

**PRECIOUS FRAGMENTS:
First Nations materials in
archives, libraries and museums**

by

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B.A., The University of Victoria, 1990

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION STUDIES**

In

**THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
THE SCHOOL OF LIBRARY, ARCHIVAL AND INFORMATION STUDIES**

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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

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Title of Thesis: Precious Fragments: First Nations
materials in archives, libraries and museums

Degree: MLIS Year: 2004

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To my grandparents
Steve and Emma Whittome

and my great-grandparents
Hoffman and Rhoda Harris

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ABSTRACT

In order to reconnect the fragments of First Nations knowledge within archives, libraries and museums with the living knowledge in First Nations communities, more bridges between Western and First Nations knowledge systems must be developed. Seepeetza, an Nlakapamux educator and storyteller, characterizes these materials as precious fragments which carry information about traditions and history but are separated from the people who created them. Without cultural, historical and juridical context, these fragments are easily misunderstood and misrepresent the knowledge and culture of their originating communities.

This exploratory study is based on expert interviews with ten Canadian First Nations knowledge workers and grounded theory. Most of the participants are either from or work in British Columbia, and the discussion incorporates perspectives from other indigenous groups nationally and internationally.

First Nations have worldviews and knowledge systems that are profoundly different from that of Western society. Knowledge systems are the ways that societies manage, organize, use and develop their knowledges. Information can be held by people or entrusted to objects such as books, documents, and artwork. Specific types of objects can have additional value, such as evidentiary, historical, legal and spiritual value. Many of these values and intangible traits depend on context and provenance and are difficult to translate cross-culturally. Reconnecting these materials with their community of origin is necessary to contextualize them. The context is necessary to recover their deeper meanings, facilitate assessment of their trustworthiness and relevance, and strengthen communities.

It is critical to share the meaning and evaluate the trustworthiness of information or objects within their cultural and juridical context. It is difficult to understand First Nations information (such as that in cultural objects, records or publications) outside of their cultural, historical, personal or social context.

Knowledge is deeper, more meaningful and more useful than information. Information needs to be analyzed, experienced or internalized to become knowledge. Knowledge is wholistic and is in a cultural, juridical, historical, social or personal context while information is fragmentary, decontextualized and can be insignificant. Ideas, information or objects which have been removed from the context of First Nations cultures lose some of their meaning and become “knowledge fragments” rather than knowledge. These fragments are precious to First Nations people who are revitalizing their communities but need to be contextualized. Reconnecting these materials to their community of origin can recover more of their meaningfulness and help First Nations evaluate their trustworthiness.

Protocols are critical elements of First Nations knowledge systems that relate to ownership, sacredness, and authenticity of ideas, crests and other intellectual property. First Nations knowledge systems are dynamic and adaptive, as are Western knowledge systems. Transmission of protocols between generations has been disrupted by residential schools. As a result, knowledge which should have been taught to community members has been lost. First Nations communities are recovering cultural knowledge and revitalizing their communities as part of their developing within the modern world.

DOCUMENTATION; CAPTURING KNOWLEDGE.

First Nations have many concerns about access to and use of First Nations materials in archives, libraries and museums. There are also many concerns about 'capturing knowledge'.... Participants expressed the need to have First Nations ownership of their intellectual property respected as is copyright law. They also express concerns about archives, libraries and museums refusing First Nations access to info and evidence they need. Withholding rather than sharing knowledge is a common way for First Nations to protect it from misuse and exploitation; some participants express concerns that withholding knowledge and information can also be dangerous for First Nations communities.

Systems and approaches used by archives, libraries and museums to organize their materials, such as the archival principles of respect for original order and *respect des fonds* which protects the evidentiary value of archival records, can maintain an object's intangible traits. These systems also can also facilitate access or create barriers to the materials. Many tools for administrative and intellectual control of institutional holdings can help reconnect the precious fragments to their communities of origin. Tools such as inventories, finding aids, guides, union catalogues, descriptions, name authorities and subject analysis are powerful tools to discover and make visible the connections and contexts to restore or protect their meaningfulness and relationships to First Nations and to other materials. These systems are based on western principles and lack some of the concepts and protocols which make First Nations knowledge meaningful. In order for the materials themselves, as well as the deeper meaning to be accessible to First Nations researchers within archives, libraries and museums, either the system or the researcher must be able to translate between the different knowledge systems. Some First Nations

knowledge centres are encoding their own concepts into archives, libraries and museums systems. In most other systems, it is the researcher who must make the necessary translations. Developing networks and working relationships between different professions and between First Nations and mainstream institutions provides opportunity to share resources, problems and insights.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all people who generously shared their time and insight for this research: Jeannette Armstrong, Linda Armstrong, Sheree Bonapart, Pam Brown, Jim Bruce, Jim Burant, Theresa Jeffries, Gene Joseph, Seepeetza (Shirley Sterling), and Rosalee Tizya. I am grateful to my supervisory and defense committees: Ann Curry, Terry Eastwood, Linc Kesler, Heather MacNeil, Michael Marker, and Lotsee Patterson for their guidance and advice. The support and feedback of friends and family were invaluable, particularly Deanna Lawson, Chester Lawson, Gerald Lawson, Jenn Cole, Robyn Laba, Janet Shaw, Claudette Rocan, Camille Callison, and Liz Krieg. I appreciate the encouragement from the First Nations Interest Group of the British Columbia Library Association, especially Ann Doyle, Nancy Hannum, Mary-Ann Cantillon, and Ene Haabnitt.

ABBREVIATIONS

AFN	Assembly of First Nations
CECs	Cultural Education Centres
CMC	Canadian Museum of Civilization
DDC	Dewey Decimal Classification
DCMI	Dublin Core Metadata Initiative
ERIC	Educational Resources Information Center
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
LCSH	Library of Congress Subject Headings
MCA	Mohawk Council of Akwesasne
MCRC	Makah Cultural and Research Center
MOA	Museum of Anthropology
NAGPRA	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act
NVIT	Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
OCLC	Online Computer Learning Centre
RCAP	Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples
SICC	Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre
TEK	traditional ecological knowledge
UBC	University of British Columbia
VRC	Virtual Reference Canada
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Some of the ways in which First Nations and non-First Nations people *know* the world are profoundly different. They differing ways to authenticate and validate information or records; the ways that they assess meaning and reliability are different. The bodies of knowledge they hold and to which they have access are different. Accordingly, the ways they manage, organize, use and develop these bodies of knowledge differ. First Nations are not only sources and consumers of knowledge, but also have their own knowledge *systems* rooted in complex oral cultures. These deep and often unrecognized differences lead to significant difficulties in communicating between indigenous and non-indigenous people. These difficulties are compounded in conflict-driven situations. There are not only disagreements about what is true but also disagreements about what makes information reliable or credible – what makes people trust it enough to act on it. The criteria that would make information reliable for a federal government civil servant to act on it would likely be different from the criteria for a traditional aboriginal cultural leader.

While there has been no academic research which explicitly examines the relationships between First Nations knowledge **systems** and Western knowledge institutions, there is related research about Native American users of these institutions, tribal libraries and museums and about bridging First Nations and Western education systems. The methodology for this study is based on grounded theory and analysis of expert interviews with Canadian First Nations knowledge workers. The knowledge workers who were invited to participate were chosen through a non-random sampling

method. The semi-structured interviews were based on seven questions which were sent to the participants before the interviews.

FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS, ORALITY AND LITERACY

There were and continue to be traditional First Nations specialists who are the equivalent of librarians, archivists and museum professionals. Orality – the ability to work with information in an oral culture – is a basic skill for knowledgeable people in First Nations communities. George Clutesi describes aspects of traditional *Nuu-chan-nulth* potlatches, which provides a glimpse of several types of traditional knowledge professions:

Out of the [traditional pre-contact] council there emerged a tribunal to resolve and settle all disputes of consequence, oftimes including those of wars. From this council, too, came the ushers, whose business it was to know which particular seat belonged to whom; the advisers to the king; the mentors; the teachers; the storytellers; the historian; and the orators who presented the message, articles of agreement and oftimes an ultimatum also.¹

Societies without writing systems have specialized knowledge workers with differentiations between their responsibilities and skills. There is diversity within First Nations knowledge systems and between First Nations knowledge systems. 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. Now these systems also incorporate English, writing and recordings. These systems are the ways in which knowledge is developed, shared, transmitted, authenticated, made meaningful and kept reliable. Traditional protocols, which differ between First Nations, are critical elements of First Nations knowledge systems. Protocols are based in the relationships between individuals, family, community

¹ George Clutesi, *Potlatch*, 1st ed. (Sidney, B.C.: Gray's Pub. Ltd., 1969), 32.

and nations as well as the relationship with the land and the spirit world. Protocols can determine at which times it is appropriate to use knowledge or cultural objects, who has rights to use them, and who has responsibility to protect and transmit them. Some protocols can be seen as analogous to copyright, while others are systems to protect the trustworthiness of oral records.

There is little academic research describing or examining First Nations knowledge systems: research generally focuses on **what** First Nations know rather than on **how** they know it. Terms used to refer to First Nations knowledge include "traditional knowledge; oral knowledge; indigenous knowledge; ... depending on what literate tradition you draw on."² These are contested terms. These systems are described in non-indigenous literature as "preliterate," "non-literate" and "post-literate:" these descriptions centre on the trait of writing rather than acknowledge or value the importance of orality. This is an ethnocentric approach, which defines other cultures by elements of Western culture that they lack. These descriptions also create a false dichotomy between orality and literacy; both are important in First Nations knowledge systems. Apart from writing, other tangible objects such as totem poles represent a type of visual literacy within First Nations knowledge systems.³ As seen in the term "pre-literate," orality – if recognized as

² Verna J. Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt, "First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R's - Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility," *Journal of American Indian Education* 30, no. 3 (1991). There are additional terms, such as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and local knowledge.

³ The term "material manifestations of orality" is an effective way to refer to objects such as totem poles because it acknowledges the presence of materials which carry knowledge within an oral knowledge system; expanding this to include sound recordings and documents acknowledges that writing can be a part of oral knowledge systems. See Shauna McRanor, "Maintaining the Reliability of Aboriginal Oral Records and Their Material Manifestations: Implications for Archival Practice," *Archivaria*, no. 43 (1997).

a skill at all – is seen in much of the academic literature as a precursor to literacy and inherently inferior to it.⁴

Archibald describes First Nations as having a “combined oral/ literate/ visual world” and stresses the need to “create new ways of thinking and writing about literacy and its relationship to orality.”⁵ 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.

Awareness of both First Nations and Western knowledge systems is important for First Nations communities developing their own knowledge agencies but relevant for all areas within knowledge professions where First Nations and non-First Nations knowledges intersect. Whether it is understanding what a Native person is seeking when they come through the door of an archive, library or museum or attempting to find relevant records or provide accurate information about First Nations to a non-First Nations person, the differences between the First Nations and Western systems shapes all publicly accessible knowledge by or about First Nations. Consequently, it is difficult to evaluate information services or programmes and accordingly to protect or improve what is being done well and fix what is being done poorly.

⁴ These issues are also discussed in: Shirley Sterling, "The Grandmother Stories: oral tradition and the transmission of culture" (Ph.D. diss., University of British Columbia, 1997). Jo-ann Archibald, "Coyote's Story about Orality and Literacy," *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 17, no. 2 (1990); Cynthia Callison, "Appropriation of Aboriginal Oral Traditions," *Law Review* (1995); Julie Cruikshank, "Yukon Arcadia: oral tradition, indigenous knowledge and the fragmentation of meaning," in *The Social Life of Stories: narrative and knowledge in the Yukon Territory*, ed. Julie Cruikshank (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998); P. R. A. Gray, "Saying it like it is: oral traditions, legal systems and records," *Archives and Manuscripts* 26, no. 2 (1998); Robin Ridington, "Narrative Technology and Eskimo History," *Ethnohistory* 47, no. 3 (2000); Greg Sarris, *Keeping Slug Woman Alive: a holistic approach to American Indian texts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

⁵ Archibald, "Coyote's Story," 66.

The lack of bridges between First Nations and mainstream knowledge systems exacerbates conflicts. Sometimes, the people involved may be unable to agree on what types of information are relevant. For example, in 1972 the Quebec Association of Indians applied to the courts for an injunction to halt flooding relating to development by the James Bay Development Corporation, (created by the Quebec government), pending settlement of land claims. Boyce Richardson describes communications in the court room as “a veritable arena for a dialogue of the deaf: one side talked almost exclusively in figures; the other spoke about the integrity of the land and the survival of the animals.”⁶

CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND SURVIVAL

The dual needs of maintaining community knowledge, history and tribal traditions and of accessing mainstream knowledge is vital to the health of contemporary First Nations communities. These needs shape many First Nations educational and information agencies. Patterson and Taylor describe the tribal colleges’ approach to these needs as a “paradigm for survival.”⁷ The association of cultural knowledge with cultural survival is strong. Similar perspectives are expressed by First Nations cultural leaders and through the demand for culturally relevant social services and programmes by First Nations political leaders. It has been reinforced by the findings of the Sullivan Commission, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the federal government's response document, *Gathering Strength*.⁸ Many provincial and federal government

⁶ Boyce Richardson, "Harvesting Traditional Knowledge: the Hudson Bay Program is teaching scientists how to see the environment through Natives' eyes," *Nature Canada* 22, no. 4 (1993): 30.

⁷ Lotsee Patterson and Rhonda Taylor, "Tribally Controlled Community College Libraries: A Paradigm for Survival," *College & Research Libraries* 57 (1996): 316.

⁸ British Columbia. Royal Commission on Education, *A Legacy for Learners: the report of the Royal Commission on Education* (Vancouver: The Commission, 1988); Canada. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada., *Gathering strength : Canada's Aboriginal action plan* (Ottawa: Minister of Indian Affairs and

agencies have stated support for this perspective and funded research directed at developing culturally relevant programs. Management of information and records, particularly of cultural information, can have powerful consequences for individuals and communities. Past research and programme development intended for First Nations communities without reference to their cultural context have been failures; some have proven to be disastrous for the communities. As Fleras and Elliot point out, "Even well intentioned actions may have negative consequences, in large measure because they begin with faulty assumptions and improper assessment of the problem at hand," indicating the need for well-informed and culturally informed decision making at every stage particularly during development of the research agenda: defining the problem.⁹ Speaking with First Nations knowledge workers is important for putting information studies into First Nations cultural contexts.¹⁰

First Nations face a number of information management issues which are not addressed in the literature of museums, libraries and archives. First Nations language and knowledge have been devalued and silenced in official circumstances for much of the history of Canada. Official federal government policies of assimilation and extinguishment have attempted to destroy aboriginal cultures.¹¹ Part of the legacy of these policies is a disruption of the traditional First Nations knowledge systems:

Northern Development, 1997); Canada. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples., *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Ottawa: The Commission, 1996).

⁹ Augie Fleras and Jean H. Leonard Elliott, *Unequal relations: an introduction to race, ethnic and aboriginal dynamics in Canada*, 2nd ed., *Prentice-Hall series in sociology*. (Scarborough, Ont.: Prentice Hall Canada, 1996), 226.

¹⁰ See section on research methods for more discussion regarding First Nations knowledge workers.

¹¹ See Dean E. Neu and Richard Therrien, *Accounting for genocide: Canada's bureaucratic assault on aboriginal people* (Black Point, N.S.: Fernwood Publishing, 2003). Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1999), xiv-xv.; See Canada. Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples., "Displacement and Assimilation," in *Looking Forward, Looking Back, Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Ottawa: The Commission, 1996).

disruption of processes of transmission, education, training, authentication and validation; *gaps* created when knowledge, expertise, people and objects were taken from these systems; silences within the written record, documentary heritage, and literature; and distrust. These gaps and silences are just as important as the information and records which are accessible. Museums, libraries and archives practices do not lend themselves to cataloguing or describing silences. First Nations have taken many different approaches regarding the protection of their traditional knowledge and knowledge systems. These include attempts to keep cultural knowledge secret and private,¹² working with anthropologists and other researchers to document cultural knowledge;¹³ developing community oral history recording projects;¹⁴ and a range of legal mechanisms, such as the Nanaimo Band registering their petroglyphs on Gabriola Island as trademarks.¹⁵

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are no studies of First Nations knowledge systems or First Nations perspectives on the relevance and effectiveness of archives, libraries and museums **collectively** for caring for First Nations knowledge or to meet First Nations information needs which extend beyond any single type of institution. There are research articles on

¹² As described in: "Protecting Knowledge: traditional resource rights in the new millennium" (paper presented at the Protecting Knowledge: traditional resource rights in the new millennium, [Vancouver, BC], 2000). Noel Dyck and James B. Waldram, eds., *Anthropology, public policy and native peoples in Canada* (Montreal: McGill Queens University Press, 1993). Paula Allen Gunn, "Special Problems in Teaching Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*," in *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, ed. Devon A. Mihesuah (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

¹³ For example, see: Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1999). Julie Cruikshank, *Life Lived Like a Story: life stories of three Yukon native elders, American Indian lives*. (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990). Curtis M. Hinsley, *The Smithsonian and the American Indian: making a moral anthropology in Victorian America*, paperback ed. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994). Angela Sidney et al., *My Stories are my wealth*, 2nd. -- ed. ([Whitehorse]: Council for Yukon Indians, 1979).

¹⁴ U'mista Cultural Centre and Suquamish Tribal Archives

¹⁵ "Protecting Knowledge".

allied themes such as the descriptions of tribal libraries and tribal college libraries,¹⁶ information seeking behavior of First Nations students¹⁷ and bridging First Nations and Western education programs.¹⁸ An examination of literature which bridges First Nations knowledge and Western information institutions of archives, libraries, museums and schools provides insight into the context of First Nations knowledge systems.¹⁹ Apart from the educational studies, there are few studies about the relationship between indigenous knowledge and Western institutions. Most of the research in library, archival

¹⁶ Patterson and Taylor, "Tribally Controlled Community College Libraries." Bonnie Biggs, "Bright Child of Oklahoma: Lotsee Patterson and the Development of America's Tribal Libraries," *American Indian Culture & Research Journal* 24, no. 4 (2001); Bonnie Biggs, "Tribal Libraries: and still they rise," *Multicultural Review* 9, no. 1 (2000); Bonnie Biggs, *Tribal Library Census and Needs Assessment Study* [web page] (25 June 2001 2001 [cited April 2003 2003]); available from <<<http://www.csusm.edu/bbiggs/loc/report.html>>>; Bonnie Biggs, "The Tribal Library Project: interns, American Indians, and library services: a look at the challenges," *College & Research Libraries News* 59, no. 4 (1998); Becky Herbert, "The Role of Libraries in Native American Communities in Louisiana" (Master's Thesis, Louisiana State University, 2002); Gordon H. Hills, *Native Libraries: cross-cultural conditions in the circumpolar countries* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1997); Lotsee Patterson, "The History and Development of Libraries on American Indian Reservations," in *Proceedings: First International Indigenous Librarians' Forum*, ed. Robert Sullivan ([Auckland, NZ]: Te Ropu Whakahau, 2001); Lotsee Patterson, "History and Status of Native Americans in Librarianship," *Library Trends* 49, no. 1 (2000); Lotsee Patterson, *Program of Services: Delaware Tribe of Western Oklahoma: community and Tamanend Community College* ([Norman, Okla.]: University of Oklahoma. School of Library and Information Studies, 2000); Lotsee Patterson, "Tribal and Reservation Libraries," *Rural Libraries* 22, no. 1 (2002); Lotsee Patterson and Rhonda Taylor, "Directory of Native American Tribal Libraries," (Norman, OK: 1995); Elizabeth Rockefeller-MacArthur, Ruth Rockefeller, and Philip MacArthur, *American Indian Library Services in Perspective: from petroglyphs to hypertext* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1998).

¹⁷ Deborah Lee, "Aboriginal Students in Canada: A Case Study of Their Academic Information Needs and Library Use," *Journal of Library Administration* 33, no. 3/4 (2001).

¹⁸ Jo-ann Archibald, "Coyote Makes a Story-basket: The Place of First Nations Stories in Education" (PhD, Simon Fraser University, 1997); Kirkness and Barnhardt, "The Four R's.," Michael Marker, "Lummi Identity and White Racism: when location is a real place," *Qualitative Studies in Education* 13, no. 4 (2000); Sterling, "Grandmother Stories".

¹⁹ McRanor, "Reliability of Aboriginal Oral Records.," Mary Ann Pylypchuk, "The Value of Aboriginal Records as Legal Evidence in Canada: an examination of sources," *Archivaria* 32 (1991). Michael Ames, "How to Decorate a House: the re-negotiation of cultural representations at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology," *Museum Anthropology* 22, no. 3 (1999); Pam Brown, "Cannery Days: Museum Exhibits and Heiltsuk Perspectives," *The Northern Review* 14, no. Summer (1995); Elke Dunker, "Cross-cultural usability of the library metaphor" (paper presented at the International Conference on Digital Libraries: Proceedings of the second ACM/ IEEE-SC joint conference on Digital Libraries, Portland, Oregon, 2002 2002); Margaret Holm and David Pokotylo, "From Policy to Practice: A Case Study in Collaborative Exhibits with First Nations," *Journal of Canadian Archaeology* 21 (1997); Kirkness and Barnhardt, "The Four R's.," Lee, "Aboriginal Students in Canada.," Marker, "Lummi identity.," Lotsee Patterson and Rhonda Taylor, "Getting the Indian Out of the Cupboard: Using Information Literacy to Promote Critical Thinking," *Teacher Librarian* 28 (2000); Patterson and Taylor, "Tribally Controlled Community College Libraries."

and museum studies is exploratory or seeks baseline data. Some issues and theories are specific to a single discipline, such as evidentiary value which is specific to archival theory.²⁰ Other issues such as cross-cultural misunderstandings, problem definition, the importance of relationships and First Nations self-determination are common elements of many of the research articles.

Methodologies

Most of these research studies are qualitative.²¹ Some are both qualitative and quantitative.²² Some of the research does not name the methods used; several employ ethnographic study or critical reflection.²³ Most of the research involves qualitative methodology. About half use ethnographic or auto-ethnographic methods.²⁴ The theory is sometimes unnamed as well. Several are personal reflections of cross-cultural

²⁰ Pylypchuk, "Value of Aboriginal Records." McRanor, "Reliability of Aboriginal Oral Records."

²¹ Pylypchuk, "Value of Aboriginal Records." Brown, "Cannery Days."; McRanor, "Reliability of Aboriginal Oral Records." Ames, "How to Decorate a House."; Holm and Pokotylo, "Collaborative Exhibits."; Kirkness and Barnhardt, "The Four R's."; Marker, "Lummi identity."; Hope A. Olson, "Patriarchal Structures of Subject Access and Subversive *Techniques* for Change," *The Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science* 26, no. 2/3 (2001); Hope A. Olson, *The Power to Name: locating the limits of subject representation in libraries* (Dordrecht [The Netherlands]: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002); Patterson and Taylor, "Getting the Indian Out of the Cupboard."; Patterson and Taylor, "Tribally Controlled Community College Libraries."

²² Dunker, "Cross-cultural usability"; Lee, "Aboriginal Students in Canada."

²³ Patterson and Taylor, "Tribally Controlled Community College Libraries." Patterson and Taylor, "Getting the Indian Out of the Cupboard." Brown, "Cannery Days." Marker, "Lummi identity." Pylypchuk, "Value of Aboriginal Records." McRanor, "Reliability of Aboriginal Oral Records." Olson, "Patriarchal Structures of Subject Access."; Olson, *Power to Name*. Dunker, "Cross-cultural usability". Tamara Lincoln, "Ethno-linguistic misrepresentations of the Alaskan native languages as mirrored in the Library of Congress system of cataloguing and classification," *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (1987). Kirkness and Barnhardt, "The Four R's." Ames, "How to Decorate a House." Holm and Pokotylo, "Collaborative Exhibits."

²⁴ Auto-ethnographic research is a study of the researcher's own institutions, environment or culture. Brown, "Cannery Days."; Olson, "Patriarchal Structures of Subject Access."; Olson, *Power to Name*. Ames, "How to Decorate a House."; Brown, "Cannery Days."; Dunker, "Cross-cultural usability"; Holm and Pokotylo, "Collaborative Exhibits."; Kirkness and Barnhardt, "The Four R's."; Lincoln, "Ethno-linguistic misrepresentations of the Alaskan native languages as mirrored in the Library of Congress system of cataloguing and classification."; Marker, "Lummi identity."

situations or problems.²⁵ Many are descriptive studies, rather than studies to test hypothesis or verify theories. Dunker's research examines the relevance to Maori students of the concept of *library* as a metaphor for the organization of digital collections in the design of computer interfaces.²⁶ Some researchers use methodologies specific to their discipline. Lincoln uses subject analysis; Pylypchuk and McRanor use diplomatic analysis and archival theory.²⁷ Kirkness & Barnhardt employ autoethnography and critical reflection. Patterson and Taylor use mail surveys and analysis of tribal colleges' calendars and use information literacy to address the issue of bias.²⁸ Olson draws together subject analysis, and feminist deconstruction to examine library classifications headings and classification structures, including the treatment of aboriginal peoples within the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) and the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC).²⁹ Of these studies, only Lee, Dunker and Patterson and Taylor studied specific groups of people. Lee interviewed six aboriginal post-secondary students at the University of Alberta. Dunker used ethnographic observation and a usability study of eight non-Maori and nine Maori students. Patterson and Taylor received mail surveys from sixteen library staff working at tribal college libraries. All have small sample sizes, and are studying small populations.

²⁵ Ames, "How to Decorate a House."; Brown, "Cannery Days."; Holm and Pokotylo, "Collaborative Exhibits."; Lincoln, "Ethno-linguistic misrepresentations of the Alaskan native languages as mirrored in the Library of Congress system of cataloguing and classification."

²⁶ Although the concept of *digital libraries* is familiar in information studies, the ways in which physical libraries organize and make accessible their holdings is very different from that of computer systems. Dunker is examining the relevance of using library processes and terminology as the basis for designing interfaces to provide access to the type of electronic collections in a digital library relating to Maori history.

²⁷ Pylypchuk, "Value of Aboriginal Records."

²⁸ Patterson and Taylor, "Getting the Indian Out of the Cupboard."; Patterson and Taylor, "Tribally Controlled Community College Libraries."

²⁹ Olson, "Patriarchal Structures of Subject Access."; Olson, *Power to Name*.

Many of these research projects begin by identifying an area where the relationship between First Nations people and an information institution seems unsuccessful; often they identify the institution as the locus of the problem. They used several different approaches to bridge the two cultures; these approaches will be discussed below.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Most of the research is exploratory. Several researchers consider their work to be preliminary. They provide rich data and valuable insights. The sample size for the research projects which studied individuals is too small to be able to generalize the results to other aboriginal or indigenous people.

Many indicate a clear gap or failing on the part of a Western information institution. Lincoln identified gaps and proposed revisions in the Library of Congress subject headings relating to Alaskan languages. Lee identified areas such as collections development where the University of Alberta library fails to meet the information needs of aboriginal students. Pylypchuk identifies an inability of the Canadian courts to understand the nature of aboriginal evidence. McRanor identifies areas where archives could protect the trustworthiness of aboriginal records more effectively. Brown, Ames and Holm and Pokytylo examine collaborative exhibit design, noting advantages to inclusion of aboriginal communities in exhibit design process. Patterson and Taylor identified the library profession's failure to recognize bias in children's books such as *The Indian in the Cupboard*. Olson identified bias in the structure and application of library classification systems and proposed several *techniques* to address them.³⁰

³⁰ Olson, "Patriarchal Structures of Subject Access."; Olson, *Power to Name*.

THEMES

The value of First Nations knowledge is a main theme in several research projects. The trustworthiness and acceptance of contemporary aboriginal oral tradition are major themes for Pylypchuk and McRanor. Lincoln describes the history of language education and suppression in Alaska, asserting the importance of Alaskan languages. Kirkness and Barnhardt see the marginalization of First Nations knowledge as one of the reasons many aboriginal students leave university. There are similar studies in the other disciplines, including education and law.³¹

Politics of representation are a central concern for museums, as well as for Olson's study. It is also an aspect of Patterson and Taylor.³²

Olson, McRanor, Dunker, Pylypchuk identify the idea of universality to be problematic. Traits which are not universal to all people and cultures but rather specific to Western culture have been assumed to be universal. McRanor identifies this perspective as Eurocentric. These authors identify ethnocentric perspectives in framing previous research as a common problem. Kirkness and Barnhardt examined educational concerns such as high drop out rates of aboriginal students which problematized the students' choices. They reframed the issue by looking at education from the students' perspective; they found that the universities' perspective that all students want the same experiences and skills was a false presumption of universality. The emphasis in previous research on drop-out rates as a measure of student failure simplified the situation and

³¹ Archibald, "Coyote Makes a Story-basket". Sterling, "Grandmother Stories". Richard Dale Pesklevits, "Customary Law, the Crown and the Common Law: ancient legal islands in the post-colonial stream" (LL.M., University of British Columbia, 2002). Neil J. Sterritt et al., *Tribal boundaries in the Nass watershed* (Hazelton, B.C.: Gitksan Treaty Office, 1995). Antonia Curtze Mills and Don Ryan, *Eagle Down is our Law: Wet'suwet'en law, feasts, and land claims*, 1st ed. (Vancouver, B.C.: University of B.C. Press, 1994).

³² Patterson and Taylor, "Getting the Indian Out of the Cupboard."

obscured the students' assessment that their educational programmes did not meet all their needs. Kirkness and Barnhardt identified four criteria – respect, reciprocity, relationships and responsibility – to evaluate university programs seeking to improve students' experience and the retention rate. Relationships and reciprocity are themes in other studies as well.³³

There are many approaches to bridging the cultural differences identified in the research projects. In collaborative exhibits, Native people are brought into the work of exhibit design. With the development of tribal libraries and tribal college libraries, Native American communities are adopting Western approaches, an endeavor that Smith would refer to as discovering libraries.³⁴ These communities are also adapting library systems to suit their own goals – which Smith would describe as indigenizing libraries.³⁵ Olson adopts Druscilla Cornell's *Philosophy of the Limit* to search for areas in library systems where the limits are permeable: where adaptations can be made for more effective and respectful representation of people. Lincoln, Pylypchuk and McRanor have taken this approach, although they do not name it as such in their work. Pylypchuk expands the notion of evidence based on diplomatic principles and archival theory to encompass oral records. McRanor applies the principles of diplomatic science and expands the archival theory underlying the principle of *respect des fonds* (the principle that the records of a given creator not be mixed with those of another creator) to reframe oral traditions and physical recordings of oral traditions as valid records. Ames expands

³³ Ames, "How to Decorate a House."; Michael Ames, Julie Harrison, and Trudy Nicks, "Proposed Museum Policies for Ethnological Collections and the People They Represent," *Muse* 6, no. 3 (1988); Brown, "Cannery Days."; Holm and Pokotylo, "Collaborative Exhibits."; Lee, "Aboriginal Students in Canada."

³⁴ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 1999.

³⁵ Ibid.

the concept of sponsorship of research from the narrower concept of financial sponsorship to include cultural and political sponsorship in the form of First Nations partnerships on funding application. He proposes that the need for informed consent be expanded from research on individuals to include research of First Nations cultural objects. These are examples of permeable limits.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND GROUNDED THEORY

RESEARCH GOAL

This research is a preliminary study of First Nations' perspectives on First Nations knowledge. Participants' perspectives on the nature of knowledge, principles of knowledge care and their evaluation of knowledge institutions (archives, libraries, museums, and First Nations knowledge centres) are aspects of those perspectives.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research focuses on First Nations in Canada, especially British Columbia, and incorporates perspectives from other indigenous groups internationally. Few other studies have been done in this area. The research design was shaped by First Nations concerns about research, by academic research concerns and by the UBC Ethical Review Process. The research process involved a purposeful sample of ten First Nations knowledge workers as expert informants; pre-testing a list of seven questions;³⁶ semi-structured interviews; grounded theory analysis (open and selective coding) of interview data; and comparison of interview results with the professional literature of archives, libraries and museums.

³⁶ Appendix 1 is the list of interview questions.

Several people interviewed shared their perspectives on research principles. Research about First Nations should be useful to First Nations.³⁷ Research on First Nations should engage the people interviewed in the interpretation process, not just the data collection process.³⁸ Research about programs for First Nations people or communities should involve all the First Nations.³⁹ When writing theory, Glaser and Strauss emphasize the need for theory to be "readily understandable by laymen concerned with this area."⁴⁰ Pam Brown, Heiltsuk museum curator at the Museum of Anthropology (MOA) at the University of British Columbia (UBC), emphasized the need for research about First Nations communities to be accessible to community members.

GROUNDED THEORY

Grounded theory is an approach which focuses on a topic or situation of interest to the researcher and is used to generate new theories rather than to verify existing theories. It combines data analysis and theory generation into one process. The patterns in the data are codified into concepts and categories, which are the basis of the theory. Grounded theory has many elements such as coding and categorization which may be alien to First Nations knowledge systems but has flexibility to respond to community concerns.

The most effective faculty members in our field programs have been those who have been able to engage themselves and their students in a process of sense-making and skill-building through active participation in the world around them. ... They jointly build knowledge from the ground up with their students through an inductive process that allows the students to develop their own emic perspective, at the same time

³⁷ Brown, interview by author, 2001. Unless otherwise noted, all references to the participants are from the interviews with the author.

³⁸ Sterling, interview by author, 2000.

³⁹ Jeffries, interview by author, 2000. This research is not intended as consultation, and does not focus on specific institutions or programs. It has not involved all First Nations in British Columbia.

⁴⁰ Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: strategies for qualitative research, Observations*. (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1967), 237.

*using literate forms of knowledge to acquaint them with other perspectives. They experience with the students the ambiguity, unpredictability and complexity of the real world, and in the process, prepare students who are better equipped to find solutions to problems for which we may not yet even have a theory.*⁴¹

Research projects with inflexible research designs that are based on theories developed outside of First Nations communities continue to impose both western knowledge systems and outside research agendas on First Nations communities.⁴² Staff at archives, libraries and museums – just as the education faculty and Native American students Barhardt discussed above – need to be able to solve problems relating to the care of traditional knowledge and First Nations communities' information needs regardless of whether the problems have a theoretical base.

Many indigenous communities have a strong distrust of existing theories. First Nations have expressed a desire not to be used as a research laboratory for outside theories. Grounded theory is a method which does not depend on pre-determined theories and is accepted in western academic research. It provides more opportunity for community participation in developing the research goals and has more flexibility to respond to First Nations feedback during all stages of research, thus making the results more relevant to the community. The concept of theoretical sensitivity is compatible with First Nations knowledge systems particularly in terms of the recognition of holistic understanding, by valuing intuition, through the multisensory approach, and by valuing prior knowledge.⁴³ Rosalee Tizya, a member of the Vandu Kutchin First Nation and

⁴¹Ray Barnhardt, *Domestication of the Ivory Tower: Institutional Adaptation to Cultural Distance* (Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska Fairbanks, 1996), 6. as cited in Verna J. Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt, "First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R's -- Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility," in *Knowledge Across Cultures: A Contribution to Dialogue Among Civilizations*, ed. Ruth Hayhoe and Julie Pan (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, 2001).

⁴² See *Decolonizing Methodologies* for a thorough overview of the impact of western research on indigenous peoples.

⁴³ Bengt Starrin et al., *Along the Path of Discovery: qualitative methods and grounded theory* (Lund, Sweden: Studentlitteratur, 1997).

former Director of Research for the Canadian Royal Commission on Self-Government, talks about the importance of researchers being open to what the world and the spirit wants to tell them.⁴⁴ This approach is compatible with grounded theory's concept of *theoretical sensitivity*: developing the ability to "be sensitive to events and be capable of observing and recording them without filtering them through premeditated suppositions."⁴⁵ First Nations want the opportunity to be more involved with all stages of research. By responding to the data, ideas, and concerns from the community, it respects the community's ability and desire to shape the research agenda. The flexibility and openness that are possible in grounded theory research provide the researcher greater opportunity to respond to both the ethical and theoretical concerns of the community members, which should lead to research which is more relevant for them and credible to them. While it provides opportunity, it is still the researcher who must provide that respect. Grounded theory accepts personal insight (in this case, the participants' insight) as a valid source of ideas for theory generation. This approach can validate indigenous theories and researchers and draw attention to the insights of First Nations professionals and elders. Grounded theory was chosen as the methodological framework for this study because of its potential to bridge First Nations and western research concerns, particularly for First Nations concerns for respect and relevance.

Because there are so many ways of using grounded theory, I want to clarify what elements have been incorporated into this study. This research is an ethnographic study since it looks at culture as a main theme. It is a qualitative study that uses standard interview and sampling techniques. It is an exploratory study, without a verification

⁴⁴ Tizya, interview by author, 2001.

⁴⁵ Starrin et al., *Along the Path of Discovery*.

stage. The data comes from expert interviews, rather than comparing incidents or events. The interviewees contributed their observations and ideas. They are experts rather than research subjects.

RESEARCH METHODS

FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGE WORKERS

The people interviewed for this research are all aboriginal people and First Nations knowledge workers. For the purposes of this study, First Nations knowledge workers are people who develop, organize, care for or disseminate First Nations knowledge or who work to meet the informational needs of First Nations communities. First Nations storytellers, authors, elders, scholars, artists, teachers, and managers and researchers would be knowledge workers, as would First Nations archivists, librarians and museum workers working with First Nations resources. (See following section for more discussion of First Nations knowledge workers). This research does not study, describe or evaluate their work,⁴⁶ knowledge or behavior, but has enlisted their assistance in examining the research questions about the care of First Nations knowledge. While they did not shape the research design, they were all actively involved in exploring the research questions during the interviews, and some continued their involvement during the analysis and writing phases of the research.⁴⁷ Their role in this study is similar to that of key informants as they provide experiences and insight into situations and events that the researcher has not experienced, but their role also goes beyond that. They not only provided descriptions and principles regarding care of First Nations knowledge but also

⁴⁶ Some participants' descriptions of their work are included in this study, because they provide context and understanding which help explore the research questions but they are not the focus of the research itself.

⁴⁷ Errors, omissions, and mistakes are the responsibility of author. Participants had limited ability to shape the research design as it had been finalized before they were contacted as required by UBC's Ethical Review process.

evaluated the relevance of knowledge keeping systems such as libraries, archives and museums for the care of First Nations knowledge. Their insights form the basis for the theory resulting from this study.

The issue of whether or not someone is an aboriginal person is complex as there are interrelated concepts and definitions.⁴⁸ All the participants in this study are aboriginal according to multiple criteria: they have biological and cultural ties to aboriginal communities and are either Métis or a member of an Indian band recognized by Canada.

STRATIFIED PURPOSEFUL SAMPLING METHOD FOR MAXIMUM VARIATION

Sampling method

Stratified purposeful sampling for maximum variation is a strategy in which the researcher selects individual people from their target group (samples) with the intent (purposeful) of choosing a subgroup for with specific qualities, such as reflecting the diversity within that target group (maximum diversity). It is a stratified sample because at least one person working in each of the following areas was included: libraries, archives, museums, elders/ storytellers and cultural education centres.⁴⁹ As per protocols set out by the Ethical Review Board, the people who were asked to participate were contacted first by letter. Several were asked to participate; those who agreed were interviewed.

First Nations people who work in archives, libraries, and museums were included in this research project because the nature of their work requires them to bridge First Nations and Western values and principles. Staff from cultural education centres (CECs)

⁴⁸ Ward Churchill, "The Crucible of American Indian Identity: Native Tradition versus Colonial Imposition in Postconquest North America," in *Contemporary Native American Cultural Issues*, ed. Duane Champagne (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira, 1999); Nancy Shoemaker, "Categories," in *Clearing a Path: theorizing the past in Native American studies*, ed. Nancy Shoemaker (New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁴⁹ Elders and storytellers in this research are integral to First Nations oral traditions and knowledge systems: "Elders are the libraries of the community."

work with Western systems such as archives, libraries and museums which are adapted within a First Nations community context. People doing other types of knowledge work (such as educators and writers) were included for the perspective of people who create and use First Nations knowledge in addition to the perspectives of those who care for First Nations knowledge.

Sampling for maximum variation suits the research goals. This research looks at concepts of knowledge care without focusing on a single profession or type of knowledge institution because that would limit the research to First Nations adaptations of and reactions to that specific profession or type of institution. Instead this research incorporates views from First Nations people who are involved in several different types of work, which is suited to exploratory research. Sampling for maximum variation "aims at capturing and describing the central themes that cut across a great deal of variation."⁵⁰ This research does not try to find principles common to all First Nations, or to gauge which are the most common because it does not attempt to be a definitive study.

