stated that for other, non-Aboriginal institutions, obtaining a “public research room that is user friendly to Indigenous peoples” is in fact “often difficult to achieve and usually means getting people to understand that Indigenous peoples may have a different way of interacting with the records.” Thus, reality may not always easily reflect or mesh with the goals and desires of the protocols. Setting is also

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<sup>114</sup> Email communication with author, 3 April 2008.

an issue with Frankland's office location, but inadequate staffing levels are more significant – a challenge certainly seen throughout archives, whether Aboriginal or not.

With regard to other Aboriginal archives or “keeping places” in Australia, no formal, centralised directory exists. In fact, Australian keeping places were the least visible on the World Wide Web. Nonetheless, the Aboriginal Heritage Unit of the Australian Museum in Sydney, NSW, does maintain information on its website about a few different cultural centres and keeping places in the state as part of “Keeping Culture,” which “draws on the experiences of the founders and staff of different Centres and serves as a guide for those people considering establishing their own Cultural Centre or Keeping Place.”<sup>115</sup> Indeed, the Unit was established in order to help Aboriginal people meet their “cultural objectives,” and particularly through “supporting communities to establish and maintain their own Aboriginal Cultural Centres and Keeping Places.”<sup>116</sup> Recognising that each keeping place or cultural centre will be unique, according to the diverse needs and traditions of each Aboriginal community and culture, the unit makes clear that there is not one standard way of creating and maintaining such settings. Hence, the unit includes at its website transcribed interviews with cultural centre and keeping place staff that outline existing models as examples.

The Cooramah Aboriginal Cultural Centre in Glen Innes, NSW, was established by the Ngoorabul Aboriginal people in the early 1990s as a means of preserving and sharing their culture and heritage with the local and wider community, but also to address

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<sup>115</sup> Australian Museum, Aboriginal Heritage Unit [AHU], “Keeping Culture,” <http://www.australianmuseum.net.au/ahu/culture/index.htm> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

racism and discrimination.<sup>117</sup> It is interesting to note that the Centre not only includes a keeping place and an education unit, but also an art gallery and “Koori Cuisine Restaurant,” which features local, Aboriginal cuisine (Koori are the Aboriginal people of southeastern Australia). In fact, it is working at the restaurant and centre in general that has instilled a sense of pride and satisfaction in their Aboriginal youth that would otherwise have been lacking.<sup>118</sup> While the keeping place holds both stone and wooden objects, it is the definition of “keeping place” by the centre’s coordinator that is especially significant: “A keeping place means to me more of education, sharing. I think it's somewhere that we can actually keep part of our past and share it with the present.”<sup>119</sup> Indeed, with the intriguing inclusion of local, Aboriginal cuisine, the centre appears to have taken a unique step towards providing a more “holistic” experience of the Ngorabul people, both for their visitors and for themselves.

An especially innovative approach to Aboriginal archives is the Mukurtu Wumpurrarni-kari Archive of the Warumungu community in Tennant Creek, Northern Territory. This recently established archives, held by the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Cultural Centre, “contains photos, digital video clips, audio files, and digital reproductions of cultural artifacts and documents” relating to the Warumungu people, and through the digital archives, these items are accessible on a locally-based website by the

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<sup>117</sup> Australian Museum, AHU, “Transcript: Audio Interview with Leanne O’Hara, Coordinator, Cooramah Aboriginal Cultural Centre,” 13 March 2001, <http://www.australianmuseum.net.au/ahu/culture/culture01.htm> (accessed 13 October 2008); Cooramah Aboriginal Cultural Centre, “Cooramah Aboriginal Cultural Centre,” <http://www.gleninnes.com/cooramah/hm/startframes.html> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>118</sup> Australian Museum, AHU, “Transcript: Audio Interview with Leanne O’Hara,” 13 March 2001, <http://www.australianmuseum.net.au/ahu/culture/culture01.htm>.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

community.<sup>120</sup> In order to address culturally appropriate access to the items and their content, the digital archives was established in collaboration with researchers and “uses Warumungu cultural protocols to facilitate access to content. In doing so, the archive mirrors a system of accountability in which many people engage in the responsible reproduction and transmission of cultural knowledge and materials.”<sup>121</sup> Indeed, upon logging in, users are asked to provide their name, age, gender and standing in their community, thereby determining what information the user is allowed to search for and access.<sup>122</sup> The Mukurtu Wumpurrarni-kari Archive, like so many Aboriginal archives in Australia and elsewhere, was established because of a desire on the part of the community to repatriate cultural items and knowledge, and to have control over the information so that community members could interpret it for themselves.<sup>123</sup> In fact, given that the digital archive is only accessible locally (and certainly user-friendly), there is a sense that it is a “safe keeping place” – and not simply safe in some distant archives, but safe within the community itself.<sup>124</sup>

Finally, the Trust and Technology Project (TTP), based in the School of Information Management & Systems at Monash University in the state of Victoria, is an excellent example of a collaborative project with Aboriginal communities. Recognising that capture of and access to oral memory for Aboriginal communities have not been extensively studied, the TTP has proposed to “undertake an extensive analysis of

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<sup>120</sup> Mukurtu Wumpurrarni-kari Archive [MWA], “The Mukurtu Archive: A Indigenous Archival Tool,” <http://www.mukurtuarchive.org/> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>121</sup> MWA, “The Archive,” <http://www.mukurtuarchive.org/about.html> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>122</sup> *BBC News*, “Aboriginal Archive Offers New DRM [digital rights management],” [last updated 29 January 2008], <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/7214240.stm> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> MWA, “A Safe Keeping Place,” <http://www.mukurtuarchive.org/about.html> (accessed 13 October 2008).

Indigenous needs in order to understand key issues such as access to archives, intellectual property, and authenticity, and to develop a relationship of trust between archival services and Indigenous communities,” in hopes of then “[building] a prototype of a trusted archival system for Indigenous oral memory, emphasising preservation and access.”<sup>125</sup> In interviewing members of the Koorie community, a recent stage of the project established that Koorie felt a right to know what records existed about them in government, church or other archives, and that they should have the opportunity to add their own narratives or corrections to them. Indeed, this approach can be described as participatory archiving, a more holistic approach to archives that would allow narratives and archives to be networked together in a multi-narrative, multi-provenance way, and also allow Koorie to be involved in the management of records pertaining to them. Thus, TTP suggests that through the use of technology (i.e., websites), Koorie people could potentially add and link their own annotations, counter-narratives, metadata, etc., to the “official” records found in government, church, and other non-Aboriginal archives. While this new frontier might appear to be challenging to and turning archives on its head, it is in fact an intriguing step towards the redefinition of archives as we know it, the turning “inside out” of Western archival methods noted above.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Monash University [MU], School of Information Management & Systems [SIMS], “Trust and Technology Project: Building Archival Systems for Indigenous Oral Memory,” <http://www.sims.monash.edu.au/research/eirg/trust/index.html> (accessed 13 October 2008).

<sup>126</sup> Sue McKemmish, “Taming the Wild Frontier – Part 2: Australian Innovations in Digital Records Creation and Capture,” (presentation, Digital Futures International Forum, National Archives of Australia, Canberra, Australia, 18-19 September, 2007), <http://www.naa.gov.au/whats-on/outreach-and-advocacy/forums/digital-futures.aspx> (accessed 13 October 2008).

## **Concluding Statement**

It is evident that innovative models of Aboriginal archives in Canada, the U.S. and Australia abound, making use of non-Aboriginal, Aboriginal, and combined or unique archival methods. What is also clear, however, is that there are challenges for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal archives alike, not least of which is the dearth of study and collaborative and centralised efforts on the part of both archival communities. Where does the future of Aboriginal archiving in British Columbia, and indeed beyond, ultimately lie? Are Aboriginal archives adapting their holistic approach to remembering to new circumstances and forms of documentation, and thus perhaps coming full circle? The answers could indeed be as diverse and complex as the number of Aboriginal cultures that exist. These questions will thus be dealt with more fully in the conclusion that follows, aiming to provide and inspire the future archivist or knowledge keeper with the tools to maintain and not compromise the very existence of traditional or contemporary Aboriginal memory, culture, and identity.



## Conclusion

### Coming Full Circle? The Future of Aboriginal Archives in British Columbia

In a postmodern and pluralistic world, is it tenable to assert that there is only one true way of knowing the past?<sup>1</sup>

Where does the future of Aboriginal archives in British Columbia, and indeed the world, ultimately lie? We have seen that, while definitions for “archives” can vary from country to country, culture to culture, and even individual to individual, the desire to be recognised, remembered, and understood is equal, regardless of chosen method or approach. Indeed, whether in Canada, the U.S. or Australia, the experience of Aboriginal archiving has been markedly similar. And, although this thesis did not allow for an exhaustive study of Aboriginal archives and archiving throughout the world, in fact similar experiences abound in places such as New Zealand, the Pacific Islands, and South Africa.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Greene, “Protocols for Native American Archival Materials,” 25.