Criteria for First Nations knowledge workers for this study

While only a small proportion of professionals (or any staff) in archives, libraries, and museums are First Nations, there are many First Nations knowledge workers. Determining who would be considered a First Nations knowledge worker and finding a way to contact them was problematic. First the research needed to look at what these people held in common, and then at the range of diversity within this group. Previous studies of First Nations have not looked at the concept of knowledge workers. There are no organizations or professional associations which bring together these very diverse

⁵⁰ Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*, 3rd edition ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 234-5.

types of knowledge workers. First Nations knowledge workers are not as easily delineated as are museum staff, librarians or archivists. There are some groups, such as the Confederacy of Cultural Education Centres, the First Nations Professional Specialists Association (Teachers) and the Aboriginal Mapping Network but none which encompass a broad range of types of work.

First I determined the criteria for people I wanted to participate in this study: people who are aboriginal; people who are active in their community; and knowledgeable people who are working in some way with the development or care of First Nations knowledge or searching for information needed by First Nations. In connection with the Ethical Review Process, I wanted to speak with people who know the implications of participating in academic research, who were capable of giving consent to participate, and who would know how to deal with topics which were sensitive or confidential.⁵¹ At the initial stage, the determination of First Nations status was based on self-identification; during initial conversations, the researcher confirmed that all participants had cultural and biological connections to at least one First Nation.⁵²

Participants

Most participants are from BC First Nations; most are involved in education. All are professionals. They have completed a higher level of education than the First Nations population in general. Most work for First Nations communities. Many have experience working for First Nations other than their own community. All are members of First

⁵¹ While this research intended to deal exclusively with topics which were not sensitive or confidential; it was important that the participants knew how to deal with those types of information.

⁵² The usage of the both terms "aboriginal" and "First Nations" include Métis in this research.

Nations in Canada:⁵³ Linda and Jeannette Armstrong (Okanagan), Sheree Bonaparte (Mohawk), Pam Brown (Heiltsuk), Jim Bruce (Métis), Jim Burant (Iroquois), Teresa Jeffries (Sechelt), Gene Joseph (Wet'suwet'in/Carrier), Seepeetza⁵⁴ (Shirley Sterling), (Nlaka'pamux), and Rosalee Tizya (Vandu Kutchin). Bonaparte and Burant are archivists; Bonaparte also has a Masters in Library Studies. Linda Armstrong, Joseph, and Bruce are librarians.⁵⁵ Linda Armstrong works at En'owkin library, a private post-secondary institution in Penticton British Columbia. Jim Bruce works at the library for the Nicola Valley Institution of Technology (NVIT), a public First Nations-operated post-secondary institution. Tizya and Jeffries are elders. Jeffries and Seepeetza are storytellers. Seepeetza is a published author, a university professor and is currently the principal of a First Nations school in Merritt. Brown is a curator at the UBC Museum of Anthropology (MOA). Burant is the Director of the Art and Photography Division, National Archives of Canada, Library and Archives Canada. Bonaparte, at the time of the interview, was the archivist for the Mohawk Council of Akwasasne Archives. Joseph developed the Xwi7xwa library at the UBC First Nations House of Learning, has worked for First Nations for 25 years and developed several First Nations libraries throughout BC. She worked for the Wet'suwet'en and the Gitksan during the Delgamuukw court case and is currently working on the Haida Title case. Jeannette Armstrong is a published author, faculty member at En'owkin, and involved in international indigenous efforts to protect indigenous intellectual properties. Tizya is a lecturer and community consultant and was the Research Director for the Canadian Government's Royal

⁵³ Sheree Bonaparte's Mohawk community crosses the borders of the state of New York and the provinces of Quebec and Ontario.

⁵⁴ Sterling, interview.

⁵⁵ At the time of the interview, Bruce and Joseph were the only two First Nations people in British Columbia with MLS degrees.

Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Except for Bonaparte and Burant, all participants live within a half-day's travel from Vancouver.

INTERVIEWS

The interviews took place from December 2000 through February 2001. I had one-to-one interviews with seven people, and I spoke with Linda Armstrong and Jeannette Armstrong together in a single interview. I spoke with Jim Bruce twice. With the participants' permission, all the interviews were tape recorded. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The original recordings and the verbatim transcripts were sent to participants for their records and feedback. As edited transcripts were developed during the writing process, these were also sent to the participants.

Interview questions

The questions were designed to be open-ended and intended to explore First Nations principles of knowledge care, the nature of First Nations knowledge, and the relevance of western models of knowledge keeping.⁵⁶ The draft interview questions were sent to the participants with a letter of introduction and invitation to participate. The draft interview questions were pre-tested on two people. The pre-tests were successful enough that the questions were used unchanged in the interviews.

Researchers' comments on and reactions to the questions

Several of the participants commented on the interview questions. Several people indicated that the questions and specifically academic terms such as "cultural knowledge" and "knowledge management" were not very meaningful for them. While they have no reason to think about the questions on a regular basis -- the questions are fairly removed from the daily business of being a librarian, archivist or working in a museum -- they had

⁵⁶ See appendix 1 for the interview questions.

considerable experience and understanding to draw upon when asked to do so. Jim Bruce reacted to the order of the questions, carrying the themes about cultural knowledge in question two into his discussion on knowledge management in question three. Because he identified personal and cultural context as elements necessary to distinguish knowledge from information, he considered that "information management should be better than knowledge management" and focused his response on those elements rather than on concepts from the professional literature. He noted that "the questions have an impact on me." Some people spoke about the concepts in the questions without addressing the questions directly. Some people answered some of the questions, but not all. All of the participants were sent a copy of the questions before the interview.

The interview conditions

The participants arranged the time and place for the interviews. The interview times and conditions varied dramatically. As expected with elite interviews, all the participants were extremely busy. They had limited time available for the interview; many were juggling several commitments in a short time frame. All were generous with their time despite other commitments.

Interview transcripts and quotations

The analysis and coding were based on verbatim transcripts of the interviews. Excerpts from the interviews that are included in the thesis are edited, primarily as a translation from oral to written discourse. The changes made include deletion of phrases such as "I think," "of course" and "well" and inverting order of phrases for clarity. Occasionally, words in the transcripts are in bold typescript to reflect the interviewee's emphasis or expression. Unless noted otherwise, all bold typescript reflects emphasis in the spoken interview. The quotes were edited to retain emotional tone and speaking

style; this approach results in an informal presentation of the participant's theories and insights. While every effort and caution was made to retain both the content and tone of the interviewee's discussions, any errors or misinterpretations are mine alone.

FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

I sent copies of the transcripts and drafts of the thesis chapters to the participants; some responded with some changes and encouragement. Most did not have time to respond in depth. Opportunity for involvement for the participants is part of respecting their insight. "When people are researching cultural professors [elders and knowledgeable people from First Nations communities] [they should] not only obtain data but **also** engage the tradition bearer as part of the **interpretation** process."⁵⁷ For grounded theory, this process helps the *emerging* theory to *fit reality*.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Sterling, interview.

⁵⁸ Glaser and Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: strategies for qualitative research*.

CHAPTER 2

KNOWLEDGE FRAGMENTS FIRST NATIONS MATERIALS IN ARCHIVES, LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS

Information ... [is] only useful for a particular thing ... But for me true knowledge is what **allows me** to function, as a creative human being.

Rosalee Tizya

The main themes which emerge from these questions are the distinctions between information and knowledge, the elements of knowledge which make it meaningful, the nature of cultural knowledge, and descriptions of First Nations ways of knowing. As Tizya's quote illustrates, knowledge is seen to have a much greater impact on individuals and communities. Participants describe information as shallow and fragmented while knowledge is more meaningful, more useful, experiential, contextualized and holistic.¹ They identify context as a crucial element that distinguishes knowledge from information. Their discussions of context include personal, historical, and cultural contexts. Their insights identify concerns about meaningfulness and reliability which affects research into First Nations cultures as well as the care of First Nations materials. Cultural knowledge is described by participants as either knowledge which is shared by a group of people or as knowledge owned by a First Nation. The participants' responses show differences in communicating about knowledge which affect provision of information services to and research within First Nations communities.

Context is key to the deeper meaning, significance and trustworthiness of knowledge. Developing shared understandings of the significance of context can be an effective bridge between First Nations and Western information professions. Knowledge

¹ In order to emphasize the concept of "wholeness," some people prefer the spelling "wholistic," to "holistic." "Wholism" is listed as an alternative spelling to "holism" in the Oxford Canadian Dictionary. Canadian Oxford Dictionary, s.v. "holism." The dictionary definition of holism is similar to but distinct from First Nations philosophies. See the following section "Knowledge learnt from a holistic worldview."

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taken out of context becomes susceptible to misinterpretation and fragmentation, and is in danger of being reduced to information.

THE INTERVIEWS

The first two questions reflect the author's perception that some First Nations people use the word *information* more frequently to refer to Western concepts and the word *knowledge* to refer to First Nations concepts. These questions explore the participants' perceptions, cultural values and word usage relating to the words information, knowledge and cultural knowledge:

1. For some people, the difference between "information" and "knowledge" is very meaningful. Particularly when talking about First Nations culture, what do these words mean for you?

2. What kind of knowledge do you mean when talking about "cultural knowledge"?

The values relating to information and knowledge which can be seen from these discussions have implications for the care of First Nations materials in archives, libraries and museums, which will be discussed in later chapters. As the responses to the first two questions are interconnected, they are discussed together in this chapter. Most points are made by more than one participant; most responses are similar or compatible. The similar responses will be summarized and responses which differ will be discussed. While there is remarkable compatibility in the responses to these two questions, the points which differ offer valuable insights. These responses provide insight into the nature of First Nations materials managed by archives, libraries and museums and the ways in which First Nations use these words, which may facilitate communications between information professionals and First Nations communities. Nine of the ten

people responded to the first question.² Eight of them discussed differences in the way that they used the words information and either knowledge or cultural knowledge; Jeffries does not find it useful to distinguish between information and knowledge. Seven people answered the first question directly. Joseph and Jeannette Armstrong combined the first and second question to look at the differences between information and **cultural** knowledge. Jeffries did not answer the second question. Generally, there was agreement that knowledge is more meaningful and complex than information.

No one addressed these concepts by providing a definition: most people discussed the concepts of information and knowledge by comparing examples of each, examining different attributes of them, or by discussing the ways that information and knowledge are developed, used or maintained. Some people explored the question through anecdotes, metaphors, and analogies. Most of the examples and attributes given are meant to be illustrative rather comprehensive, indicating that they describe some kinds of information, but not necessarily all kinds of information. Many responses describe information as shallow, fragmentary, of limited meaning or usefulness, and raw while they describe knowledge as deeper, processed, meaningful, and holistic. The participants' discussions about cultural knowledge focus on knowledge shared by a group of people and on First Nations knowledge and oral traditions.

INFORMATION

EXAMPLES OF INFORMATION

The participants explore the concept of information by listing examples such as: "facts and figures;"³ "information can be just data;"⁴ "descriptive or statistical, legal, that

² Linda Armstrong did not respond to this question. Unless otherwise noted, all references to the participants are from the interviews with the author.

³ Sterling, interview.

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kind of thing,"⁵ "administrative records;"⁶ "facts;"⁷ "just a barrage of facts and figures, the internet, commercials."⁸ "The babble of the streets and the sounds of the birds – all that is information, it's all data."⁹ Some participants indicated that they associate the word information with a broad range of things.¹⁰ They describe information as being **about** something: "specific things **about** a certain topic ... certain facts, what you want to know **about** a certain topic;"¹¹ such as "information **about** the process of applying for a graduate program here;"¹² "tax, taxation, changes in the tax act or something like that;"¹³ "facts about the Nlaka'pamux people for research purposes;"¹⁴ "[the names and relations of] the children who have been adopted out;"¹⁵ "information **about** all the cures and the doctoring and all the different things that you need to do to heal somebody,"¹⁶ [emphasis added.] Other examples of information include "know[ing] what a dentist is and how to get in touch with a dentist;"¹⁷ "something ... written down or transmitted by word of mouth or in some other way;"¹⁸ and "a few articles that were very, very helpful in my work."¹⁹ The interview responses mention information recorded in books, documents, audio and video recordings, photographs, artwork and cultural objects such as baskets.

⁴ Bruce, interview by author, 2000.

⁵ Joseph, interview by author, 2001.

⁶ Bonaparte, interview by author, 2001.

⁷ Sterling, interview.

⁸ Bonaparte, interview.

⁹ Bruce, interview.

¹⁰ Bonaparte, interview; Bruce, interview; Sterling, interview; Jeannette Armstrong, interview by author, 2001.

¹¹ Sterling, interview.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Tizya, interview.

¹⁴ Sterling, interview.

¹⁵ Tizya, interview.

¹⁶ Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Sterling, interview.

¹⁹ Ibid.

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ATTRIBUTES OF INFORMATION

Other than providing examples of information, people list attributes – traits or characteristics – which they associate with the concept of information. There are similarities in these attributes. Some of their statements are: "information is just ... raw,"²⁰ "can be just ... data,"²¹ "shallow,"²² "Information is unprocessed,"²³ and "it has no colour or no life to it, not necessarily any significance."²⁴ Information was also said to be easily understood and known by many people: "something that's very broad and probably basic,"²⁵ "almost the things that you could count on to be consistent throughout everybody's understanding,"²⁶ and was "the shallowest level"²⁷ of understanding. Information is not necessarily a concept, as indicated by Bruce's comment that "information can be just data." The participants also described information as something which can be decontextualized²⁸ and fragmentary.²⁹ These discussions include both recorded information (*e.g.* textual documents, audio recordings and government records) and objects and intangible information such as ideas, feelings and noise. Some information is unwritten and undocumented, "maybe what somebody knows or think they know about a topic."³⁰ Expanding on the idea that information is "unprocessed,"³¹ Burant said that it is "material that doesn't give you -- without a great deal of work -- what you are looking for." Information can be **about** something: *know-what* information;

²⁰ Bruce, interview.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Sterling, interview.

²³ Burant, interview by author, 2001.

²⁴ Bruce, interview.

²⁵ Joseph, interview.

²⁶ Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

²⁷ Sterling, interview.

²⁸ "The contexts are often missing. The stories that are collected often don't even give the name of the storyteller." Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Bruce, interview.

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or it can be associated with an **ability**: *know-how* information.³² Several participants talked about some information being valued: "very important;"³³ "critical ... the wave of the future;"³⁴ "valuable;"³⁵ "vital;"³⁶ something that "everybody should have;"³⁷ "key things ... that people need to know;"³⁸ that "should be available to everybody;"³⁹ that "everyone is expected to have;"⁴⁰ wanted or needed and having a purpose;⁴¹ "precious;"⁴² that can "round out sketchy knowledge;"⁴³ and "another process to make me more efficient ... [but itself not] a revolution."⁴⁴ Wanted information can be difficult to find.⁴⁵ Information can be lost.⁴⁶ Information can also be unwanted such as: "information overload ... way too much information for what you need ... we don't even use a fraction of it,"⁴⁷ or of limited relevance: "a lot of it is useless" or "insufficient."⁴⁸ It may be unorganized.⁴⁹ Information could be sensitive,⁵⁰ sacred,⁵¹ personal,⁵² or painful⁵³ or

³² Sterling, interview. Tizya, interview. Jeannette Armstrong interview.

³³ Bruce, interview.

³⁴ Tizya, interview.

³⁵ Sterling, interview.

³⁶ Bruce, interview.

³⁷ Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

³⁸ Bonaparte, interview.

³⁹ Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Sterling, interview; Tizya, interview; Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

⁴² Sterling, interview.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Tizya, interview. These last two points are not as contradictory as they sound: in the context of rebuilding one's culture, information about that culture can be invaluable while in the context of a tax seminar, the information while useful is not life-changing.

⁴⁵ Bruce, interview.

⁴⁶ Tizya, interview; Bruce, interview; Joseph, interview.

⁴⁷ Sterling, interview.

⁴⁸ Jeannette Armstrong interview; Bonaparte, interview; Tizya, interview.

⁴⁹ Burant, interview.

⁵⁰ Brown, interview; Burant, interview.

⁵¹ Tizya, interview; Bonaparte, interview; Sterling, interview; Joseph, interview; Bruce interview.

⁵² Tizya, interview.

⁵³ Bruce, interview.

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about something negative such as schoolyard violence,⁵⁴ sexual abuse,⁵⁵ racist terms⁵⁶ or alcohol addictions.⁵⁷

ATTRIBUTES: INFORMATION IS FRAGMENTARY

Seepetzta, Bruce and Joseph indicated that information is fragmentary and in small pieces. It was described as "bits and pieces and chunks,"⁵⁸ and "scattered bits and pieces."⁵⁹ When talking about information, several people used the word "**fact**" to indicate a small bit of data or a single thought or idea rather than to indicate a factual or truthful nature. From the context of the interviews, the participants did not use the word "fact" in lists of real or truthful things, but rather associated it with words such as "noise," "babble," "commercials," and "figures."⁶⁰ Seepetzta specifically addressed this issue of word usage and the concept of truthfulness:⁶¹ "facts, you tend to think of facts as true, but they're not necessarily true ... it could be untrue statements as well."⁶² The *Oxford Canadian Dictionary* definitions for "fact" carries the same ambiguity – while the fourth definition has "fact" synonymous with "truth, reality" and the first definition is "a thing that is known to have occurred, to exist, or to be true," the second definition is simply "a thing that is believed or claimed to be true."⁶³ The participants used examples of measurable or empirical things such as "statistics" as well as things that are false such as

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Tizya, interview.

⁵⁶ Burant, interview.

⁵⁷ Tizya, interview.

⁵⁸ Bruce, interview.

⁵⁹ Joseph, interview.

⁶⁰ Bruce, interview; Bonaparte, interview; Sterling, interview.

⁶¹ Sterling, interview; Bruce, interview.

⁶² Sterling, interview.

⁶³ Oxford Canadian Dictionary, s.v. "fact."

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"untrue statements;" and things which are neither true nor false such as "the babble of the streets."⁶⁴

ATTRIBUTES: INFORMATION NEEDS TO BE PROCESSED

The participants also described their perspectives on information by describing what is, can be or should be done with information. Information can be sought⁶⁵ or avoided,⁶⁶ transmitted by word or writing,⁶⁷ absorbed, integrated or filtered⁶⁸ taught or given,⁶⁹ categorized,⁷⁰ compiled or packaged,⁷¹ recorded,⁷² deleted,⁷³ lost or taken,⁷⁴ forgotten,⁷⁵ accumulated,⁷⁶ organized,⁷⁷ preserved,⁷⁸ made available and accessible⁷⁹ or made available on a restricted basis⁸⁰ or kept secret and confidential.⁸¹ Several statements supported the idea that information was unprocessed: " we have to choose what is useful and what is not useful;"⁸² "Information: [is] ... all of the noise that comes into us and the way that we pick out that noise to make meaning into our lives;"⁸³ and "maybe we have a lot of oral materials [recorded on tape] but a lot of work needs to be

⁶⁴ According to the Merriam-Webster Online for factoid: "an invented fact believed to be true because of its appearance in print" or " a brief and usually trivial news item." Merriam-Webster Online, s.v. "factoid." The American Heritage Dictionary defines factoid as "A piece of unverified or inaccurate information that is presented in the press as factual, often as part of a publicity effort, and that is then accepted as true because of frequent repetition" or "A brief, somewhat interesting fact." American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 4th ed., s.v. "factoid."

⁶⁵ Bruce, interview.

⁶⁶ Bruce, interview; Burant interview.

⁶⁷ Sterling, interview; Tizya interview.

⁶⁸ Tizya, interview.

⁶⁹ Jeannette Armstrong, interview; Tizya interview.

⁷⁰ Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

⁷¹ Tizya, interview.

⁷² Bruce, interview.

⁷³ Sterling, interview.

⁷⁴ Tizya, interview.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Burant, interview.

⁷⁷ Linda Armstrong interview by author, 2001; Bruce, interview; Burant, interview.

⁷⁸ Bruce, interview; Jeannette Armstrong interview.

⁷⁹ Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

⁸⁰ Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

⁸¹ Tizya, interview; Bruce, interview; Jeannette Armstrong interview.

⁸² Bonaparte, interview.

⁸³ Ibid.

done with it."⁸⁴ It is what people **do** with information that differentiates it from knowledge.

DISTINGUISHING INFORMATION FROM KNOWLEDGE

OVERVIEW

Most people interviewed did distinguish between information and knowledge.⁸⁵

No one gave a definition for either, nor drew an absolute boundary between information and knowledge. Tizya made the strongest distinction between knowledge and information: "Knowledge is thoughts and ideas that come, I believe, from the spirit world" whereas "information ... [are] generally about the mind and body ..." and lack "spirit or emotion." Other participants indicated that information and knowledge differ by degree or are connected in some way rather than being fundamentally different. Most examples focused on knowledge being more meaningful than information.

While significant, the distinctions are subtle and difficult to define; as Joseph says, "It's just like trying to say 'what's the difference between a smart person and a **wise** person?' " Some of the examples participants discussed explore the connections between information and knowledge, such as the observation that prior knowledge gives people the ability to make information meaningful for them. People described knowledge as deeper, more useful, more meaningful, more specialized and valued than information. They also described it as holistic: it is internalized, experiential and contextualized. It is also associated with education, training, skills and areas of expertise. Jeannette

⁸⁴ Bruce, interview.

⁸⁵ Jeffries did not find it useful to talk about information and knowledge differently, as "they sound pretty much the same to me." Joseph commented that it was difficult to distinguish between the two. Jeffries described information, ideas and knowledge that are important for First Nations communities, particularly for her own community of Sechelt. Many of those descriptions are similar to examples given by other participants.

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Armstrong gave the example that information is the fact that a dentist is a tooth doctor while having the concepts and skills necessary to *do* dentistry is knowledge.

KNOWLEDGE IS DEEPER THAN INFORMATION

The concept of **depth** was a starting point in several interviews: "knowledge is deep information."⁸⁶ In contrast, information was described as "shallow,"⁸⁷ and "something that's very broad and probably basic."⁸⁸ Knowledge results from **more** analysis or processing; retains **more** of its original context; is better understood, **more** meaningful, **more** specialized; **more** holistic or integrated and **more** useful than information. Bruce, Burant, Bonaparte and Seepeetza used the word "meaning" or "meaningfulness" to describe the difference between information and knowledge.

*Information tends to be less **deeply** meaningful ... I think knowledge takes on a much **deeper** meaning. There are many different levels of knowledge and you come back and circle sometimes to explore the same question in different ways so there are layered meanings. When you are giving information it seems to me you would be at the very shallowest part of the layer. You would be giving when, who, what, when, where kind of information. And the knowledge might take on why and how so it would a higher level of thinking. [emphasis added].⁸⁹*

Bruce indicates that knowledge is more useful or useable than information. Tizya notes that information has a more limited usefulness or relevance than knowledge: "It's only useful for a particular thing." Knowledge, such as a library catalogue' understanding of the contents of the collection, makes objects useful. Without being able to determine what books represent, the books are useless to you.⁹⁰

PROCESSED INFORMATION CAN BECOME KNOWLEDGE

Several participants indicated that information **needs to be** processed, while knowledge is something that **has been** developed as a result of processing, evaluating,

⁸⁶ Bruce, interview.

⁸⁷ Sterling, interview.

⁸⁸ Joseph, interview.

⁸⁹ Sterling, interview.

⁹⁰ Burant, interview. This point will be examined more closely in chapter 4.

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absorbing or analyzing information.⁹¹ Bruce said, "knowledge ... it has somehow been processed with a mix of wisdom as well ... it is processed, adjusted, made meaningful."

The concept that analyzing data or insights from years of observation can produce knowledge is shared by Western research traditions including physical scientific methodology and qualitative research. Some Western research has documented indigenous societies' ability to develop knowledge this way⁹² despite Western stereotypes about the limits of building knowledge within an oral tradition.

KNOWLEDGE

KNOWLEDGE IS INTERNALIZED AND EXPERIENTIAL

Several participants indicated that knowledge is internalized and more experiential than information.⁹³ Like analysis, internalizing information is a way to turn it into knowledge. Bonaparte describes internalizing information:

*Information: [is] a barrage of facts and figures [from which] we have to chose what is useful and what is not useful. Knowledge on the other hand is, to me, more of experience, it's more of a living thing. You take all the things that come in through your senses – it doesn't have to be verbal – it's feelings and experiences and how you take that and develop your ideals of life and the way you see the world – to me that's what knowledge is.*⁹⁴

Seepeetza said, "We have a huge amount of unconscious knowledge that becomes integrated. ... Aboriginal people living in a university setting would integrate university knowledge and mainstream knowledge and cultural knowledge and bring those things out that are appropriate to the situation." Mohawk legal scholar Patricia Monture-OKanee

⁹¹ Bruce, interview; Burant, interview; Sterling, interview; Bonaparte, interview.

⁹² Doris M Schoenhoff, *The Barefoot Expert: the interface of computerized knowledge systems and indigenous knowledge systems, Contributions to the study of computer science* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1993). Julie Cruikshank, "'Pete's Song': establishing meanings through story and song," in *The Social Life of Stories: narrative and knowledge in the Yukon Territory*, ed. Julie Cruikshank (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998). Louise Grenier, *Working with Indigenous Knowledge: a guide for researchers* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1998).

⁹³ See the chapter 3 for a discussion of the importance of connecting First Nations knowledge fragments with living cultures.

⁹⁴ Bonaparte, interview.

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writes, "In the Aboriginal way, truth is internal to the self."⁹⁵ Tizya speaks of internalizing teachings from elders as "absorbing knowledge." She teaches people to value everything they learn "because no one can take it away from you." Bruce provides a metaphor for internalizing information:

*Knowledge is something we should seek for; information is just raw. I suppose it is like looking at the grain in the fields or fish in the water: we can't eat it at that point – it's just there. It is information in a sense but when it comes into us and it is part of us and it is true to us, it is knowledge.*⁹⁶

People's prior knowledge from ideas, experience and facts that have already been internalized gives them the ability to find or create meaningfulness from new information. Burant recognizes the value of internalized knowledge for interpreting objects such as photographs:

*Even when I look at my own family albums they mean nothing to me unless I have somebody explain it to me because that person has the knowledge to impart or to make that information meaningful. That's really the difference that I feel between knowledge and information.*⁹⁷

This is similar to Jeannette Armstrong's example of dentistry, since dentists have training, knowledge of teeth and knowledge of the dental tools which together give them the ability to do dentistry: this is internalized knowledge. Similarly, she notes that it would be impossible to research a legal problem without an understanding of the law and of case history.

In addition to Bonaparte, several people mentioned or described experience as part of developing knowledge. Bruce said, "knowledge is something that passes the test: it holds up to a lot of experience." Joseph describes how people who "[have] grown up

⁹⁵ Patricia A. Monture-O'Kanee, "Reclaiming Justice: Aboriginal Women and Justice Initiatives in the 1990s," in *Aboriginal Peoples and the Justice System: Report of the National Round Table on Aboriginal Justice Issues, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Ottawa: Canada Communications Group, 1993).

⁹⁶ Bruce, interview.

⁹⁷ Burant, interview.

on reserve ... with elders and ... a family who values traditional beliefs" would have cultural knowledge but "people who were adopted out [would not know] the manners or ... their lineage and their family's history and ... things that are naturally passed on. ... I think that knowledge is something that people and the community gain from time immemorial. It's something that ... comes from living within the community." Jeffries speaks of the importance of knowing and sharing personal experience, through a program which brought Native mentors to speak in Vancouver high schools, and the impact they had on the students. Tizya stated that her understanding of the problems in First Nations communities comes from her experience living there: "When I work in a community I **live** there. I don't live in a hotel; I don't live anywhere else I live right in the homes with people and I **see** what the impact of extinguishment policies have **really** created in the community. I've seen **just enormous** pain, destruction, self-destruction." This type of knowledge is very different from that learned in a survey or from academic studies. The perspective that knowledge is internalized and experiential intersects with the perspective that knowledge is more holistic than information.

KNOWLEDGE LEARNT FROM A HOLISTIC WORLDVIEW

"Holistic" is a term used to describe the worldview of First Nations culture and philosophy. Many things that a Western worldview identifies as distinct and separate elements of culture such as spirituality, family and relationship with the land are seen by First Nations elders as inseparable from their whole culture. For example, traditional environmental knowledge is deeply spiritual as well as empirical.

The concept that knowledge is holistic emerges from the interview responses directly.⁹⁸ It also emerges indirectly in two forms: knowledge which integrates diverse types of information; and knowledge developed within a holistic culture. While participants described information as fragmentary and scattered, their descriptions of knowledge emphasize its interconnectedness and its ability to draw together diverse types of information and understanding.

THE SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL ELEMENTS OF HOLISTIC KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

In contemporary First Nations society, the medicine wheel symbolizes a holistic perspective of life. For many First Nations the medicine wheel is the framework for explaining their philosophies and teachings – their ways of knowing.⁹⁹ Traditional First Nations philosophies are holistic in that they are based on integration of mind, heart, soul and body which are associated with the four directions of the medicine wheel.¹⁰⁰ These four directions indicate four aspects of life – the spiritual, physical, emotional and intellectual. Tizya draws on the medicine wheel to compare Indian and Canadian knowledge systems; several people made related points during the interviews.

While Western culture associates information with the mind and intellectual pursuits, several participants mentioned spiritual, emotional and physical types of

⁹⁸ Tizya and Sterling used the word holistic when discussing knowledge.

⁹⁹ See *The Sacred Tree*, (Lethbridge, Alta.: Four Worlds Development Project, 1984). and conference proceedings such as Kathy Absolon, *Building Health from the Medicine Wheel: Aboriginal program development* ([Victoria, B.C.: s.n.], 1994). and academic research including Herman Jeremiah Michell, *Walking in Balance through the Journey of Teaching: teacher distress and the medicine wheel*, ed. Columbia University of British and Education Faculty of ([Vancouver, B.C.]: University of British Columbia, 1998). and Marion L. Roze, "Organizational Culture of Two Schools and its Effects on First Nations students" (M.Ed., University of British Columbia, 1993)..

¹⁰⁰ James Dumont, "Justice and Aboriginal People," in *Aboriginal Peoples and the Justice System, Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (Ottawa: Canada Communication Group, 1993). For an introduction to the concepts associated with the medicine wheel, see *Sacred Tree. Sacred Tree*. The medicine wheel is traditional to many Native Americans and First Nations but not all. It is not a traditional part of the author's Heiltsuk culture, but is used frequently in health, education, sociology and other "helping" fields and by indigenous scholars. First Nations which do not use the medicine wheel still talk of integration of the heart, mind, soul and body.

information or knowledge during the interviews. Tizya notes that First Nations knowledge and oral tradition involve all four of these aspects:

...what's largely missing from information systems in Canada is really ... spirit or emotion. You know it's generally about the mind and the body and that's insufficient for us to come to any real conclusions about events and things. This is what I like about Indian storytelling and why I like the oral tradition – when I'm imparting information to people, I know what's coming across also is the spirit and the emotion of it.¹⁰¹

Bruce, Bonaparte and Joseph discuss the spiritual and emotional aspects of knowledge. Bonaparte describes cultural knowledge as being "within our spirits and within our bodies." She observed a deficiency in research by non-Natives who studied Mohawk traditions– they were "concentrating on the physical" and so "miss[ed] the spiritual." Bonaparte commented upon a similar deficiency in Western medical knowledge:

Sometimes [Western medicine] works well with the physical, but I think more that the mental and emotional things that people go through that can usually be treated through natural process [Native medicines] are not really treated [by Western medicines].¹⁰²

In First Nations philosophies, the word holistic describes the importance of relationships in First Nations cultures – relationships between people, between people and other living things, and between people and the rest of the world.¹⁰³ These relationships are an aspect of context; context also differentiates information from knowledge. Cruikshank criticizes traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) studies for

¹⁰¹ Tizya, interview.

¹⁰² Bonaparte, interview. Mohawk traditional medicine is similar to the Canadian Oxford Dictionary's second (medical) definition of holism: "treatment of the whole person including mental and social factors rather than just the symptoms of a disease."

¹⁰³ This is a distinctly different concept than the Oxford Canadian dictionary's first (philosophical) definition of holism, based on the concept that "certain wholes are to be regarded as greater than the sum of their parts." For discussion of the importance of relationships, see also Verna J. Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt, "First Nations and Higher Education: The Four R's - Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility," *Journal of American Indian Education* 30, no. 3 (1991).

attempting to extract data from indigenous knowledge systems without acknowledging these contexts, particularly the spiritual aspects of it.¹⁰⁴ Bruce contrasts relationships between people and the rest of the world within the Cree worldview with that of the Western worldview:

I had a Cree instructor talking to me about the Cree worldview. She built a pyramid and at the top she put a worm and at the bottom of that pyramid she put people. She said because a worm is eaten by a bug which is eaten by a bird which is eaten by a wolf and so on and eventually at the end of that food chain you get people. [She] said that what this means in our [Cree] worldview is that everybody depends upon the worm and the worm – it could exist without you. You could vanish from the world and the worm could go on quite happily. On the other hand, if all the worms vanished we would all die. We would die because we depend [on the rest of the food chain] so we have to be thankful and care for that which sustains us. She started to explain why the traditional hunter would say the prayer to the spirit of what it ate and it would thank that animal for giving its life – her explanation [of] how different [that view is] from a Judeo-Christian view. Adam was given dominion over all the beasts so the impression is that Adam ... and Eve [are] at the top and somewhere way down there are these other things. We gave names to them so we own those things we give name to and they depend upon us.¹⁰⁵

Tizya describes First Nations perspectives as a "world approach":

A world approach is you look at the world and how things fit in it. And to me, that's how Indian people look at the world. It's whole, that's what holistic means, it means the whole world. It doesn't mean me in the world, it means the whole world and how I fit into it. Where Rosalee Tizya fits. If I understand where I fit, then it gives meaning to my life. It's based on that meaning then I go out, and I achieve or I relate or I do certain things. I come to understand what my accomplishments are in the world: how it contributes to what happens in my lifetime, or what it may even do in the future. I present the information as it relates to the world not in isolation of the world.¹⁰⁶

It is difficult for a person from a Western or scientific worldview, with different perspectives on the connections between objects and the world, to understand information or knowledge from the world approach. Bonaparte's vision for the Archives of the

¹⁰⁴ Julie Cruikshank, "Yukon Arcadia: oral tradition, indigenous knowledge and the fragmentation of meaning," in *The Social Life of Stories: narrative and knowledge in the Yukon Territory*, ed. Julie Cruikshank (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998).

¹⁰⁵ Bruce, interview.

¹⁰⁶ Tizya, interview.

Mohawk Council of Akwasane is to help Mohawk people understand how they fit in the world. She discusses connections and relationships as an identity issue and associates loss of identity with suicide:

If somebody cut you off from your language, your people and from everything, you don't have an identity anymore. If the land becomes polluted or you're moved off it then you have no connection with the earth anymore. You don't even know who you are anymore. You're a human being, but [you have lost] the importance of your history, where you came from and [your connection to your] ancestors is gone. You get a feeling of being disconnected and by yourself. Of course those [suicidal] kinds of thoughts are going to be there.¹⁰⁷

Jeffries also spoke of the importance of people understanding their connectedness with the world around them. She discusses connections and relationships when speaking with school children in order to strengthen their cultural identity:

It makes them feel good, especially when I'm talking to the non-Native children – I always start off by welcoming them to Sechelt territory, and [give them] a little bit of history to begin with: how long we [have] been there as a people. I also tell them we have a culture [and say] "I'm sure every one of you do, too: every one of you has a culture." They always feel so good when I tell them that.¹⁰⁸

Native American and First Nations authors across many disciplines stress these relationships.¹⁰⁹ Tizya criticizes scientific ways of knowing for ignoring these relationships: "I find the scientific approach is **flawed** because it looks at an object in the world **separate** from the world."

HOLISTIC KNOWLEDGE INTEGRATES DIVERSE FORMS OF INFORMATION

Knowledge can be holistic in that it draws together information, concepts or observations from different or even disparate sources in a meaningful way.¹¹⁰ Some of

¹⁰⁷ Bonaparte, interview.

¹⁰⁸ Jeffries, interview.

¹⁰⁹ Cruikshank, "Yukon Arcadia." Gregory Cajete, *Native Science: natural laws of interdependence* (Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers, 1999). Thomas King, ed., *All My Relations: An Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991). Kirkness and Barnhardt, "The Four R's."

¹¹⁰ These types of contradictions are part of the gaps between First Nations and Western knowledge systems which will be especially important for First Nations information institutions to address.

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the descriptions of knowledge given in the interviews are different but not contradictory. The concept that knowledge is a product of processing information can be contrasted with Tizya's description of knowledge coming from the spirit world rather than a product of human intellect and observation. She emphasizes the importance of learning from her parents, grandparents and elders because of their experience and wisdom, and of learning from children because of their close connection with the spiritual world. However she also values formal education, learning and study. Seepeetza and Bonaparte, both of whom have advanced university degrees, also discuss the spirit world as a source of knowledge. Jeffries, the first from her community to attend university, is an educator and cultural leader who values both formal *and* cultural education.

The participants discuss other ways in which knowledge integrates different types of learning and understanding. Jeannette Armstrong discussed how dentistry involves both abstract concepts and technical skills. Tizya emphasized the importance of instinct and dreams, as well as books, magazines, workshops and formal education as sources of knowledge. Bonaparte talked about knowledge from dreams, the sky and the stars as well as from books, records and other people. Seepeetza noted that aboriginal people in academic settings can "integrate university knowledge and mainstream knowledge and cultural knowledge," and that stories can connect the theoretical with the concrete. In her dissertation, *The Grandmother Stories*, Seepeetza described how her grandmother told her stories while teaching her how to weave baskets and fish traps, integrating concrete abilities with deeper theoretical knowledge. Seepeetza discusses integrating First Nations and Western knowledge. "Both sides [Western and First Nations] can inform each other

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and work together."¹¹¹ Similarly, Tizya discusses bicultural relations, arguing that cultures should try to "build an understanding ... and to build these bridges [between First Nations and Canadian cultures], not to try to change [or] adapt [one culture to the other.] She said that she would rather see both cultures "remain the way they are, in that we can enjoy them in their true form rather than an adapted version of it because something gets lost in the process."¹¹²

KNOWLEDGE IS IN CONTEXT

Information was characterized as fragmentary and disconnected, but knowledge was seen to exist within a context – connected to the world, people and other information. Culture, experience and personal perspective are some aspects of context people mentioned when talking about knowledge. Five of the ten participants mentioned context; others did not use the word but emphasized the importance of connecting information or knowledge to the situation, culture, history or people who developed or used it. For example, Seepeetza says that a person's immediate situation – such as attending a formal occasion or at work doing manual labour – is a determinant for what knowledge they would draw upon at that particular time. Burant says, "Information is unprocessed. The material [such as oral history tapes] doesn't give you, without a great deal of work, what you are looking for. Whereas knowledge is something that's been built up ... in an ongoing way [so you can tell] what this piece of information means in the context of that piece of information, and in the **context** of the **whole**"¹¹³ (emphasis added). In this sense, prior knowledge and context are what give information meaning; by implication information out of context is less meaningful or even meaningless. Both

¹¹¹ Shirley Sterling, "The Grandmother Stories: oral tradition and the transmission of culture" (Ph.D. diss., University of British Columbia, 1997).

¹¹² Tizya, interview.

¹¹³ Burant, interview.

Seepetza and Tizya use Albert Einstein's theories as a touch point for the need to look at ideas in context. Tizya considers society's perception of Einstein's theories: Einstein is recognized for his intelligence which is given more credence than spirituality. Tizya believes that his theories are given more prominence because they are seen in isolation; if we see them in a holistic context they become less important:

*If we take Einstein's theory of relativity and we read [it] in isolation of the world, it takes on more prominence than it really deserves. [Because we pay too much attention to] people who have really domineering personalities we don't give children the credence **they** deserve. [Some] children really are very aware of what's going on. That's what a lot of adults don't realize about children. They have not disconnected their spirit from the world and so they tend to have perceptions we don't have. We don't give them enough credence. ... It's their world – their future – they're inheriting from us. [Even] if we don't listen enough to them and try to put into context for them all these things that are happening, they already see it.¹¹⁴*

Tizya speaks of giving less attention to Einstein's theories while Seepetza talks about seeing them seen within a broader context.

If we're learning Albert Einstein's brilliant theories and if we could hear a story about him personally, that would connect the theoretical and the concrete. It makes it more meaningful for people, to see the human side of a great scientist. I think it becomes a more rounded type of information, more holistic.¹¹⁵

KNOWLEDGE HAS A HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Knowledge is developed within a cultural context. The historical context is also important for understanding events and recorded information. Burant explains, "The present and the past are intertwined and in order to understand the present **and** the future, you have to understand the past in all of its contexts. Knowledge is a continuum." Several people explore the importance of culture in understanding knowledge; indicating that the differences between cultures make it difficult to understand information or knowledge from another culture. Worms are more important in the Cree worldview than

¹¹⁴ Tizya, interview.