<sup>2</sup> In New Zealand, government archives and other organisations have involved Māori people (the Aboriginals of NZ) in ensuring culturally appropriate archival processing and handling of records containing Aboriginal knowledge – including the recent hiring of Māori staff by the national archives. This has allowed for “multiple ownership” of records in which archives oversee the physical safekeeping of the records, but also provides for discussion about joint control over the records in an equal, “bicultural” way. (Tracy Jacobs and Sandra Falconer, “Ka Mua; Ka Muri Walking Backwards into the Future: Paths towards Managing Māori Information in Archives,” *Comma: International Journal on Archives* 2003.1:112 and 104-5, respectively).

The Pacific Islands’ archival experience harkens back to Evelyn Wareham’s assertion that the more of a disruption colonisation causes to Aboriginal culture and processes, the more significant a role written and recorded documentation plays in Aboriginal attempts to regain their rights and identity. Although most countries in this region were at one time colonised, they have largely remained oral societies. Thus, upon departure of colonial governments, non-Aboriginal archival infrastructure and records have fallen into disrepair. While the written record can and should play a part in Aboriginal culture and identity, along with oral tradition and history, the introduced archival infrastructure must be altered to suit local needs, moving towards a more “living archive,” in which ancestors, identity, and spirit are tied up in the words and documents – along with oral traditions. (Wareham, “From Explorers to Evangelists,” 198, quote from 204.)

In South Africa and the surrounding region, the effects of colonisers and apartheid have marred not only the identity, history, and thus archives of South Africa’s black people, but also those of other non-whites and people who were against apartheid and colonisation. As with Aboriginal ways of remembering

It is also apparent that the issue for Aboriginal archives in British Columbia and, indeed, around the world, is not so much that archives as edifice or records are not right or appropriate for Aboriginal memory and recalling, but that archival methods such as arrangement, description, handling or accessibility, need to respect, be flexible enough and be shaped to address Aboriginal cultural needs, particularly with regard to traditional records. It is also evident that the medium and choice of archival record may vary, as will the associated perspectives and voices, but ultimately the idea behind remembering and recalling, whether one calls it “archives,” “keeping places,” or an archives in the “mind and heart,” comes down to the desire to be understood, recognised, remembered – to have an individual and shared identity. Indeed, it is not about Euro-Canadian or Aboriginal, archives or not. It is simply human nature, a universal need that crosses all cultural, religious, ethnic, racial and national boundaries, regardless of how the remembering is done:

[Archives] collectively offer a sense of identity and a tangible connection to community. They let us belong. More yet, archives are (and represent) a foundational desire for justice in human affairs, a potential safeguard for our vital interdependent relationship with ecological systems, and a hopeful symbol of our spirituality as human beings – a means for transcending this mortal sphere. Archives touch our souls.<sup>3</sup>

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and archiving in North America, oral history in South Africa was tied to the landscape and social structures, but apartheid effectively destroyed such ties. Thus, South African blacks are using oral history to fill the gaps and take an equal place alongside textual records in archives. Indeed, a new oral tradition and history is emerging, and one that is especially a form of “confession and therapeutic speech,” thus challenging Euro-derived archival processes. (Klopfer, “Oral History and Archives in the New South Africa,” 105, 106, quote from 107.)

<sup>3</sup> Terry Cook, “Hugh Taylor: Imagining Archives,” in *Imagining Archives: Essays and Reflections by Hugh A. Taylor*, ed. Terry Cook and Gordon Dodds (Lanham, NJ and Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2003), 19.

We have seen that, although the approach to Aboriginal archiving was traditionally holistic in nature, it soon had a reactionary or defensive response to deliberate or indirect assaults on Aboriginal culture and identity.<sup>4</sup> For Aboriginal people, holistic memory was practical, seamlessly integrated with daily life and interactions, a means of survival for identity and remembering. Reactionary remembrance became a scramble to maintain what remained because even the everyday basis of identity and culture was being or had already been all but obliterated. Nonetheless, reactionary remembrance would also have its positive impact. Reactionary was about power – the power of Aboriginal people to take back, rewrite, and create their own new and accurate histories. It was also about the ability to reclaim identity in a neo-colonial time and world using the very information that had been used as a weapon against them.