¹¹⁵ Sterling, interview.

the Western worldview.¹¹⁶ Snakes are associated with evil in Western culture but with healing in many First Nations cultures:

*If a child is learning about snakes, all of a sudden they may find that snakes have a capacity to heal certain diseases in human beings. If we look at snakes as evil – as we're conditioned to – if we look at snakes as "yucky" we may have deprived a lot of people of their own capacity to heal.*¹¹⁷

When asked if culture frames the significance of knowledge, Bruce replied:

*Yes, culture would very definitely frame that significance, as you have your view of the world: your philosophy and your spiritual framework. [Something] which is insignificant perhaps in another context or another worldview is highly significant to you so that context that cultural framework is going to determine the importance of even the things you see.*¹¹⁸

Nardi and O'Day describe this phenomenon as *inattentional blindness*: "some of what goes on in any setting is invisible unless you are open to seeing it."¹¹⁹ Bonaparte provides anecdotes which illustrate the inattentional blindness of outside researchers; Bonaparte attributes their perceptions of Mohawk culture and communities to their cultural worldview. She compares a recent researcher who spent a week studying the [Awakasane] Freedom School with Arthur Parker, who published his research as *Parker on the Iroquois*. The recent researcher focused on the mess in the school created over the weekend during Bingo fundraisers, while Parker could not see the spiritual significance of the ceremonies he observed:

*By Monday morning when the kids [returned to school], the place was spotless. Everything was aired out and it was fine. [But] what she [the researcher] saw was this mess. She didn't bother to say that by Monday morning we had it all cleaned up, she talked about the mess. It made me think that this woman was concentrating on the physical. Just the way that Parker's *On The Iroquois* concentrate on the physical [when describing our ceremonies]: "they danced like this, they put their foot like this, they wore these things, they turned around, they said these things." But what*

¹¹⁶ Bruce, interview.

¹¹⁷ Tizya, interview.

¹¹⁸ Bruce, interview.

¹¹⁹ Bonnie A Nardi and Vicki O'Day, *Information Ecologies: using technology with heart* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 14-17.

*they miss is the spiritual; just in the inflection of the voice, or who said what and how they said it can make a big difference. And they can't capture that in words, you have to be there.*¹²⁰

Just as it can be difficult to understand First Nations ceremonies, knowledge and events if you are unfamiliar with the culture, it can be difficult for First Nations people to understand Western culture, events and knowledge. Bonaparte speaks about relating to Western cultural arts:

*I know about symphonies and the great arts but [it wasn't very] relevant. To you as an individual, it just looks all crazy. But then you put it into context – the context is important – and then all of a sudden they have to relate to you and to the cultural things that happen in our culture. ... I appreciate what they put into it [symphonies and other arts] – the intricacy of the work [and] the artistic expression. But I understand the spiritual content of our culture and that gives me a whole new perspective.*¹²¹

Jeannette Armstrong notes that aspects of Western culture can be confusing for people from other cultures: people who are "culturally illiterate in ... the English world [have difficulty] find[ing] ... or understanding anything in the English world." Many knowledgeable First Nations people who speak their own language may have difficulties getting information they need from Western society. Similarly, someone culturally illiterate in a First Nations language would have difficulty finding information from that culture. Seepeetza notes that recordings of First Nations stories often lack cultural context:

But then again, you look at "why do anthropologists," for instance, "do what they do?" Franz Boas was trying to figure out how far the Coyote stories spread, in the meantime people were dying of smallpox and trying to fight for their land [but] there was nothing said about that – it was of no interest to the anthropologist whatsoever. So anthropological knowledge is anthropologically driven. But we take this knowledge [from stories recorded by anthropologists] and look at it from the context

¹²⁰ Bonaparte, interview.

¹²¹ Ibid.

*of the culture. I think both sides can inform each other and work together and create information which is more balanced.*¹²²

The context of documentation or writing stories is important as well as the context of the stories within the cultures and the lives of the storytellers. The discipline of anthropology is also a context which affects knowledge about First Nations. The cultural context is complex; not all cultural knowledge is shared by everyone in the same cultural or ethnic group. Cultural knowledge may differ according to factors such as gender, community, family, and education.¹²³ While some types of knowledge and culture are held in common by a large group of people such as Cree or Mohawk speakers, other knowledge is shared by smaller groups of people such as a family or a specific community. Burant notes the values of local and specialized knowledge:

*There are lots of images of Native communities and people can look at those images [but] if they don't know anything about the community [and] they don't know who the people are in the images or where the community's located, they can extract very little knowledge from that information. In order to learn about what's in that photograph, you have to learn about who took it, where it is and why it is taken. There are all those contextual questions, which then impart knowledge of the document.*¹²⁴

Burant's point about the importance of contextual information about photographs is about personal as well as cultural context. Seepetza, Bruce and Bonaparte also provide examples of personal experiences and perspectives which shape knowledge and understanding. Bruce speaks of understanding the complexity of his relationship with his father:

I'll put this in a personal view: I had a father that was verbally abusive, using a real life example. Yet I can remember being 12 years old with a group of people standing on a bank and I'm down by a river, running through Glacier National Park. I fell in the rapids and was being swept out to the current and I couldn't swim. All the rest of

¹²² Sterling, interview.

¹²³ Bonaparte, interview; Jeannette Armstrong, interview; Burant, interview; Sterling, interview.

¹²⁴ Burant, interview.

*the people froze and didn't move on the bank. He [Jim's father] slid down the bank ahead of where I was in the water and grabbed my hand sticking out of the water as it passed by. Now that piece of information changes my knowledge of him. In one respect you can say, 'yeah he was nasty and thoughtless and careless and loud and boisterous and unfeeling.' On the other hand you [have to] understand it within a context of an incredible deep love that would sacrifice anything for me if it had to happen. Doesn't that change the view of the information? In the same way, we could look at cultural information and data and say, 'you simply, unless you can get deeper into this information – this knowledge even – you're not even worthy of it.'*¹²⁵

Bonaparte provides an equally personal example of context, perspective and understanding: "You may think you know it, but until it affects you it's just not the same. It's like being **at** a funeral and being **in** a funeral, it's just not the same. It's like seeing a funeral instead of being part of a funeral. One of yours, one of your own, it's so different in so many things."

PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE

In contrast to personal knowledge, Jeannette Armstrong discusses specialized knowledge shared by trained professionals. Professions such as dentistry are associated with expertise and skills and bodies of knowledge. Other participants identified similar types of specialized knowledge including "Indian science and sociology and psychology," storytelling and healing.¹²⁶ Armstrong describes information as more universal than knowledge:

Everyone should have that information, everyone should have access to it and everyone is expected to have that information. Information means to me the things that you could count on to be consistent throughout everybody's understanding. When we're talking about in a library system and an educational program like ours, information is something that you don't have to interpret [because] it's given in its own form.

Everybody should know what dentists do and how to access them. ... but the dentist knows how to use the drill to drill your tooth. The dentist has the training and the knowledge of the equipment, so just because you know what a dentist does doesn't

¹²⁵ Bruce, interview.

¹²⁶ Tizya, interview; Bonaparte, interview; Sterling, interview; Jeffries, interview.

mean you can go and pick up that drill and go and drill somebody's tooth. So to me that's knowledge, that's the difference between the two.¹²⁷

Dentists' knowledge is also controlled knowledge because it is learnt within a system which controls who is legally permitted to do dentistry through licensing or certification processes. Within First Nations cultures, specialized knowledge such as medicinal use of plants is also controlled.

The dentist [knows] the language of dentistry, the terminology, all the names of each of these teeth, the name of every single tool on his tray and every single mixture of every chemical, [including] a needle to put your jaw to sleep or else to put a filling in. He knows all of that. In terms of licensing, he has gone to school [and] has training to gain that language, to be able to connect that to what he's got to do in your mouth. So that's what he has his license for. He wouldn't just read about those things, memorize them and then suddenly be a dentist. Which is what some people do try to do in the Indian world [with First Nations cultural knowledge but] somebody has got to say, "okay watch this guy," make his mistakes, mark him on it and say "okay, he's doing a good enough job that he can actually go and do it on a person." That's what the license basically consists of in anything, whether it's a brain surgeon or whether it's a dentist, right. ... Even to be a teacher you have to be licensed to be a teacher because you can't just go there and teach. Somebody who is already expert in it has to assess [your teaching method] say 'yeah, that person is qualified to do it.' That's all a license is, that's all a Ph.D. is. So, given that, you look at our world and it's the same.

... In our tradition there are people who have categories of knowledge: songs, philosophy of the Okanagan, and so on. In terms of licensing, it's those people who qualify others in terms of their use of that knowledge. When I say "I'm a student of Tommy Gregory's," everybody in the Okanagan understands that he is one of the people who is knowledgeable about rights on the land, our rights, our traditional indigenous law and our rights on the land. He's the one who is a speaker for the land. That's what it's called in our language. He's my teacher; he's my mentor. When I say that, people understand that he's the one who's qualified me for being able to speak on that subject and being able to be called upon to give expert opinion and advice and information in that area. And that's still a protocol that's recognized.¹²⁸

The training process controls how specialized knowledge is shared and applied, and also protects its credibility and integrity. The distinctions between these types of Okanagan

¹²⁷ Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

knowledge are recognized by Okanagan people, but may be unknown to people seeking expert First Nations 'informants' who may expect all elders or all traditional First Nations people to have the same knowledge.

You wouldn't go to a foot doctor if you had a toothache. In the same way, a person who is knowledgeable in one area may not be knowledgeable in another area. By the same token, a person who may have the biggest Ph.D. in your toenails couldn't give a license to a dentist. Even though they might be the most eminently knowledgeable about your toenails. [laughs] ... Somebody has to qualify that person in terms of their knowledge. Is it authentic or not? And if it's not authentic then our people raise hell. They can say, "well, what the heck's he talking about? He does know what he's talking about." They'll say it right out and they have a right to say it. Just like a foot doctor standing up and trying to pretend that they're a dentist: talking about dentistry as though he were an expert in dentistry. You'd say, "What does he know?" [laughs]¹²⁹

Within First Nations, systems which control the transfer of skills and understanding are part of the oral tradition, part of First Nations ways of knowing. These kinds of knowledge are cultural knowledge; knowledge of the Okanagan people.¹³⁰

CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

The second question, "What kind of knowledge do you mean when talking about 'cultural knowledge'?" reflects the author's experience that many of the kinds of information that First Nations people are often most reluctant to share relates to their cultural beliefs, practices or sites such as graveyards or rock art locations. This question was intended to explore whether this phrase was meaningful to the participants, and if they distinguished between knowledge that is cultural and that which is not. Some participants responded to the second question directly, while others responded to both the first questions together, contrasting information and cultural knowledge. Some people look at cultural knowledge as an abstract term to describe knowledge that is shared by a

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

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group of people, while others look specifically at First Nations oral traditions and knowledge. Shared knowledge is associated with education, manners, and identity. Examples given to describe First Nations knowledge include the role of elders, spirituality, stories, traditional training through protocol societies, language, and the kinds of knowledge that First Nations cultures hold. The interview responses include people's descriptions of the richness of First Nations cultural knowledge – knowledge from living in aboriginal cultures, knowledge about aboriginal cultures and knowledge about the world from First Nations perspectives.

CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE IS SHARED KNOWLEDGE

Several interview responses focused on cultural knowledge as knowledge that is shared within a group of people. Several participants discussed it in the context of community or an ethnic, cultural or linguistic group of people. Some people note the differences within groups relating to experiences or training. People also discuss the connection between shared knowledge and identity. The interview responses include examples of types of knowledge such as traditional healing and their own language which are shared within specific First Nations. Seepeetza expands this idea to social groups:

Culture isn't just [an ethnic culture such as] an Aboriginal culture but you can have a graduate school culture in which you have to learn a new language [such as] the language of philosophies. [You would] behave in a different way than [for example] if you were a highways worker. There's a whole culture around grad school [that is] a very different from [that of] BC Highways. They would have their own language customs and values that are somewhat different. [They] wear different clothing and speak in a different way.

The experiences of the culture group, the values, and the morals give you an idea of how to behave appropriately within that culture group. There are many situations in which a person doesn't overtly deal with cultural knowledge [but] has to learn to bring out certain knowledge at the right time. For instance, you wouldn't wear a bathing suit to a formal gathering. We all pull in a lot of knowledge about a lot of

*different things, cultural and otherwise. We have to learn when it's appropriate to bring it out.*¹³¹

In this sense, cultural knowledge is internalized and shapes people's behavior and actions.¹³² Similarly to Seepeetza's observation about people drawing on cultural knowledge as needed, Joseph says:

*A lot of the cultural knowledge would be something that's more of everyday use in the person's life in the community. ... For example cultural knowledge would not only include your lineage, songs and family history but there is also cultural knowledge about your mannerisms: how you speak to people, how you greet people, how you fit within the community, [and] how you fit within your clan.*¹³³

Knowledge such as manners and an understanding of appropriate dress also serves to distinguish 'insiders' from 'outsiders' in the community. Within the context of research, it also shapes how a researcher interprets what they observe, and how they characterize what they see. Joseph continues:

*It's like telling me how to define being an Indian or a First Nations person, how exactly do you define it? It's easy to [use] the legal description. But a First Nations person who has grown up on reserve and has some contact with elders and has maybe a family who values traditional beliefs, systems and such then they'd have a cultural knowledge. Whereas if somebody had grown up completely off-reserve, for example, people who had been adopted out with white people they have no cultural knowledge [or] ideas about the manners or anything about their lineage and their family's history and such. There are things that are naturally passed on, [such as] some basic medicines that First Nations automatically use because this is what families always use.*¹³⁴

Brown also describes cultural knowledge as something developed from living within a culture:

¹³¹ Sterling, interview.

¹³² This perspective is similar to Mellon's view of culture as shared knowledge. Constance A. Mellon, *Naturalistic Inquiry for Library Science: methods and applications for research, evaluation, and teaching, Contributions in librarianship and information science; no. 64* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 7-13.

¹³³ Joseph, interview.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

*Cultural knowledge is the knowledge that someone gains from learning to dance, learning the songs and being more informed about their own culture. It's just like First Nations culture: it's very broadly defined.*¹³⁵

Burant's description of cultural knowledge is similar:

*Cultural knowledge is that which gives meaning to things which seems meaningless. In other words, there's knowledge about what took place and when it took place, but what its meaning is something far different than just the ordinary "who what where why when." You have to understand the importance of that event, person, activity, within the context of the society in which it occurred. To me for example, knowing that this is a birch bark box, that that's fine, I mean it tells me it is the birch bark box -- somebody made it, but did it have a specific importance? Was the person who made it an important member of the community? Was that person the only person who constructed birch bark boxes? That's a kind of cultural knowledge that I find we don't have enough of, within the context of acquiring records for Native communities. For example, [when] we look at pictures of people at a treaty signing, ... and you think to yourself, "Who are these people?" One person's labeled the chief, but within the context of this group of people, why is he the chief?"*¹³⁶

These kinds of broadly defined, contextual knowledge can be developed through shared language, culture, values, experiences and upbringing. Much of this shared knowledge is also personal and internalized; and Seepeetza indicates it can also be unconscious.

(Bonaparte and Tizya also talk about similar types of personal knowledge; see also earlier discussion of internalized and experiential knowledge). There is also considerable diversity of knowledge within groups, as can be seen in Bonaparte's example of experiencing funerals and Jeannette Armstrong's examples of specialized training such as ethnobotany and dentistry.

Cultural knowledge about everyday life is also related to identity. Similar to Joseph's comment that cultural knowledge is "how you fit within the community ... and your clan," Jeffries describes how teaching genealogy as cultural knowledge to children in her community school provides students with a sense of identity:

¹³⁵ Brown, interview.

¹³⁶ Burant, interview.

[I] tell them our history, that each of them has a history and for them to do their [family] tree. Their real interest is to find out where they come from and who they're related to: they're just awe, in awe. We say to them "you're related to us," 'cause it's family, we're all related, some way or another. Some close and some not so close. So they really like that because it makes them feel like they belong. And it's really important for students to feel that way: a sense of belonging.¹³⁷

Within the interviews, Jeannette Armstrong approached the idea of shared understanding differently. Jeannette Armstrong contrasts "information" and "cultural knowledge." She describes information as something that "doesn't need to be interpreted" because it "would be part of the culture." She uses the term information as the level of ideas or understanding that is shared within a broad group and uses the term "cultural knowledge" for deeper understandings held by experts within those groups.

CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE IS OUR KNOWLEDGE: FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGE

Brown began her discussion of cultural knowledge with the statement, "Cultural knowledge is just another way of saying **our** knowledge." First Nations knowledge is knowledge about and informed by **First Nations** culture and experiences. In the interviews, people explored the concept of cultural knowledge through descriptions of First Nations ways of knowing, of the things about which First Nations have knowledge, and the importance of cultural knowledge to First Nations communities. Tizya emphasizes the importance of these kinds of knowledge, since "some of [First Nations'] belief systems and rituals" are needed for survival.

There is a close connection between knowledge **about** their cultures and knowledge developed **within** their cultures for First Nations. Bonaparte contrasts the connection of cultural knowledge and identity in mainstream North American society and First Nations communities:

¹³⁷ Jeffries, interview.

In the Western sense, I think cultural knowledge is the knowledge that people accumulate that sets the basis of who they are and what they are, [such as] the development of the arts and theatre and the important things in the Western culture that they remember that that makes their culture. For us [Native communities] I think it's a little bit different. In the United States or Canadian culture, it's a mosaic of things that they put together that say 'this is 21st century culture'. For us it's more of a story or a tapestry that blends together. Maybe, starting down here and it grows to the top of the tapestry but it tells a whole story because everything is interconnected -- it's not a mosaic or puzzle. Our culture and our knowledge our cultural knowledge grows on itself it's not snipped here and there and brought together. It grows like a tree grows.¹³⁸

FIRST NATIONS WAYS OF KNOWING

In the interviews, several people described ways in which knowledge is developed **within** First Nations communities as part of their discussions of cultural knowledge.

They spoke about knowledge learned through living in the community, from elders' teachings, through spiritual sources such as dreams, through stories and specialized training. Cultural protocols which restricted or control the ways in which knowledge is shared are mentioned. Sharing cultural knowledge is necessary to its continuance.

Certain types of knowledge are restricted and protected through secrecy. Many of these types of knowledge are shared by a select group of people while some are very personal. Seepeetza states, "Some knowledge I would never share with anyone."

Bonaparte's description of her mother-in-law's ability to manage information necessary for her farm demonstrates the importance of memory in oral cultures and one of the important differences between First Nations and Western knowledge systems:

[First Nations communities] have to get the techniques and the expertise to [manage paper] because keeping an archive, except what's in your head, is not something our people did before. What's interesting is that our older people have a lot better memory that we do: [if someone] take[s] that little laptop away from you and your pencil away from you, how much can you remember? As an information specialist, we know how to look for information; we don't actually retain it on the hard drive up here [our own minds], but those old people could; they could. My mother-in-law could remember all her cows, when they were born, how many cows they had, how

¹³⁸ Bonaparte, interview.

*much they weighed when they died. She knew, she could calculate just how much seed [was needed] for that field, when to plant it, and when it was going to be harvested and how much was going to be canned. All that in her head. Maybe it wouldn't take us long to sit down and figure it out, but we don't need to. It's just a different world that we live in.*¹³⁹

In addition to the knowledge learned through living in the culture, several participants speak about the role of elders in developing First Nations knowledge.¹⁴⁰

*"Before education as we know it today came, it's the elders – the women especially – that were the teachers of the culture. Talking about education, the teachers of the culture, holders of the culture. Everything. They start you off at birth, and they continue on, and then you take over."*¹⁴¹

*"With First Nations we have a system through Elders, through people with greater wisdom, to process information in a formal way to make it into knowledge. Other cultures may or may not have that sort of benefit."*¹⁴²

Elders can explain "what something **means** to them, about how they passed down their **own** knowledge."¹⁴³

I look at the old people as our archives. I look at them as the storehouse of Indian knowledge and Indian science and sociology and psychology. They are the source of all of that and I have absolutely no doubt when I'm being taught by an old person I don't doubt, I don't question I absorb. And to me that's what learning is, it's absorbing knowledge. Then it takes time to integrate that, to begin to really understand. Some things I've been told – maybe twenty years ago – only now I'm beginning to fully realize the power of what I was told then. All of a sudden the whole thing becomes real. You know I read the bible from cover to cover when I was young, and there's a part in there that said: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, and when I grew up, I see through a glass darkly, and then it's face to face." It's like that. It's like twenty years ago I was looking through a glass darkly.

It's like those old people know, somewhere along the way, you're going to see face to face, exactly what they're saying. That's how it happens. When I look at them as the archive, then I know that whatever I've been taught, I have to really listen because I may not see its full impact until twenty years from now. They seem to know the right time to instill it, when I'm there ready to listen, and I'm open. Then sometime they'll say something, and I'll think, "Why on earth did they say that? What does that have to do with anything?" Then I'm in a situation where, boom: it's like they knew this

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Bruce, interview; Tizya, interview; Sterling, interview; Joseph, interview.

¹⁴¹ Jeffries, interview.

¹⁴² Bruce, interview.

¹⁴³ Brown, interview.

*time was coming and they gave me the tool or the knowledge to see the whole thing as it's happening and to understand what's going on.*¹⁴⁴

Tizya, Seepeetza, and Bonaparte all describe knowledge coming from First Nations spirituality; spiritual knowledge is an aspect of holistic knowledge. They all indicate that spiritual knowledge is not only about spiritual things but comes from the spirit world.

While discussing the loss knowledge and culture, Bonaparte said:

*Cultural knowledge stays within an area, a region, and within our spirits and within our bodies. That may sound funny but I think that cultural knowledge is in your blood.*¹⁴⁵

Jeffries talks about the power of memory when describing the elders of her community's work to develop their cultural knowledge while developing educational materials:

*We [developed several] cultural notes [while developing curriculum materials] that comes out: somebody [remembers] things that they didn't know about – we [had] forgotten [but] all of a sudden it just comes out. [They remember] how to do things, how to research things, how our people did those things. So they get a lot of cultural – not only the language but other things – other ways of achieving that knowledge. And also not only achieving it, but working with it and using it, [that's] really important. ... It's amazing, when you sit down and words come out and you know that it's from the old language so it's really important.*¹⁴⁶

Tizya talks of her own education:

One of the things about me is, I've always loved knowledge. It's my whole world really. As a child I used to go out in the bush all the time, and be alone. And my parents, my whole family, all my brothers and sisters used to let me do that. It was a place of learning for me. Knowledge to me is thoughts and ideas that come, I believe, from the spirit world. I can't control what comes into my mind but once it comes in then I have a choice and I have a power – the power to make a change. I think that's the purpose of knowledge is to make change: it's to enhance, to strengthen, to make change. How we make that change is our free choice. Some people will make change destructively, some people will make change creatively and that's nature. Nature does that too: it makes change though beauty and it makes

¹⁴⁴ Tizya, interview.

¹⁴⁵ Bonaparte, interview.

¹⁴⁶ Jeffries, interview.

*change through absolute violent destruction but that change is necessary. So knowledge to me is a tool. It's what education is all about.*¹⁴⁷

Stories are also an important aspect of First Nations cultural knowledge. There is great diversity in the types of stories and other genres within oral tradition: children's stories, myths, family history, creative stories, community history, sacred stories and texts such as the Mohawk *Great Law* and the Wet'suwet'en *kungax*. Some sacred texts require different protocols or special care. For example, certain stories are closely associated with rights to and responsibilities for land: only people who belong to a specific place can tell some of its stories. These protocols were described in the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en court case regarding their claim to their traditional lands. "In Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en society the Chiefs are responsible for their part of the society's history and for knowledge of their particular territory. However, Chiefs are reluctant to answer questions about histories or places that properly belong to someone else. It is as if to speak of another's territory were to constitute a trespass."¹⁴⁸ Stories are a way that knowledge is transmitted between people and generations, "it's how we learned right and wrong sometimes, when our grandparents told these stories."¹⁴⁹ Stories are also a powerful communicative tool:

I tend to say that I never read a book twice. I feel very impatient with reading a book twice. It's hard to make myself do that. From that cultural context the repetition is very important. I had [a missionary] tell me once ... he know both First Nations preachers and European ones, and he said 'you know, when I listen to the First Nations ones, they take a theme, like love your neighbour, and will tell 20 stories about one little point and then I go and hear one of the white preachers, and they will make 20 points with no stories'. They would just explain the knowledge whereas the First Nations preacher would instinctively say, 'I have to impart a value

¹⁴⁷ Tizya, interview.

¹⁴⁸ Gisday Wa (Chief) and Delgam Uukw (Chief), *The Spirit in the Land: the Opening Statement of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en Hereditary Chiefs in the Supreme Court of British Columbia, May 11, 1987*, 1st ed. (Gabriola Island, B.C.: Reflections, 1989).

¹⁴⁹ Jeffries, interview.

*to you, so what I will do is I will paint with a story so that you understand it. After that story is done I will tell another story along the same lines and then another one." So once you get out of hearing that, you never forget that little lesson you're taught.*¹⁵⁰

Tizya described Western information systems as having mainly physical and mental dimensions, while oral traditions are more holistic since they also carry emotion and spirit. Stories are also a dynamic process of creativity, healing, and negotiation.¹⁵¹ Bruce notes that Elders created stories based on their own experiences, insights, observations and the events of their times as well as passing on the stories that they were taught. Seepeetza talks of aboriginal writing as an extension of storytelling, and of the power of storytelling:

*I think we are a race of master storytellers, but the type of genres that we like yet probably [doesn't include] the academic genres; it's probably not that popular yet. I think mostly we like mystery stories yet. I try to write gracefully and lyrically [in her PhD], but the voice of the critical analyzer definitely was there. It's not my normal voice but I thought that it was necessary, we really did need to have a look at our situation and say, "okay, what's the best strategy for us, or what's the best strategy for myself?" The conclusion was just to be myself. I was born into a family of storytellers and I could continue the tradition of sharing my knowledge through storytelling. I find that any audience that I talk to is open to hearing my views if I start with a story and connect to the issue with the human condition. I was talking to the Vancouver Multicultural Society on Tuesday night. I made a point of making them laugh, and telling them funny stories. I told them, "I am a healer, because I'm goofy, I can make you laugh," [laughs] and to me that is relevant. Healing is relevant, not just for aboriginal peoples for all people.*¹⁵²

Jeffries reveals the relevance of contemporary storytelling when she describes the many types of events at which she and her cousin Gilbert are asked to speak. They speak to Sechelt and non-Sechelt people. She tells stories to the children in school, visitors to the

¹⁵⁰ Bruce, interview.

¹⁵¹ Julie Cruikshank, *The Social Life of Stories: narrative and knowledge in the Yukon Territory* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998).

¹⁵² Sterling, interview.

Sechelt Museum, women's groups and neighbouring community groups such as the Rotary Club.

I do a lot of storytelling to the white side. And every time they need somebody in the museum or in the longhouse, they get a hold of myself or my cousin Gilbert who's a storyteller too. So we explain how to respect our cultural things. I'm speaking to the Rotary Club. They want to know what the band is doing, because we're doing a lot of business now. We're clearing all that space by the hospital for a mall, and it's kind of scaring them. Take away their business, they're thinking. So I have to meet with the band council, see [if there is] anything new that's coming up in that, so I'll know, for questions I'll be asked. So that's important. We in Sechelt do the good neighbour policy, as much as we can. That's really important because we have to live together. We're right in the middle of the non-Native community.¹⁵³

Some kinds of First Nations cultural knowledge is developed through specialized training. As mentioned earlier, Jeannette Armstrong differentiated between information which should be available to everyone and cultural knowledge. She uses the Western process of licensing and of academic training Ph.D.s as an analogy for the traditional protocols for the development of these types of specialized knowledge within the Okanagan.

The person who is eminently qualified in ethnobotany would be the person who knows the name of every plant that's used, and every possible mixture that it's used for and what times of the year they're gathered and how they're prepared and all the things that are required. Also whether it works for man, woman, child, [or] elder. There are some things [medicines] you just don't give to men that you give to women. So this person who's the expert in that would be the person who could qualify and license this person, and say, "okay, here's how you do it, yes, you know you've trained long enough to know all these medicines" and they work with a person for however many years, and then that person is qualified by that person. ... So that's one way, individual to individual. In Okanagan that's how it happens. In our tradition there are people who have categories of knowledge. Those people are knowledgeable about songs, people are knowledgeable about philosophy of the Okanagan, and so on. ... Same thing with genealogy and history and so on. From my point of view, licensing is the same as in the Western world. Somebody has to qualify that person in terms of their knowledge.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Jeffries, interview.

¹⁵⁴ Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

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This system not only preserves the knowledge by passing it onto following generations, it also protects its integrity and credibility. The way in which it is passed along is part of the reason that people within that culture accept it.

FIRST NATIONS CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

Another way in which participants described cultural knowledge was by describing the ranges of disciplines and topics about which First Nations people have knowledge. Several different types of specialized knowledge listed in interview responses include traditional medicines and healing, plants, cultural activities and symbolism, history, genealogy, science, sociology, psychology and technology such as canoe building. Jeannette Armstrong describes several areas:

So you have people who are knowledgeable on genealogy. You have people who are knowledgeable on land and rights. You have people who are knowledgeable on traditional law. You have people who are knowledgeable on traditional – I guess you could say spiritual origin stories – the origin text: the sacred text of our people. There are people who are knowledgeable about these ceremonies: the winter dance people. ... In our tradition there are people who have categories of knowledge. Those people are knowledgeable about songs, people are knowledgeable about philosophy of the Okanagan, ... people who [are] knowledgeable about our traditional indigenous law and our rights on the land: "a speaker for the land." Then the people who take care of the lands, who take care of the winter dances, there's Marylou Louise who's the knowledge keeper for winter dances; with genealogy and history. So I just answered the second question. That's what we mean when we talk about cultural knowledge. Cultural knowledge means that knowledge in those areas that I just mentioned. And the range of the categorization of cultural knowledge is as extensive as the Western cultural knowledge. There's science, there's medicine, there's philosophy, [and] linguistics. So there's a whole number of areas like that. It's as broad and as wide as Western science categories, Western knowledge categories.¹⁵⁵

Seepeetza, Jeffries, Bonaparte, Joseph, Linda Armstrong, Jeannette Armstrong, and Burant provide First Nations languages as an example of cultural knowledge, discussing the importance of aboriginal languages, language education and the elders'

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

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deep understanding of their language. In the interviews, Jeffries, Jeannette Armstrong and Linda Armstrong described elders' development of the languages. Sechelt elders, teachers with a linguist have developed a dictionary, several books and curriculum materials.¹⁵⁶ When listing some of the types of specialized Okanagan knowledge, Jeannette Armstrong included linguistics:

*There's even the linguistics branch [of Okanagan knowledge] because you have high speakers who have a **real** interest in the innuendoes of language. When they sit together they actually discuss the innuendoes of how the language works. There's quite a number of people who are high speakers and I know who have linguistic knowledge, real clear linguistic [specialization].¹⁵⁷*

Bonaparte talked about Mohawk use of English:

The terminology and nomenclature we use here can have total different meanings than out there. I think that somebody from the outside coming here would have to use us for interpreters even though we speak English, they would still need us to [explain to] them the way we use our own English words.¹⁵⁸

Jeffries says, "Of course, when you tell it [stories and myths] in our language, it's so different. It's so much nicer than when you translate it. It loses its meaning [in English]."

Many aspects of cultural knowledge have deeper spiritual or symbolic meanings, such as ceremonies, art, crests and spirituality. In the interviews, Linda Armstrong mentioned visual and artistic knowledge while Bruce talked about artwork, philosophies, pow wows, songs, dances, regalia, ceremonies as examples of cultural knowledge. Joseph mentioned spirituality. Bruce, Bonaparte and Jeffries mentioned sacred places. Seepeetza describes some types of sacred knowledge: "Certain crests and oral traditions and certain **animals** even were considered to be very special to a certain group of people.

¹⁵⁶ Jeffries, interview.

¹⁵⁷ Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

¹⁵⁸ Bonaparte, interview.

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Sometimes the ancestor had to pay the price for that knowledge with their lives and so it's considered to be very **sacred** and it's not **shared** with just anybody and everybody."¹⁵⁹

Cultural knowledge also includes the community's memory – knowledge of the myths, stories, genealogy and history. Several participants provide examples of this kind of knowledge.

Jeffries speaks of community interest in their cultural history:

And our people are really into it, not only the elders, but the young people too. They're finding out the history. My sister was the information person for the band in the cultural area for several years and [researched several of] these family trees. The kids are really interested. I do it [family trees] at the high school, the first thing in the New Year.¹⁶⁰

Bruce describes community history which is kept on sound recordings at the SICC:

Some Elders that [were] old enough in the sixties when we first made some of those tapes at the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre were children in Little Big Horn times. Some of the people who were small at time the treaties were negotiated were still alive in the 50s and 60s. That was vital [and it is] on tape.¹⁶¹

Jeffries speaks of cultural knowledge relevant to land claims:

For our land claims, a lot of the work was done by the elders because we know the history, the territory, those parts of our land, the people that lived there. We [recorded] all the [information for the] traditional use study – all our territories, all the rivers and mountains, everything got our Indian names. So a lot of our people – our elders – are involved in the land claims because of their knowledge.¹⁶²

The claims processes involve a broad range of knowledge about place, understanding of landscape, history, and genealogy together which typifies cultural knowledge.

DISCUSSION

LACK OF CONTEXT LEADS TO MISINTERPRETATIONS

Examining ideas and information about First Nations out of the context of their culture has the effect of fragmenting that knowledge and makes it more open to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Burant's example of photographs of First

¹⁵⁹ Sterling, interview.

¹⁶⁰ Jeffries, interview.

¹⁶¹ Bruce, interview.

¹⁶² Jeffries, interview.

Nations communities illustrates how information taken out of context can lose much of its meaning. It would be difficult to understand the Cree hunters' prayers without understanding their relationships with other living things and other aspects of their spirituality. Seepeetza talks of the importance of researchers returning to talk to the people they interviewed while writing their research, rather than after their research is complete which increases the potential for cross-cultural misunderstanding. Julie Cruikshank discusses problems arising from the way in which scientific studies of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) take information from elders and reduce it to the empirical observations which make sense within a scientific framework but which ignore non-scientific insights and spiritual aspects of environmental knowledge.¹⁶³ Knowledge taken out of context is in danger of being reduced to information.

CONTEXT AS A BRIDGING CONCEPT

Examining differences and similarities in First Nations, archives, libraries and museums perspectives about context will help to bridge these knowledge systems. The importance of context which was emphasized by many of the participants is central to archival theory. The trustworthiness of archival records can only be evaluated within the juridical context in which they were created.¹⁶⁴ Accordingly the principles of *Respect Des Fonds and* Respect for Original Order is central to archival practice. Both archivists who participated in this research discussed the importance of context. The prominence of this concept among the participants who are not archivists signals that this concept can act as a key bridging concept between First Nations and archives. Library theory and

¹⁶³Cruikshank, "Yukon Arcadia."

¹⁶⁴Shauna McRanor, "Maintaining the Reliability of Aboriginal Oral Records and Their Material Manifestations: Implications for Archival Practice," *Archivaria*, no. 43 (1997). Luciana Duranti, "Archives as a Place," *Archives and Manuscripts* 24 (November 1996) (1996). Luciana Duranti, "The Records: Where Archival Universality Resides," *Archival Issues* 19, no. 2 (1994).

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practice focuses on content and content analysis more than context. The principle of provenance is also central to museum theory and practices. Museums include both the ethnicity of the object's creator (community of origin) and the custodial history as elements of provenance. The provenance recorded in museum catalogue records for First Nations materials – particularly the oldest objects -- often lacks association with First Nations families, clans or individuals. This is an element of context or provenance which First Nations would like to see incorporated into museum catalogues. For example, the Makah Cultural and Research Centre (MCRC), a museum operated by the Makah Nation in Washington State, was originally established to house the archaeological materials from the Ozette village site.¹⁶⁵ The collection was originally classified by functional categories developed by archaeologists; they have since been reclassified and are stored according to the household from which they were recovered.¹⁶⁶

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

Because of the cultural and philosophical differences between Western and aboriginal cultures, it can be a struggle for traditional First Nations people to discuss their culture in English. Participants did find English words to describe traditional knowledge, however as Bonaparte points out, aboriginal people use English differently. Jeannette Armstrong has written about the difficulties of communicating Native concepts in English.¹⁶⁷ Many Western categories and definitions are profoundly different from those in First Nations worldviews. Brown explains that definitions and abstract terms are problematic because they ignore that: "everything is intertwined." Relationships which

¹⁶⁵ Jeffrey E. Mauger and Janine Bowe chop, *Tribal Collections Management at the Makah Cultural and Research Centre*, vol. Two, *Perspectives: A Resource for Tribal Museums* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1995), 1.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 3. The MCRC cataloguing and classification work will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

¹⁶⁷ Maria Campbell et al., *Give back: First Nations perspectives on cultural practice, Gallerie : women artists' monographs; 11* (North Vancouver: Gallerie Publications, 1992).

are crucial for aboriginal people to make sense of the world maybe unrecognized within Western Culture. Native people have to work with English terms and definitions within their own communities because of language loss. Their use of English and French is also necessary in order to use outside resources such as archives, libraries and museums and because of governmental laws, policies and regulations. For example, aboriginal rights are recognized by the Canadian constitution, but no definition of those rights has been negotiated between First Nations and Canadians or imposed by the courts or through legislation. The British Columbia provincial government has an operating definition of aboriginal rights which affects documentation of First Nations cultural knowledge as well as First Nations exercise of their aboriginal rights and resource management in British Columbia.¹⁶⁸ In order for information professions and First Nations to form partnerships to care for First Nations knowledge, they will need to find mutually meaningful and respectful definitions of concepts such as knowledge and aboriginal rights.

Internalized knowledge can only exist within living people and living communities. In order to transmit First Nations cultural knowledge to future generations, the intangible traits such as context which distinguishes it from information must also be managed. Where those traits have been lost, knowledge has been fragmented. The next chapter examines the problems resulting from the fragmentation of First Nations knowledge and the importance of reconnecting First Nations communities with materials about their culture that are in archives, libraries and museums.

¹⁶⁸ Province of British Columbia, "Crown Land Activities and Aboriginal Rights Policy Framework," (1995).

CHAPTER 3

RECOVERING PRECIOUS FRAGMENTS

Preservation ... is what we do to berries in jam jars and salmon in cans. ... Books and recordings can preserve languages, but only people and communities can keep them alive.

Nora and Richard Dauenhauer¹

INTRODUCTION

Nora and Richard Dauenhauer have spent decades recording and translating Tlingit language and oral tradition. They have published bilingual (Tlingit/ English) editions of epic stories from the Tlingit oral tradition.² They have also been active in work to revitalize culture and language. They recognize that recording and translating language can preserve it but preservation is distinctly different from maintaining a living language. Recorded knowledge, like language, is not the same as knowledge within a living culture irrespective of the level of detail, accuracy, relevance or value. Participants' descriptions and discussions show that they value both these kinds of knowledge.

The connections between culture and knowledge are complex. Culture and cultural knowledge shape identity and are necessary for people to make sense of the world. Participants discussed knowledge loss and fragmentation. They discussed the value of recording projects to preserve knowledge and concerns about recording projects which fragment and distort knowledge. Several participants noted that accumulating

¹ Nora Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer, "Native Tongues," *Sierra* 81:6 (1996): 68.

² Nora Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer, *Haa Shuká, Our Ancestors: Tlingit oral narratives, Classics of Tlingit Oral Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1987); Nora Dauenhauer, Richard Dauenhauer, and Gary H. Holthaus, *Alaska Native Writers, Storytellers and Orators*, 2nd ed., *Alaska Quarterly Review* ; v. 4, no. 3-4 (Anchorage: College of Arts and Sciences University of Alaska, 1986).

information can not replace elders or knowledgeable people. Participants emphasized the importance of reconnecting First Nations knowledge fragments with First Nations communities. Recovering these connections makes the materials more meaningful, revitalizes cultures and strengthens communities. First Nations knowledge centres can diminish the distortion and loss of community knowledge, and reconnect knowledge fragments with their communities. In their discussions, participants discussed the mandates for, strengths of and challenges facing First Nations knowledge centres. Burant points out that First Nations knowledge centres in Canada rarely call themselves archives, libraries or museums.³ “Cultural Education Centre” and “Resource Centre” are more commonly used; others are an unnamed responsibility of varied offices such as resource management departments, Traditional Use Study (TUS) departments, legal departments, curriculum centres or research departments. In contrast, there are numerous tribal libraries and tribal college libraries in the United States.⁴ These knowledge centres face administrative challenges that include a lack of sufficient stable funding, the need to advocate for the importance of knowledge centres as an aspect of the community’s basic infrastructure, and the need to network within the community.

The interview questions did not ask participants to describe or evaluate their own institutions or First Nations knowledge centres; the open questions gave them opportunity to discuss either First Nations or mainstream institutions. Most of the discussions about First Nations knowledge centres relate to the participants’ descriptions of First Nations

³ Burant, personal communication, 2001.

⁴ Lotsee Patterson, "The History and Development of Libraries on American Indian Reservations," in *Proceedings: First International Indigenous Librarians' Forum*, ed. Robert Sullivan ([Auckland, NZ]: Te Ropu Whakahau, 2001); Lotsee Patterson, "Tribal and Reservation Libraries," *Rural Libraries* 22, no. 1 (2002); Lotsee Patterson and Rhonda Taylor, "Tribally Controlled Community College Libraries: A Paradigm for Survival," *College & Research Libraries* 57 (1996).

needs for their own knowledge and of First Nations challenges to care for their own knowledge; their evaluation of archives, libraries and museums as models for First Nations knowledge management; their descriptions of the value of these institutions and their visions for the future of First Nations knowledge systems. These discussions do provide insight into First Nations knowledge centres which are not currently documented within the literature of the information professions. However this is not a comprehensive overview of First Nations knowledge centres: participants may have provided additional information if the questions focused on these centres. Participants described the mandates of, strengths of and challenges to these knowledge centres. Their visions for First Nations knowledge centres will be examined in a later section of this chapter.

KNOWLEDGE AND LIVED CULTURE

The concept of *lived culture* draws together the experiences, heritage, knowledge, language and philosophies of living First Nations people. Rather than look at the lives of contemporary First Nations people as a midpoint between past authentic cultures and assimilation, this approach views First Nations culture as the culture of living First Nations people. Knowledge and lived culture are intertwined.

People cannot be guided by or act on knowledge which is unknown. Maintaining, recovering and developing knowledge about First Nations culture is necessary for cultural survival. While other people may record, observe or learn about First Nations culture, only First Nations communities can keep their cultures alive.⁵ Cultural knowledge and revitalization are integral to their health and cultural survival. Genealogy,

⁵ Issues of ethnicity, residency and community membership are complex, controversial and deeply emotional issues for many people. For example, a person who is ethnically aboriginal and a member (status or non-status) of a First Nations may reside elsewhere while a person who is not aboriginal may be an integral part of a First Nations community. These are only two examples; many variations exist.

history and stories are important types of cultural knowledge for both individuals and communities. Knowledge can be healing for people, empowering them and validating their experiences, both individually and as a community.

Research about First Nations culture will not automatically support First Nations communities and their **lived** culture. Some projects which document First Nations knowledge appropriate it rather than validating and valuing the knowledge system which produced it. These projects may preserve knowledge in a fragmented or distorted form without maintaining the connections between knowledge and communities. Brown responds to these problems by advising archives, libraries and museums "to be more informed and to validate what knowledge management is to us."

MULTIPLE LITERACIES WITHIN LIVING FIRST NATIONS CULTURES

The dichotomy of written and oral information distorts First Nations knowledge systems. The term, "multiple literacies" is one alternative approach to this dichotomy. First Nations knowledge systems are based on orality, but orality is more than simply a lack of written communication or records. Greg Young-Ing equates Native arts (including totem poles, wampum belts, dance and dramatic productions,) with published materials because of the information they carry. "This is the aboriginal way of transmitting knowledge and recording information and history. If publishing is understood to be the documentation and dissemination of information on a wide scale, this was the method of 'publishing' employed in North America for thousands of years before colonization."⁶ Before contact with Europeans and the use of writing systems for

⁶ Greg Young-Ing, "Aboriginal Peoples' Estrangement: Marginalization in the Publishing Industry," in *Looking at the Words of Our People*, ed. Jeannette C Armstrong (Penticton, British Columbia: Theytus Books, 1993), 179.

First Nations language or First Nations knowledge, objects which carry meanings, ideas, and symbols were a tangible and important aspect of First Nations knowledge systems. Since contact, other tangible forms such as writing, audio-video recordings, photographs and other visual arts in Western media have been added to First Nations knowledge systems. Other intangible forms, such as radio broadcasts and new types of performing arts, have also been added.

Many of the kinds of cultural knowledge people described in the interviews have been recorded in some way, such as oral history tapes mentioned by Bruce and Burant and land claims research mentioned by Jeffries. Joseph notes that First Nations information is no longer only oral. Both Bonaparte and Jeffries discuss Native people writing their own stories. As well as growing numbers of aboriginal writers, there are now also aboriginal publishers.⁷ Several authors, writers and literary critics see the connection between the ways in which aboriginal authors communicate in written form with the genres of oral tradition, as Kim Blaeser who titled her analysis of Gerald Vizenor's writings as *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition*.⁸ Speaking about her PhD dissertation, Seepeetza talks about applying her storytelling skills within an academic context required "the voice of the critical analyzer" but she still tries to write "gracefully and lyrically." Writing and Western communications media have been part of First Nations culture for several generations. Band newsletters, Native newspapers, school curriculum materials and unique genres such as settlement feasts programmes have been developed primarily to communicate within a community. First Nations have

⁷ Greg Young-Ing discusses the importance of aboriginal publishers for addressing barriers faced by aboriginal writers in the publishing world. Ibid.

⁸ Kimberly M. Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor: writing in the oral tradition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996).

also developed large bodies of legal and administrative records.⁹ Bonaparte notes that much of these types of materials in the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne Archives were written to communicate with outside agencies rather than within the Nation.

Past research about Native culture has been typified by one-way movement of information out of First Nations communities into government and academic reports.¹⁰ However, for many First Nations people writing has become an aspect of daily life, rather than a mechanism to remove knowledge from daily life. Traditional arts of all types were disrupted during colonization; artists have begun reviving traditional art forms and expanding their expression into new mediums and new media.¹¹ Aboriginal communications now includes filmmaking, performance art, installation pieces, internet animation, television, radio and internet chat rooms. Some of these communications are ephemeral and intended to meet immediate needs while others are meant for long term knowledge maintenance, (see following section on preservation).

RELATIONSHIPS, IDENTITY AND GENEALOGY

Cultural knowledge and identity

In chapter 2, identity was discussed as an aspect of cultural knowledge. The importance of genealogy was raised in several interviews and relates to identity, family

⁹ In Bella Bella, Heiltsuk Settlement Feasts are held as community memorials, generally about a year after a funeral. A potlatch follows about four years after the funeral. The programs from Settlement Feasts often include a copy of the eulogy, poetry, biographies, and family trees. They can have great emotional value, especially for family members unable to attend.

¹⁰ As reported by Vine Deloria, *Custer Died For Your Sins: an Indian manifesto* ([New York]: Macmillan, 1969). Deborah Lee, "Aboriginal Students in Canada: A Case Study of Their Academic Information Needs and Library Use," *Journal of Library Administration* 33, no. 3/4 (2001). Lotsee Patterson, "Information Needs and Services of Native Americans," *Rural Libraries* 15, no. 2 (1995). Nancy Hannum, "Do Native People Use Public Libraries?," *BCLA Reporter* 39, no. 4 (1995). See following section on knowledge loss.

¹¹ See also Helen Molnar, *Songlines to Satellites: indigenous communication in Australia, the South Pacific and Canada* (Annandale Australia: Pluto Press, 2001). George J. Sefa Dei, Bud L. Hall, and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg, eds., *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts: multiple readings of our world* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

and to broader First Nations philosophies which emphasize the importance of knowing how you are related to the rest of the world. Burant's experience from the National Archives participation at an Aboriginal Days symposium showed him the importance of genealogy to First Nations communities: over eighty percent of the enquiries were about genealogy. Burant's observation is supported by several other participants who emphasize the need for people to know "how you fit within ... your clan,"¹² and for children to be taught their family trees.¹³ Tizya's description of the world approach centres on an understanding of how people relate to other people and the world around them.¹⁴ An awareness and recognition of relationships is central to First Nations cultural knowledge: loss of knowledge about these relationships diminishes people's ability to maintain them.¹⁵ It also reduces people's ability to maintain communities especially when separated by distance, geographic or political borders. Cultural loss and a loss of these relationships affect the survival of individuals as well as the survival of communities. As discussed in the previous chapter, Bonaparte associates loss of connection to land and culture with high rates of suicide. Tizya associates trauma and loss of culture with high rates of violence and suicide. Her experience living in First Nations communities across Canada shows her that the impact of policies of assimilation and extinguishment of aboriginal rights continues: "the genocide that's been taking place

¹² Joseph, interview.

¹³ Jeffries, interview.

¹⁴ Tizya does not consider knowledge to be a defining aspect of identity: "I can bring in all of these different ideas that I've read about or encountered and put it all together so knowledge is an accumulation of ideas, to enhance us as human beings but it doesn't make us **who we are**. It simply makes us more **efficient** in what we do."

¹⁵ As noted in the literature review, several authors note the importance of relationships in indigenous philosophies.

in this county is just horrendous." She sees restoring relationships as a key element of empowering people to heal from these traumas.

Healing can come from rediscovering relationships

While Bonaparte and Tizya attribute the increased suicide rates to differing causes (loss of identity and trauma,) both see the start of community healing in recovery of people's connections to the past, land and the rest of the world.¹⁶ Tizya described some of the archival records relating to restrictive government policies such as the punishment books listing the names of students punished for speaking their language at Kuper Island Residential School and the "yellow tickets" which were used in the Prairies [when] to restrict Native people's movement outside of their reserves:¹⁷

So in reading [archival material], I read it being aware of what has taken place. ... It was good for me to go [to the archives] and see face to face very clearly the racism: the absolute total hatred of Indian people written there in black and white. It's good for Indian people to see that: when I can show a person what actually comes out of an archives: this is the storehouse of knowledge here. ... they read it and of course it makes Indian people angry, it enrages them, but it's also healthy to see it, because when people can see face to face exactly what is being said about them then it validates for them all of the behaviors that they've had to endure.

It validates for a [Native] person their own feelings: "Now I know why I feel the way I do. Now I know why I'm angry. It's because there was an intention for me to feel this way; that's why I do and I've been right all along." That begins for people a healing. It's a validation of their own self-worth, their own perception of the world: it's not as distorted as they thought it was.

Discovering the record of these events exposes power relationships which help people understand their lives and exposes power relationships which continue to affect their

¹⁶ Knowledge and healing are themes in indigenous scholarship and writings about indigenous knowledge. Knowledge about these relationships also relates to people's ability to make sense of the world and to get the information they need to solve their own problems. Doris M Schoenhoff, *The Barefoot Expert: the interface of computerized knowledge systems and indigenous knowledge systems, Contributions to the study of computer science* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1993). Patterson, "History and Development of Libraries."

¹⁷ Kuper Island Indian Industrial School records, (BCA, MS-1267) British Columbia Provincial Archives

communities.¹⁸ It provides insight and validation which help understand the past and present and help find solutions for the future. Bonaparte sees the recovery of identity as a healing which can include participation in ceremonies, recovering tradition and recovering language. Tizya sees information which validates people's experience as a start to their healing.

Community history and identity strengthens communities

Knowledge about one's own culture and history, and the ability to practice and shape one's own culture rather than be assimilated into mainstream society is vital to the survival of First Nations people and communities. Jeffries emphasizes the importance of knowing one's culture and history when describing the elders' involvement with her community's school:

One of us [elders] is usually there, to welcome them [the students] with a prayer. It's important that our kids start learning our own prayers. We say in school before each class: we do the cedar tree prayer. That's really important that the children [are] aware of where they come from, their cultural history, [and] their stories. There's so many [and] the myths are important because they always tell a story. They always have a reason behind those myths. It's how we learned right and wrong, when our grandparents told these stories. That's really important [that all students], the oldest to the youngest, should be well aware of the history of their own people. They should all be taking part in [cultural activities].

Tizya talks of knowledge related to "some of their belief systems and rituals that are important for us to have as our **tools** to survive."¹⁹ History shapes identity. First Nations knowledge includes knowledge about the First Nations experiences. Burant talks of the value of historical knowledge and records which show the historical depth of contemporary problems. Tizya values archives for showing people historical events and

¹⁸ These types of validation and remembering also relate to the indigenous research projects such as "testimonials" and "celebrating survival" described in Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 1999.

¹⁹ See also Claudia Elisabeth J. Haagen, "Strategies for Cultural Maintenance: aboriginal cultural education programs and centres in Canada" (M.A., University of British Columbia, 1990).

changes which affected First Nations. On a person level, Bruce speaks of stories being a form of surviving after one's physical death: elders tell you stories because they knew that their continued existence in people's memories after their deaths is dependent upon someone knowing about their life.

Smith writes, "The need to protect a way of life, a language and the right to make our own history is a deep need linked to the survival of indigenous peoples."²⁰

Schoenhoff discusses the experiences of Zasetky, a brilliant young man who suffered a brain injury which cost him his identity and his ability to make sense of the present.²¹

Schoenhoff used this example as a metaphor to warn of the danger of attempting to replace local indigenous knowledge with Western knowledge. She writes that it is "offering death" rather than development.²²

KNOWLEDGE LOSS AND FRAGMENTATION

As a corollary to the importance of First Nations cultural knowledge, the loss of knowledge was a strong theme in the interviews. Some of the causes of knowledge loss and fragmentation identified in the interviews include prohibitions on speaking aboriginal languages, population loss, separation of children from their elders: their "cultural professors," governmental genocidal policies, separation from land, being submersed by Western cultures, deaths of knowledgeable people, missionary influences, anthropological research, and suppression of culture. During colonization, the loss of lives from war and epidemics was substantial. Population loss for aboriginal people of

²⁰ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 1999), 158.

²¹ A. R. Luria, *The Man with the Shattered World*, as cited in *The Barefoot Expert*, 161.²² Schoenhoff; "The Wound of Knowledge" in *The Barefoot Expert*, 161.

the Northwest Coast between 1835 and 1890 alone are estimated between 62 and 90 percent.²³ This had a devastating impact on people's ability to maintain their oral traditions and knowledge. Joseph described the knowledge loss:

"you look at the history of the last 200 years, and the diseases and everything else that have wiped out major portions of our population: there's no way in hell that you can expect that all of the knowledge would have been able to survive completely intact until now."

For people who see the spiritual world as a source of knowledge, the concept of knowledge loss has different implications which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Knowledge has been lost to communities because of disruption of oral transmission of knowledge, because of the removal or loss of materials such as masks and records and because materials have deteriorated or been destroyed without replacement. Bruce strongly expressed concerns about the ongoing deterioration of these types of materials, and the urgency to preserve them. Seepetza and Bruce associate museums with protecting First Nations objects from loss and deterioration. Most of the participants spoke of the need to gather and protect First Nations knowledge fragments.

Participants also speak of struggling with cultural loss associated with loss of knowledge. Seepetza explains:

With the disruption of our culture, traditions and history, we are just now starting to re-learn these things. We were separated from our cultural professors – grandmothers and grandfathers – when we were sent to residential school. So we didn't learn a lot of cultural protocols and we're in the process of [recovering them] right now.²⁴

Joseph is concerned about the loss of integrity of cultural knowledge. She commented that: some people approach the loss of their own community's knowledge by

²³ Steven Acheson. "Culture Contact, Demography and Health Among the Aboriginal Peoples of British Columbia." In *A Persistent Spirit: Towards Understanding Aboriginal Health in British Columbia*, eds. Peter H. Stephenson, et al., 1-42. Victoria, BC: University of Victoria Western Geographical Press, 1995.

²⁴ Sterling, interview.

drawing on knowledge from other First Nations communities: "First Nations people are losing a lot of basic cultural knowledge. [Some] people ... are crossing a lot of ... the information that they know about other First Nations groups and mixing it up with [their] own traditions. I don't really like to see that happening, but it's really easy to happen when people have lost their own traditions and so they start adopting other traditions." While seeing that approach as problematic, she also raises the problem of determining authenticity according to any specific point in the past:

*"I don't see why First Nations people or any other indigenous people should be firmly static within their culture. Everybody's always changing and moving on with the times. We're part of this world so there's no use and no sense in trying to demand that we live and have the same knowledge that we may have had 200 years ago."*²⁵

Aboriginal languages

There is great linguistic diversity among British Columbia First Nations. Most participants discussed the importance of language, how it has been damaged or lost by colonization and the importance of language education work to cultural revival.²⁶

Jeannette Armstrong identified linguistics as an area of cultural knowledge which is not shared with non-Okanagan people. Tizya talked of the harsh punishments First Nations students received for speaking their own languages at residential school. Mandatory attendance at residential schools and the prohibitions on students speaking aboriginal languages endangered all these languages; most fluent speakers are now seniors. Chief Rocky Wilson uses the metaphor of radio communications to describe the problem. While the elders who are fluent speakers are strong transmitters broadcasting the

²⁵ Joseph, interview. Linda Tehuiwai Smith has powerful insights into these losses, which she discusses in the section "Remembering" in *Decolonizing Methodologies* (146). See also Gloria Cramner-Webster's discussion of changes to the Potlatch in Alert Bay; in Gerald McMaster and Lee-Ann Martin, eds., *Indigena: Contemporary Native Perspectives* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1992).

²⁶ Seepeetza, interview.

knowledge and language together, they cannot communicate effectively without radio receivers: a younger generation who knows the language well enough to understand.²⁷

Jefferies, Jeannette Armstrong and Linda Armstrong talked about the importance of language learning programs and language materials in their communities. Bruce expresses the hope that technology will help develop more innovative language learning materials.

CAPTURING KNOWLEDGE: RECORDING TO PRESERVE INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

Preservation projects

As noted in the discussion on multiple literacies, First Nations are embracing many forms of recording and expression. Recording technologies are being used to preserve cultural knowledge. Verna Kirkness writes of the need to "bank our languages" because aboriginal communities are losing so many fluent speakers.²⁸ First Nations individuals and communities are turning to writing and recording technologies as ways to deal with knowledge loss. Participants discussed the value of recording First Nations knowledge. During the interviews, several types of documentation projects were described: recording elders speaking about stories, myths, history and life stories, recording events and meetings, use of photographs and videos, development of curriculum materials, and recording traditional names and place names. Bruce noted that Cree elders from a community in which he worked in Saskatchewan entrusted their valued information to sound recordings: "the elders said that they wanted this information ... recorded in a tape ... so that the ideas and the words that they spoke would live." Bruce acknowledges that other people chose instead to not share and to not

²⁷ Wilson, Rocky. Personal communication, Vancouver BC, February 2001.

²⁸ Kirkness, *Aboriginal Languages*, 5.

document their knowledge. First Nations people are developing curriculum, writing books and developing language learning materials for their schools. Jeffries described some of the work in her community.

[If it wasn't for] our linguist, Ron Beaumont, who has been going to Sechelt since 1969, [because] few of us know the language, I think it would [be] completely gone when we die. There's a book called She Shashishalhem: The Language. The teachers are [writing several books]. We have a dictionary, with over seven thousand words in it; it will never be finished.

About writing knowledge, Jeffries says:

We have a lot of people writing books now, and a lot of them are my relatives. I work now in the school writing our own curriculum. We're going to be writing more about our own people and putting them in our language, for the kids. That's how we're teaching them the culture.

Linda Armstrong noted that Morning Dove was honored for her role in preserving Okanagan culture as the first person to write down their stories.²⁹ Tizya emphasized the need for a "documentation centre **very much** like the *Shoah* foundation that Steven Spielberg sponsored" because "Indian people have their stories to tell that haven't been told." Bruce, who expresses the need to share information in order to survive in the memories of other people after one own's death, also talked about the value of recording stories and information. When exploring the concept of knowledge management, Bruce added that recording the information itself may be insufficient:

I've heard many people say that elders will talk to you and impart knowledge at a time of their choosing not necessarily when you go to them [with a] microphone but they wait for the context being right for when you can properly understand it and then they'll impart it at their own timing, that's probably the difference. There's a whole system that you have to know and somebody in a sense is a gateway and you have to try to make sure that you've got enough knowledge to get there, that you've recorded that knowledge system.

²⁹ Linda Armstrong, interview.

Bruce's view of connecting the recordings to the elders' knowledge system builds on the distinctions between information, knowledge and cultural knowledge from the previous chapter. As Burant says, "cultural knowledge is that which gives meaning to things which seems meaningless." Participants provided several examples where researchers or recording projects were problematic because they were incomplete or based on misunderstandings.

Recording knowledge can be an effective way to preserve knowledge but it is important to recognize that it does not automatically preserve it. As with Western society, not all recordings are intended to preserve knowledge. Many are intended to meet more immediate needs. These records and recordings cannot simply, by virtue of their media, be expected to preserve all the valued knowledge of a First Nation's culture. Some valued knowledge may have never been recorded. Most of the administrative records in Bonaparte's archives have been written to communicate with people outside of her Mohawk community, to meet the needs of government or funding agencies. They lack information that Mohawk people chose not to share with the rest of the world. It is impossible to understand the knowledge which the archives do contain without seeing that context. Recording information can not be expected to automatically preserve it, since these recordings are unlikely to survive long unless they are stored a safe dry place. Some types of recording media, such as magnetic tape used in audio and video recordings and computer disks, are inherently unstable and deteriorate over time, such as the oral history recordings of Saskatchewan elders in the 1960s and 1970s that Bruce discussed. In Western societies, recorded knowledge is not automatically preserved; recordings

preserve knowledge because national archives, libraries and other knowledge institutions have budgets of several million dollars to conserve, make accessible and store them.

Capturing knowledge

While there are many examples of First Nations research and documentation projects, these collections of information can not replace the role of elders and other knowledgeable people. "Capturing knowledge" is one way to describe the goals of archives and libraries: to compile books, records and other materials which have enduring value and provide people with the information they need. It is also a way to describe the desire to hold on to endangered traditional knowledge, specifically through documentation. In their interviews, Joseph and Bonaparte talked about capturing knowledge by documenting it. Joseph provided an anecdote showing a community reaction to this approach: "

When I first graduated from library school, I was [speaking] at a First Nations function at UBC. Afterwards in the gathering a couple of elder First Nations people stopped me and said 'Gene, how are you going to have all of our cultural knowledge - are you going to put us on the shelf?'

Particularly in the context of oral cultures, the concept of 'capturing' knowledge is based on recording but is much more. Bonaparte describes one model of Western knowledge management where an organization regularly documents its employees' knowledge and experience; she expands this concept to community knowledge in a way which resembles many oral history projects.

If we could continually interview our elders and old people, so that we could capture the knowledge that they have through interviews so that if they passed away or got sick, then we would still be able to use that knowledge that they had [We would have to record] how to use that knowledge; not just the information but the knowledge on how to use the information. ... [We would have] to take those recordings, whether it's transcripts or it's video or audio, and allow access points, and create the access points so that people could get into it.

Bonaparte's comment about capturing "not just the information but the knowledge on how to use the information" mirrors Bruce's comments about recording the elders' knowledge system as well as their knowledge. The knowledge system he mentioned is part of the context, part of what makes it knowledge instead of simply information. This context leads to a more complete recording, a more meaningful record. It also maintains the connection between the past and present. Jeannette Armstrong notes that cultural objects (and by implication the traditions that shaped them) from the past are valued for what they can teach the present.

I don't think we will ever develop the idea of a museum in the same way that the Western mind thinks about it. Because a museum [looks at our cultural things] as artifacts of past culture. We want to have archived articles and archived cultural properties, as a part of the information system. So we [Enow'kin] have things donated [to us] that are cultural property [such as] those baskets [but] all of those things like that are not museum pieces. For us those are information [sources] so we can talk about how this basket was constructed, what it's made of, and what its name is. So that to us is that basket is cultural information rather than an artifact – rather than a precious past historical thing. It has a different value in terms of information and knowledge. And so that's for us why it's connected to the archive and library rather than [as] a show piece. For us it's to access the knowledge surrounding it.

The Western approach to knowledge management as Bonaparte describes it above sounds very different than the training and licensing process for Okanagan knowledge specialists as described by Jeannette Armstrong in the previous chapter. Both these approaches hold in common the intent to pass those skills and knowledge forward. In the same way that Western organizations want future employees to be able to use the knowledge and skills of present employees, groups such as the Okanagan Speakers-for-the-Land (as is Tommy Gregory) want to give their knowledge and skills to their students. One difference between the two approaches is that people's ethics and values

are transmitted with the knowledge within protocol societies.³⁰ Some Western approaches to knowledge management such as those associated with corporate knowledge and data mining focus on knowledge with commercial value and do not involve ethical principles. Another difference is that protocol societies can be lifelong commitments which is rare in mainstream employment. Developing, documenting and sharing knowledge within a traditional society keeps knowledge within that society but documenting employees' knowledge in a Western approach can make it a commodity which can be separated from the employees, their value and ethics, and the organization. Information compiled through Western knowledge management approaches can be decontextualized more easily than knowledge developed within a traditional system. Indigenous people are very concerned about the commodification of their knowledge.

Indigenous knowledges are embedded within a holistic worldview; they are diminished outside of their cultural contexts where they are separated from the "human beings who created them and loved them and conceptualized them and took care of them,"³¹ and from the symbolism and contextual knowledge which make them meaningful. The main challenge for projects seeking to document or preserve indigenous knowledge may be to consider this dilemma: how can information or perhaps even knowledge be recorded without alienating it from the living culture which created it?

Joseph describes a further challenge to this endeavor:

I don't know if it would be possible or maybe even realistic to try to capture all the cultural knowledge in an archives or library, resource centre, cultural centre, whatever you want to call it. Because when you try to capture the cultural knowledge it seems to me you're trying to capture the essence of First Nations spirituality. There are ... things that are fairly amorphous [so] it's not something that you can write

³⁰ Protocol societies are described in Chapter 2 and will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 4.

³¹ Seepeetza, interview.

down and say definitely that this is what is taking place. The whole idea of trying to capture all the cultural knowledge – it's just not possible.

Bruce speaks of tensions between the need to preserve information and concerns about accuracy of recording:

Suppose you knew some stories your grandmother told you. Should you publish them in a book? If she were not with us would you have the right to go ahead and take that story? You could go to your grave without that story being told. On the other hand, maybe it would be better, even though you might make some mistakes, to try to render it for people so that they can enjoy it with you and learn from it.

He acknowledged that other people chose instead to not share and to not document their knowledge, saying, "I know that a lot of First Nations people would disagree with me on this, and I respect their views as well." There is a wide range of reasons behind people's decisions about whether to share or record some types of knowledge. Participants discussed problems with information recorded about First Nations. This next section examines some of these concerns.

RECORDING PROJECTS CAN FRAGMENT OR DISTORT KNOWLEDGE

Complex pressures and competing needs, protocols and standards lead to difficulties in deciding whether, when and how to record knowledge. The interview participants expressed concerns about recording and sharing knowledge. There is a wide range of reasons behind people's decisions about whether to share or record some types of knowledge. Many past recording projects have ignored protocols on protecting and sharing knowledge. Participants discussed problems with information recorded about First Nations and provided several examples where recording projects were problematic because they were incomplete or based on misunderstandings. This section examines those concerns while the following chapter will examine related principles about the use and management of knowledge.

Building on the distinctions between information, knowledge and cultural knowledge explored in the previous chapter, participants discussed the importance of 'knowledge systems'. Bruce noted that recording information itself may be insufficient and that it is important to connect the 'fragments' to the knowledge system:

There's a whole system that you have to know and somebody in a sense is a gateway and you have to try to make sure that you've got enough knowledge to get there, that you've recorded that knowledge system.

In contrast to a community's or an elder's knowledge system, several participants described documented First Nations knowledge as fragmented. Seepeetza said that traditional stories can be "decontextualized and kind of fragmented" when they are published. Similarly, Joseph said: "what we can do is get the video tapes and the oral history, but more often than not they are scattered bits and pieces." Participants discussed examples where researching or recording information distorted it, made it less meaningful or unreliable.³²

Jeffries explains that the elders' stories lose some of their meaning when translated into English. Seepeetza spoke of difficulties evaluating the usefulness of recorded stories:

The contexts are often missing. The stories that are collected often don't even give the name of the storyteller. Well the storyteller could have been pulling the anthropologist's leg all along. Because we don't know the names of the storytellers, it's really really hard to determine whether to take some of them seriously. I think sometimes, if they were getting paid for it, they may have been trying to please the anthropologist and tell the anthropologist what they wanted to know instead of what's more relevant to the people.

Tizya mentions that people have told her that they deliberately misled outside researchers to protect their sacred knowledge. Seepeetza spoke of anthropologists researching only one small aspect of First Nations traditions while people were facing smallpox and other crises. Seepeetza also spoke of government policy which used funding to direct research into areas such as addictions rather than "the things [such as unemployment] that were really causing social problems." These approaches lead to misinterpretation of aboriginal communities. Seepeetza gave one example: the anthropological research project which

³² See previous chapter.

"equat[ed] the warrior spirit with drunken behaviour" so attributed social problems to inherent characteristics without reference to external factors or contemporary issues.³³ Bonaparte also mentioned frustrations arising from the misinterpretations of outside researchers. Speaking of *Parker on the Iroquois* Bonaparte explained that Parker "totally misinterpreted everything" including ceremonies and the activities of secret societies, describing people in those societies as "devil worshipers."³⁴ Tizya said, "I tend to be suspicious of the information in archives about Indians because it's other peoples' perceptions of who an Indian is, and I'm very **suspicious** of that."³⁵ Recording, publishing and posting information on the internet can make it more accessible to people without the cultural knowledge to understand it. It can also make it easier to commodify First Nations information – removing it from the living cultures and reducing it to economic objects. It can then be distributed as a commodity separate from the protocols and ethics that make it meaningful and reliable.

Participants also discussed ways of protecting knowledge from distortion, which will be examined in the following chapter. The next section looks at the idea of using recordings as the main approach for preserving First Nations knowledge.

Research legacy

The interview questions did not mention previous research on First Nations; several participants raised it as an issue related to distortion and control of knowledge.

The participants expressed apprehension about research and provided several examples

³³ Similarly, Marker writes of an educational research project which ignored the violence and racism that students faced and recommended addressing absenteeism by getting alarm clocks for students. Michael Marker, "Lummi Identity and White Racism: when location is a real place," *Qualitative Studies in Education* 13, no. 4 (2000).

³⁴ Bonaparte, interview. See also Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 1999.

³⁵ Tizya, interview. She emphasized that it was important for people to be aware of these perceptions. She valued the materials, but did not want them accepted as objective recordings.

and specific concerns. Too much research is not based on community concerns or needs. Universities do not validate First Nations knowledge. The federal government has used research to divide people. Previous research has failed to respect First Nations protocols. Research has perpetuated misunderstandings and has profoundly different values and ethics from First Nations protocols. Academic theories and government policies have directed research away from insight which could help communities, such as Boas' study of coyote stories during smallpox epidemics, and the federal government's focus on drug and alcohol problems rather than developing "housing and schools, better infrastructure, and employment opportunities. Those were the things that were really causing social problems."³⁶ Past research has failed to reflect the needs of First Nations communities, and failed to respect protocols relating to knowledge and knowledgeable First Nations

people. *Very often, researchers [who] come from a [wholly] western context ... will get the data [from tradition bearers] and interpret it the way they want, [without] engag[ing] the tradition bearer as part of the interpretation process. [Researchers] interpret it the way they want, and if they come from a western context totally [misinterpret it].*³⁷

Distortion and misrepresentation of native culture impacts communities and individuals. Bonaparte noted that a previous researcher who misunderstood Mohawk culture "turned people against each other." Withholding information from outside researchers is one way that First Nations' communities have reacted to researchers' interest in their cultures. As noted in a previous chapter, another is to "deliberately mislead" researchers in order "to keep sacred some of their belief systems and rituals that

³⁶ Sterling, interview.

³⁷ Sterling, interview.

are important for us to have as our tools to survive".³⁸ This legacy has shaped First Nations concerns about control of knowledge which is discussed in chapter 4.

PRECIOUS FRAGMENTS: RECOVERING KNOWLEDGE

If First Nations materials in archives, libraries and museums do not represent 'captured knowledge' what is their value to First Nations communities? Joseph values archives, libraries and museums for their care of materials such as oral histories. "[It is] very important to gather and preserve [community knowledge] in libraries and archives. But it's still not going to give you cultural knowledge. It's going to make you smart in knowing information about the First Nation group, but it's not going to make you wise, in the First Nations traditional sense." Seepeetza's perspective is similar:

They are precious fragments – a lost set of cultural traditions and activities. An artist who didn't know anything about his culture, he had been away in residential school, went back and looked in the archives. You'd think there'd be dead documents sitting on the shelf gathering dust but... they were really precious to him. He looked up the old carving designs and became a really well known carver and revived his culture, based on those archival documents. So, sometimes, they are just incredibly precious, and for those of us who are attempting to revitalize our cultures, those documents provide tremendously valuable starting places.

Bonaparte explains that the knowledgeable people in her community utilize books written by non-Mohawk people about their culture, but as mnemonic tools to spark their memories. They do not accept the books as complete or authoritative but value descriptions and evaluate it against their own knowledge. Those memories that are sparked by these books are similar to the cultural knowledge about photographs that Burant describes in the previous chapter. They are valued whether or not they are

³⁸ Tizya, interview. The first section of *Decolonizing Methodologies* is a deep and thorough examination of the history of Western research of indigenous peoples. Smith examines the issues raised above in the context of Western colonization of knowledge and the power relationships of imperialism.

documented. While Tizya has written articles, much of her knowledge is still undocumented:

I like to believe that I'm an intelligent human being and that whatever information that I have to offer the world – it's not in an archive, it's not in a book – but it is in the world and it changes lives. It changes lives dramatically.

She is often hired for legal and historical research for First Nations; she speaks of bringing her traditional and university education together when researching: "So when I look at archival material, when I go into the National Archives, or the provincial archives – I don't look at the paper. What I try to do is let the human being – the spirit of the human being – come through. That's how I do what people call research. And I let that human being speak to me, so sometimes what is on the paper is not as it seems. So [I] take that one piece and it may guide me to something completely different or to a completely different place but then it all comes together in one." Tizya and Seepeetza also speak of using these types of material with caution, noting that they are still valuable even if they can not be accepted as literally true or complete. Seepeetza says:

So we have to realize that we can't just take for granted that this [written version of a story or myth] is the knowledge [or that] this is the authority; but we take this knowledge and look at it from the context of the culture. Both sides can inform each other and work together [to] create information which is more balanced. It's always good to take everything with a grain of salt, and also to give credit where credit is due. [From] that one story of the artist, we realize how important knowledge is.

Several participants discuss the importance of critically evaluating recorded information when using it to recover knowledge. The cultural and other contextual knowledge are necessary to be able to do so. Burant emphasizes the importance of contextual knowledge, in relation to archival records.

Tizya says that materials in archives reflect other people's perceptions of First Nations. Burant discusses ways in which archival records about First Nations reflect the perception of the records' creator. Both Tizya and Burant emphasize that it is important

for people to be able to see those records to learn about those perceptions, but neither wanted people to accept those perspectives as authoritative.

Burant emphasized that the government's use of terms such as "half-breed" are a part of history so it is part of archives' responsibilities to maintain that as well and that good knowledge management should "tak[e] care to ensure the appropriateness of one's descriptive record³⁹ but also making sure you don't erase the historical record however pleasant or unpleasant that may be for whatever community is involved." This aspect of archival record and responsibilities will be discussed in next chapter. Recontextualizing these materials is key to recovering their deeper meanings. A critical aspect of that context is the First Nations knowledge systems and living cultures which generated the materials.

RECONNECTING FRAGMENTS WITH KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Seepeetza talks about written stories and cultural objects which are no longer in the hands of the families or communities which created them. She speaks of recovering knowledge:

For instance you see the beautiful totems or baskets in a museum, but you don't know who made them or why they made them or the meaning of this symbol. It would be nice to know those kinds of things. They are decontextualized and fragmented. The storytellers and the makers of these beautiful things are separated so people walking in and having a look at them see them as dead objects. They have a living history and when those histories are revived, it becomes part of a living culture again. ... to reconnect the artifacts with the human beings who created them and loved them and conceptualized them and took care of them ... it becomes more rounded.⁴⁰

³⁹ A descriptive record is a tool used by archivists to describe records and the context of their creation and use and to help researchers find relevant material in groups of archival records.

⁴⁰ Seepeetza, interview. See also Greg Sarris' discussion of Pomo Baskets in museums which are decontextualized; he compared them to pictures of water which "could be water anywhere or nowhere." Sarris, *Keeping Slug Woman Alive*, 1993.

Many of the people interviewed expressed a desire to restore connections between people with relevant cultural knowledge and the recorded information and cultural objects. Restore these connections can restore the context to the fragmented information and address distortions and misinterpretations in the recordings.

There is an additional dimension to the question of knowledge loss and recovery for people who, as Tizya described, see the spirit world as a source of knowledge. With hope of recovering knowledge from the spirit world, knowledge loss becomes less tragic and recovery is not dependant upon analyzing fragments. Bonaparte describes one of these perspectives:

I feel that cultural knowledge stays within an area, a region, and within our spirits and within our bodies. ... I think that cultural knowledge is in your blood. Maybe we forgot how to do a ceremony – that was something that one man did [but] he died and so everybody is in mourning because we lost that knowledge. Then a few years down the road somebody has a dream and it comes back. Even maybe sometimes people lose their language but the dreams and the spirit [are] in the blood and it returns.

So I really don't believe that the cultural knowledge is lost. [If you faced] an archives burning, you would be horrified at the information that you lost and if a person dies you grieve over the information they take, but the cultural knowledge – because it's regional it's based on who we are – it comes back. I've seen it come back. People knew about speeches that were a long time ago and then they have dreams and the speeches come back. It may be a long process in coming but they do come back. .

Similarly, when discussing her own research Seepeetza incorporated intellectual research and analysis with family guidance and spiritual preparation: “I figured that if this is right for me, then I would receive the knowledge I needed to proceed which did happen.”

Tizya, Bonaparte and Seepeetza all spoke of knowledge from the spirit world; they all also valued information from other sources, including formal education and written sources.

KNOWLEDGE TO REVITALIZE CULTURE AND HEAL COMMUNITIES

While many Native people do greatly value their Nation's knowledge, recording and preserving knowledge may be a secondary goal: when envisioning the future of their community, they are more likely to talk of healing their communities, revitalizing culture or of self-determination. Recording, protecting, asserting and validating their knowledge are critical aspects of those goals but rarely goals in and of themselves. Jo-ann Archibald, at a conference about Aboriginal Education in 1999, said:

"It is important to preserve oral traditions, but perhaps even more important to let them preserve us. Oral traditions support us when we are challenged, and can show us the way if we let them."⁴¹

Jeffries emphasized the Sechelt people's need for their culture and describes its vitality. They built a longhouse at their elders' insistence, which has become central to community life. Their oral tradition is available through storytellers, their school and libraries and their museum. All of the participants in this research discussed how cultural knowledge was used by aboriginal communities and many discussed the close link between lived culture and knowledge. People have many ways of maintaining and revitalizing their cultures apart from research and formal education. Many of these projects emphasize education and sharing lived knowledge more than documenting it. Bruce said, "My basic tenet is 'information is preserved by usage,' and that the more people come and use information, the more I find things for them, the more somebody reads [the material I can offer them], the happier I am."⁴²

⁴¹ Celebrating Oral Traditions: Fifth Provincial Conference on Aboriginal Education November 6-8, 1999. Whistler Conference Centre, *Conference Summary* ([Vancouver]: [First Nations Education Steering Committee], [1999]), 4.

⁴² This perspective is similar to the ideas surrounding the theme that "information wants to be free" described by John Perry Barlow in "A Taxonomy of Information," *Bulletin of the American Society for Information Science* (June/ July 1994): 13-17.

Burant describes an example of an aboriginal community using technology to bring its knowledge to more of its members: the communities of the *Makivik* Inuit of Northern Quebec are small and widely scattered so they are using the internet to teach cultural knowledge such as sewing seal skin boot and making parkas. "They use the internet to transmit that information: a learning tool, as a way of diffusing knowledge. They record that information at the same time and store it." Tizya said: "I look at the impact that one computer can have in a community it's incredibly powerful because it transmits information, it transmits knowledge."

Bonaparte and Jeffries both talk about their community's schools. Tizya and Jeffries emphasized the importance of education, learning and literacy much more than efforts to record all that the elders know. While they both greatly value the elders' knowledge and Jeffries spoke of several projects to record elders' knowledge, they speak much more about learning from elders. Jeffries mentioned many projects in her community school where written books, curriculum and other materials are being used to teach the elders' knowledge to the children, but with the elders' participation instead of as a substitute for it. Seepeetza, Bonaparte, Tizya and Linda Armstrong consider knowledge to be healing. Seepeetza explains that her storytelling is healing because she can make people laugh.⁴³ Several participants provide positive examples of people revitalizing culture in their communities. Bonaparte, who does not speak her language, describes her children learning Mohawk as "my children are picking it up again."⁴⁴ Bonaparte and Jeffries both talk about their community's schools.

⁴³ See chapter 2.

The idea that traditional knowledge is necessary for the future of aboriginal people is expressed throughout the interview responses. As well, many participants suggested that aboriginal people and their lived culture are necessary for the survival of traditional knowledge in a meaningful and reliable form. Stressing the need to preserve a knowledge **system** rather than simply knowledge, Bruce asked, "Can tape recorders do that? Can museums and archives and libraries? I'm not sure. Maybe it's people we have to preserve and pass on." Bruce indicates that the approaches used by libraries do not easily adapt to First Nations ways of knowing:

For example, how do we catalogue an elder? Where would they fit on the Library of Congress classification? Would they stay still between the bookends for us? I rather doubt it.