And so, as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures and worldviews have continued to intertwine throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries, it seems a new approach to Aboriginal archiving, indeed archiving in general, has begun to emerge. Aboriginal archiving is now coming full circle, returning to its holistic roots, having in fact been positively influenced by the power inherent in the reactionary approach, but with a new set of challenges to contend with and innovatively overcome as it creates, retains, and works with both Euro-Canadian- and Aboriginal-derived records and archival methods. We have seen this in the many examples discussed in the previous chapters where Aboriginal communities have integrated archives into larger heritage centres, or taken Western archival concepts and shaped them to fit language, culture or community needs, or where non-Aboriginal archives have developed collaborative and mutually beneficial partnerships with Aboriginal communities to redefine standard

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<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of the “holistic,” see chapter 1, especially pp. 15-16.

notions of Western archiving, or even where new tools (whether technology-related or otherwise) have been creatively applied to reflect the holistic. As Sul'ma'ejote has noted:

Is/Aw'te (people), our dreams, our thought powers, our original purposes were not destroyed by colonizing powers. It is true that often we have had to alter them in order to evade the many thrusts of the colonizers, but we neither forgot nor discarded them as we have often been told.<sup>5</sup>

At the same time, Aboriginal archiving has challenged and contributed to a redefinition of traditional, Euro-Canadian notions of archiving, and thus pushed the boundaries of archiving as we know it. Indeed, Laura Millar has suggested that

when two cultures come into contact with each other, the relationship between them is inevitably transformed, along with each culture's traditional methods of communication, information management, and memory making. While it is often assumed that one technology might dominate the other, more often the different technologies and methods blend together to create a new hybrid approach, a cross-cultural integration, though the less powerful culture often does most of the accommodating.<sup>6</sup>

Ultimately, archives in general seem to be moving away from the scientific, the mechanistic, compartmentalisation, and returning, coming full circle, or even newly arriving at a more holistic approach, one that recognises there are no set answers, that boundaries are ever-shifting and blurry, that there are multiple narratives and provenances, that “everything relates.”<sup>7</sup> Archives and remembering can and should be in

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<sup>5</sup> Sul'ma'ejote, “The Way, Our Way,” *Hay'dutsi'la* (weblog), 13 April 2008, [http://www.haydutsila.com/2008\\_04\\_01\\_archive.html](http://www.haydutsila.com/2008_04_01_archive.html) (accessed 17 April 2008).

<sup>6</sup> Millar, *Subject or Object?* 329.

<sup>7</sup> Robyne Bancroft, “Everything Relates, or a Holistic Approach to Aboriginal Indigenous Cultural Heritage,” in *Safeguarding Traditional Cultures*, <http://www.folklife.si.edu/resources/Unesco/berman.htm> (accessed 29 September 2008).

constant motion, constantly asking questions, constantly being reinvented. We should not be afraid to continue exploring archives and what they mean. As Hugh Taylor has boldly stated, “I have purposely played around with some outrageous archival possibilities which will tease and infuriate the more traditionally minded. We should not be afraid to dance a little with the absurd from which insights may emerge.”<sup>8</sup> Will this change the face of archives as we know it? Will a set Aboriginal archival standard be established, or will it be an organic approach, as diverse as the number of Aboriginal cultures that exist, both influenced by and influencing non-Aboriginal archival methods? Frank Boles echoes Taylor’s challenge:

Discussion can define terms in ways that are mutually beneficial. Novel legal concepts, with careful articulation and the passage of time, can become accepted pillars of jurisprudence. Laws change. What is a novel archival concept today can become tomorrow’s archival truism.<sup>9</sup>

With a return to the holistic, with Aboriginal archives breaking new ground, there will also inevitably be familiar and new challenges. At a most basic level, funding and capacity needs will always be of concern, as it is for archives in general. Funding affects the ability to hire staff, purchase archival supplies and equipment, arrange and describe archival materials as per community needs, promote visibility, provide reference services, etc. The question of staffing also inevitably raises the question of training. What of the lack of Aboriginal people trained in the archival field? And, while there appear to be several Aboriginal-focused societies and special interest archival groups working in

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<sup>8</sup> Hugh A. Taylor, “Reflection 2000” for his article “Towards the New Archivist: The Integrated Professional” in *Imagining Archives*, 158-159.

<sup>9</sup> Comment 39 by Frank Boles, January 9, 2008, p. 138 in Boles, George-Shongo, and Weideman, “Report: Task Force to Review *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials*,” <http://www.archivists.org/governance/taskforces/0208-NativeAmProtocols-IIIa.pdf>.

Canada, the U.S. and Australia, they appear to be working independently while their goals seem to overlap. They would perhaps benefit more by working collaboratively at national and even international levels, particularly when it comes to the development of protocols for culturally appropriate records handling, archival services, and interactions. Furthermore, the lack of literature and centralised directories not only challenged the study of Aboriginal archives for this thesis, but also contributes to a lack of communication amongst these archives themselves. A concerted effort at all levels, from regional to international, would contribute to greater communication and sharing of ideas among Aboriginal archives.