Bruce then wonders what a library might look like if viewed from a First Nations perspective:

If we saw a library from a First Nations' perspective it might be something totally different. In fact culturally, it would be more of a meeting and exchange of information. Perhaps the circle around the fire when somebody told a story. Is that not a library? Are all those stories like books on the shelves, only in this case they're brought up with a point in view. ... Libraries: our Western view of libraries is not suited really to handle the oral experience, as well as it probably could.⁴⁵

The metaphor of libraries as stories around a campfire is one which emphasizes the continuing presence of elders and storytellers. It emphasizes the social and interpersonal elements of traditional First Nations knowledge systems. To talk about storytelling around fires raises very different emotions, mental images and connotations than those raised by the phrase "knowledge management."

⁴⁵ Bruce, interview.

FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGE CENTRES

First Nations cultural education centres and other knowledge centres can become focal points for diverse research, healing and educational work. Knowledge centres are not the only way to address the need to reconnect people with their knowledge fragments; Seepeetza points out that several people work to revitalize their culture through materials in archives, libraries and museums. Where these knowledge centres have trained staff who understand the practices, standards and tools of archives, libraries and museums, they can become a place within communities to act “as a tunnel” connecting to information.⁴⁶ First Nations feel strong connections to cultural material in archives, libraries and museums. Bruce and Seepeetza envision a time when First Nations communities will be better able to care for these materials. First Nations knowledge centres address many of their communities’ information and cultural needs. They may also provide safe storage for neighbouring communities who lack a knowledge centre. They are needed to document the experiences of the elders, and develop educational materials.⁴⁷ They provide community members with access to their cultural and informational resources; without these centres some communities face geographic, economic and physical barriers to accessing information. They promote the use of resources; facilitate healing; validate community members’ experiences and provide research skills.

⁴⁶ Bonaparte, interview.

⁴⁷ Jeffries interview; Tizya, interview.

MANDATES OF FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGE CENTRES

Patterson and Taylor gave tribal college libraries a presence in the library literature with their 1996 study based on a survey of tribal college librarians and examination of the mandates of tribal colleges as stated in their calendars:

Driven by unmet educational needs and the need to maintain tribal traditions, [tribal] colleges exemplify, for their respective tribes, a paradigm for survival. ... The tribal institutions' philosophies, missions, goals and objectives ... reveal a mixture of the usual academic programmatic statements combined with an articulation of the necessity to promote preservation of traditional tribal culture.⁴⁸

The central metaphor for this thesis is the vision of aboriginal communities reconnecting their people with precious fragments of their knowledge: First Nations materials in archives, libraries and museums. First Nations feel strong connections to cultural material in archives, libraries and museums. First Nation knowledge centres, such as tribal colleges libraries Patterson and Taylor describe above, also “exemplify ... a paradigm for survival.” Bruce and Seepeetza envision a time when First Nations will be better able to care for these materials. First Nations knowledge centres address many of their communities’ information and cultural needs. They are mandated to preserve the records and other important historical, cultural and information resources.⁴⁹ They are needed to document the experiences of the elders, and develop educational materials.⁵⁰ They provide community members with access to their cultural and informational resources; without these centres some communities face geographic, economic and physical barriers to accessing information. They promote the use of resources; facilitate healing; validate community members’ experiences and provide research skills. They provide information services to the non-Native public.

⁴⁸ Patterson and Taylor, “Tribally Controlled College Libraries,” 1996, 316-7, 325

⁴⁹ Bonaparte, interview; Bruce, interview; Joseph, interview; Armstrong, interview.

⁵⁰ Jeffries, interview; Tizya, interview.

CHALLENGES FACING FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGE CENTRES

Participants described a number of administrative, collections development and cultural challenges faced by First Nations knowledge centres. The main administrative challenges are the lack of resources and advocates. Most of the collections development challenges result from the issues of knowledge loss, maintenance and recovery described above. The urgency of the need to use cultural knowledge for healing combined with the urgency to preserve endangered materials and to capture endangered knowledge lead to tensions between preservation work and information services. The cultural challenges relate to the recovery of cultural protocols.

Administrative challenges

The strongest point of agreement among the participants about knowledge centres is that they are seriously under funded; all participants discussed this concern.⁵¹

Jeannette Armstrong said that the En'owkin Library does not have enough funding to organize and house their collections as they wish. Bruce mentioned the "lack of funds" while Joseph focused on the lack of "resources" including trained staff, adequate space and computers as well as funding. Bonaparte notes that First Nations community need training in archival procedures and theories to manage their documentary heritage. Joseph noted that many reserve communities lack technological infrastructure such as internet access and local networks. Linda Armstrong would like a more powerful computer, local network and specialized software for the En'owkin library, but could not afford it at the time of the interview. Participants discussed the lack of basic appropriate

⁵¹ Patterson has also identified this as a serious problem. Patterson, "History and Development of Libraries."

storage space: safe, dry, secure storage. Joseph also stressed the need for environmentally controlled buildings or vaults.

Joseph, Bonaparte and Burant also discussed the need to advocate for the importance of First Nations knowledge centres to community leaders and to funding agencies. Burant explains that the problem relates to both priorities and perceptions:

One of the real problems in most First Nations communities [is the band council doesn't] want to spend money on archives or museums and libraries, because they have to spend money on health care centres and housing and snow removal, water, the basics of life. The amenities of everyday existence certainly take precedence over the preservation of memory. It's hard to convince Native politicians just as it's hard to convince white politicians about how important it is to preserve culture and memory. That's one of the real challenges, for all of us working as archivists or information managers or knowledge managers or whatever one wants to refer to oneself as: is to convince people of the importance, of the appropriateness of at least devoting some resources to that kind of work. You're always going to have problems with infrastructure, even in big cities there's problems with infrastructure. ... God knows there must be a hundred Native communities where there are probably much greater problems with water pollution than a little place like Walkerton but nobody hears about them. You're always going to have troubles with infrastructure and what you need to do is remember that preserving knowledge is also an important part. It really is – an intellectual infrastructure is the best way of putting it – and that in order to make sure that your community continues to thrive you have to manage that intellectual asset that is what we traditionally preserve in libraries, museums and archives.⁵²

Joseph describes the funding for on-reserve libraries and cultural centres as “boom or bust” noting that they “wax and wane.” Several have closed or reduced their services dramatically, at least temporarily. Without stable funding, it is difficult for First Nations knowledge centres to build collections or services.

Urgent preservation work

Joseph and Bruce note that there is a large volume of materials in First Nations communities that are endangered and inaccessible. They are concerned about the amount

⁵² Bruce, interview.

of work required to preserve and organize them, even to simply “stack [them] in dry places hoping that we would get to them.” Participants are concerned about preserving heritage materials – the tangible records and objects important for recovering and maintaining First Nations culture.

Collections development may start with piles of disorganized boxes, the need to document the elders’ experiences, the need for cultural knowledge for language programmes or court cases, or the need to care for endangered materials.⁵³ When staff gain control of basic problems and needs, their work can extend to additional needs as funding permits. For example, the MCA Archives began gathering and protecting endangered records. Then they developed a records retention schedule for managing active records. They plan to develop a collections management system for the published material. Bonaparte described that approach as “backwards.” Ideally, an archival programme begins with good records management of active records, followed by control of inactive records and then the records selected for permanent retention in the archives. However, because of the complex dynamics related to the history of knowledge disruption and loss described above, many First Nations communities lack places and systems to set aside important materials of any type. Joseph emphasizes the need for preservation programmes for all First Nations communities:

We do need to, for the archives, have basic rules and procedures for preserving information. For the museum type of objects, you do need some basic procedures and guidelines. I can not see many First Nations communities even be[ing] able to afford the full environmental controls that are required for an archives or a library. If anything they might be able to afford a small little environmentally controlled vault where they might be able to put in their most precious objects. ... Even in a fairly small community, you can still copy all of your video tapes and sound recordings [to]

⁵³ Bonaparte, interview; Linda Armstrong, interview; Bruce, interview; Joseph, interview; Seepeetza, interview; Jeffries, interview.

*put it in a different building at the very least. There are some very small minor things – basic things – that can possibly be done without the full environmental control.*⁵⁴

Participants associate the need for preservation of written material and cultural objects with both the heritage value and informational value. The term ‘archives’ is closely associated with the theme of preservation. The necessity for communities to preserve these materials is heightened because much of the information they hold is unavailable elsewhere.

Informational needs

As Bruce indicates, much of the needed information has not been researched or published:

We can't go back in First Nations cultural work [as we can with] William Shakespeare and see the original manuscripts and then see the manuscripts of people written at his time and then have 300 years of people writing criticisms and people in different languages writing criticisms and with different scientific work that has been done. When you are researching Shakespeare you have all this work done for you [but] with First Nations [topics], you don't. If you're writing a paper you may have to go back to the Elder that remembers. You may have to go to an original source document. You have no choice. There isn't the secondary and tertiary levels.

Joseph notes that some of the needed information is in gray literature, but that First Nations communities can not depend on public libraries to manage these materials:

Libraries could serve First Nations people [better] but they are still unable and/or unwilling to collect what they call ephemeral material of First Nations people. First Nations libraries still have to cover that themselves, or the First Nation communities have to collect and gather that information themselves.

As Linda and Jeannette Armstrong and Bruce describe, First Nations are gathering those materials themselves.

⁵⁴ Bruce, Jeannette Armstrong, Seepetza and Joseph mention the importance of having safe secure storage for cultural objects such as baskets.

Collections

Several participants described collections at a specific knowledge centre or the types of collections typically found at First Nations knowledge centres. These collections typically include written materials, published materials, documents, unique recordings in a variety of media formats, and cultural objects. While several people mention published materials and objects, most of the examples given and discussed in depth are the gray literature and archival materials.

Several participants discussed archival materials. Jeannette Armstrong defined archival materials as unpublished materials; none of the other participants defined their use of the term. The use of this term differs between participants. The term is associated with documents, unique or irreplaceable materials, materials used in court cases, materials which are valued, heritage preservation and information that people wish to be available to future generations. The qualities Jeannette Armstrong values in these materials include uniqueness, naturalness and authenticity although she does not describe them with those terms. She does not differentiate between archival and non-archival materials by these qualities. She also emphasizes the importance of materials which would not be valued by non-Okanagan people. She notes the distinction between monetary value and historical value. Tizya and Joseph mention the value of archival material as evidence within legal courts. The archivists – Bonaparte and Burant – raised principles and practices from the archival profession, including the importance of preserving the original, of respecting donor restrictions, of respecting concerns for privacy and of preserving the historical context of archival records. Generally, the

materials that non-archivists describe as archival are those which would be irreplaceable if lost.

Bruce⁵⁵ and Jeannette Armstrong describe the types of archival material in their knowledge centres: the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre (SICC) and En'owkin. Both collections include the types of gray literature which Joseph would like public libraries to acquire and preserve. The holdings of the SICC library include very old documents, video tapes of interviews going back to the mid 1960s, pictures, and files. Although the SICC is officially a library, Bruce stated that "people forced us to become an archive" by continuing to bring them photographs and documents. Many of these materials lacked provenance or context; often people did not know what the materials were. Jeannette Armstrong's description of the En'owkin library's holdings are similar:

A lot of [the collection] isn't in published form: that's what we call archival information. So we have a lot of materials that might not be historically valuable to anyone else except the Okanagan but for us we archive that material because historically it's the only place that that material would exist. So we have accessions: we have archived a lot of the information so we can call on that information. Even though it's not precious in terms of its value and worth historically but it's information that we might want. For instance we've created an archive of Akwesasne Notes. That archive is for us important because it gives a lot of information of the political will of the people during a really important period of our people historically. We're archiving it because you can't get Akwesasne Notes anywhere anymore and we want to take care of it so it's here 25 years from now or [longer]; maybe then it might be real archival material. We do also have one-of-a-kind information. People who have given us photographs and a legacy of written material, written by hand by some of our elders dating back 20, 30, 40, 50 years [such as] some of our chiefs [gave us] their speeches [and notes from] their famous meetings [and] elders meetings. [We have] specific documented information on video back to the 1970s, like the occupation of the DIA offices in Vernon, and speeches. Those are all archive materials for us. We archive them because our people need access to [the materials] we have them available: the same thing with all the newspaper articles that we can collect on all of those things that our people have said and done over the last 100

⁵⁵ In this instance, Bruce speaks of his work at the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre, rather than his current position as librarian of the Nicola Valley Technical Institute.

*years. We go back and look for the old, old newspaper articles because that information is important for us so we archive that in categories as well.*⁵⁶

While her description of their holdings and what she considers archival does not incorporate the archival concepts of evidentiary value, interrelatedness or naturalness, but many of the materials she describes have these qualities.

Bruce views the separation of storing and cataloguing these materials across different types of knowledge institutions as "fragmenting them." Jeannette Armstrong noted that the community valued both archival and museum materials for their information value, not for their monetary or "showpiece" value. Bruce and Armstrong both identify differences between the ways that First Nations communities see cultural objects and the ways that museums have presented First Nations cultural objects.⁵⁷

Tensions between preservation and information needs

As seen in discussions regarding knowledge preservation and recovery above, First Nations communities are struggling to maintain their living culture and knowledge, to preserve knowledge through recordings and preservation of objects, and to recover knowledge and knowledge fragments that have been lost. All of these endeavors require time, effort and resources. While they support each other, there are also tensions between these types of work. Bruce indicated that his primary concern is to preserve the informational value of the materials. Bruce discussed frustrations he encountered when

⁵⁶ Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

⁵⁷ Jeannette Armstrong, interview; Bruce, interview; Sterling also mentioned this in response to another question. See also the museum response to these challenges: Michael M. Ames, *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: the anthropology of museums*, 1993, 2nd rev. ed. (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia Press, 1992). Miriam Clavir and University of British Columbia. Museum of Anthropology., *Preserving What is Valued: museums, conservation, and First Nations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002); Ira Jacknis, *The Storage Box of Tradition: Kwakiutl art, anthropologists, and museums, 1881-1981*, *Smithsonian series in ethnographic inquiry* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002); National Museum of the American Indian (U.S.), *The Changing Presentation of the American Indian: museums and native cultures* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000); Ann M. Tweedie, *Drawing Back Culture: the Makah struggle for repatriation* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2002).

seeking specific records at an archive by phone, noting that his perspective differed from that of the archivists he spoke with:

I know it comes from a different operating view than mine. Their major concern is to preserve and to understand how they select what they preserve, which is the dirtiest of all possible jobs: how do you know what you should keep and not. I suppose my practical need as a librarian sometimes runs against the need of archives to preserve things.

Non-archivists associate archival work with preservation and restricted access. Burant and Bonaparte emphasize the need to preserve the original and the work needed to preserve not only the physical records themselves but also the context of the records. Context is central to archival description, unlike cataloguing. Joseph emphasized the need for materials that can be used in courts as evidence; Burant and Bonaparte emphasized the need to care for records in ways that protect their evidentiary value. These differences reflect different priorities but also reflect a lack of shared understandings. These differing perspectives will be discussed at the end of this chapter. They affect concerns about control of knowledge, which is discussed in Chapter 4

Collections management

Knowledge management challenges include the need to determine what information, classification and computer systems suit the community's need. En'owkin library needed to develop its own system for organizing its collection because none of the models they looked at reflected the types of information they were caring for or their community's information needs. See chapter 5 for more discussion regarding organizational systems. The differing perspectives about archival materials mentioned above affect participants' views on the possibility of using a single collections management system for both library and archival materials, as discussed in chapter 6.

Networking First Nations knowledge centres and with mainstream knowledge institutions was discussed in the interviews as a way to improve access for communities and for the general public. See chapter 6 for more discussion regarding networking First Nations knowledge centres.

Bonaparte noted that the MCA archives does not hold information or records about the Mohawk ceremonies; or sensitive cultural information. She intends to develop appropriate storage and access policies before accessioning sensitive cultural records. She described the challenge of protecting privacy in a small community, severing (blacking out) the name in a record will not ensure their anonymity, as their identity can be determined through the contextual information such as profession and number of children. Bonaparte also emphasized the importance of maintaining the donors' trust.

STRENGTHS OF FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGE CENTRES

Participants described the strengths of First Nations knowledge centres. They have the support and assistance of knowledgeable community members, including storytellers, linguists and elders. Their collections encompass a broad range of subjects and media. The collections provide access to materials which would be difficult for community members to find elsewhere. They included very specialized information and unique materials. The staff bring their cultural knowledge to their work. Staff can adapt professional standards to meet local needs. Staff can adapt the classification and other search tools to meet the community's needs. Having a local person on staff increases the community's comfort level, which will increase their use of the centre. The centres support people's research, connection with cultural knowledge and identity and healing. They establish and support connections between people and their history, heritage and

identity. It strengthens the community and helps alleviate feelings of isolation and trauma that Tizya and Bonaparte associate with high suicide rates.

FUTURE OF FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Question seven was designed to explore participants' visions for institutions and approaches to keeping knowledge which meet First Nations cultures and needs.

7. Recent changes (such as new technology, changes in funding, or development of new ways to share information) have affected the work done at libraries, museums, and archives. Professionals working at these institutions have met to discuss the implications of these changes, talking about themes such as "Libraries of the Future". What should future information services or systems for First Nations knowledge look like?

The awkward wording of the question was distracting: mention of "recent changes," "libraries of the future" and the word "systems" led to responses that focus on computers, the internet and technology. The author did not redirect participants back towards the theme of visioning for consistency and for lack of time. Since this was the last question, many participants had to return to other commitments. This reaction did not occur in either of the two pre-interviews; neither mentioned computers or technology.

Seven participants answered this question directly. The main themes which emerged from these interviews are the participants' assessment of the role of technology for managing First Nations materials and their vision of ways of organizing and caring for First Nations information and knowledge. These themes also occurred in responses to other questions and in the interviews with people who did not answer this question directly.⁵⁸ The ranges of ideas discussed in both themes reflect the range of issues and concerns raised in the following chapters. All the responses are valuable, but are an incomplete reflection of people's visions. While the wording of this question made

⁵⁸ Jeffries, interview; Sterling, interview; Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

technology a more dominant theme, it would have been a theme regardless. Some relevant comments from responses to other questions are included in the interview data below.

This section, unlike the rest of the thesis, is a case by case analysis of the interview responses which discusses each individual's reactions rather organizing the response by theme. The diversity within the responses, which is at least partly a reflection of the poor wording of the interview question, can be examined more effectively in a case by case analysis than the cross-case analysis method which was used for most of the rest of this thesis.

PAM BROWN

Brown's response focuses on community control of its own knowledge, by developing its own vision of "good management" and having its own protocols recognized for their intellectual property. This theme is discussed in more depth in Chapter 4. She values the use of technology to give First Nations information which can help them use mainstream institutions more effectively, such as the MOA guides online or Xwi7xwa's research guides. She sees a great risk in use of internet to share information or images about First Nations materials without addressing First Nations intellectual property concerns. Every First Nation should define good management themselves and maintain control of their intellectual property. First Nations knowledge workers should be able to work with museum staff as equals to have First Nations knowledge and their perspective on their knowledge validated.

ROSALEE TIZYA

Tizya values technology for its potential to transform people's lives by transmitting knowledge and information. Her vision of First Nations knowledge involves a growing importance of types of knowledge beyond documentation and historical knowledge. Her vision also involves increasing people's abilities to see the world in a more open and holistic way:⁵⁹

For the future I would like to see the whole paradigm of research change, where people aren't just conditioned to follow [the same automatic approach]. I don't know what it is that guides destiny [but it is] how I can find things that no one else can find. I would like to see them [receive] more train[ing] in their own ability to pursue that. That's what guides me, whatever it is. I don't put a name to it because it's not up to me but [whenever] people want something, it doesn't matter if it has a name or not, they come to me and ask me anyway because they know they'll get a result. So whatever it is, I would like to see that people have that capacity in them nurtured and developed, more than to just be conditioned to follow certain things and to come to the same old materials everybody else comes to and just interpret it a little differently. [They are] not really be adventurous and look beyond that: look into the eyes of space and say "tell me." They don't do that. They just have their nose like the mouse right to the ground and can't see really that maybe the answer's up here, not down there so I would like to see that in the future.

I also think over the long term that there's other kinds of information that are going to be more valuable than simply documenting historical events and things like that, for the future.

GENE JOSEPH

Joseph's response began with the concern that new technologies are not always available in First Nations communities, so the potential advantage that they can offer is greatly limited. She raised concerns that the level of awareness of new technologies in First Nations communities is low. She also discussed the need for managing information in general. It is unlikely that First Nations communities will develop knowledge centres and the capacity for records management as part of their basic infrastructures unless First

⁵⁹ See chapter 2 for Tizya's description of the difference between education and conditioning.

Nations leadership recognize it as a basic need and so advocate, develop or negotiate for stable funding for it. Many people in First Nations communities are not aware of the expertise needed to manage First Nations knowledge centres.

Joseph envisions the development of stable funding and basic intellectual infrastructure for First Nations communities. She sees the awareness of the importance of First Nations knowledge centres and the expertise required to operate them as essential to their development and growth, particularly awareness by First Nations leadership. Joseph sees basic computer systems, the internet and the ability to do copy-cataloguing as useful for First Nations knowledge centres. She recommends the centres use simple computer software that is affordable, flexible enough to manage all types of materials (archive, library and museum materials) and that can be used by people with limited training. She sees awareness and the lack of stable funding as serious barriers to First Nations communities being able to access the potential of technology to help care for their knowledge.

LINDA ARMSTRONG AND JEANNETTE ARMSTRONG:

Jeannette Armstrong and Linda Armstrong requested that their interviews for this thesis be conducted at the same time. Jeannette Armstrong had other commitments which called her away from the interview, and did not answer question 7. Their responses to question 3 about good knowledge management address the themes of technology and visions, specifically their vision for the growth and organization of the physical space of the En'owkin library. Jeannette Armstrong's interview did not address the theme of technology directly. She indicated acceptance and recognition of the value of technology with mention of video recordings and photographs with their research

collections and archival materials. She wants Okanagan protocols for the care of Okanagan knowledge to be respected by Western society and researchers as well as their own people. Linda Armstrong's response to question 7 is very similar to Joseph's response. It begins with her recognition of the value of computers and the internet, and software and classification systems to organize library holdings. She would like the ability to share the library's catalogue with the instructors and rest of the staff at En'owkin. However, the lack of funding for the En'owkin library limits their ability to take advantage of the potential of these systems and technologies. En'owkin library has all the expenses of running a post-secondary library including the shelving, computers, software, textbooks, maps and other acquisitions, without any stable academic library funding.⁶⁰ They rely on fundraising and on donations, especially from authors and former students. The courses and programs such as Adult Basic Education at En'owkin have budgets to cover administrative and program costs, but the library does not. Linda Armstrong explained the En'owkin, although it began as a short-term curriculum project, has survived and had a phenomenal impact on the lives of the students.

We've been able to touch so many lives and change a lot of lives. We've seen the changes that people have made that have come through here. It's just amazing, the changes that some of these people have gone through. Some of these people have been really withdrawn or really angry or really arrogant: people have had to face a lot of challenges growing up. Some of [the people here] are people that everybody has given up on and now these people are some of the best people out there. We've been able to play a small part in them turning their lives around and doing something positive with their lives.

En'owkin's impact on people's lives is the vision that guides the En'owkin library; their lack of stable sufficient funding is the main obstacle for them.

⁶⁰ Public post-secondary (academic) libraries receive core funding from the provincial government. En'owkin is a private post-secondary institution.

The En'owkin library is open to the public, which is challenging to care for information resources about knowledge which is restricted. In her response to the question about "good knowledge management," Linda Armstrong begins the discussion about physical space with their need to raise funds for the library:

We're always trying to raise more funds so that we can expand our spaces because we need the research area, the archival area and just the general library area [but] it would better to have them all in their own departments [and spaces, rather than housed together].

Jeannette Armstrong continues:

We need our resource and research libraries separated out for different purposes. It's [specialized Okanagan knowledge is] not just part of the general public library. [However] it's not for us practical to set it up that way [right now because] we don't have the space. We should have a whole room just for the language including tapes, audiovisuals, support materials as well as all the different written materials but we don't have the space for that. [Now] we have a corner in one of the offices where we have that information available to all of the speakers and teachers. We have a resource person [for language] who is a teacher herself and is president of the language association. We monitor who has access to that information. Even our own speakers when they come in, we have to monitor their use of that information. And that's what we're directed to do by our elders in the language association.

Their vision is to combine the usefulness of western information systems and institutions with Okanagan protocols for caring for knowledge.

JIM BURANT

There is great potential for knowledge institutions and First Nations communities to use technology to contextualize information and collections in order to share and protect knowledge.

One of the great powers the internet is the fact that you mount one copy on the web and a million people can see it. All they've got to do is click into the web on their personal computer, and all of a sudden you've got access to that photograph, he's got access, she's got access, they've got access. Particularly for many First Nations

*communities which are widely scattered this can be a powerful tool for delivering not just information but knowledge.*⁶¹

The two themes of technology and envisioning improved systems for caring for First Nations information are closely connected in Burant's response. He expresses the need to improve communications between archives and First Nations. He identifies a role for technology in incorporating more of the community's cultural knowledge into the archival descriptions to make them more meaningful, in the development of tools for feedback, in development of tools for accessing archival records, and the possibility of a virtual central records repository for First Nations. He also sees the need for archivists to explain what they do. The potential for technology to assist in the care of First Nations knowledge can be seen in Burant's description of the *Makivak* internet-based cultural education program; they use the internet to share the elders' cultural knowledge through their scattered communities.⁶² That project documents and stores knowledge as well as sharing it. Like Joseph, Bruce sees significant improvement in computer capabilities during the last 20 years which permit much more powerful searching; he emphasizes that the additional work of adding subject access does provide important additional access to the records which computers alone will not provide. He also cautions:

*What we have to do is make sure that when we apply those technological solutions, we preserve things like authenticity and evidence, and make sure that we don't forget that the original has to be preserved too because that's what makes us unique, is that we preserve the original.*⁶³

As does Joseph, he also emphasizes the need to advocate for records management, archives and other knowledge centres within First Nations communities. He described efforts to address First Nations records management needs, including a proposal to build

⁶¹ Burant, interview.

⁶² Burant's description of this project is quoted in the chapter on knowledge loss and recovery.

⁶³ Burant, interview.

and central repository for First Nations records. While he recognizes the value of a central agency for preservation of records he raises concerns that it would be geographically inaccessible for most First Nations. He raised the possibility of a virtual repository: records for several communities could be kept together to facilitate preservation, with staff who could provide access to the electronic copies to the records directly to communities.

In other words, can you create a virtual archives rather than a real archive? I think that's one of the interesting changes in technology that's taking place.

You can, without necessarily building this big central repository, still build an archives that has authenticity: that preserves evidence and that tells people about their society and culture [but] doesn't have to be centralized. As long as you apply the standards and make sure that things are appropriately stored, and you know that somebody's taking care of them, that you can do this. And that technology's enabling us to do it [develop the intellectual infrastructure discussed earlier] a little bit better than we used to 20 years ago,⁶⁴

The themes of envisioning and technology are closely intertwined in both Burant and Bruce's responses.

JIM BRUCE

Bruce envisions the development of multipurpose First Nations knowledge centres which are networked to each other and to mainstream knowledge institutions. He hopes that each First Nations would develop the capacity to care for its own cultural materials. He sees the first stage of networking as the mainstream institutions providing inventories and other information to the First Nations communities. Internet based collaborative projects can provide opportunity for First Nations people to contribute their understanding and knowledge.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Bruce brings together the potential of internet technology for sharing information through digitization of information resources and union catalogues to address the challenges of gathering, preserving and providing access to First Nations materials. He sees that recent technological developments are creating fundamental changes in the way that information can be managed with computers and electronic networks which are not possible in individual knowledge centres and archives, libraries and museums. Technology "enables everyone to look at information disassociated from the source" so that "who houses the information becomes of lesser importance than how you can access it." He sees tremendous challenge in preserving endangered First Nations knowledge, such as endangered languages. He sees that many of the information resources that can answer First Nations people's information needs are scattered in different forms, formats and institutions; and many only in primary sources. His approach focuses on sharing digital forms of information: such as computer images and words from textual sources such as books and journal articles; sound and video recordings of stories, language and events; and images of cultural objects in museums and art galleries rather than distributing the information sources themselves to communities or bringing people to the resources.

Bruce identifies copyright issues and the works required to catalogue or describe these materials as significant barriers to access. Descriptions of his past internet and digitization projects as well as projects he would like to develop illustrate the potential to diffuse the work of digitizing, organizing, indexing and providing access to First Nations information resources.

Bruce focuses on the potential to coordinate work and visions across distances and diverse communities. He sees the museum and library materials as too vast to be able to catalogue according to current library and museum practices. As an alternative to cataloguing every item (book, journal, or object) for its content, he recommends a "preliminary survey" and then development of a catalogue reflecting people's information needs by cataloguing people's questions; see chapter 5. Diffusing the work across the professions, First Nations communities and several institutions will make it more manageable and more possible.

SHEREE BONAPARTE

Bonaparte's response includes both themes of visioning and technology, but they are not as interconnected as in Burant or Bruce's response. She predicts that future Western computer technology will become more like First Nations knowledge systems by incorporating more sensory types of information such as smell and wind:

*[Knowledge systems] should include smell, for one thing; and I think it will. One friend was saying that – with the internet, 3D, audio and video –non-Native [technology] is finally starting to capture [knowledge that] is becoming more and more Native: more and more interactive; more and more sensory oriented. Now, the main things missing [are] smell and the wind. [If you can] create those two senses and start feeding people information that way, and then you've **really** got something. [But] how do we allow access to that? [laughs] It would be real interesting, but I bet it's not far away. If we could have thought of the internet 20 years ago, we would have been rich! [laughs] So those things may be coming.*

*Even in the saddest movie that you watch, Wounded Knee: **visually** you are affected by it, but can you **imagine** how that would do if you could **smell** that kind of thing or you **felt** the coldness or the warmth, or the heat? I just can't imagine. Like World War II movies, you watch those and you **see** what's going on, but suppose if you could feel like you were really there? How many people would **really** want to go to war? ... to feel the terror of these things ... I keep thinking [with scary movies], "what if they smell that?" or "what if they could feel that?" [laughs] And at the same time, can you **image** being able to see a picture of a beautiful field of flowers, and be able to feel the breeze and smell the flowers? That would be nice.*

*I think **that's** the future of the libraries. People say that the book is never going to die: the written word is never going to die. I think it will always have a place but I*

*think that – especially as more senses are involved – that the screens will get bigger and the interactions [will] be bigger so maybe books will be the records keepers but the interactive stuff will be more audio and video. Then our job will be to pick out the important things and save that, for when the electricity no longer flows like [the rolling blackouts] in California.*⁶⁵

She envisions her archives as a place to gather, protect and care for Mohawk cultural symbols and knowledge where they can be reconnected with Mohawk people, especially youth. She sees these cultural symbols as central to the understanding and Mohawk identity that Mohawk people need. Bonaparte's vision for her archives involves close interaction with its community members so that they will know their history and identity; it is to become a repository for the symbols of Mohawk people and culture which were taken away from them.

*What do I want **our** archives to look like? I'd like to have a community educator ... I want a theatre in there [for] audio and video [and when the technology is ready] then the smells running through the theatre and the wind, [laughs]. The more you can be there, the better. ... To me total archive is more than just what you collect; it's how you interact with community. In order to get these young people to be proud of who they are and where they come from, they have to know their history. In order to do that, you have to start something somewhere. I think that the archives can do that. We can make it real for them.*⁶⁶

Discussing the problems such as loss of identity, Bonaparte believes:

*In the archive we can help to reestablish that connection. My kids are brought up traditionally [but] there's a lot of people around here who were brought up to be American citizens or Canadian citizens and not Mohawks. [They] have no idea of the language and culture; how to dance. So to me, using the archives, with what we are able to save [with gifts from our donors] and the philosophical thinkers of our time, and getting the **kids** interacting with it, and then getting the **elders** interacting with it, at the archive I think that we can be one of the links. ... I grew up in the city, and I didn't have that link. I had my parents who spoke Mohawk, and the stories they told of what it is to be Mohawk, but it was a real fight to hang onto the bits and pieces. ... [our goals it] to try to find those pieces and bring them back and stitch [them] together so we get a sense of who we are. Those symbols come back, they belong to*

⁶⁵ Bonaparte, interview.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

*us. We [the archives] can store those things, keep them safe, and let people come and use them.*⁶⁷

SEEPEETZA (SHIRLEY STERLING)

Seepeetza did not answer this question directly but her responses to other questions involve the themes of technology and visioning. She mentioned the usefulness of databases such as the Educational Resource Information Centre (ERIC). She envisions cultural revitalization, including the recovery of cultural protocols about knowledge, respect for knowledge and respect for knowledgeable people. She hopes that First Nations communities will develop their own places to keep cultural objects safe; and that Western and First Nations will work together more closely to the benefit of both. She envisions reconnecting First Nations objects in archives, libraries and museums with the people "who created, loved and conceptualized them." She hopes that information systems can provide more holistic types of information and can become better suited to answering First Nations needs. She notes that Western information systems, like the mainstream education systems, will not change in order to suit First Nations needs alone.

TERESA JEFFRIES

Jeffries did not answer this question directly, but her vision can be seen in the several strong themes of her interview, particularly education, literacy, language, culture and openness. She speaks of her Grandfather's insistence on and support for her own education, and the importance of her children and grandchildren's education. She spoke of many aspects of her long career as an educator, and her work as an elder with children's education in the schools, education through storytelling at the museum, and communicating with non-Native people through public speaking. She spoke of her love

⁶⁷ Ibid.

of reading, and appreciation for the work of the Schelt elders and Ron Beaumont (a linguist) to document and teach her language. She speaks of the importance of culture and of everyone knowing from where they came.

DISCUSSION

EXPECTATIONS FOR FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Many of participants' discussions focus on First Nations knowledge centres but also incorporate other community members and resources such as elders, traditionally trained specialists, schools and projects such as the *Makivik* Inuit cultural project described above. Since they did not discuss knowledge institutions or centres on their own, this discussion uses the term *knowledge systems* to incorporate these other elements as well. Participants' visions for future First Nations knowledge systems include short term objectives and long term hopes. In the short term, endangered materials would be brought into an institution for protection and preservation. These systems will support education and foster literacy, a love of reading, aboriginal language and culture. The information which is needed the most will be available in some form. Technology should be used to bridge distances better and faster. Feed back tools should be developed to improve communications. Knowledge systems should reconnect stories and cultural objects with "the people who loved and created them."⁶⁸ Knowledge centres can help people locate their knowledge fragments which are located elsewhere. They will validate people's experiences and be a healing for them. As in the En'owkin classrooms, they will support programs which help people to "do something positive with their lives." They will begin to address problems which have grown out of loss of identity, culture and

⁶⁸ Sterling, interview.

connection to the land. Knowledge centres will support the community's elders and knowledgeable people. Intergenerational transmission of culture will be strengthened.

Over the long term, participants want to see First Nations develop their own records and knowledge centres. The existing and new knowledge centres will become places to gather, protect, care for and provide appropriate access to knowledge. Each First Nation will can build on their own protocols in order to address the tensions between the need for access, (for the community and the public,) and the need for protection of attributes such as authenticity, traditional ownership, sacredness, and evidentiary value. First Nations knowledge centres will become repositories of symbols, objects, stories and knowledge that were taken away. Providing this access these recovered or rescued knowledge fragments will enable people to know their history, reconnect to their identity and living cultures and be proud of who they are and where they come from. These centres will “strive to have information easily accessible to the people that are using the library”⁶⁹ and “take everything we’ve experienced and do it better – not necessarily in the Western sense but how do we use that [experiential knowledge] to better serve our people, to help them achieve their dream and help them achieve their potential.”⁷⁰ First Nations knowledge centres, like knowledge management, should do more than information management. First Nations protocols and ways of caring for knowledge are important elements of future knowledge systems. Knowledge systems for First Nations knowledge should be based on First Nations ways of knowing. Knowledge management within First Nations communities needs to incorporate the aboriginal cultures’ worldview in order to present the context of the knowledge to the

⁶⁹ Linda Armstrong, interview.

⁷⁰ Bonaparte, interview.

people using it. First Nations knowledge centres, more than mainstream institutions, could examine ways to incorporate knowledge “within our spirits and our bodies” as well as “from the spirit world” into ways the centres work, if not into their collections. See chapter 4 for more discussion regarding traditional protocols regarding control of knowledge. Although current information and other community needs are dominated by land claims and healing, Tizya hopes that future knowledge centres will include more types of knowledge than documentation and historical knowledge. The effectiveness of First Nations knowledge centres will be reflected in the health of the communities, in people's sense of identity and in decreased suicide rates and increased graduation rates.

ADMINISTRATIVE CONCERNS

Administrative concerns, especially funding, is a theme in discussions about the future. The lack of stable or adequate funding is a serious concern shared by all participants. They hope for stable funding for knowledge centres and basic information infrastructure in First Nations communities. They also envision leadership within First Nations communities that will develop, advocate for and negotiate stable funding for First Nations knowledge centres.⁷¹ They envision records keeping systems within First Nations organizations which share information among departments and programs effectively to avoid duplication of services and to prevent poorly-informed decisions in cases when the needed information is available elsewhere in the community. In future, networks between several First Nations communities and agencies as well as mainstream knowledge institutions could diffuse the work of identifying, preserving and indexing First Nations materials in order to make the work more manageable.

⁷¹ Joseph, interview; Burant, interview.

ORGANIZING SYSTEMS

Organizing systems are another theme in discussions about the future. In the immediate future, the amount of information and the scope of information needs which are not being met by mainstream institutions are greater than the resources to organize those materials. A preliminary survey to gather and provide basic access to the most needed information by knowledgeable people is suggested as an alternative to 'identifying every atom' or cataloguing all the content of all the relevant information sources individually. Ways to organize these materials will be examined in chapter 5, while ways to address the challenge of doing so with scarce resources will be discussed in chapter 6.

Participants noted the value of computers for the work of organizing First Nations materials. First Nations knowledge centres should have the computers and other facilities they need to properly handle and keep track of their collections. Affordable, flexible, friendly computer systems for managing archival, library and museum materials are needed. The possibility of developing software to manage these diverse materials in the same database in order to provide basic physical management was raised. See discussion of merging or integrating management systems for diverse types of materials in chapter 6.

POSSIBLE MODELS FOR FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGE CENTRES

Participants envision all First Nations developing their own knowledge centres and managing their own records. Several participants described different types of or models for First Nations knowledge centres. Tizya sees the *Shoah Foundation* which protects the testimonies of holocaust survivors as a powerful model for First Nations people to "tell our stories." Jeffries description of the Sechelt community's local

education system is a school-based model for recovering and maintaining language, family trees and cultural knowledge which connects with their museum and library. The *Makivak* internet-based cultural education program documents and preserves knowledge while connecting it to *Makivak* communities at the same time. Several participants mention the ongoing importance of storytellers. Bruce's metaphor of fireside storytelling as a library within an oral tradition is a reminder that stories are to be told as well as kept; in the *Directory of Tribal Libraries*, 38 of the 97 tribal library list "storytelling" with their services. A central records repository for First Nations⁷² at a regional or national level was mentioned. The Mohawk archives is dynamic model with plans for a community educator and places for a theatre; research; discussion; and elders' use as well as specialized storage for preservation and for culturally sensitive materials. The En'owkin library is similarly dynamic with academic education, research and language learning except it is based on a library system and post-secondary educational materials instead of administrative records. As mentioned at the start of the discussion section, participants described several types of connections within and between First Nations communities which link First Nations knowledge centres into First Nations knowledge systems. Their discussions regarding networking First Nations knowledge centres and mainstream knowledge institutions will be examined in chapter 6.

INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS CONCERNS ABOUT KNOWLEDGE LOSS

Indigenous groups internationally are very concerned about knowledge loss, distortion and recovery. Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* provides insight into these concerns and a range of indigenous responses, including documentation, research,

⁷² Bonaparte, interview; Burant, interview.

storytelling, testimonials, knowledge recovery and the reconnecting with living culture. After an overview and discussion of the history of research on indigenous peoples, she describes several indigenous research projects. These projects are types of research undertaken by or under the direction of indigenous people, which strengthen their communities and address the problems they face. Recording and sharing knowledge are important aspects of several of these projects. The claiming project requires substantial documentation:

"For some indigenous groups the formal claims process demanded by tribunals, courts and governments has required the conducting of intensive research projects resulting in the writing of nation, tribe and family histories. These 'histories' have a purpose, that is, to establish the legitimacy of the claims being asserted for the rest of time. Testimonies intersect with claiming because they are a means through which oral evidence is presented to a particular type of audience. ... A testimony is also a form through which the voice of a 'witness' is accorded space and protection. ... The structure of testimony ... appeals to many indigenous participants, particularly elders. It is an approach that translates well to a formal written document."⁷³

In her description of indigenous research projects which focus on "celebrating survival," Smith writes: "In one such collection of [elders' stories] told to Sandy Johnson she writes of the way in which '[the elders] speak openly of their personal struggles to stay on the path against impossible odds. Their stories of what they have lost and what they have fought to save are both tragic and heroic.'⁷⁴ "Revitalizing initiatives in language encompass education, broadcasting, publishing and community-based programmes."⁷⁵ Similarly, the "writing" and "revitalizing" projects include recording but extend beyond documentation into publishing and filmmaking. The envisioning projects include a vast range of ways to preserve and share valued ideas and sentiments.

⁷³ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 1999, 143 - 144

⁷⁴ S. Johnson, and D. Dudnik (1994), *The Book of Elders*, Harper, San Francisco, p.7 cited in *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 145.

⁷⁵ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 147

*"The profound statements of indigenous leaders from the last century and the centuries before are often written into diaries and notebooks, carved into stone, distributed by T-shirt and poster. Often the original source of the comment has been forgotten but the power of the words remain. They make our spirits soar and give us hope. Indigenous people have borrowed freely from each other and it is not uncommon to find the saying of a Maori chief embroidered into a wall hanging in an Aborigine home."*⁷⁶

"[Sharing] is a form of oral literacy, which connects with the story telling and formal occasions [including weddings and funerals] that feature in indigenous life."⁷⁷ "The face to face nature of sharing is supplemented with local newspapers which focus on indigenous issues and local radio stations which specialize in indigenous news and music."⁷⁸ These projects involve not only the preservation of knowledge, but also communicating, authenticating or validating them in some way. Projects such as claiming and testimonies have a close connection to the concerns of archival theory. Projects such as envisioning and language revitalization have strong connections to theories relating to representation and meaningfulness, which have more connection to libraries and museums.

GRAY LITERATURE AND ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

The participants do not have a shared vocabulary regarding archival materials and gray literature (ephemeral or unpublished materials.) They do not hold a shared perception of the attributes of archival materials, such as informational value, evidentiary value, interrelationships, naturalness, trusted, trustworthy, or authentic. Within information studies, the types of materials described in the interviews may be divided into a category of archival documents which meet criteria established by archival science,

⁷⁶ Ibid. 153.

⁷⁷ Ibid. 161.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 160-161.

and gray literature which is a more encompassing term that includes materials which are not widely available.

The differences between the way in which library studies and archival science perceive and manage gray literature is a critical area of dissonance, if not disagreement. The main point of agreement is that both fields see informational value as an attribute of archival materials. Within archival science, the context of the materials is central to distinguishing archival materials from gray literature. The context of the archival documents (including their relationship to their creator's functions and their relationship to other documents), are crucial to evaluating and understanding them. The context is a critical aspect of archival description work. Archival descriptions provide access points to records which facilitate people's intellectual access to them (as catalogue records do for published materials) and help people to evaluate the documents. As noted in chapter 2, the context is an important element for distinguishing between information and knowledge. Burant noted that archival descriptions lack cultural context for archival materials relating to First Nations that are important to understanding their deeper meanings; he also emphasized the importance of the contextual information which archives do currently incorporate into the descriptive record.

Further exploration of First Nations perceptions of archives and archival materials can help develop a shared understanding and negotiate a shared vocabulary. As noted above, several of the participants who are not archivists associate archives with irreplaceable material, preservation work and restricted access. Discussions between archivists and First Nations knowledge workers regarding archival records and the ephemeral material that Joseph mentioned will help develop a better picture of First

Nations needs for both information and archival materials. Discussions regarding preservation, memory and archival theory can help articulate First Nations visions for the long term care of their documentary heritage. Another area of dissonance between archival science and librarianship, as well as museology, is differing theory and values regarding intellectual freedom, restricted access and intellectual property. The participants discussed several of these issues in their responses, which are examined in following chapter.

CHAPTER 4

CONTROLLING THE FRAGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

The control of information and materials is the strongest theme emerging from the interview data. Controlling knowledge and First Nations materials in archives, libraries and museums was discussed by all participants. All participants expressed concerns relating to the misuse, misrepresentation, organization and relative accessibility of First Nations knowledge fragments within libraries, archives and museums. Several participants expressed the importance of traditional protocols regulating openness, selective sharing of knowledge, knowledge which is freely shared, protection of the integrity of knowledge, restrictions on sharing and use of traditional knowledge, ownership of knowledge, and concerns about access to knowledge fragments in mainstream institutions. Diverse approaches discussed include: following or reinstating First Nations protocols; keeping knowledge within a select group of people; sharing knowledge; recording knowledge; restricting access to recordings; and integration of First Nations and Western principles about access to knowledge.¹

People want to protect knowledge from becoming more fragmented and distorted. They also want to keep First Nations knowledge out of the hands of people who would (mis)use it against First Nations people and communities. They discussed access to, use and misuse of, validation of and gaining benefits from First Nations knowledge. Participants raised concerns about the cross-cultural misunderstandings which become embedded in First Nations materials in mainstream archives, libraries and museums.

¹ The interview questions did not explicitly ask about First Nations approaches to controlling knowledge; this list should not be taken as comprehensive. Unless otherwise noted, all references to the participants are from the interviews with the author.

People drew attention to unresolved conflicts between First Nations and mainstream society, including ongoing conflicts with the federal government. These conflicts have shaped First Nations information needs, the materials in archives and libraries, the terminology used to describe and catalogue them, and the use of those materials. These conflicts also foster First Nations mistrust of researchers, archives, libraries and museums. As discussed in the previous chapter, both sharing and withholding knowledge are important aspects of protecting knowledge in oral traditions. The mistrust arising from continuing unresolved conflicts makes sharing knowledge with outsiders less appealing to many First Nations people. These conflicts are an important part of the political and social context which affects First Nations relationships with Canada and the United States and with archives, libraries and museums. First Nations protocols are elements of First Nations knowledge systems which let people know when and under what circumstances knowledge should be shared or kept unspoken; they also shape what is trusted and meaningful. Concerns raised in the interviews include access to sensitive material such as personal information, writings and images relating to sacred events and objects; protection of fragile recordings; use of material in archives and libraries to validate or marginalize First Nations experiences and knowledge; and reconnecting people with their materials which are held in archives, libraries and museums.

THE INTERVIEWS

None of the interview questions explicitly asked about control of information or knowledge, but all participants raised aspects of the issue in the interviews. Most discussion of this issue was in response to questions 3, 4 and 6.²

² See appendix 1.

Most of the responses focused on care of cultural knowledge rather than the full range of archives, libraries and museums services. This is a reaction to the ordering of the interview questions. The discussions generally followed from one question to another so people's focus on the care of cultural knowledge from the first two questions carried over into the discussion of knowledge management and again into their evaluations of archives, libraries and museums.³ This is a significant concern for First Nations so these points would have been prominent regardless, but First Nations communities have other concerns about information and knowledge.

TRADITIONAL PROTOCOLS AND ACCESS CONCERNS

Participants discussed traditional protocols which restrict access to information, traditional values about truthfulness and openness, and concerns about institutions hindering First Nations access to their knowledge fragments. The previous chapter mentioned people's concerns that recording knowledge or information can facilitate distortions of knowledge or misuse of information. In the interviews, participants also discussed approaches for protecting knowledge from distortion and misuse, including traditional protocols relating to sharing and not sharing knowledge as well as protocols regarding use of knowledge.

PROTOCOLS

First Nations' protocols regulate access to knowledge within their juridical systems. Some protocols require sharing knowledge such as events and speeches which should be witnessed and validated. Others restrict access to knowledge not sharing it

³ Tizya, interview and Jeffries, interview did not did not answer the interview questions in order they were written. The emphasis on care of cultural knowledge in the responses to questions 4 and 6 is most visible in the interview with the other participants who did answer the questions in the order written.

outside of specific groups of people. There are diverse reasons for these restrictions.⁴ First Nations have knowledge which is freely shared; knowledge which is shared and used under specific conditions; and knowledge which is maintained but rarely shared. The complex protocols guiding sharing and use of knowledge are compared to but do not equate directly to western concepts such as copyright and public domain. There are restrictions on the **use** of knowledge which mirror the restrictions on sharing knowledge. Jeannette Armstrong explains that only the people who have completed specialized training can use some kinds of specialized knowledge. While students are permitted access to the knowledge which is needed to learn it, they can not apply that knowledge until their teachers decide they are capable.⁵ Other traditional protocols which regulate **use** of knowledge that is freely shared.⁶ Hearing knowledge does not necessarily confer all types of rights to use it. For example, people who have witnessed songs, speeches and dances would have the responsibility to remember them and to validate what they have seen often would not have the right to perform them. Seepeetza points out there were protocols though which people without the rights to a story could get permission to tell it; these protocols differ from nation to nation.⁷ As discussed earlier, people's concerns about misuse of information include the harm that could come from overexploitation of natural resources, desecration of gravesites or other sacred places, and misuse of medicinal plants.

⁴ See also Schoenhoff, *The Barefoot Expert*, 162.

⁵ Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

⁶ Bonaparte, interview.

⁷ Sterling, interview.

SHARING KNOWLEDGE SELECTIVELY

Many kinds of cultural knowledge, including information about spirituality and sacred matters are considered very sensitive. Joseph notes that "First Nations people rarely ever talk to outsiders, quite often they don't even talk **openly** within the First Nations community about their traditional spiritual beliefs." Some kinds of knowledge need to be protected because "some of their belief systems and rituals are important for us to have as our **tools** to survive."⁸ Some knowledge and information is kept secret to protect other important aspects of culture such as: sacred sites (places of spiritual importance and power), grave locations, sensitive environmental places and resources.⁹

In many First Nations cultures, many kinds of knowledge are only shared amongst a select group of people. Jeannette Armstrong describes restrictions on sharing information about her language: "the Okanagan elders have instructed us [that] language is taught only to Okanagan members and their spouses. It's not taught to people external to that."¹⁰ Seepeetza talks of knowledge that is only shared within families. Tizya and Bruce note that elders may share their knowledge selectively based on their perceptions of the listener's abilities or needs. Building on her description of specialized knowledge discussed in the chapter 2, Jeannette Armstrong says that these kinds of specialized knowledge are only shared within protocol societies: groups of people with specialized training. Similarly, Bonaparte mentions knowledge which is gender specific and that is only shared within the "medicine societies."¹¹ Armstrong compared people with training

⁸ Tizya, interview.

⁹ Jeannette Armstrong, interview; Jeffries, interview.

¹⁰ Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

¹¹ Bonaparte, interview. See also discussion of gender restrictions for the MCRC collection, Jeffrey E. Mauger and Janine Bovechop, *Tribal Collections Management at the Makah Cultural and Research Centre*, vol. Two, *Perspectives: A Resource for Tribal Museums* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1995).

in traditional knowledge with medical doctors, teachers and dentists, who have to be licensed to work in their professions. This is a part of the traditional cultural protocols and a part of the knowledge systems which also protect the integrity of the knowledge. She used Okanagan ethnobotanical knowledge as an example; this subject encompasses botanical, environmental and medicinal knowledge. The restrictions on sharing this kind of specialized knowledge are to protect fragile ecosystems and protect people from harm that could result from misuse of medicinal plants.

Discussing information and knowledge related to painful, embarrassing and controversial actions and events, Bruce and Tizya presented secrecy and refusal to discuss information as serious concerns. While acknowledging that it is difficult for people to face many kinds of negative information, they stress the need to address these types of information and the dangers they see in keeping them secret. Their concerns will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

None of the participants used the phrase "restricted access" for these topics, rather they used words such as 'talk,' 'secret' or 'given.' Within information studies, access is an important term. Controlling who should be permitted to hear or know specific kinds of information is a main theme within the interviews, and occurs in indigenous scholarship in several disciplines.

PROTOCOLS REGARDING RECORDED KNOWLEDGE

An extension of those protocols is to keep these kinds of knowledge unrecorded and undocumented. Bonaparte speaks of value of unwritten knowledge and its effectiveness for preventing misinterpretation of events by people who had not experienced them. Tizya looks at the same question in association with archival records: "If a person doesn't **want** the world to know, they shouldn't write it down. A lot of

people keep diaries, and they say 'Oh I don't want anyone to see these for fifty years.'

Well why bother writing it if you don't want anyone to see it. If you don't want to hurt a person's feelings then **don't** write it, don't say it, let it go. I don't know if that's at the heart of it; I don't know what it is and why information has to be kept secret."¹²

Bonaparte reflects on reconciling the need to protect freedom of information in libraries and addressing the problems of misinterpretation and concludes that "what we need to do is get our own voice out there." Having Mohawk knowledge published by Mohawk authors is ideal since "if we speak in our own voices then we **say** what we want to say and we **don't** say what we don't want them to know." Considering the *Parker on the Iroquois* book, she wonders: "how much would we have written and how much would we have not written?"¹³ Restricting access to knowledge in order to protect it is not the only reason that people choose to not write things down. Some oral stories are to remain unwritten to maintain their integrity as an oral tradition.

The approach of restricting recording of some kinds of knowledge offers it protection from misuse and distortion but risks it being forgotten.¹⁴ Another approach seeks to maintain any recordings and records of traditional knowledge in the control of the people who have permission to hear it according to traditional protocols. Noting that it would be difficult to even find relevant specialized information without appropriate training, Jeannette Armstrong speaks of restricted access to specialized types of recorded information.

¹² Tizya, interview.

¹³ Bonaparte, interview.

¹⁴ This concern is lessened for people who believe that the spirit world can and will give knowledge back to communities when it is needed.

TRADITIONAL PROTOCOLS RELATING TO USE OF KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION

First Nations have knowledge which is freely shared; knowledge which is shared and used under specific conditions; and knowledge which is maintained but rarely shared. The complex protocols guiding sharing and use of knowledge are compared to but do not equate directly to western concepts such as copyright and public domain. There are restrictions on the **use** of knowledge which mirror the restrictions on sharing knowledge. Jeannette Armstrong explains that only the people who have completed specialized training can use some kinds of specialized knowledge. While students are permitted access to the knowledge which is needed to learn it, they can not apply that knowledge until their teachers decide they are capable.¹⁵ There are other traditional protocols which regulate **use** of knowledge that is freely shared; stories which are widely known are not secret but the rights to retell them may be owned or retelling may only be appropriate at certain events or certain seasons.¹⁶ Hearing knowledge does not necessarily confer all types of rights to use it. For example, people who have witnessed songs, speeches and dances would have the responsibility to remember them and to validate what they have seen often would not have the right to perform them. Seepeetza points out there were protocols though which people without the rights to a story could get permission to tell it; these protocols differ from nation to nation.¹⁷ As discussed earlier, people's concerns about misuse of information include the harm that could come from overexploitation of natural resources, desecration of gravesites or other sacred places, and misuse of medicinal plants. Seepeetza looks at traditional protocols as an analogy for copyright:

Copyright is reflective of the ownership of knowledge in Western society but the oral tradition works a little differently so a person would not be able to tell certain stories

¹⁵ Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

¹⁶ Bonaparte, interview.

¹⁷ Sterling, interview.

unless they got permission from the owners of the story, and [whether] a clan or an individual or a family or a group.¹⁸

She talks in terms of "sacred," "respect," "exchange" and "permission" rather than purely economic or commercial transaction:

For instance, in oral tradition or in other knowledge as well, sometimes the ancestor had to pay a big price to obtain that knowledge. So the descendants of that person consider that knowledge to be owned by the descendents – by the families or individuals. Certain crests and oral traditions and certain animals even, were considered to be very special to a certain group of people. Sometimes the ancestor had to pay the price for that knowledge with their lives and so it's considered to be very sacred and it's not shared with just anybody and everybody.¹⁹

Seepeetza provides two examples to show that the concept of ownership of stories and ideas existed traditionally:

[From a] reading [about] the Cree, this one man was thinking of building a log house like the settlers were doing. And so then he watched them and then he built a house also. But he referred to it as "stealing with my eyes". [This phrase indicates that] he recognized some kind of boundary there. But because it was a non-member of his people, then maybe it was okay because they [the settlers] would do the same: acquiring, taking knowledge just by looking as well. In at any case I remember that statement, "stealing with my eyes". You could see there, that [people recognized it was not acceptable to] just take knowledge from other people without their being some kind of protocol for it.²⁰

In the log house example, the protocol can be seen within the man's admission that he was breaking it. Within archaeological sites, the protocol can be seen in the patterns that are found within the same households over time, indicating family ownership of ideas and designs:

In my own country, when archaeologists were digging up artifacts and culture sites, as they dug into the ground at different levels [representing different times in the past] the same artifacts showed up and yet those artifacts [and] the concepts and ideas [they embody] were not found in the other households around. So you could see that they did maintain a strict obedience to that law of respecting someone's knowledge. People didn't just look at [anything] and say "Oh, I'm going to take that

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

idea and I'm use it, and I'm going to benefit from it;" they would have to have had an exchange or something. ... [There is] the need for proper protocols. There is a way you can get to sing a song or to use crests or whatever.²¹

These examples are analogous to copyright because people have a sense of ownership of ideas and compensating for use of someone else's intellectual property. In this sense, specific types of use are restricted to those who have a right to it; and this right can be extended to others. Brown also talked of ownership. There are also administrative and legal implications of using knowledge. In their opening statements, the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en lawyers described aspects of the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en information systems:

As a total system of knowledge, therefore, Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en facts are shared out. The totality of the historical record exists in the minds of the Chiefs that feast together, those feastings together being those who historical paths have crossed. In this way, the record of Gitksan or Wet'suwet'en history exists in its totality in the minds of those whose duty it is to remember it. Each Chief tells his history in the living context of the knowledge in each others' minds. Thus, when a Chief describes the events that took place long ago, events that he or she could not possibly have witnessed, these can be told as established truths by virtue of having been tested and validated at a succession of narratives. . . . Chief Lelt . . . insisted that the things he was saying were true because they had been witnessed and acknowledged.²²

The relationship between the chiefs and the histories are more complex than ownership; they are responsible for it and are the only ones with the authority to speak it. Copyright is a complex concept, and not a perfect analogy for protocols within oral traditions.

Based on his experience with educational and cultural centre work, Bruce had a different perspective on copyright in traditional First Nations society which will be discussed in a later section in this chapter.²³

²¹ Ibid.

²² Gisday Wa and Delgam Uukw, *The Spirit in the Land* (Gabriola, BC: Reflections, 1992), 39.

²³ Bruce, interview.

There are other protocols regarding cultural and traditional knowledge. For example, Jeffries talks of her band asking a medicine man to visit cultural sites which have skeletal remains, graves or other sacred places when they are discovered. She also stated that police must be contacted when skeletal remains are discovered. Knowledge of the locations of spiritual places such as grave sites are otherwise kept secret.²⁴

KNOWLEDGE WHICH IS FREELY SHARED

In addition to traditional protocols which restrict some kinds of knowledge, participants also talked of knowledge and information which is freely shared. There are many types of knowledge which are freely shared but they do not necessarily equate to the Western concept of public domain. More complex protocols [regulate] the retelling or other use of knowledge, which may relate to ownership, authority, administrative systems or spiritual concerns.

Jeannette Armstrong talked of knowledge which is owned by all Okanagan people and is not restricted within their communities. She also spoke of knowledge which everyone should know, such as how to find a dentist and the proper protocols for contacting traditional knowledgeable Okanagan people: "Everyone should have that information, everyone should have access to it and everyone is expected to have that information."²⁵ Oral traditions depend upon several different kinds of knowledge being public and freely available, although as discussed earlier some knowledge is only spoken at certain times or by certain people. There are similar things in Western culture which will be examined in the discussions at the end of this chapter. First Nations have different protocols about what knowledge is freely shared and what is restricted. Even

²⁴ Jeffries, interview.

²⁵ Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

within the same community, people can have very different perspectives on what knowledge should be shared and what should be withheld, and from whom.

Many kinds of knowledge are shared within the community and with non-members.²⁶ Seepeetza and Jeffries are both storytellers and speak to non-Native groups as well as their own communities including non-Native schoolchildren, graduate students, church groups, women's groups, multicultural societies and the Rotary Club. Jeffries and her cousin Gilbert are both storytellers and use museum events, public speaking and storytelling as ways to address issues which are important to the Sechelt and non-Native Canadians such as residential school issues and the local Rotary's Club's concerns about band developments. Knowledge is shared in other ways as well. Sechelt knowledge is shared through their museum and events at their longhouse.

OWNERSHIP ISSUES

Canadian society has not recognized the protocols from First Nations oral tradition; nor included any form of protection for traditional First Nations knowledge in Canadian copyright law. Canada copyright law considers First Nations oral tradition to be public domain.

That becomes complex when the knowledge becomes written and published, because when once it's written and published it becomes public domain knowledge and so that anyone who has access to the stories ... to oral traditions. So what happens to the fact that it's owned? Can a person who's not even part of the culture group read the story and then start telling it and then start passing it on? Now such a thing would never happen in a cultural setting, because people are aware of the fact that stories and crests are owned, and certain knowledge is owned and if they wanted to use it, they would have to pay a price for it, because the price was paid by the ancestor. So it becomes kind of tricky, because what becomes when a non-Native person writes down a story and they own the copyright [according to Canadian law]? So western society also recognizes ownership of, say intellectual property,

²⁶ Jeffries, interview.

*like that. So you have laws around copyright, but [they don't cover First Nations stories].*²⁷

In the section about traditional protocols regarding use above, Seepeetza explains that First Nations people did honour the traditional protocols that are similar to access restrictions, but things are more difficult now:

*So you know with the disruption of our culture and traditions and history, we are just now starting to re-learn these things. We were separated from our cultural professors – grandmothers and grandfathers – when we were sent to residential school. So we didn't learn a lot of cultural protocols and we're in the process of trying to figure those out right now.*²⁸

Brown states that traditional First Nations protocols regarding knowledge and tradition should be respected in the print and electronic world as well:

*They [archives, libraries and museums digital projects] should follow the same protocol [as seriously as they follow] copyright – looking at how [the owners' rights are] managed. ... You just have to acknowledge that if it has to do with First Nations information and knowledge, it has to do with ownership and community.*²⁹

Copyright is a Western set of property (ownership) rights to specific types of intangible things which are established within National laws and recognized internationally through treaties. First Nations protocols and laws also establish rights to intangible things such as crests, artwork and stories. When museums copyright exhibits or images of First Nations materials in their collections, they are claiming ownership and the right to benefit from these types of intellectual properties. This is a serious concern for many First Nations people:

*So while I say "oh yes everything that they – libraries, archives and museums – do is very valuable and useful to us" it's not necessarily the case if they want to continue to own our information, and I find it irritating that a good many institutions still don't understand that.*³⁰

²⁷ Sterling, interview.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Brown, interview.

³⁰ Joseph, interview.

Some participants want First Nations protocols recognized in the same way that Western copyright is respected; they want First Nations to have the type of control over use of material that copyright offers and want the communities and families to benefit from use of their own information and knowledge. This approach is problematic because property rights is not the only connection between the knowledge and the communities.

Bonaparte looks at the concept of ownership in a different light and under different circumstances, when explaining the need for an archives, library and museum in her community as well as her decision to include records from other First Nations than Mohawk at the MCA archives:

*I'm afraid that other First Nations, especially within the confederacy, don't have a space and probably won't get a space for a very long time, to house things that are deteriorating now. In archival practice they'll say, "Don't accept anything that you can't own, because you have to insure it." You have to insure the building anyway, and people take a risk in the building, but if your building is good then the risk is low, so what you have to pay the insurance on it? The main thing is to **preserve**. To try to get it as long a life as possible. So you don't have to own it in the white man sense of owning something, just like we don't own the land. The information that we collect, preserve, is for **our children**, it's not for us. So this ownership thing: I don't know ... ³¹*

Bruce discussed the openness of elders he has worked with, contrasting their approach with the Western concept of copyright.³² He focuses on support for the creators rather than the potential for misuse of information.

I have a lot of concern with the whole notion of copyright and how does that fit into a First Nations world. We've recognized with our intellectual property laws we have to support people who are creative. Now, our Elders used to be creative people; they originated some of those stories, they didn't just repeat them. Things happened in life, they were more stories being made; they saw the needs of their community and they saw things happen which built the stories which built the wisdom and they also observed and remembered things that happened, from the hunting, from the wars, from the household things and they observed those and repeated them. ... Now we have the printing presses in the predominant culture here churning off

³¹ Bonaparte, interview.

³² Bruce, interview.

things by the ton, whereas at one time we would have respected: I guess even in a European sense the troubadours and storytellers were supported: The kings and their courts would pay money and actually help these people survive so that they tell their stories sing their songs write their music. And that's where they got sustained we saw them as a valuable part of our society so, we cared for them. And because we cared for them, they [felt as though:] "does that bird out in the tree copyright its singing?" It would never dream to do that. If another bird cares to learn that song then that bird lives on because the song is part of what it is. But because we haven't cared for our artists I think, we've invented this other thing called copyright to property, right to intellectual knowledge. [which is problematic]. [For example,] you're taking my words and you're recording them and I'm giving you the rights to use it. Some of these words and ideas probably came from something I read or someone else I talked to. And I haven't credited them with that, I'm guilty. I don't like this.³³

In this sense, he sees the control inherent in copyright as a barrier to the use and perpetuation of cultural knowledge to the detriment of First Nations communities. He also spoke more generally about cultural knowledge, stating that: "Everyone should own their own culture as much as we can possibly do that." That statement, part of a discussion of repatriation, ownership and control, refers to different kinds of ownership than a commercial interest or a right to payment for use.

NEED FOR OPENNESS

During the interviews, Tizya, Bruce and Jeffries discussed the importance of openness and access. In contrast to the discussions about sensitive types of knowledge which are traditionally not shared, both Tizya and Bruce provided examples of very personal types of information which can be difficult to face but should be accessible so that it can be addressed. Bruce stated his personal commitment to be open to negative information. Speaking specifically of First Nations information in archives, libraries and museums, Tizya sees the danger in keeping information secret rather than in the information itself:

³³ Ibid.

*One of the things that I am very much opposed to is keeping information secret, and confidential because I think that only serves one individual's purpose. It doesn't serve the community. It doesn't serve humanity. I just don't see the purpose in it, I don't see the reasoning for it, and the logic in it and I'm very opposed to that. No matter what situation I've been in, I've always fought for wide open awareness. Even with children who have been adopted out. None of that should be secret, because so many children that have grown up have almost married their sisters or brothers because no one told them that they were related. So I think secrets in many cases are dangerous. That's a big issue for me. It's a big issue for me because I think its dangerous in the long run. Things happen in the world. We don't make it happen, it just happens. That doesn't make us bad or it doesn't make us wrong, it just happens and so we should deal with it honestly. We should deal with these things honestly. So many people in Indian communities have been sexually abused. They should never be forced to keep that secret because as long as they do, other people – other children – are going to get hurt. Other women and other men are going to get hurt because of it. Young people are going to get hurt because of it. When it's open, it's less likely to happen. That's what I'm talking about: when an abuser can say to a bunch of his or her victims, "things have to remain secret, or confidential": that's the power, that's the danger. I see too much of that. What's wrong with being open? Sometime, women are getting beat up in their homes and they're hiding and that's wrong. I don't think it should be that way. ... Knowledge can be dangerous in that way, when it's **withheld**. I really don't know **why** archives for example have certain things that are confidential.³⁴*

Bruce expresses a similar perspective:

It's something that's very important something, that very often we're afraid of. If I knew that my kids were at a school with a lot of swearing going on, or a lot of violence, I shouldn't be afraid to say: "There were 38 violent influences on your school ground." At that point, people would think that I'm being opposed to the school and I'd say "No that is just information I'm just presenting; not because I dislike you or like you. It's something we have to know about; we have to have our eyes open to the information."³⁵

CONCERNS ABOUT ACCESS IN ARCHIVES, LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS

Participants stated a desire for archives, libraries and museums to provide First Nations people with open access to First Nations materials. They also expressed concerns where First Nations materials were too accessible to or misused by non-First Nations (non-members).

³⁴ Tizya, interview

³⁵ Bruce, interview.

They described situations where First Nations peoples were prohibited access to First Nations materials which are in archives, libraries and museums. Participants express concerns about not being permitted to see materials and about being unable to find out what materials are in institutions. Tizya has experience with institutions restricting access to needed information:

When I worked at the RCAP Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1992, [the federal government] fought the Royal Commission on providing all the files on Residential schools. There were about 61 feet of files and in the end they made an agreement to make them available but only allowed one non-Indian researcher into, in to access those files.³⁶

Linda Armstrong values:

being able to access some of those items and pictures and material that were many many years ago given to the museums and libraries without the knowledge and consent of many of our people. In some cases now, the museum is giving us either copies or giving us items back.³⁷

Material which isn't catalogued, inventoried or described is also inaccessible, even if no one is trying to keep it secret. Inaccurate or incomplete descriptions are often also barriers to access. Participants express the need for inventories of museum objects and archival records: "They shouldn't hide these things."³⁸

POLITICAL CONFLICTS AND CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

A main theme in the interviews is the differing values, perceptions, use of language as well as numerous past, present and continuing conflicts. Discussions include different relationships with land, the environment and other people. These conflicts include government policies and actions such as colonialism, genocide, cultural and land alienation, military conflicts, residential schools, assimilation policies, and separation of

³⁶ Tizya, interview.

³⁷ Linda Armstrong, interview.

³⁸ Bruce, interview.

children from their cultural professors (grandparents). They also include court cases related to abuse and land alienation as well as efforts to negotiate modern-day treaties. In discussions of knowing one's culture and of caring for knowledge, they mention problems such as alcoholism and suicide that are attributed to colonization, displacement and loss of culture.

In discussing her concerns about archives, Tizya discusses the relationship between marginalizing First Nations and the colonial government's goals to assimilate First Nations individuals and extinguish First Nations rights and connection to land.

The white colonial masters' perception of the Indian [is what is found in archives] .. It's a necessary perception for what they needed and what they wanted to do, and that was to destroy Indian identity. Keep the body standing and destroy our soul. When I look at all of the archives around Governor Douglas or Trutch or any of those people that were in the colonial government of the time, they all carry the same kind of outlook or perception of the Indian people as being backward, as being uncivilized, as being very destructive and I don't even know in what terms they're talking about Indian people being savage. At the same times they acknowledge Indian intelligence and the physical stature of people and things like that. It was all in the interest of demeaning the Indian people as a race. It was all in the interest of the genocidal policies that exist even today, in the extinguishment policies of the government.³⁹

Concerns about ongoing extinguishment policies and resulting conflicts shape communities' management of their own information. Any work to facilitate community use of its own knowledge has the potential to be used against communities:

I'm always worried about hackers. This community sits on the border, and whenever we sneeze, Ottawa catches cold. We can shut down the border, which is an international incident. There's a natural gas line going through here; there was a war here in 1990; there's smuggling going on all the time so we know that there's surveillance here. So [if] we start putting everything on computers and of course they're going to have all our information – information that we don't want them to have. That really sounds paranoid, but I know that it's possible.⁴⁰

³⁹ Tizya, interview.

⁴⁰ Bonaparte, interview.

Cultural differences between First Nations and Western culture is a major theme in the interviews.⁴¹ Three participants note the hierarchical relationships in Western culture are very different from aboriginal cultures. The Cree metaphor of the world as a pyramid⁴² contrasts the importance of people's interdependence with other creatures unlike the hierarchical relationships in the Judeo-Christian worldview; it also illustrates power of naming: "the impression is that Adam and Eve [are] at the top and somewhere way down there are these other things which we gave names to them. so we own those things we give name to and they depend upon us. As soon as we do that we can put them in cages ..."⁴³ Joseph talks about the relationship of Western culture and the environment: "That whole idea of 'management' comes from the western concept that the human beings are above everything else they're out to use and control everything in the environment."⁴⁴ Similar to the way that naming things is a way of gaining power over them, the scientific worldview and Western information systems claim and gain power over things by defining them and organizing them. Tizya describes these approaches as foreign to aboriginal worldviews.

The act of defining and categorizing people also assigns them a place; both Tizya and Linda Armstrong identify the need to fit into mainstream society as a challenge for aboriginal people:

*Sometimes some of the people that go out [of their own communities], they know what they want and they can do it but then they get out there and the system just gets too hard for them. They have to fit within the system out there and with a lot of our people that's really **really** hard because that's not the way we were raised. Even if you were raised like that, it's not natural for **us** to think, and feel and live like that.*

⁴¹ See chapter 2.

⁴² See chapter 2.

⁴³ Bruce, interview.

⁴⁴ Joseph, interview.

*That's why a lot of our people have so many problems and why a lot of times that they would just finally give up and come home.*⁴⁵

PROTOCOLS AND PRINCIPLES FOR CONTROLLING KNOWLEDGE

Controlling knowledge and First Nations materials in archives, libraries and museums was discussed by all participants. Diverse approaches discussed include: following or reinstating First Nations protocols; keeping knowledge within a select group of people; sharing knowledge; recording knowledge; restricting access to recordings; and integration of First Nations and Western principles about access to knowledge.⁴⁶ People want to protect knowledge from becoming more fragmented and distorted. They also want to keep First Nations knowledge out of the hands of people who would (mis)use it against First Nations people and communities. They discussed access to, use and misuse of, validation of and gaining benefits from First Nations knowledge. Participants raised concerns about the cross-cultural misunderstandings which become embedded in First Nations materials in mainstream archives, libraries and museums. People drew attention to unresolved conflicts between First Nations and mainstream society, including ongoing conflicts with the federal government. These conflicts have shaped First Nations information needs, the materials in archives and libraries, the terminology used to describe and catalogue them, and the use of those materials. These conflicts also foster First Nations mistrust of researchers, archives, libraries and museums. As discussed in the previous chapter, both sharing and withholding knowledge are important aspects of protecting knowledge in oral traditions. The mistrust arising from continuing unresolved conflicts makes sharing knowledge with outsiders less appealing to many First Nations people. These conflicts are an important part of the political and social context which

⁴⁵ Linda Armstrong, interview.

⁴⁶ The interview questions did not explicitly ask about First Nations approaches to controlling knowledge; this list should not be [taken] as comprehensive.

affects First Nations relationships with Canada and the United States and with archives, libraries and museums. First Nations protocols are elements of First Nations knowledge systems which let people know when and under what circumstances knowledge should be shared or kept unspoken; they also shape what is trusted and meaningful. The development of First Nations materials which are now in archives, libraries and museums often required breaking First Nations protocols. Concerns raised in the interviews include access to sensitive material such as personal information, writings and images relating to sacred events and objects; protection of fragile recordings; use of material in archives and libraries to validate or marginalize First Nations experiences and knowledge; and reconnecting people with their materials which are held in archives, libraries and museums.

The previous chapter mentioned people's concerns that recording knowledge or information can facilitate distortions of knowledge or misuse of information. In the interviews, participants also discussed approaches for protecting knowledge from distortion and misuse, including traditional protocols relating to sharing and not sharing knowledge as well protocols regarding use of knowledge. A dominant approach to protecting First Nations knowledge has been to withhold it from outsiders or people who lack proper preparation, training and permissions. Some situations restrict access to knowledge, while others permit unrestricted access but restrict other types of use. For example, there are songs, dances and stories known and witnessed by everyone in communities which can not be told or performed without permission. First Nations have traditional principles and protocols which regulate knowledge sharing and use. Many extend protocols about sharing and use of knowledge to recording and publishing

knowledge. These protocols and restrictions are intended to protect not only the knowledge itself but also people from harm, fragile plants from extinction and cultural places from desecration.

INTEGRATING FIRST NATIONS AND WESTERN PROTOCOLS FOR MANAGING KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION

The decision whether to record ideas, information or knowledge can be complex within First Nations communities. Once information is recorded, whether according to or despite traditional protocols, the concerns about misuse and misinterpretation discussed earlier remain. These concerns shape decisions and fears about outsiders and other community members accessing this recorded information. Since First Nations knowledge and education have been so severely disrupted, the protocols which were effective for maintaining knowledge may be problematic for reclaiming or revitalizing knowledge. During the interviews, participants discussed protecting First Nations knowledge and objects within Western institutions through both traditional First Nations protocols and also through Western practices. Seepeetza talks of the importance of respect for knowledge, rather than payment:

There's different protocols for each cultural groups, a person would have to look into those. I don't think that there is a grand formula designed yet for dealing with all aboriginal culture groups but I think that there are some things that are fairly prevalent among all of the nations. One of them being, to have a respectful attitude for knowledge.⁴⁷

Of the ten people interviewed, eight used the word "respect" and four used the word "protocols" in relation to managing or caring for knowledge. Rather than put the knowledge in the archives, libraries and museums, Jeannette Armstrong recommends that

⁴⁷ Sterling, interview.

the protocols and routes to find the knowledge should be kept instead. Noting that public libraries don't typically include dentists' textbooks in their collections:

*Well, it's the same way in the Indian world. Why would you put all the information about all the cures and the doctoring, and all the different things that you need to do to heal somebody [openly accessible]? **You would put the information as how to access that person who specializes in that or how to do the right protocols in order to get that work done for you.** But you don't need to fill your shelf up with [everything they know]. Not unless you're an anthropologist wanting to be famous for being an expert in Indian stuff. [laughs]. ... So in our traditions, it's the same way. We have protocols – in western world the protocol is you [the dentist needs] the training: you have [to have] the license with the Ph.D. after your name and you've [the patient has] got to have the money to pay for the service. That's the protocols. For us, there's different kinds of protocols. You might need to have a license and a Ph.D. from our perspective. You need to have the permission to do and to know certain things. You need to have the training. So to me people need to clearly understand that.⁴⁸ [emphasis added]*

In this sense, libraries would be expected to provide guidance on how knowledge should be used as well as how it can be accessed. Linda Armstrong also expresses concerns about the use of knowledge available in libraries:

We probably have more in depth and accurate information [about Okanagan knowledge] than the archive or the library or the museum. like, Because what we're concerned with is just our area and a lot of the information that they have is really general. We're always very concerned about who is accessing information and what for because a lot of times the only reason [people want] the knowledge is for some kind of a gain and it's usually a financial gain.⁴⁹

Most participants who discussed control as permission to access knowledge would like to see First Nations have more ability to restrict access to knowledge which is available through public institutions. Bruce would prefer a different approach:

In a sense I would like to work towards a system – certainly in a First Nations culture – where we adequately support the people that are imparting the knowledge. The Elders should be well-cared for and well revered. We make sure that they are never abused and they are always treated in a respectful way. Once that's having been done, I think that we would be less worried about what happened to their words. ... They didn't do it [record their knowledge] with the view to saying, 'hide

⁴⁸ Jeannette Armstrong, interview.

⁴⁹ Linda Armstrong, interview.

it, put it under your bed.' Unfortunately when we do that and we don't have the systems for caring for the knowledge, the knowledge dies. Sooner or later it'll degenerate: it won't copy properly; we'll forget where we put it. Even the best of all archives, the museum in Alexandria, they want all over the world to gather knowledge, all over the known world, and then a visiting conquer decided to burn it. And we've lost most of our knowledge of that part of human history. So copyright: I would like to see people move towards supporting the people that create [knowledge] rather than worry quite as much about how it is used. Don't ask me how this can be done; this is such a big problem.⁵⁰

Bruce discusses copyright issues as an access concern, as when they requested and received the publisher's permission to make a digital version of the book, *The Plains Cree*,⁵¹ freely available over the internet. He strives to provide people with the information they require, and has experience with First Nations people who are looking for information which is not contained in published material.

We get into the ownership question constantly. Somebody goes onto reserve and records a bunch of interview tapes. Who owns the tapes? Is it the Elders and their descendants? What if they didn't sign proper documentation? That's some of the obstacles. I think that's going to be solved somewhat by a relaxation somewhat on the question of ownership. Because we're talking raw materials here and perhaps we can say that it's, we got to differentiate between historical knowledge and perhaps the creative knowledge that comes out of interpreting that. I'm hopeful that that question of ownership won't become too much of an obstacle.⁵²

The differences between this perspective and other participants' desire for strengthening traditional protocols to regulate access and use of First Nations knowledge are the most noticeable within the interview data. At least in part, these differences reflect concerns for very different types of knowledge (medical knowledge and community histories) and very different types of information needs (evidence for legal claims in the Canadian courts systems and insight for reviving or maintaining traditional culture). They need to be addressed, in part through further dialogue and awareness. With the range of different

⁵⁰ Bruce, interview.

⁵¹ David Goodman Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree*, vol. XXXVII, pt. II, *Anthropological papers of the American museum of natural history*. (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1940).

⁵² Bruce, interview.

types of First Nations knowledge – such as personal and community histories; myths; songs; environmental and specialized knowledge – a combination of approaches may be needed just as there are different ways of managing public domain, personal and government knowledge in Western society. Participants recommended that mainstream institutions develop projects or programmes regarding First Nations knowledge slowly, checking with First Nations communities before making decisions regarding aboriginal materials. For example, Brown want to see the development of more guides on how to access and use the services of mainstream institutions; noting that publishing these guides on the internet would be more welcomed by communities than publishing the images of First Nations materials, particularly any images owned by aboriginal families.