There have also been positive results from Aboriginal archives coming full circle. An increase in collaboration among Aboriginal communities and the Euro-Canadian archival world has provided for support and encouragement of Aboriginal-run and -created archives. This has led to a greater respect for and understanding of Aboriginal ways of archiving, as well as a greater recognition by Euro-Canadian archives of the importance of including Aboriginal communities in the entire archival process.

Therefore, where does the future of Aboriginal archives in British Columbia lie? It certainly resides in the holistic, where everything relates, all elements are given due consideration, where boundaries are organic, and Aboriginal communities are fully involved.

**Appendix A:  
Introductory Correspondence for the Questionnaire – BC**

I am working towards my Masters degree in the Archival Studies Program at the University of Manitoba under the supervision of Dr. Tom Nesmith ([xxxxxxxx@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:xxxxxxxx@cc.umanitoba.ca)). My thesis examines the past, present, and future of Aboriginal ways of archiving. It is tentatively entitled *Reactionary Remembrance and Holistic Memory: Archives Created By and For Aboriginal People in British Columbia*.

I am hoping to learn about how archives created by and for Aboriginal people in BC began, where they are now, and where they are going, and would very much appreciate your assistance. I am especially interested in learning about the unique methods Aboriginal archives have employed, above and beyond the typical, Euro-Canadian ways of archiving. Indeed, what exactly is the definition of “archives” in the Aboriginal sense?

If you are willing to provide information for my thesis by answering a questionnaire about archives created by and for Aboriginal people in BC, please contact me directly at [xxxxxxxx@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:xxxxxxxx@cc.umanitoba.ca). The questionnaire will take, at a minimum, 40 minutes to complete depending on the length of your answers.

While I am primarily interested in responses from archivists, records managers, and keepers of BC Aboriginal archives, I would also like to hear from BC Aboriginal community members who have an interest in the keeping of “archives.” I would also be interested in responses from archivists, records managers, and keepers of Aboriginal archives outside of BC, in order to gather and explore comparative approaches, experiences, and views. Please feel free to forward this letter to those that may have an interest in this topic.

Should you choose to take part in the questionnaire, you are free to refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. All data gathered from your questionnaire will be kept in my possession in a secure location, and will be destroyed within two years after the completion of my thesis. In addition to being used in my thesis, the data you provide may also be used at conferences or in subsequent writings or publications. The data gathered from the questionnaire will form the basis of a chapter in my thesis. For those participants requesting it, I would be happy to forward an electronic copy of the chapter to you once the thesis is complete.

My research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact my supervisor noted above or the Human Ethics Coordinator at (204) 474-7122 or [xxxxxxxx@umanitoba.ca](mailto:xxxxxxxx@umanitoba.ca).

Thank you for your interest and assistance!

**Appendix B:  
Introductory Correspondence for the Questionnaire – Canada**

I am working towards my Masters degree in the Archival Studies Program at the University of Manitoba under the supervision of Dr. Tom Nesmith ([xxxxxxx@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:xxxxxxx@cc.umanitoba.ca)). My thesis examines the past, present, and future of Aboriginal ways of archiving. It is tentatively entitled *Reactionary Remembrance and Holistic Memory: Archives Created By and For Aboriginal People in British Columbia*.

I am hoping to learn about how archives created by and for Aboriginal people in BC began, where they are now, and where they are going, and would very much appreciate your assistance. I am also interested in learning about archives created by and for Aboriginal people in the rest of Canada, in order to gather and explore comparative approaches, experiences, and views. I am especially interested in learning about the unique methods Aboriginal archives have employed, above and beyond the typical, Euro-Canadian ways of archiving. Indeed, what exactly is the definition of “archives” in the Aboriginal sense?

If you are willing to provide information for my thesis by answering a questionnaire about archives created by and for Aboriginal people, please contact me directly at [xxxxxxx@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:xxxxxxx@cc.umanitoba.ca). The questionnaire will take, at a minimum, 40 minutes to complete depending on the length of your answers.

While I am primarily interested in responses from archivists, records managers, and keepers of Aboriginal archives, I would also like to hear from Aboriginal community members who have an interest in the keeping of “archives.” Please feel free to forward this letter to them, as well as any other Aboriginal community that may have an interest in the topic.