VALIDATING KNOWLEDGES AND EXPERIENCES

Validation is not a concept from the interview questions, but was raised by several participants. Brown and Tizya used the word "validating;" others raised the concept without using that term. Participants raised concerns about validating First Nations' views about knowledge; validating First Nations history and culture; validating individuals' experiences; and the challenge of preserving the traces of racism in the historical record without validating racist ideas. They spoke specifically about museums and archives without mentioning libraries.

Tizya and Brown both use the term "validate." It is not a concept common to archival and library theory or practice; but it is important in relation to First Nations materials, First Nations users and First Nations communities. Within museums studies, it

is an aspect of the politics of representation. Validating indigenous knowledge systems is one of the roles that Smith identifies for librarians.⁵³

Brown noted that her work in museums is based on her respect for the ways in which different First Nations care for their knowledge:

*My whole work is in respecting the different knowledge. [While] Western museums [tend to look at] First Nations as information sources, some are just **starting** to acknowledge that **are more than just a place to get information, but a different type of information system or knowledge.** It's really hard to use words like "information" or "knowledge" or "intellectual property". **everything is intertwined, and to me it's really important that programs like that [library and information studies] need to be more informed and acknowledge and validate what knowledge management is to First Nations.***⁵⁴

When museums claim copyright of exhibits of First Nations materials, they are invalidating the First Nations' protocols and intellectual property rights, as well as their ongoing connection with those materials. Tizya notes that Western information systems tend to dominate rather than coexist with other types of knowledge.

*There is a lot of political interest and economic interest in keeping a large amount of information, not just from the Indian public but from the non-Indian public too, and from the world. I think with many people their instincts [tells them that] there's something more to this but there's nothing there to really prove it. If we go simply on our instincts, scientific approach says, "No, you can't believe that. You believe it when we see the evidence." What's the evidence?*⁵⁵

Tizya continues:

*I think in some ways I find that archives are really valuable. I look at the Canadian world as you could say through the eyes of the colonized because I think it's important to do that. It's important to understand that genocide is taking place and because of the genocide, **so much** information is used to derail Indian hopes and dreams, it's used to **diminish** Indian self worth and identity – that so much of the information is **there**, in some ways, to take people in universities and empower them*

⁵³ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, "Decolonizing Indigenous Knowledge: summary of paper," in *Proceedings: First International Indigenous Librarians' Forum*, ed. Robert Sullivan ([Auckland, NZ]: Te Ropu Whakahau, 2001).

⁵⁴ Brown, interview.

⁵⁵ Tizya, interview.

*to diminish Indian people. To make us feel **less than** human in so many ways, whether it's intellectually or physically or the colour of our skin, or whatever.*⁵⁶

Seepeetza notes that individual researchers often fail to validate the knowledge of the people they interview:

*So it's really important I think, to engage the cultural professors not only in acquiring data but also interpreting it. Giving them a chance – reading it back to them – and giving them a chance to comment on their understanding of the information they've given. ... I think that it's **respectful** to go back and share what you've made of [their information] and ask them, "What do you think about [what I have done with] your statements?" "Am I on the wrong track?" or, "What do you think about what I've made of [your information]" I think that whole process is just simply respectful. That is a big word. Aboriginal ways of **respecting** are somewhat different. Because respect is an attitude based on beliefs, so if we believe differently then obviously there's a good chance that we may have different attitudes and predispositions.*⁵⁷

Respect and First Nations protocols relating to respect are also part of First Nations knowledge systems. Many aboriginal people have expressed concerns regarding validating aboriginal people as experts of their own culture and fields of knowledge, rather than as informants for outside experts. Jeffries and Bonaparte demonstrate that the need to document First Nations history often comes from the outside. While the Schelt elders recorded “the history, the territory, what happened in those territories, those parts of our land, the people that lived there, the traditional use study [and the Indian names] for all our territories, all the rivers and mountains; everything.” Many of the records managed by the MCA are correspondence and reports to outside agencies such as government agencies, foundations and legal agencies; much of their records relate to the needs and procedures of those agencies.

Tizya discussed how discusses the inaccessibility of First Nations materials in museums and archives, speculating that:

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Sterling, interview.

I understand there's a giant room [in the museum] full of Indian materials, button blankets and copper shields and tons of stuff that Indian people aren't aware of; they're not allowed in to see it. So things like that are the nature of the beast. I think Indian people, we have to have the attitude that all of this is not there for our best interests. Why they want to hide that stuff away, I don't know.

Is it because they don't want the younger generations of Indian people to know how really powerful our ancestors were? How rich they were? Do they want to continue this idea that we were poverty stricken, like Chief Justice McEachern said "nasty brutish and short" and stuff like that?⁵⁸

Tizya values the ability to see the historical record of mainstream perception of aboriginal people:

In Canada, the colonialism that's still here creates a lot of caution in Indian people in how we use a lot of these materials. At the same time it's interesting to see how the non-Indian people perceived Indian people.⁵⁹

Burant draws a connection between the descriptive work of archivists and preserving those perspectives in the record. He also distinguishes between retaining the ability to see those perceptions within the archival record and validating those perspectives:

*This [knowledge management] is another thing that we've have been working with over the past 15 years at the here at the National Archives, [by] making sure that we try and provide a good context. For example, good identification – working if possible with the communities – to try to identify the individuals [in photographs]; making sure that the kinds of descriptions we provide are not considered offensive, or otherwise inappropriate **but** at the same time preserving the original information because that too provides a context. [For] example, the Métis National Council has contacted us because they object to certain kinds of terminology that's used in our [descriptions]. We no longer use terms like 'half-breed' or what we might consider inappropriate language in our **title** fields but because we have to preserve that information so people **know** – we **do** include it in our inscription fields. We make sure that we record the original inscriptions, we also will make a note about when this was done. The government did use the term 'half-breed commission' for a long period of time. You can't deny the history when one is recording information about the object regardless of whether or not that may offend people in the present or in future. You can't take away that, you can't erase history and I think it's important to preserve that. So, that's one of the things that good knowledge management should do. Taking care to ensure the appropriateness of one's descriptive record but also*

⁵⁸ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* ([London]: [Andrew Crooke], 1651). cited by Allan McEachern, *Delgamuukw v. the Province of British Columbia and Canada: reasons for judgment of the Honourable Chief Justice Allan McEachern* ([Victoria, B.C.]: [Queen's Printer], 1991), 13. cited by Tizya, interview.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

*making sure you don't erase the historical record however pleasant or unpleasant that may be for whatever community's involved. First Nations communities are not the only communities that object to kinds of [terms] that appear; words like "nigger" or "chink" [and] all those kinds of very derogatory terms have appeared in labeling of photographs [and] of works of art. We of course don't use them for the titles but we certainly have to record that as inscription information, make notes about the context in which those words were used. [We] try and present that as far as we can, and I think this is the role of an archivist making sure that the history of those collections and those items don't get forgotten in the **rush to not offend**, I guess is maybe the best way of putting it. There has to be an understanding of how knowledge has changed as much as what knowledge is. So that's an important question for me, in terms of how we've dealt with First Nations records, particularly in the photographic and artistic media. Certainly in the context of government record keeping, you can't deny that that kind of terminology was used in the past. Good knowledge management shouldn't deny the past. It has to make sure that the past is understood and explained and contextualized well enough so that people understand why things are like they are. That to me is what good knowledge management should be, is making sure that you're not wiping out something in the past because somehow or other it's inappropriate to the present. The present and the past are intertwined. In order to understand the present **and** the future, you have to understand the past in all of its contexts. Knowledge is a continuum. [We can't say] "let's stop this here, and wipe the slate clean and move on."⁶⁰*

Maintaining a record of the racism terms that have been used in the titles of historical documents, art and other records is an important aspect of preserving that history.

Keeping these terms in the archival description without using them as titles is one approach to balancing this need to preserve the records of racism without validating past racist perspectives. This example illustrates the connection between the archival description, access and the preservation of the context of the record. If racist terms were deleted from these records, it would be more difficult to interpret them in light of the racist perspectives which created them. Adding more search terms to the archival description, such the First Nations own name and more abstract terms such as "aboriginal" or "First Nations" build access paths for people who would not think of using the racist term to find materials. The next section looks at the participants'

⁶⁰ Burant, interview.

perspectives on the ways that archives, libraries and museums organize their holdings and how it facilitates or hinders access.

FIRST NATIONS PROTOCOLS WITHIN FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGE CENTRES

The participants described several specific practices or approaches which integrate protocols into the practices of First Nations knowledge centres. These knowledge systems should reflect the relationships in aboriginal cultures; they should be based on how things fit together rather than attempt to define or dominate them. They should not attempt to separate First Nations knowledge into little packages but rather link it to First Nations living cultures in a way which permits them to grow together. These systems will be built on words and ideas used by and relevant to the community so that the search tools are not a barrier to accessing information. Okanagan protocols for the care of Okanagan knowledge should be respected by Okanagan people and by Western institutions. First Nations knowledge systems should be based on First Nations perspectives on good knowledge management, not just Western information professions' standards. They should respect and validate First Nations protocol systems and societies. Principles of good management should be defined by First Nations communities for own materials: without seeking a set of standards which would be applied to all First Nations materials. First Nations knowledge systems should include what is considered appropriate access and is ethical and respectful. People should "hesitate before taking any kind of step into knowledge acquisition" until they know what is ethical and respectful.⁶¹ First Nations should maintain or recover control of their own intellectual

⁶¹ Sterling, interview.

property.⁶² Knowledge centres should use space, computers, classification systems and other tools to realize the directions of the elders. For example, physical layout can be designed to assist in implementing the protocols for different access restrictions for all the different types of knowledge for each community, which is Jeannette Armstrong's dream for the En'owkin's library. Similarly, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne Archives plans to postpone acquiring sensitive cultural knowledge until they have determined appropriate access restrictions and created a proper space for it.

DISCUSSION

BRIDGING CORE VALUES

Many of the concerns raised by participants relate to the core values of archivists, librarians, museums curators and the core values embedded in First Nations protocols. These core values relate to the integrity of knowledge, protection of people's privacy, truthfulness, openness, accountability, and intellectual freedom. In some of the examples discussed above, these core values seem to be in conflict. Determining whether they are truly in conflict is difficult in situations where the people involved do not share a common vocabulary and do not know each other's core values. In situations where there are real conflicts in values, they are not necessarily irresolvable. To use a Western example, respect for copyright ownership is based on restricting access while intellectual freedom and freedom to read are based on open access yet they coexist. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy legislation involves similar tensions between restricting and facilitating access to records; they can be balanced and mediated. These

⁶² Doris M Schoenhoff, *The Barefoot Expert: the interface of computerized knowledge systems and indigenous knowledge systems, Contributions to the study of computer science* (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1993).

types of differences in core values would be impossible to reconcile if people do not discuss them or are unable to communicate about them.

Bonaparte, Tizya and Seepeetza expressed frustration with the misrepresentation, inaccuracy and racism in some of the materials in archives and libraries, expressing concern that these materials do or could reinforce and validate racist and harmful ideas. None of them recommended removing these materials. Tizya and Burant mention the importance of having a record of past racism. Bonaparte, Burant, and Tizya all respond to this concern with recommendations that serve to better contextualize the materials.⁶³ Tizya seeks to connect the racist materials with people who have experienced the racism documented in the records. Burant recommends more thoughtful use of the descriptive record in ways to retain the history and links to the racism without validating the racism itself. Bonaparte sees the publication of more books by Native authors as a solution. None of these approaches are challenging to the archives, libraries and museums professions but rather established practices. However, the frustrations expressed were very real regardless of the compatibility.

Both raising awareness of institutional core values and increasing programs to implement them may be needed to address potential conflicts between these values. Burant considers librarians' educational work regarding intellectual freedom to be a possible model for archivists to raise awareness of the work they do, their values, and the significance of what they do.

⁶³ See also Lotsee Patterson and Rhonda Taylor, "Getting the Indian Out of the Cupboard: Using Information Literacy to Promote Critical Thinking," *Teacher Librarian* 28 (2000).

In contrast to Tizya's concern that archivists will bar access or even destroy records to protect government or church agencies, archival ethics focus on respecting the record rather than the records' creator. David Horn writes:

As is evident in many statements of the current code, archivists should see their role as more than the protection of their own interests or those of their institutions. The privacy of individuals is often affected by the revelation of the contents of records. Since those people are not able to speak for themselves, archivists should take their rights into consideration.⁶⁴

PROTECTING KNOWLEDGE

First Nations and other indigenous groups have expressed concerns regarding varying forms of appropriation for decades; internationally there is a growing dialogue centred on the concept of indigenous people "protecting" their knowledge. Indigenous people and the growing numbers of indigenous scholars educated within Western institutions have responded to colonization and cultural appropriation for several years without specifically writing about knowledge systems or the nature of indigenous knowledge. These efforts are referred to as "writing back" or "researching back" within postmodernist studies. Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* describes many of the types of research that indigenous communities have used, including testimonials, remembering, connecting, claiming, story-telling, protecting and sharing.⁶⁵ Recently, international indigenous leaders have focussed more directly on their own knowledge and knowledge systems because of their concerns about globalization, cultural appropriation and commodification of their knowledges. They have responded through a wide range of

⁶⁴ David E. Horn, "The Development of Ethics in Archival Practice," *American Archivist* 52 (1989). See also Luciana Duranti, "ACA 1991 Conference Overview," *ACA Bulletin* 15, no. 6 (1991): 25.; Barbara Craig, "What are the Clients? Who are the Products? The Future of Archival Public Services in perspective," *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990-91) Barbara Craig, "What are the Clients? Who are the Products? The Future of Archival Public Services in perspective," *Archivaria* 31, no. Winter 1990-91 (1991): 141.; S.N. Prasad, "The Liberalisation of Access and Use," in *Archivum* 26 (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1979).

⁶⁵ "Twenty-five indigenous projects" in Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 1999.

creative local, regional and international approaches including international symposiums and conferences such as *First International Conference on the Cultural & Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in New Zealand in 1993 which led to the *Mataatua Declaration*; the Fulbright symposium *Indigenous Cultures in an Interconnected World* held in Darwin, Australia in 1997; the *Protecting Knowledges: Traditional Resource Rights in the New Millennium* conference hosted by the Union of BC Indian Chiefs, in Vancouver 2000; and the International Indigenous Librarians' Forums in New Zealand, Sweden, and the United States.⁶⁶ Apart from these contexts, First Nations and other indigenous cultural leaders may have had little interest in or need for describing or articulating their information systems or their "ways of knowing." As Linda Tuhuwai Smith points out, the priorities for research agendas for indigenous peoples are affected by outside forces, and must often "[respond] to immediate crises rather than a planned approach."⁶⁷ Indigenous groups consider the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), Indigenous Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), data mining of medicinal and other types of traditional knowledge, and patenting of plants which are important to indigenous peoples to be crises. Publications by indigenous authors reflect these concerns as well, such as *Decolonizing Methodologies* and *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage*.⁶⁸ In general, these authors are not concerned with improving access to traditional knowledge, nor with the pragmatic or theoretical issues relating to its

⁶⁶ First International Conference on the Cultural & Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples., "The Mataatua Declaration on Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights of Indigenous Peoples," (Whakatane, Aotearoa, New Zealand: 1993); "Protecting Knowledge: traditional resource rights in the new millennium" (paper presented at the Protecting Knowledge: traditional resource rights in the new millennium, [Vancouver, BC], 2000); Claire Smith and Graeme Ward, *Indigenous Cultures in an Interconnected World* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2000).

⁶⁷ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 1999: 116.

⁶⁸ Marie Battiste and James Youngblood Henderson, eds., *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage: a global challenge, Purich's aboriginal issues series* (Saskatoon: Purich, 2000).; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 1999.

storage or organization. A primary goal is to have traditional knowledge recognized, acknowledged and validated. These authors want traditional knowledge and knowledge keepers to be involved in decision-making which affects indigenous people and their environment but also want to keep this knowledge protected from commercialization or misuse: often this is ensured by **preventing** outside access to it **except** through its caretakers (elders). There is no discussion about creating information surrogates (catalogues or record descriptions), or extracting knowledge into other forms or bodies of knowledge. They have a well-founded concern that information surrogates will be used as a substitute for consultation – as a mechanism to prevent people from asserting their aboriginal rights or participating in decision-making processes that will profoundly affect their homes and lives. The indigenous community's response to these concerns includes legal means so much of the vocabulary used in these discussions reflects a legal context, i.e. "intellectual property" and "intellectual property rights."

There are several statements by indigenous peoples about concerns about their knowledge such as the *Mataatua Declaration* and the *Spirit of the Conference Statement* from the *Protecting Knowledge* conference. Ongoing forums relating to protecting knowledge and indigenous intellectual property rights could be productive places for discussion of core values.

CHAPTER 5

ORGANIZING KNOWLEDGE FRAGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Participants' concerns regarding sharing knowledge and restricting access to knowledge fragments also relate to the ways in which knowledge centres and institutions organize their knowledge. Some aspects of collections management systems track the physical location of the holdings, providing an ability to locate materials. Other aspects, such information regarding donor restrictions and copyright in archival descriptions, facilitate implementation of restrictions on access or use governed by law, agreements or institutional policy. Collections management systems such as classification systems, name authorities, and subject heading are the tools which provide intellectual access; they facilitate use by helping researchers find relevant materials within an institution's holdings. These systems facilitate access and use of the knowledge fragments.

The differing mandates of archives, libraries and museums shape the ways in which they organize their holdings. Participants note that some of the ways that materials are organized are problematic for First Nations information needs. Participants suggest ways to address these problems.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ARCHIVES, LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS

Despite their similarities, archives, libraries and museums have differing mandates and theoretical foundations. Their holdings are their most prominent aspect; they are generally characterized by the format of their collections. However the institutions' reasons for acquiring and keeping them differ more than the format of their collections. The work of these institutions reflect their professions' ethical and theoretical bases in ways which affect the design of their search tools and accordingly the

ways that people need to search them to find what they need. The similarities and differences in the ways they organize their collections reflect their values and mandates as well as the nature of their collections.

ORGANIZING FIRST NATIONS MATERIALS

The ways that archives, libraries and museums organize their holdings affects access to them. Participants discussed the usefulness of Western approaches to organizing information, the difficulties they see in these approaches, and suggestions for addressing those difficulties.

VALUE OF WESTERN APPROACHES TO ORGANIZING

Joseph, Linda Armstrong, Bonaparte, and Jeannette Armstrong discussed aspects of western information management that they considered to be suited for organizing First Nations materials. Joseph provided the most direct statement about the value of Western systems for organizing materials in archives and libraries for First Nations communities:

[The ways in which] archives and libraries¹ handle information is relevant and useful for First Nations today mainly because the information that we are capturing about First Nations people is always on paper or tape recorded so it is a Western type of capturing of the information that we're handling. Western libraries and archives have been set up to handle that type of information so it makes sense to me to use it rather than trying to reinvent something totally new or different. That would be my basic reasoning for it: they do handle it because it's the format we're looking at. We're no longer necessarily only talking about oral traditions: we're talking about written, digitized, taped information. There's no real difference I think in that kind of format and what any other library anywhere in the world has.²

The En'owkin Library has a manual cataloguing system with Brian Deer classification and subject headings. While it is useable, Linda Armstrong would prefer a computer system and thinks that all bands and Native Organizations need good library software.³

¹ Joseph notes that she doesn't have strong connections to museums. Unless otherwise noted, all references to the participants are from the interviews with the author.

² Joseph, interview.

³ Linda Armstrong, interview.

Bonaparte identifies two important potential benefits possible from integrating databases within Mohawk government agencies. It could help coordinate research so that each department could draw on the research of others.

DIVERGENCE BETWEEN WESTERN AND FIRST NATIONS APPROACHES

Participants discussed areas where western approaches to organizing these materials are problematic. The differences in worldview between First Nations and rest of Canada relates in part to differences in how each cultural group categorizes things and ideas; these differences impact the use of language and the connections between things in culture. This affects both the ways that people organize their own information and the way in which they look for information. Tizya identifies a fundamental difference in worldviews which is difficult to reconcile with cataloguing systems:

If we look at the indigenous point of view of how we interpret the world, I think the indigenous people have to look at entirely different systems to organize information and it has to organize information in how that information fits in the world, not how it defines the world because none of us are capable of defining it, and this is what I find that science tries to do.

[Science tries to define the world]. People that take philosophy try to do that. People who are in theology want to do that. When in fact if we could just leave the world alone for a while and look at: "why is this flower in the world the way it is? Why is this human being in the world? Why are these ideas in the world, the way they are? Why are we thinking the way we do?" That's the Indian reality isn't it; that's how we are raised. We're raised to look at why are we in the world, the way we are. Not to try to suit someone else's view but to take our place in life. Information systems don't do that. They're always trying to tell us how we should fit. It's all about domination. I think that's what I resist the most.

[The way I was raised] didn't tell me to dominate one or the other, or to try to change one or the other but to see how we can coexist. And that's how we [First Nations people] are raised.⁴

Naming and defining the world is at the heart of cataloguing. Cataloguing itself is profoundly different from the narratives which are at the heart of oral traditions. It would

⁴ Tizya, interview.

be difficult to imagine a cataloguing system which is not based on definitions.

Cataloguing may be useful for organizing First Nations materials and yet be ineffective for organizing First Nations knowledge.

First Nations have bodies of knowledge about the world, as can be seen in Jeannette Armstrong's description of Okanagan cultural knowledge in chapter 2. Some of this knowledge is encoded into aboriginal languages, including in complex categories which can be very different from Western categories.⁵ These categories are called "indigenous classification systems" in the academic literatures. Existing library and museum classification systems, based on Western worldviews, do not reflect First Nations perceptions of their own knowledge. For example, the relationship between art and these others aspects of culture are closely connected in ways which are not inherent in the English language. As Dunker's research with Maori students indicates, mainstream search tools are based on Western theories and classification systems so are not effective for Maori people searching for information about their cultures. Bonaparte's experience brings her to the same conclusion for Mohawk people's research about their culture and history. When a communities' own words, names and categories are not incorporated into the catalogues, finding aids, indexes and other search tools, its members' research will be hindered. Few mainstream archives, libraries and museums have attempted to incorporate First Nations perspectives, concepts, and wording into their search tools.⁶ Bonaparte notes that the communities' names and terminology is probably more appropriate for their culture and history, but First Nations researchers have to learn

⁵ Jeffrey E. Mauger and Janine Bowe chop, *Tribal Collections Management at the Makah Cultural and Research Centre*, vol. Two, *Perspectives: A Resource for Tribal Museums* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1995); Nancy Shoemaker, "Categories," in *Clearing a Path: theorizing the past in Native American studies*, ed. Nancy Shoemaker (New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁶ The Maori subject headings committee is an exception.

the mainstream search terms in order to find the information they need. Language is an important aspect of access which is problematic for First Nations. Linda Armstrong mentions that none of the existing library classification systems were effective for En'owkin to organize their materials and were particularly ineffective for their specialized knowledge. She emphasized the importance of understanding the needs of your community when developing or adapting a library system.

As discussed in chapter 3, published materials and general library materials do not address all First Nations information needs. Accordingly, knowledge institutions or knowledge centres must provide intellectual access to gray literature and other unpublished materials in order to be relevant to First Nations information needs. When assessing the value of libraries as a model for managing First Nations information and knowledge, Bruce evaluates libraries' management of non-book materials:

I could probably fault us with being too much in a rut with our own processes and procedures and sometimes we tend to forget about the people aspect of things. We have all sorts of funny policies that people don't know anything about. We're also too accustomed to formats of information. We're really biased towards books and we tend to shy away from media because it's awkward for us to catalogue and process. We like computers because it gives us text information fast and furiously, and it's indexed and we can understand the tools to get the information. We're very poor at handling people as information.⁷

Libraries, archives and museums do not hold all the kinds of information First Nations people need. Archives and museums hold unique materials which are important aspects of First Nations heritage; more material is held by community members and within private collections outside of communities. Because of the sheer volume of these diverse materials which are undescribed or poorly documented – whether within archives,

⁷ Bruce, interview.

libraries and museums or outside of them – developing tools to provide intellectual access to them is a concern.

They'll going to have to have the eye for picking out the detail that we want to get the access to. ... There's a challenge to preserve, to digitize, to organize; I don't think it's going to be solved by us trying to do everything either. We're going to have to get the people [who already understand the information]; when I was involved with the making CDs from Elder interviews, we hired somebody who spoke the language of the interviewed Elders and [told them]: "When you find something interesting, just note it down " and so she'd note something like "they talked about traditional fishing techniques, they talked about the growing lack of respect for older people" and identified the place on [the tapes] that they did it; [she] hit all the highlights. I think we need some preliminary survey work done on all this material."⁸

Because the access tools differ between museum catalogues, archival descriptions and finding aids, library catalogues and periodical indexes, neither a single search nor a single search strategy will get people what they need. First Nations researchers need to learn a broad range of search skills, strategies, and tools to effectively gather their community's information. As Burant notes, this problem does not hinder First Nations researchers alone but any researchers looking for geographically and historically located materials.

When looking at the differences between information and specialized knowledge, Jeannette Armstrong indicated that people who are "culturally illiterate in English" have difficulty finding information in libraries, so libraries should be made more usable for these people. This supports Dunker's finding that the library metaphor is not effective for computer interface design for people who are not familiar with libraries. Similarly, Seepetzta notes that students who come to university from cities may be more comfortable with computers, media and library systems than students from rural areas so different approaches could make the library more usable for people without those skills.

⁸ Ibid.

Library classification systems and call numbers as ways of organizing information can also be a barrier to searching for information:

I find it daunting probably because of the alphanumeric system. I know that they symbolize certain things but to me it's rather obscure. And I think if you grew up in Western societies you become accustomed to these things from a very early age, and you don't think twice about being able to use such a system. But if you come from an area where these are not common you can be very daunted by alphanumeric symbols. I honestly don't know why it would be so difficult to write simple directions for finding certain information. I think that there are these assumptions on the part of these experts that everybody knows what they're talking about anyway and it's not true. It is very confusing sometimes.⁹

Another problem is the multitude of names imposed on First Nations, their bands communities and reserves. Burant indicates that researchers need to be aware of these various names for comprehensive searches. Naming is also an important area of language and access:

By and large, our records of Native communities [use] the white name for the community, like the Golden Lake Indian Reserve 64 whereas the community has renamed itself Pikwakanagan. [Although] they refer to themselves by that community name, all of the records still deal with Golden Lake Indian Reserve. Those kind of cross references aren't necessarily built into systems; partly that's because First Nations don't tell us but partly because we are not always aware of how these changes are occurring within the communities. I'm not sure how easy that would be to change, partly because we don't have things like common name authorities.¹⁰

While First Nations have many names for their communities and places in their territories, they must now learn all the spelling variants of these names as well as any new English or French names given by settlers and explorers.

⁹ Sterling, interview.

¹⁰ Burant, interview.

RESPONSES TO CHALLENGES FOR ORGANIZING KNOWLEDGE

Participants also had suggestions for addressing some of the problems discussed above. Several solutions can be implemented at individual institutions and others require cooperation across institutions or professions.

Use of Western methods

One solution is to adopt relevant Western tools and approaches for appropriate First Nations information and materials.¹¹ Bruce offers metaphors for thinking about the work required to identify and care for the gray literature needed to meet First Nations information needs:

I guess it's like an archaeologist of old that said: "first of all let me get the materials in a safe dry spot." Now we've got to get the information while people still have it, the data from the Elders, and get it at least in a digital form that we know is not going to be lost and trust to the future, I guess, to what to do with it.

And probably we have to view that in the matter of, I don't know, of an early surveyor, who went through the land and noted [the main landmarks and trails] in journals and so on: I think our First Nations research people are going to be like that. They're going to be like surveyors in very old land, very peculiar stuff.¹²

The challenges include identifying, locating, documenting or acquiring and organizing these types of information. Western print and computer based tools such as indexes and inventories as well as catalogues and archival descriptions are effective for those types of challenge.

Incorporate narrative approach

Another solution would be to develop more guides as an alternative access path to indexing and classification. Since the library call numbers and classification can be a barrier for some people, Seepeetza suggested that libraries find more narrative and less

¹¹ Burant, interview. Joseph, interview. Bonaparte, interview. Linda Armstrong, interview. As noted in chapter 3, First Nations people and communities are writing and recording their knowledge and information: these writings and recordings need to be managed.

¹² Ibid.

technical ways to explain how to find information and use computers and databases.

Burant, Seepetzta and Bruce all suggested a more readable approach: "You [can] use narrative approach sometimes. It might be better to try to get away a little bit from the technological language and try to be a little more narrative."¹³ People value the development of narrative guides for researching for all types of institutions: Bonaparte and Bruce for libraries; Burant for archives and Bonaparte and Brown for museums.

Burant suggests:

Providing better research guides for Native communities for First Nations, indicating where [the] best sources of information [can be expected]. The difficulty is that – is to be a good researcher, to know what's out there – you have to have really good research methodologies and techniques. Of course that's the other thing that we as institutions don't provide for any of our researchers. We don't or at least we haven't until very recent times provided researcher guides: the tools that tell people how to find things. [We need to tell them more than] "here are our finding aids". [We should tell them] "in order to find what you're looking for, these are the routes you might want to take." I liken it to a video game where you can go through all the steps of the video game to try and get somewhere but it would be a lot easier if you had a tip sheet that said, "don't go through that door, go over to that door." For example, for First Nations genealogy we've now built a resource guide: "These are the kinds of things you should be looking for, these are the kinds of records you should be going to". That's a very useful tool ...

We've [the National Archives of Canada has] done that already, to a certain extent, with our Indian Affairs CD-ROM which certainly gives good access to government record keeping. There is the aboriginal genealogical guide, which is a good service to provide. What I'd like to see, and this is something that we haven't done, is I'd like to see better visual documentation or assistance or pointers. A lot of people are interested in seeing pictures of their community as it was and individuals in their community – again not necessarily from a community point of view but from an individual point of view. We don't do enough of that, and we can.¹⁴

This approach and other aspects of First Nations knowledge systems could make

Westerns ways of organizing information more effective for everyone, not just First Nations researchers.

¹³ Sterling, interview.

¹⁴ Burant, interview.

Adapting existing systems

Adapting existing systems has also been productive: local staff knowledgeable about their communities have adapted mainstream library systems. As previously noted, Linda Armstrong talked about using the Brian Deer library classification system, which was developed by a Mohawk librarian and is used in First Nations libraries and cultural education centres across Canada. She finds other systems difficult to use as a researcher because the classification at En'owkin is closely connected to their information needs.

Focus on First Nations information needs

As discussed in chapter 3, First Nations have many information needs which are not addressed by published materials. Bruce also sees a solution in focusing on the users' information needs, rather than the information resources which are closest at hand:

[As] librarians we want to look at one major work and deal with that in an efficient way that's standard. [However] instead of cataloguing physical items [for its content], we're cataloguing for an informational need. ... We need to know [which] questions we really need to answer [and identify] the things that we really need to preserve [because they hold the answers we need]. [We can only] go in the attic and pick out the hundred things we need and forget about the rest. It's unfortunate but I guess we can't locate every atom in the universe. We can only locate what is important to our culture and our history and our language.¹⁵

He shares insight from a previous research project:

A small percentage of items can answer most of our reference questions. Reference librarians gather things around them that are really important: [such as] the almanacs; then a little farther out are other finding aids and the computer; then the encyclopedias; [while] the general information is way out there. Rather than keeping things around [reference librarians] keep a list of questions. [For example] every year somebody wants to know the words to Flander's Fields so they have a little card saying "What are the words to Flander's Fields?" that will direct you very quickly to the book. They catalogue the questions rather than catalogue the work. That's really what I'm suggesting in an organizationally neglected area of First Nations information -- [in] museums and archives. ... It was constantly a matter of frustration to me that people would come into my library with really basic questions [that I couldn't answer]. Somebody would come in with a question: "Everybody's

¹⁵ Bruce, interview.

selling dreamcatchers [but] how did they come to our province, and who brought this idea here?" Seem easy? You look in the reference works for dreamcatchers and you find very little. They're selling them everywhere, everybody's making them, but the roots of it aren't [in any of the publications] yet that what people want to know. We've got to start looking at the answers that people want and working in that direction.¹⁶

Share approaches across archives, libraries and museums

The solutions discussed above look at bridging ways of caring for knowledge between Western and First Nations cultures. Sharing ideas between Western information professions is another:

We – western [information institutions] – haven't explored situations and ideas [such as use of culturally sensitive images] in the Canadian archival community [although it has been discussed] in the American archival community. It's not just [a communication gap] in [the] archival community but it's also between the archives, library and museum communities; [we need] to try to share ideas. [The gap also exists] within [the] larger context of the community as a whole.¹⁷

Awareness of issues, concerns, information needs and protocols could be shared between professions. Burant and Bruce talk about bringing tools from libraries into archives and from archives into libraries. For example, Burant identifies a need for development of more subject access points in archives while Bruce looks at incorporating archival and museum types of acquisition or materials into libraries:

Whereas [most] libraries are recipients of information which they just stamp and take somebody else's cataloguing, we have to go out to the raw knowledge and catalogue, classify and preserve [it]. [We have to] combine the archiving with the circulation of regular materials.¹⁸

He sees value in archival approaches for drawing together diverse types of information which may be scattered through several institutions and other places:

It's almost as if you have a gigantic attic full of stuff – maybe you want to organize it in a new way that's useful to you. [It is not useful to just put it] in neat little piles. A better way would be to [identify what] the things that I really [need]. I'm going on a

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Burant, interview.

¹⁸ Bruce, interview.

quest not to organize the attic [just to] physically mov[e] things around, but rather[to find things that] answer the questions that suit my needs. [For example, you could] open a photo album and say, "There's the pictures of my grandparents going to school. I see the importance in that because we're dealing with the early history of residential schools."

I think [we should] equip people for a different kind of information identification, and free them from the idea that they have to do a traditional shelf by shelf [inventory]. Sometimes archives [use] finding aids, and those are tremendously useful when they are published. We can electronically do that.¹⁹

Finding aids also lend themselves to a narrative approach, which is suggested by several participants.

Cooperate and coordinate

Participants also raise the potential and the need for First Nations and Western information professions and institutions to work together locally and on large scale projects and programs. As quoted above, Joseph hopes that mainstream institutions can support First Nations communities' libraries. Bruce sees opportunity for more creative and grassroots approaches to organizing information in internet projects. Burant sees the importance of coordinating access tools across archives, libraries and museums to really address the challenges faced by First Nations and other researchers.

Bruce looks at the potential of new technology to enable new kinds of collaborative projects that would share work amongst people with differing perspectives who work in different places. He discussed the *First Nations Periodical Index* and the *Aboriginal Art Index* out of the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre (SICC); individuals can add to these databases over the Internet:

Somebody can go on and locally index a periodical or [where] you could conceivably add your own First Nations craftwork. [if you] catalogue it and [post it], it's up with the database. We don't have a method for equaling what Gale Research [does for] major periodicals. But there's no reason why somebody who

¹⁹ Ibid.

worked with Windspeaker [for example] couldn't start working on a tool of indexing [that] couldn't tie in with other people's work. If we could interest some of the major people who have developed the tools for doing this on-line, if they could share that with us, we can probably find the people to share the work of doing it. We can bypass a lot of the hierarchical structure [common to] traditional western knowledge dissemination.²⁰

Projects such as these may address the volume of information which is currently difficult or impossible to access. They also provide opportunity for the First Nations elders, community members and researchers to shape the ways in which their information is identified, or even organized.

Because the catalogues and descriptive records in archives, libraries and museums use different computer systems, different classification systems, different search terminology and are stored in different databases, researchers must learn all the systems and terminology in order to search for information about their community comprehensively or effectively. They cannot find all relevant material with a single search or even a single search strategy. Burant looks at the value of standards and sharing standards between archives, libraries and museums:

It's a really difficult situation when First Nations communities come to big organizations like archives and libraries. They have to go [to] one [institution] at a time. It's like any Canadian [researcher:] you're looking for information [and] you want to make it as easy as possible for yourself. You want to go to a library and find out all [the relevant] information, regardless of whether it's held by the library or the archives or the museum. I'd like to [ask] a library [for] "all the information you have about Golden Lake." I don't just want the books about Golden Lake; I want the archival records about Golden Lake; I want the artifacts about Golden Lake. You can't do that anywhere now. For managing knowledge about First Nations there has to be a more integrated approach: a more seamless kind of integration of the information that you can find in museums and librarians and archives. We haven't gotten anywhere near that goal. We're working towards it [in archives] through the imposition of archival standards, but we're only now just starting to talk about

²⁰ Ibid.

*combining archives, museum and library standards [through collaborations such as] Dublin core, and we're a long way away.*²¹

Bruce's assessment of the tools for improve access to First Nations information resources, such as the *First Nations Periodical Index*, is similar: "we're got a scratch on it now, but it's just a start."²²

DISCUSSION

ADAPTING WESTERN APPROACHES

Adopting Western classification systems and subject headings within First Nations communities and adapting them by incorporating First Nations cultural categories, names and local terminology can help bridge First Nations and Western knowledge systems. These adaptations can provide improved access to First Nations researchers. Adapting these standards to meet local needs is not unusual. Specialized libraries which are not part of First Nations agencies also adapt the standards such as the Library of Congress and Dewey classification systems to reflect local practice and specialized knowledge. Museums have tools and standards such as the *Canadian Heritage Information Network Data Dictionary* to help standardize terminology and use of field codes, but terminology and practice between museums varies considerably. These kinds of adaptations identify areas of practice which may be more responsive to First Nations perspectives or needs: these kinds of adaptations indicate a "permeable limit" in the classification and cataloguing systems.²³

²¹ Burant, interview.

²² Bruce, interview.

²³ Hope A. Olson, *The Power to Name: locating the limits of subject representation in libraries* (Dordrecht [The Netherlands]: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002).

CONTROLLING AND ORGANIZING KNOWLEDGE FRAGMENTS

Concerns about who should access and benefit from First Nations knowledge are reflected in frustrations regarding cataloguing systems. Political issues relating to control of First Nations knowledge fragments and the organization of these fragments are interconnected. The power structures which shape access to information and knowledge organizations result in barriers as well as paths. These barriers may be inadvertent and unintended but result from a series of decisions, values and philosophical frameworks. First Nations people who are traditionally trained have difficulty researching cultural concepts in mainstream knowledge institutions because of the differences in terminology. However people working for non-aboriginal agencies which are in conflict with First Nations are unlikely to face those barriers. The discussions about what information should be shared should also shape **how** that information is shared. The technical aspect of adapting these access tools to be more responsive to Native American needs or First Nations materials is also political, since it will be time consuming to do effectively; it may be difficult to find the necessary funding and willingness to change current practices.

CULTURAL ASPECTS OF ORGANIZING FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGE FRAGMENTS

Western cataloguing, description and classification are effective for many aspects of managing First Nations knowledge fragments. Cataloguing First Nations material within mainstream institutions will be designed for the needs of the general public, but could be adapted to improve service for First Nations users. Many of these adaptations will also improve services for non-Native researchers. Although they may be effective for managing the materials – the objects, records and publications – they are poorly suited to managing holistic First Nations knowledge, including the experiential, sacred and holistic knowledge which is often not entrusted to objects.

Depending upon how they define their role within their community, First Nations knowledge centres may look to developing more innovative collections management systems which incorporate cultural protocols and concepts. Knowledge centres can contribute to the health of their communities as the keepers of the community's knowledge fragments and tangible heritage. In this role, they can provide effective services through basic adaptations to Western systems such as use of appropriate terminology and by inclusion of knowledgeable people in the databases of community resources. They could also seek to become more integral to the revitalization of First Nations knowledge systems, through restoring cultural protocols and development of more innovative approaches to collections management. Perhaps First Nations knowledge centres need to seek to become a vital part of the hybrid oral/ written/ visual/ electronic First Nations knowledge systems, rather than to seek to incorporate First Nations oral traditions into adapted Western systems of managing knowledge. Knowledge centres, regardless of where they are located, will have little credibility with traditionally trained First Nations cultural workers and elders if they do not have a basic knowledge of and respect for the community's protocols. Their ability to support the deeper knowledge will be limited without this credibility.

First Nations knowledge centres need to address problems resulting from past disruptions to First Nations knowledge systems and their limited resources in order to balance divergent and urgent responsibilities. They must find ways to address the urgent preservation concerns raised in chapter 3, such as the need to "bank our languages,"²⁴ while also providing basic appropriate access; they are uniquely positioned to develop

²⁴ Verna J. Kirkness, *Aboriginal Languages: A Collection of Talks and Papers*. (Vancouver: Kirkness, 1998).

more innovative collections management systems which respect First Nations worldviews and philosophies. The next chapter looks at the participants' perspectives on integrating management of diverse materials and the development of relationships between archives, libraries and museums and First Nations communities.