Should you choose to take part in the questionnaire, you are free to refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. All data gathered from your questionnaire will be kept in my possession in a secure location, and will be destroyed within two years after the completion of my thesis. In addition to being used in my thesis, the data you provide may also be used at conferences or in subsequent writings or publications. The data gathered from the questionnaire will form the basis of a chapter in my thesis. For those participants requesting it, I would be happy to forward an electronic copy of the chapter to you once the thesis is complete.

My research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact my supervisor noted above or the Human Ethics Coordinator at (204) 474-7122 or [xxxxxxx@umanitoba.ca](mailto:xxxxxxx@umanitoba.ca).

Thank you for your interest and assistance!



**Appendix C:  
Introductory Correspondence for the Questionnaire – International**

I am working towards my Masters degree in the Archival Studies Program at the University of Manitoba in Canada under the supervision of Dr. Tom Nesmith ([xxxxxxxx@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:xxxxxxxx@cc.umanitoba.ca)). My thesis examines the past, present, and future of Aboriginal ways of archiving. It is tentatively entitled *Reactionary Remembrance and Holistic Memory: Archives Created By and For Aboriginal People in British Columbia*.

I am hoping to learn about how archives created by and for Aboriginal people in BC began, where they are now, and where they are going, and would very much appreciate your assistance. I am also interested in learning about archives created by and for Aboriginal/Indigenous people outside of Canada, in order to gather and explore comparative approaches, experiences, and views. I am especially interested in learning about the unique methods Aboriginal/Indigenous archives have employed, above and beyond the typical, European-derived ways of archiving. Indeed, what exactly is the definition of “archives” in the Aboriginal/Indigenous sense?

If you are willing to provide information for my thesis by answering a questionnaire about archives created by and for Aboriginal/Indigenous people, please contact me directly at [xxxxxxxx@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:xxxxxxxx@cc.umanitoba.ca). The questionnaire will take, at a minimum, 40 minutes to complete depending on the length of your answers.

While I am primarily interested in responses from archivists, records managers, and keepers of Aboriginal/Indigenous archives, I would also like to hear from Aboriginal/Indigenous community members who have an interest in the keeping of “archives.” Please feel free to forward this letter to them, as well as any other Aboriginal/Indigenous community that may have an interest in the topic.

Should you choose to take part in the questionnaire, you are free to refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. All data gathered from your questionnaire will be kept in my possession in a secure location, and will be destroyed within two years after the completion of my thesis. In addition to being used in my thesis, the data you provide may also be used at conferences or in subsequent writings or publications. The data gathered from the questionnaire will form the basis of a chapter in my thesis. For those participants requesting it, I would be happy to forward an electronic copy of the chapter to you once the thesis is complete.

My research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact my supervisor noted above or the Human Ethics Coordinator at (204) 474-7122 or [xxxxxxxx@umanitoba.ca](mailto:xxxxxxxx@umanitoba.ca).

Thank you for your interest and assistance!

## Appendix D: Questionnaire

### *Questionnaire: Archives Created by and for Aboriginal People*

<b>Part 1</b>	<b>Archives and You</b>
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1. What do you think “archives” means from an Aboriginal perspective?

2. What type of archives do you work in? (e.g., You may be a part of a larger heritage centre or museum, you may be an individual informally tasked with the responsibility of looking after community records, or other?)

3. Who is your employer and what is the name of your archives?

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4. Who do you report to? (e.g., A director of an administrative department? A tribal council? Other? No one?)

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5. What is your position title? (Check all that apply)

- Archivist  
 Records Manager  
 Community Historian  
 Volunteer  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

6. How long have you been in this position?

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**Part 2** **About your Archives**

This section is concerned with general facts about your archives.

7. Do you have a records management program in place?
- We have both an archives and records management program
- We only have an archives
- We only have a records management program
- Uncertain
8. If you only have a records management program in place, do you plan on starting an archives?
- Yes
- No → If no, why not?
- Uncertain
9. Approximately how many staff members does your archives employ?
- 
10. What is the annual budget for your archives?
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_
11. When was your archives established?
- \_\_\_\_\_
12. Why was your archives established? (Check all that apply)
- To house tribal council records       To house cultural records
- To house records supporting treaty negotiations       Uncertain
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_
13. Was there community involvement in the creation and development of your archives?
- Yes → If yes, please describe:

No → If no, why not?

Uncertain

14. Was there outside assistance, direction, or requirements (e.g., Aboriginal or Euro-Canadian\* organisations or archives, government regulations, legislation, consultants, etc.) used or followed in the creation and development of your archives?

Yes → If yes, please describe:

No → If no, what was followed?

Uncertain

15. What is the current purpose or role of your archives?

16. What formal policies govern your work?

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\* For those outside Canada, "Euro-Canadian" in the context of this questionnaire means archival methods, organizations, institutions, legislation, etc., of European or non-Aboriginal derivation used in the respondent's home country.

<b>Part 3</b>	<b>Access and Support in Your Archives</b>
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	This section is concerned with the accessibility of your records and the guidance you follow to run your archives.
--	--

17. Do you maintain working relationships with the Aboriginal archival community?  
 Yes → If yes, please describe with whom, in what ways, and whether you find the connection helpful:

- No → If no, why not?

- Uncertain

18. Do you maintain working relationships with the Euro-Canadian archival community?

- Yes → If yes, please describe with whom, in what ways, and whether you find the connection helpful:

- No → If no, why not?

- Uncertain

19. With regards to accessibility, is your archives:

- Open to the public  
 Restricted → To whom and why? (e.g., approved researchers, council members, community members only, etc.):

20. Regardless of whether your archives is open to the public or restricted, how do you determine what materials can be made available? (Check all that apply)

- Provincial legislation
- Federal legislation
- Community-imposed restrictions
- Other:

21. How does your archives serve your community? (Check all that apply)

- Provides community members with a place to keep family and community records
- Provides education and outreach
- Provides job opportunities
- Other:

<b>Part 4</b>	<b>Your Archival Holdings</b> This section is concerned with your archival holdings (i.e., the type and amount of records your archives contains)
---------------	--

22. a) What kinds of holdings does your archives contain? (Check all that apply)

- Audio/visual records
- Artifacts
- Maps
- Photographs
- Textual records
- Other:

b) Please indicate what percentage of your holdings each record type encompasses (e.g., 60% audio/visual, 10% maps, 30% textual)

- \_\_\_\_\_ %
- \_\_\_\_\_ %
- \_\_\_\_\_ %
- \_\_\_\_\_ %
- \_\_\_\_\_ %
- \_\_\_\_\_ %
- \_\_\_\_\_ %
- \_\_\_\_\_ %

**100** % Total

23. What is the extent (i.e., total volume) of your holdings?

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24. Please indicate what percentage of your holdings are original records and what percentage are copies:

\_\_\_\_\_ % original records  
 \_\_\_\_\_ % copies  
**100** % Total

25. What are the inclusive dates of your holdings? (i.e., What year represents the oldest and what year represents the newest record?)

From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

26. What are the predominant dates of your holdings? (i.e., What years reflect the majority of your records? These may not necessarily be the same as your inclusive dates)

From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Part 5</b>	<b>Archival Methods</b>
---------------	-------------------------

	This section is concerned with the archival methods you use in your archives (i.e., the ways in which records are arranged, described, handled, etc.)
--	---

27. What percentage of your holdings have been arranged and described?

\_\_\_\_\_ %  
 Uncertain

28. a) What Euro-Canadian archival methods does your archives use? (Check all that apply)

Respect des fonds  
 Rules for Archival Description  
 Appraisal  
 Uncertain  
 None  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

b) What are the advantages and disadvantages of each Euro-Canadian archival method that you use?

--

29. a) Do you use what you would consider to be distinctly Aboriginal archiving methods? (e.g., oral tradition, traditional mapping, etc.)

Yes

No

Uncertain

- b) Please name the Aboriginal archiving methods that you use:

- c) What are the advantages and disadvantages of each Aboriginal archival method that you use?

30. a) Are you using any unique archival methods? (e.g., Have you blended any Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian archival methods, or developed something new and innovative?)

No

Yes →

If yes, please describe:



b) What are the advantages and disadvantages of each unique archival method that you use?

31. Do you think Aboriginal archives should follow:
- Euro-Canadian archival methods exclusively?
  - Aboriginal ways of recording, remembering, and archiving exclusively?
  - Unique archival methods exclusively?
  - A combination of all three?
  - Other?

Please discuss the answer that you choose:

32. Please indicate to what extent your archives uses each archival method:

\_\_\_\_\_ % Euro-Canadian archival methods  
 \_\_\_\_\_ % Aboriginal archival methods  
 \_\_\_\_\_ % Unique archival methods  
**100** % Total

**Part 6****The Archival Setting**

This section is concerned with your opinions about the archival setting (i.e., the place where records are kept)

33. Should there be a separate archival setting for contemporary Aboriginal records (created in the Euro-Canadian fashion) and traditional Aboriginal records?

Yes → If yes,  
why?

No → If no,  
why not?

Uncertain

34. a) Aboriginal archives (whether contemporary or traditional) should be run as:

Part of a larger heritage centre, museum, etc.

A separate entity

Uncertain

Please discuss the answer that you choose:

- b) If you feel that Aboriginal archives should be run as part of a larger heritage centre, museum, etc., should these settings be run by:

Euro-Canadians

Aboriginals

Both

Uncertain

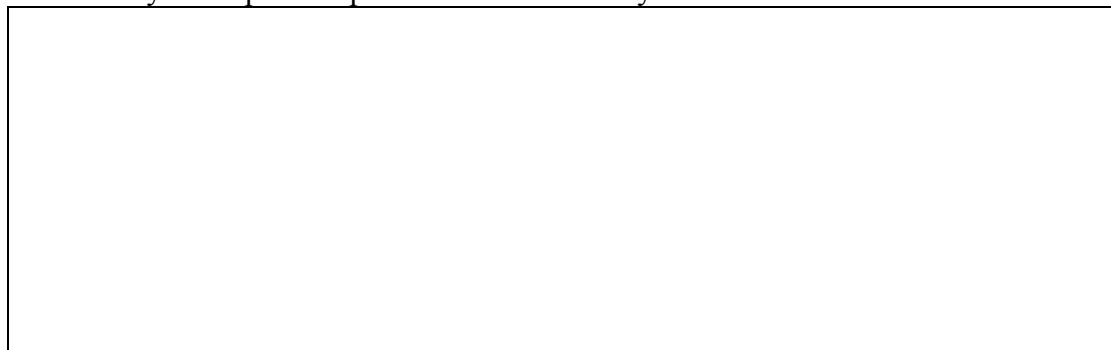
Please discuss the answer that you choose:



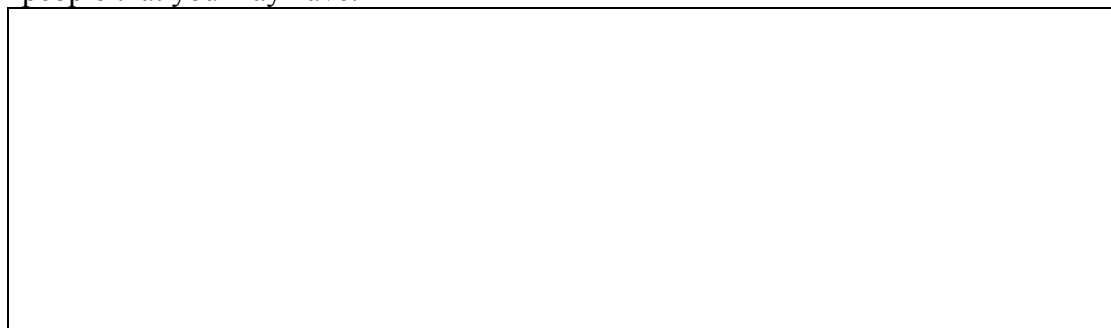
35. Is an “archives” even the best setting for records created by and for Aboriginal people? That is, do you believe there is an alternative (or alternatives) to the Euro-Canadian-type of “archives” for Aboriginal ways of recording, remembering and archiving? If so, what alternatives would you suggest or have you seen in action?



36. What are your hopes and plans for the future of your archives?



37. Please provide any additional comments on archives created by and for Aboriginal people that you may have.



<b>Part 7</b>	<b>Demographics</b> This section gathers background data in order to allow for the comparison of different categories such as education, employment and ancestry amongst respondents.
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38. What is your educational background?

39. What other archival-related employment have you had?

40. What is your cultural background? (e.g., ethnicity, ancestry)

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41. a) Has your employer given permission for you to respond to this questionnaire?  
 Yes                       No

b) Has your employer given permission to have itself identified in my thesis?  
 Yes                       No

42. Are you willing to have your name appear in the thesis with the data you provide in this questionnaire? If so, please provide your name here:

---

*Thank you for your interest and kind assistance!*

Please email your completed questionnaire to Rita Mogyorosi at [xxxxxxx@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:xxxxxxx@cc.umanitoba.ca)

If you prefer to print out your completed questionnaire and mail it, please send it to:

University of Manitoba Aboriginal Archives Questionnaire

c/o Rita Mogyorosi

xxxx

xxxx

xxxx, BC

xxxxxx

CANADA

If you have any further comments or questions, please feel free to contact me at [xxxxxxx@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:xxxxxxx@cc.umanitoba.ca) or 1-xxx-xxx-xxxx (xxxx area, British Columbia).

## Bibliography

### PRIMARY SOURCES

#### Responses to the Questionnaire:

##### *Australia*

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