CHAPTER 6

MERGING AND NETWORKING KNOWLEDGE INSTITUTIONS

The previous chapter discussed the benefits that participants see in sharing approaches to organizing materials between archives, libraries and museums. This chapter examines the participants' responses to the idea of "combined approaches" to archives, libraries and museums. All participants who responded to this question considered integration of management of archival, library and museum collections or networking institutions as a way to address problems of fragmentation. The principles of knowledge control, core values of archives, libraries and museums and tools for organizing materials described in the previous two chapters shape both the challenges and benefits of developing networks between knowledge institutions.

Several themes shape the participants' ideas about "combined approaches" including: fragmentation of First Nations knowledge and materials across different types of institutions; lack of funding and trained staff to properly care for materials; and First Nations mistrust of mainstream archives, libraries and museums. The three types of combined approaches they discussed are integration of archival, library and museum collections within institutions; networking between the knowledge institutions; and development of working relationships between First Nations communities and mainstream knowledge institutions. Discussion of these themes in responses to other questions is included in this chapter.

INTERVIEW QUESTION FIVE: COMBINED APPROACHES

Many First Nations knowledge centres¹ have responsibility for at least two types of collections; for example 37 of the 97 tribal libraries listed in the *Directory of Nation American Tribal Libraries* have archival collections.² Some, such as the Heiltsuk Cultural Education Centre, (Bella Bella, British Columbia, Canada,) the Makah Cultural and Research Centre (Neah Bay, Washington State, United States) and the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center (Mashantucket, Connecticut, United States) have archival, library and museum collections and services.³ The Woodland Cultural Centre (Brantford, Ontario, Canada) is a library and museum. In order to explore some of the connections between the different types of information institutions, the fifth question participants were asked was:

5. Archives, libraries and museums usually operate independently from each other, but some agencies have combined these services. How well suited do you think a combined approach like that would be for addressing the concerns or needs of First Nations?

This question was included to examine another aspect of participants' perspectives on aspects of archives, libraries and museums systems. There are discussions within the information literatures about convergence between archives and libraries, but without reference to First Nations materials.

Six participants responded to this question in the interviews; the other four participants did not discuss this topic during their interviews. The question did not

¹ First Nations knowledge centres are often called Resource Centres or Cultural Education Centres in Canada and tribal college libraries and tribal libraries in the United States. See also Claudia Elisabeth J. Haagen, "Strategies for Cultural Maintenance: aboriginal cultural education programs and centres in Canada" (M.A., University of British Columbia, 1990)..

² Lotsee Patterson and Rhonda Taylor, "Directory of Native American Tribal Libraries," (Norman, OK: 1995). See also Lotsee Patterson and Rhonda Taylor, "Tribally Controlled Community College Libraries: A Paradigm for Survival," *College & Research Libraries* 57 (1996).

³ <http://www.hcec.ca/main.html>; <http://www.makah.com/mcrchome.htm>; <http://www.pequotmuseum.org/>

distinguish between mainstream and First Nations institutions; most participants focused on First Nations institutions. Brown and Burant discuss mainstream institutions; Joseph, Bonaparte, Jeannette Armstrong look primarily at First Nations institutions while Bruce looks at both. Of the six participants who discussed this question, all except for Bonaparte saw the separation between archives, libraries and museums as problematic for First Nations' knowledge and needs. In discussions regarding First Nations own institutions, the primary reason given for preferring merged institutions was the need to care for all kinds of materials without sufficient resources to sustain three separate institutions.⁴

MERGED KNOWLEDGE CENTRES AND INSTITUTIONS

Participants' responses consider integrating multiple types of collections, such as archival and library materials, within the same institution or within the same collections management system. Most participants consider these types of merged institutions as a useful approach for First Nations knowledge centres. Most responses focus on the inadequate funding and other resources within First Nations communities. Participants also consider the potential for facilitating community based research as reasons to consider integrated institutions or collections management. Participants also mention mainstream institutions which have two or more types of collections. Most responses focus on the collections, with less mention of integrating the services of differing types of institutions. Patterson and Taylor's survey of tribal college libraries found that several had library and archival collections and services:

⁴ While none of the participants discussed it, the combined approach provides opportunities to consider different ways of managing holistic knowledge.

There was also some indication that the service functions performed by these tribal college libraries resembled those of public library services. Of the sixteen respondents [tribally controlled colleges,] ten (62.5 %) reported engaging in preservation, records management, and/or archival function.⁵

MERGED COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT IN FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGE CENTRES

Joseph, Bonaparte, Jeannette Armstrong and Bruce's responses look at First Nations knowledge centres. Their responses consider integration of the responsibilities of archives, libraries and museums into a single agency as a way to share scarce community resources or to facilitate research of diverse materials. Joseph recommended development of a basic collections management system which encompasses archival, library and museum materials and enables staff to minimally control the physical location of the material. Other participants spoke more generally about housing different types of collections within the same institutions, without discussing collections management systems specifically. Most participants' responses to the idea of integrating responsibilities within a single knowledge centre were positive: "the most reasonable route to go;" "would be very good;" "may be better"; and "would assist for addressing the concerns of First Nations and perhaps is essential."⁶ Bonaparte was the only participant to raise concerns about integrating these responsibilities. She acknowledged this approach as a possible solution given the financial constraints faced by many First Nations communities but emphasized that it was not ideal. Most discussion of the benefits of combining responsibilities focused on archival and library collections.

Integrating collections management systems for archival, library and museum materials implies that they are similar enough to not require different management

⁵ Patterson and Taylor, "Trially Controlled Community College Libraries."

⁶ Bruce, interview; Burant, interview. Unless otherwise noted, all references to the participants are from the interviews with the author.

systems. Bruce feels that the information professions define their work and roles too narrowly, regardless of First Nations needs. He notes that First Nations do not accept those narrow roles for institutions within their own communities.⁷ As noted in chapter 5, there are dramatic differences between the mandates of archives, libraries and museums. The lack of a shared vocabulary between the three information professions and between each profession and First Nations knowledge workers makes it difficult to determine whether two people are considering the same values and materials even when using the same terms. Most participants consider that archival and library materials are similar enough to consider using the same management system for both. As discussed in chapter 3, most participants focus on the informational value of archival and ephemeral material, which contrasts archivists' focus on the evidentiary value of archival records. The urgency to preserve endangered materials and the depth of community need for their knowledge fragments for healing and survival underscores participants' concerns about preservation of irreplaceable materials. Bonaparte sees the distinctions between library, archival and museum work as important and of value to the community, but noted that some communities may not be able to afford three separate institutions.

Joseph and Bonaparte's responses show the most striking divergence in perspectives. Joseph recommends integration of collections within a single space and system for intellectual control in order to address the **basic** needs for preserving and making accessible the collections within a community:

I really do believe that for a First Nation, community or organization that to combine all aspects of libraries, archives and museums is the most reasonable route to go just because of the infrastructure of the community. When you look at the resources – the financial resources or even the available office space – within a First Nation

⁷ Bruce, interview.

community is very limited. You can't have nice little separate organizations or separate buildings or even separate staffing for a museum by itself or an archives by itself or a library. It seems to me that you would want to naturally combine all of your resources and put them together so you would have a centre that would combine the three types of institutions. ...

We would like but we don't necessarily have the expertise or the trained staff to try to go and do complete full Anglo-American cataloguing for the library aspect nor can we expect anybody to go complete full archival description or [full cataloguing] for the museum [objects]. At times we're just trying to get a basic grip on where things are located in your building. [laughs] At times when I've been working in First Nation organizations, if I just had a very simplified system of being able to locate things then that seems to be to be as far as my resources could go. Getting myself into a big tizzy about: "is this archival?" and [whether] I have to do this archival description exactly so to their standards and exactly so to library standards [is unrealistic]. I don't have time or the resources to do that. When I've seen people try to do it, they just get themselves deeper and deeper into a hole that they can't get out of. Perhaps we just need a very simplified system that we can use. ...

We have to just remember that we are talking about a First Nations community and we are always bloody poor and we never know where our next [funding will] come from or if it's going to come.⁸

Joseph does not assert that the standards are irrelevant, but her experience is that they are well beyond the resources of most First Nations knowledge centres. She is aware of the use of archival and informational materials as evidence within the Canadian courts from her experience with the Gitskan/ Wetsuwetin court case;⁹ she also has extensive experience helping to develop First Nations knowledge centres and is aware of their resources and long term challenges. As discussed in Chapter 3, all participants agreed that First Nations knowledge centres are very under funded. Bonaparte's vision of the minimal care needed in First Nations knowledge centres includes different collections management systems for library and archival material:

If [the community has] the budget to be combined but remain autonomous, then go ahead. ... If you have one facility and you have an archivist, a librarian and a museum curator, let them stay separate, if you can afford it. If you absolutely cannot

⁸ Joseph, interview.

⁹ The usefulness of archival materials as legal evidence is different from their evidentiary value.

*afford three people, then maybe the library and the archives could start to work together, but you have to always plan that they'll still be separated later.*¹⁰

In contrast, Jeannette and Linda Armstrong describe integration intellectual control of their collections but want separate physical storage with differing levels of security and access for library and archival materials. As described in Chapter 3, the amount of work needed for preserving and organizing First Nations materials is tremendous; recognition of the gap between work needed and resources available also shapes participants' perspectives on integrating collections management.

MERGED MAINSTREAM KNOWLEDGE INSTITUTIONS

Brown and Burant spoke about mainstream institutions with responsibilities for several types of collections.¹¹ Brown notes that the Museum of Anthropology has an archive and a library as well as their museum collections and services. Burant notes that staff at the Glenbow Museum, Art Gallery, Library and Archives would have valuable insight for these discussions. Both of these institutions employ archivists, librarians and museums professionals with training and qualifications. The different types of collections have their own collections management systems. Most discussion of non-First Nations institutions focused on networking rather than integrating collections.

NETWORKING KNOWLEDGE CENTRES AND INSTITUTIONS

Networking among knowledge institutions is a central theme in many of the interviews. Linda Tehuwai Smith describes networking among indigenous groups:

Networking has become an efficient medium for stimulating information flows, educating people quickly about issues and creating extensive international talking circles. Building networks is about building knowledge and data bases which are based on the principles of relationships and connections. ... Issues such as the Convention on Biodiversity or GATT, for example, are not addressed by mainstream

¹⁰ Bonaparte, interview.

¹¹ Brown, interview. Burant, interview.

*media for an indigenous audience. Indigenous peoples would not know of such agreements and their impact on indigenous cultural knowledge if it were not for the power of networking. The project of networking is about process. Networking is a process which indigenous peoples have used effectively to build relationships and disseminate knowledge and information.*¹²

Networking within and between First Nations communities was discussed by several participants. Burant, Joseph, Bruce and Bonaparte spoke of networks which connect library and archival institutions, such as union databases for sharing catalogue or descriptive records; they also discussed other approaches to connecting institutions and communities, but did not refer to these approaches as "networking." Indigenous networking can benefit from the perspectives of librarians, archivists, and museum professionals as well as the tools they use for managing the material in their care.

NETWORKING FIRST NATIONS KNOWLEDGE CENTRES

Networking within a single First Nations community

First Nations communities frequently have several knowledge centres with differing mandates, collections and resources. Bonaparte wants to develop connections between the MCA archives and the Akwesasne Freedom School library: "On a broader scale, it would help the community if this was all connected [so if] people were looking for information they could come to us or to find her [to get access to information in both institutions]. It's got to be coordinated sometime."

Networking between First Nations communities

Bonaparte would like to connect her archives with the other Mohawk knowledge centres in other Mohawk communities. She would also like to support Mohawk communities that do not have archives or adequate safe storage by offering to store their records until they have developed their own facilities. Burant mentioned that the AFN

¹² Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 156-157.

(Assembly of First Nations) "introduced [initiatives for] better record keeping procedures" to facilitate development of records keeping systems in their member Nations. Joseph promotes networking between several First Nations communities to help their library staff share cataloguing. Burant and Bonaparte mentioned the idea of developing a national or regional records centre had been raised and discussed within First Nations and archival communities prior to the interviews.

Networking mainstream institutions

Burant also identifies the need for networking between the professions and specific institutions.¹³ He noted that although the professions do not have a strong history of coordination and cooperation, there have been events and projects such as the joint Canadian Library Association (CLA) / Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) conference and developments for standards to share information as the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative.¹⁴ The Dublin Core Initiative provides a basic definition of metadata as "structured data about data" and describes it as "descriptive information about an object or resource whether it be physical or electronic. While metadata itself is relatively new, the underlying concepts behind metadata have been in use for as long as collections of information have been organized. Library card catalogs represent a well-established type of metadata that has served as collection management and resource discovery tools for decades."¹⁵ The Dublin Core initiative develops standards for sharing information about holdings in archives, libraries and museums although "we're a long way away."¹⁶

¹³Since this interview, Burant's institution, the National Archives of Canada, has merged with the National Library of Canada to form the Library and Archives of Canada.

¹⁴ Dublin Core Metadata Initiative, *Dublin Core Metadata Initiative* (2004 [cited July 5 2004]); available from <<<http://dublincore.org>>>.

¹⁵ Dublin Core Metadata Initiative, *DCMI Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)* (2004 [cited July 5, 2004 2004]); available from <<<http://dublincore.org/resources/faq/#whatismetadata>>>.

¹⁶ Burant, interview.

While at a CLA workshop about First Nations libraries, Burant mentioned that there were very few archival organizations within Ontario First Nations communities. Another workshop participant disagreed, illustrating a lack of shared knowledge between the professions of archives and librarians:

There [were] differing sets of information between two different kinds of Western information agencies about what existed and what kind of support there was to try and carry out cooperative efforts in terms of First Nations concerns. Until we, that is Western agencies, get our act together to look at this whole notion of sharing information: the whole management of information. whether it's printed or original or artifactual. I mean that's basically [the different kinds of institutions: libraries represent printed information, archives represent original documentation and government records by and large, and the museum community represents artifacts. Until we can get our act together it's really hard to address the needs of First Nation communities.]¹⁷

Burant recommends contacting people who work in integrated organizations such as the Glenbow Museum for insight into coordinating collections and services.

Burant notes that the general public as well as First Nations would like a single or at least more coordinated route to the information they want; research guides and bibliographic information can help address these needs. He sees a need for a “more integrated approach” across the professions. Bruce sees archival finding aids as a good model for developing library guides for First Nations information.

CROSS-CULTURAL NETWORKING

Networking First Nations communities with mainstream knowledge institutions is a strong thread in the interviews. Some discuss developing connections between First Nations knowledge centres and mainstream institutions. Bonaparte, Brown and Jeffries suggest that institutions consult with First Nations communities. Bruce and Burant recommend use of internet technology to provide more opportunity for First Nations

¹⁷ Ibid.

community members to communicate directly with mainstream institutions. First Nations mistrust of Western institutions includes knowledge institutions; several participants describe the depth and some of the causes for this mistrust. Participants promote the development of working relationships as a way to address several problems. They identify several challenges to developing these relationships and offer suggestions for improving working relationships.

Mistrust of archives, libraries and museums

The development of relationships between mainstream archives, libraries and museums and First Nations is a prominent theme in the interview responses. Institutions which store or disseminate problematic research such as those described in the Chapter 3 inherit First Nations mistrust with the research materials. The mistrust is also related to First Nations concerns about control of their knowledge which is discussed in Chapter 4. Participants question what purposes and whose interests affect the way in which First Nations information is used and describe concerns which foster mistrust of archives, libraries and museums. They described the impact of colonization on First Nations knowledge systems and sketched the roots of political conflict between First Nations and mainstream society. Participants expressed more direct concerns about archives and museums than about libraries. They also discussed positive experiences, although these were often qualified. Based on past experiences participants are concerned that materials are being used against them and used for others' benefit. They also expressed mistrust of archives' parent organizations, particularly of government and church archives. Several participants noted that there is a mistrust of the collections themselves. Tizya discussed concerns about archives:

I'm always cautious and I approach storage of that kind of information [in archival materials] very very carefully and I look at it through that filter. I don't often filter you know, I try to just see the world the way it is, but when I go into an archive I go in cautiously knowing that the information that's there [was written to demean Indian people and is based on misleading information.]"¹⁸

Brown discusses concerns about museums, including the marginalization of First Nations protocols and knowledgeable people;

Museums should try to let First Nations take control over their own material and not copyright it. Some of the museums still want to copyright exhibit material and material in archives. I really disagree with that: I think it's inappropriate. They need to look at knowledge management: if they're going to have First Nations materials in their archives or libraries and if it's to do with personal histories, then they shouldn't take copyright. Those are really serious concerns. I mean if they [First Nations] want to learn how to look after the material [museums and archives can be helpful]. But the whole issue of copyright and knowledge some museums are [respectful] in some processes but not in others. The CMC –because they're a public institution they want copyright of the material in archives, they want copyright of First Nations material. This is going backwards. If they're going to look after material that belonged to First Nations, then they have to acknowledge it and respect what they [First Nations people] want to do with materials left there. They should be looking at that sort of management. It's a big problem in museums and doing exhibits: who gets copyright? The Heiltsuk one [Káx!áya Gvi!ás] had nothing to do with copyright. There are other museums that basically want whole or joint [copyright], and that's totally backwards. I feel strongly about that. Maybe in different areas they're not but in terms of whose knowledge is right and validating traditional knowledge, it's still very one-sided."¹⁹

Brown is concerned because First Nations have not been acknowledged as the caretakers of their own knowledge in past:

[Instead of focusing on mainstream standards for] management [museums should consider] setting up a process for people to help themselves [and] empower themselves to look after [objects] in their own terms of what it means to them, because it doesn't always mean [what museums expect]. So far museums are saying, "They don't know how to look after it, then we should do it." It's very imposed. There should be some way of working together instead of saying "you're bad managers" and "only we white people can do it" [because] it doesn't work that way. It just really turns people off when they're told [you can't manage these objects because] "you don't have the system."²⁰

¹⁸ Tizya, interview.

¹⁹ Brown, interview.

²⁰ Brown, interview.

Several people talk about information from archives, libraries and museums which was used against First Nations people.²¹ These observations are [compatible with] Tizya's observation that archives and museum materials are used "to empower [university researchers in order] to diminish Indian people." Brown also notes that "the university is so conservative ... in terms of whose knowledge is right [is accepted], and [with their failure to] validat[e] traditional knowledge, it's still very one-sided." Brown was concerned that First Nations students were having difficulties using the university library while at the same time the library was providing information to groups who used it against First Nations. Participants do not want archives, libraries and museums to focus on projects which primarily improve access for people who will use it against First Nations. The experiences described above are strong incentive for First Nations communities to avoid sharing their knowledge and information with non-First Nations agencies. Once it is shared, the control over who it is shared with afterwards is lost.

The question of who benefits from these collections and services at archives, libraries and museums is a concern. Bonaparte also provides examples of projects intended to help Native Americans but were of more benefit to non-Native people, archives, libraries and museums. While she was in library school, a project intended to provide California Native people with access to copies of historic photos of their rancherias (reserves) was not effective:

What they didn't take into consideration was that libraries were usually off reserves, in towns next to them, and usually conflicting with the Native peoples over [issues such as] land or racist attacks. So the Native people never actually used that information: what started off as a real great idea turned out to be almost a failure in a sense. The people who actually got to use [the photos] were the people that were actually hurting the rancherias: it was backwards. But things like that happen. The

²¹ Bonaparte, interview; Tizya, interview; Joseph, interview; Brown, interview.

project was, of course, conceived by a non-Native person and developed and done by non-Native students. The communities [hear about these types of project and realize the] monies that could have been spent elsewhere were spent on this project.²²

She sees similar dynamics with projects arising from American federal legislation requiring museums to provide inventories to Native American communities:

[Museum inventory programs provided] copies of pictures [and information about the Native objects in] museums on the American side because of the Repatriation and Graves Act [NAGPRA]. But they used a lot of that funding for indexes and [similar projects] of the collections. So the archives and the libraries thought "This was great. We got all this money now; now we can do the indexes we never could do before." So they used it to their advantage. But in the long run now we're able to hopefully access more of the materials that they've already had.²³

Jeannette Armstrong and Linda Armstrong also talk about people turning to libraries to get information about First Nations culture and language that they want to commercially exploit.²⁴ Joseph criticizes projects to make knowledge available to people to use against First Nations which are justified as projects to help First Nations. She described an offer of the Department of Indian Affairs to catalogue the holdings of First Nations knowledge centres, such as the Gitksan Tribal Council, in order to add it to a union catalogue.

Although the work was needed, Joseph was frustrated that the project was presented as an offer of help without reference to the ongoing litigation between the federal government and Gitksan. The project makes the catalogue information available to people who would use it against the Gitksan.

Tizya, Bonaparte and Burant discuss concerns relating to archives specifically. First Nations people mistrust church and government archives because of First Nations' distrust of churches and government agencies resulting from unresolved justice issues arising from residential school operations and land alienation. Since there are serious

²² Bonaparte, interview.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Jeannette Armstrong, interview; Linda Armstrong, interview.

conflicts between First Nations and churches and governments, this relationship is a critical aspect of people's assessment of archives' credibility and trustworthiness. As noted in chapter 4, participants are concerned about the access to First Nations materials in archives and libraries. They worry that they institutions are providing information which will be used against them but are also deeply concerned about archives withholding, blocking or impeding First Nations access to records and evidence needed by residential school survivors and communities preparing other types of court cases or negotiations. These conflicts will affect these relationships for the foreseeable future. Bonaparte knows of people facing increasing difficulties seeking records relating to their time in residential schools:

People that were affected by boarding school were able to get information [at first], [but] as more people started getting involved it dried up; they made it hard for them to find the information they need. People said, "we call up there and we don't get an answer." Maybe what I need to do is establish one person that will help me get that information for other people, so that you create a tunnel to get to the information instead of this big mountain of information. It would be nice.²⁵

As discussed in chapter 4, First Nations people are suspicious of the motives of archives; wondering if aboriginal people's access would be restricted in order to protect the government or church from legal action. Tizya also questions whether archives and museums restrict access to their holdings in order to misrepresent aboriginal culture and history. Complex issues of representation, inclusiveness and validation also foster mistrust. As discussed in chapter 4, Tizya values archival records which show the history of racist and oppressive government policies because she believes that people should know that history. She noted that other aboriginal people are angered at racist ideas and oppressive actions documented in some of the records; they wonder whether inclusion of

²⁵ Bonaparte, interview.

these records is intended to condone those actions. This concern is heightened when using of archival records validate those actions or perspectives. Tizya mentioned university research which draws on archival material to invalidate First Nations people's experiences and humanity, and Judge McEachern's assertion that Native peoples' lives are "nasty, brutish and short."²⁶ As discussed in chapter 4, Burant discusses the need to maintain the history of racism without validating the racist ideas. His recommendations to address issues which foster mistrust are discussed later in this chapter.

Working together

Despite the mistrust and conflict participants raised in the interviews, several also discussed the importance of finding ways to work together respectfully. They raised the concept of coexistence, using terms such as "the good neighbour policy."²⁷ Seepeetza sees value in closer connections between First Nations and Western knowledge:

I think their Western technology has a lot to offer but so does aboriginal philosophies of life and thought and living. If we can find a way to make better connections, I think we can benefit both sides. ... Both sides can inform each other and work together, and create information which is more balanced.²⁸

Similarly, Tizya said "people with beautiful views, information, changed my life dramatically. It didn't tell me to dominate one or the other, or to try to change one or the other but to see how we can coexist." She discussed ways to describe coexistence and cultural relationships:

I don't think that cross cultural is a proper term: I don't know how you can combine the two when the perspectives are so opposite in view. But I can see [using the term] "bi-culturally" [to describe] building an understanding. I think that's what we're confronted with in Canadian society. No matter what the reality is, we're not going to go anywhere and unfortunately the non-Indian people aren't going to go anywhere either. So somehow we've got to build these bridges [instead of] to try to change

²⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1651, as cited by McEachern, *Reasons for Decision*, 13.

²⁷ Jeffries, interview.

²⁸ Sterling, interview.

[each other]. I suppose that's what cross-cultural means to me: to try to adapt Indian culture to non-Indian culture or vice versa. I would rather see both cultures remain the way they are, in that we can enjoy them in their true form rather than an adapted version of it because something gets lost in the process. It's like the totem poles in Stanley Park. I remember a woman one day say, "well, what's wrong with enjoying them in Stanley Park?" I said "because they belong to a family. Those totem poles belong to that family and if you want to see them you should be willing to go where the family is, not force them to forgo their culture so that you can enjoy it in Stanley Park. That's the kind of thing I'm talking about. So much of the culture gets co-opted and [which gives] people get a wrong impression of what it is."²⁹

Tizya sees that healthy vital First Nations cultures and communities can be accessible to non-First Nations people interested in First Nations culture. Similarly, Bruce feels that repatriation of First Nations materials to First Nations communities doesn't make them inaccessible to libraries:

I used to think I wasn't a librarian unless I had books and things surrounding me; I am now getting a different view. With the information age and knowledge becoming perhaps more important, I'm a librarian right now and whether or not I have stacks of stuff, those are just things. If somebody else has the things, if I give them to you as a matter of fact, that's still okay. Now you will maintain them: that's a wonderful thing Kim, for you to maintain all my things and I will know what they are so I will come to you when I need them. Maybe I will have the best of all worlds [when First Nations materials are returned to First Nations]. So maybe a possessive view – that's a western viewpoint too – if you don't have ownership and if you can't stamp that book and make sure it's returned to you, you don't own it, maybe that's a foolish thing anyway. Maybe we should be just as happy that it gets back to where its home originally was.³⁰

Other challenges to developing working relationships

The political and cultural concerns described in previous chapters – conflicts between First Nations and government agencies over land alienation; loss of First Nations language and culture; and abuses at residential schools – involve archives, libraries and museums in complex ways. Acknowledging these conflicts will affect the relationships between First Nations and archives, libraries and museums and will help address First Nations concerns.

²⁹ Tizya, interview.

³⁰ Bruce, interview.

People's willingness to participate in projects or to develop working relationships depends on their perception of who the work would benefit or who it could harm.

Seepeetza, Bruce and Joseph value the ethics of library access for the general public and for First Nations.

Participants do value the work of archives, libraries and museums; some of the mainstream services are equally valuable to First Nations people, since "we're part of this world."³¹ There are diverse examples of situations where First Nations individuals and communities do not share in the benefits of modern society or the public good. Because of these experiences, First Nations people often react skeptically to projects or technologies which are presented as a universal good, intended to benefit all humanity. Joseph is skeptical about the promises of new information technologies because her experience has shown her that many technological advances have little impact on First Nations communities.

Joseph worries that First Nations involvement in mainstream institutions taking expertise and resources away from First Nations communities' ability to develop their own knowledge centres and wants to see mainstream institutions assist First Nations in developing these centres rather than continuing to gather First Nations information and materials. Similarly, Bonaparte stated that she would not encourage outside researchers to continue to gather information about First Nations. Joseph does not want mainstream institutions to see themselves as owners of First Nations knowledge.

The question of how willing archives, libraries and museums are to develop working relationships is an obvious extension of this theme. Museum attempts to claim or demand copyright of First Nations exhibits and universities failure to validate First

³¹ Joseph, interview.

Nations views of knowledge indicate a lack of willingness to seek a shared perspective or negotiate respectful working relationships. Burant mentions that there are archivists at the National Archives of Canada (NAC) and in the Special Interest Section on Aboriginal Archives (SISAA) of the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) who are committed to good working relationships and addressing the types of concerns raised by participants. He described it as a "fundamental concern." However, their credibility in First Nations communities is hampered by mistrust of their archives' parent institutions, as discussed above. Burant provided a description of a failed outreach attempt by an archivist. At a large assembly of chiefs, an art archivist from the National Archives followed a representative from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). The INAC representative's condescending attitude and refusal to answer questions angered the audience so they were unreceptive to the archivist's presentation.³²

Another serious challenge is that both First Nations and archives, libraries and museums lack the time and resources needed for developing these types of relationships and partnerships. Burant describes this problem from within the context of a mainstream institution:

*It's hard, because first of all you have to have the funding to be able to do it [developing working relationships]. Second of all, you have to have the time to be able to do it, and certainly within the Federal Government for the last ten years it's been very difficult because we barely have the time to do what we currently do without having the vision to try and do something broader, which is that consultative process. By the same token, First Nations have not themselves had the time or the energy or the money to cooperate in that way.*³³

³² Burant, interview; Jim Burant, "The Acquisition of Visual Records Relating to Native Life in North America," *Provenance X*, no. 1 and 2 (1992).

³³ Burant, interview; Canada. Office of the Auditor General., "A status report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons," (Ottawa: Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2003).; Robert R. Janes, *Museums and the Paradox of Change: a case study in urgent adaptation*, 2nd expanded ed. (Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, 1997).

Joseph shares her concerns from the perspective of working in First Nations communities:

*If we [First Nations people] started supporting and totally giving all our energy and what-have-you to non-First Nation museums or libraries and what have you, then it will just continue that [pattern of] our very limited resources of our history and culture and traditions are all outside of our community. That's not right. I don't think it would be right in the future for non-First Nations institutions to be trying to gather up all of this information. Instead it seems to me that these established institutions should be assisting First Nations people in developing the combined library-archives-museums type set-ups that we need in our communities.*³⁴

As discussed in chapter 3, funding was identified as a central problem by all participants, including those who did not discuss the topic of combined approaches. This issue is also identified in the literature; Lotsee Patterson identified it as the most important issue.³⁵

Funding is also a barrier for developing coordinated or cooperative approaches for mainstream institutions as well as First Nations communities. These concerns do identify the need to consider ways to explore the potential for innovative approaches and cooperative projects such as those suggested by Bruce which are described in the previous chapter. He acknowledges the challenge involved in developing an integrated approach to access includes finding people who can recognize what information will be important.³⁶ He observes that decentralized networks provide more opportunity to innovative teamwork and joint projects.³⁷

Developing working relationships with First Nations about general concerns or principles is a challenge; it can become more complicated when dealing with specific objects or documents:

³⁴ Joseph, interview.

³⁵ British Columbia Library Association. First Nations Interest Group., "Back to the Future: a forum on the education and training requirements of First Nations record keepers," (Vancouver: British Columbia Library Association First Nations Interest Group, 2000).

³⁶ Bruce, interview.

³⁷ Bruce, interview.

[A] whole other issue [is] who then represents the First Nation [with the best connection to a specific object or document or place]? I don't know if you've come across this yet; historical documentation or imagery and recordings or whatever other kind of archival records get recorded at a certain time and place, [but] a hundred years later, the people [from] place may not be the same as the individual you were dealing with because individuals move, and there are changes in who's in that community and sometime the factions within that community as well. On those rare occasions you may find conflicts occurring as to who speaks for that record.³⁸

This concern is shared by museums and cultural resource management agencies responsible for the protection and care of cultural, archaeological and other heritage sites, particularly when looking at cultural sites or objects which are thousands of years old.³⁹

Aboriginal people's reluctance to accept the rules or practices of archives, libraries and museums can also be problematic:

Another hard part and you probably face it out here, is that a lot of our people don't believe that the library owns [books with Native content]. [They believe] that they own it and that they don't really have to bring it back. So for libraries, especially a Native library, that's a hard thing to deal with. Because people borrow things, they get interested, they want to research and then they don't bring things back.⁴⁰

Finding common ground between First Nations and archives, libraries and museums can also be a challenge. Negotiating mutually acceptable compromises to traditional protocols and the practices of archives, libraries and museums is difficult.

Brown assesses mainstream approaches for First Nations:

[Western institutions and First Nations have] two different perspectives. There needs to be more understanding amongst each other – cross-cultural sharing about what it means. Archives museums and libraries are driven by concepts and structures that are Western. They're not First Nations. First Nations – all of them – see it in different ways. It's not as though I disagree but [too many differences are unresolved]. [For example, looking at the] management of audio tapes: Who looks after it? Who has copyright to this material? Is it accessible? Is it too accessible? Whose knowledge is it? That sort of thing really has to be addressed, [through] a protocol, or informed consent. Informed consent is a huge problem for museums.

³⁸ Burant, interview.

³⁹ Robert Layton, *Conflict in the Archaeology of Living Traditions, One world archaeology*. (London ; Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

⁴⁰ Bonaparte, interview.

*There is a lot to be learned by both, [First Nations and Western] but as far as I'm concerned the university is so conservative.*⁴¹

Since Western institutions are "driven by concepts that are Western" they do not reflect First Nations knowledge systems and ways of caring for knowledge.⁴² Since both First Nations and Western systems are culturally based and profoundly different, Brown's question "who defines good management" is critical. Without recognition of the cultural basis of Western knowledge systems, discussion of cultural perceptions can become framed as bias. Reducing cataloguers' bias is a goal of archives, libraries and museums systems; the standards for these professions strive for objectivity. However, it is difficult to recognize one's own cultural biases. Burant explains that the process of establishing dialogue with First Nations communities includes the need to describe archivist's roles to people: "although we have rules for arrangement and description, there's a lot of leeway in what we do."⁴³

Awareness of the ethics and mandates of knowledge professional is important. A lack of understanding of archivists' responsibilities fuels mistrust of them. Perceived or claimed objectivity of archives, libraries and museums professionals combined with perceived bias of First Nations knowledgeable people marginalizes First Nations expertise and knowledge systems. Bonaparte, as her community's archivist, brings together local and cultural knowledge, her education and training in library, records and archival management with her understanding of the strengths and gaps in her community's documentary heritage, as well as the present and future information and evidentiary needs of the Mohawk Council and community members. While there is acceptance of the value of adapting standards to meet local needs within these

⁴¹ Brown, interview.

⁴² Brown, interview; Olson, *Power to Name*.

⁴³ Burant, interview.

professions, First Nations adaptations are more likely to be perceived as unprofessional rather than as reflective of their knowledge systems. Some of these adaptations reflect other issues, such as a much lower level of staffing and Western training in First Nations centres. Joseph notes that First Nations do not have the same time, space or resources as mainstream institutions; nor is their perspective necessarily valued by large institutions or funding agencies. This uneven playing field and the dramatic differences in cultures and knowledge systems make it imperative to develop some kind of negotiated understanding of principles of respect or principles for working together.

Improving working relationships

Participants also discuss examples of and approaches to partnerships and developing working relationships which they consider productive. Consultations, communicating and informing First Nations are the approaches raised by most participants. Burant recommended examining the Glenbow's experience with consultations with First Nations. It is not possible to identify or address issues or barriers without communicating with the communities, as seen with the California library school project above, since the people working on the project "didn't know that there was no way that Native people were going to go into that library."⁴⁴ Consultations are even more important regarding spiritual materials:

Using an example from the prairies, if a medicine bundle was left out, it may have been left out because the spirit associated with it was bad. If [it was then part of a museum collection and] they say: "you can repatriate it; I'll give it back to you," [but] you may want to say, "Consult the Elders because this may not be a good thing to do."⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Bonaparte, interview.

⁴⁵ Bruce, interview.

Staff awareness of First Nations concerns is essential.⁴⁶ Providing information to First Nations about the First Nations materials held by institutions is a theme in several interviews.⁴⁷

*What we need out of these agencies is a cooperative open view. The museums should open up their catalogues and say "You want to know what we have that's First Nations? Here's the list of everything we have. You tell us what's interesting to you." They shouldn't hide these things. Museums and archives and libraries should make a point, if it's First Nations cultural material, of going out of their way to bring it forward and get it under discussion. At least hopefully that makes the material somewhat sharable and accessible and understandable and something that will build knowledge.*⁴⁸

Burant mentioned a National Archives project which brought Inuit people to the archives to document their community's photographs.

Seepeetza emphasizes that communications involve more than what people talk about; it is also the way in which staff approach the people they wish to help:

*In my article about Quaslametko and Yetko, the two grandmothers, one was kind hearted and one was mean. Librarians [can learn] how to talk to people and how to help aboriginal peoples. The presence of aboriginal people in the system is always a big help and they will help to change it just by their presence. ... I may or may not be able to change anything in the curriculum or in the educational system but I can certainly determine what kind of teacher I will be in the classroom: I can be friendly and helpful and at the same time be a good classroom manager. The same can be said of any institution. A secretary can be trained to be very capable communicator. Even that would be a help.*⁴⁹

Respect is an aspect of communication. Seepeetza discussed respect in the context of research regarding First Nations knowledge:

It's really important to engage the cultural professors not only in acquiring data but also interpreting it: giving them a chance [by] reading it back to them and giving them a chance to comment on their understanding of the information they've given. It's respectful to go back and share what you've made of it, and ask them, "What do

⁴⁶ Brown, interview.

⁴⁷ Tizya, interview; Bonaparte, interview; Bruce, interview.

⁴⁸ Bruce, interview.

⁴⁹ Seepeetza, interview; Shirley Sterling, "Yetko and Sophie: Nlakapamux Cultural Professors," *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 26, no. 1 (2002).

you think, about I think about what your statements?" and "Am I on the wrong track?" or "what do you think about what I've made of [the information] and what do you make of it?" I think that whole process is just simply respectful. That is a big word, and aboriginal ways of respecting are somewhat different. Because respect is an attitude based on beliefs, so if we believe differently then obviously there's a good chance that we may have different attitudes and predispositions.⁵⁰

Similarly, Brown indicates that First Nations concepts of management differ from Western concepts:

You just have to acknowledge that if it has to do with First Nations information and knowledge, it has to do with ownership and community: defining [and] finding their work with communities. To me it comes down to management: who's defining [intellectual property?] Community [input is needed]: that's the whole thing.⁵¹

Participants also discussed developing principles and articulating what is considered respectful: Brown emphasizes that research should be useful to communities, and in words that are meaningful to them. Assisting First Nations centres with projects that they initiate are relevant and useful. Addressing questions of who benefits from the information or the projects is important:

So [to say that] "this is the management of knowledge" [without considering] the ways we perceive the future and what we're going to do with the material [is pointless]. I think unless it's accessible to First Nations, then why are we doing this? Who's going to be able to use it? You want a cultural centre or library to use it, and if we don't have terminology that's understandable, then it's not useful. If you're going to put in all this work, then I think that it should be useful.⁵²

Bonaparte, Burant, and Brown all indicate that many museum staff members have an awareness of First Nations concerns about protocols and sacred materials. Brown noted that there are still many more issues which need to be addressed. Burant noted that there is better communication between museums and archives in the United States.

Beyond improving communications with First Nations, knowledge institutions can develop projects collaboratively. Brown curated the *Káx!áya Gvi!ás*: "The ones who

⁵⁰ Sterling, interview.

⁵¹ Brown, interview.

⁵² Brown, interview.

uphold the laws of our ancestors" exhibit, which was jointly developed by the Heiltsuk community and the Royal Ontario Museum and is a landmark for its respectful collaborative approach. *Káx!áya Gvì!ás* is currently touring other museums. Pam Brown has since co-curated the *Mehodihi: Well-Known Traditions of Tahltan People: "Our Great Ancestors Lived That Way"* exhibit at the Museum of Anthropology through a similar collaborative approach. The communities participating in the development of these exhibits made their decisions by consensus. While a time-consuming approach, it respects community perspectives. Linda Armstrong described museums efforts to develop more cooperative relationships. Although En'owkin's previous requests to borrow and even access Okanagan cultural objects such as baskets and cooking items were refused by museums, these institutions are considering more cooperative projects and improving access. In some cases, museums are repatriating small objects or providing copies to En'owkin. While only smaller objects have been returned, the change in attitude is significant. She describes museum projects becoming more inclusive and respectful:

[The museum was] featuring women from this area who were important in preserving language [and] culture. Morning Dove [was featured] because she was one of the first to preserve the stories in the written form. She was one of the women that was featured at the museum for the whole month. They [museum staff] borrowed some of our books and had them in their showcases [with] a picture of her and information that described her [and her] place historically. At the end of their show they gave us back the copies of those laser prints that they made so that we can also use as part of the display. It was a sharing kind of thing. Because we lent them our book, they gave us back [some of the other] display [materials] that they had. That's something that hadn't happened before. Usually, they would just maybe come in wanting the information. I think that it's something that [is] a sore point in our people [and the reason they are] not wanting to let go of any of their items or information. So traditionally our people are very very cautious when it comes to museums.⁵³

⁵³ Linda Armstrong, interview.

Several other First Nations, Native Americans and other indigenous groups share these concerns; some tribes expect researchers to follow their ethical guidelines for research of archival documents, their environment as well as with human subjects.⁵⁴ Some of these examples reflect a change in attitude, values or principles on the part of mainstream institutions. Bruce sees potential in technology to facilitate different relationships between the objects and communities as well as between First Nations and mainstream institutions:

Networking [opens] the possibility of diffusing the effort at converting the information to machine readable form. It's no longer necessary for us to say that one major undertaking has to take place, that we need an OCLC to go online and attempt to be the world leader in information conversion and access. Now we're getting to the stage where we can get many more small players involved. We can make great use of what can be done at a local level. Bands can be involved [by] putting up material for themselves [which will enable] larger groups [to] access this. Museums, for example, can house material that relates to a particular band or tribe and that material can be indexed in such a way that other people can say: 'this is ours.' Although in a sense the ownership question, where is it physically located, is one question; maybe that's not the most important question. Maybe the important question is that the kids on a particular band can go through their own access routes and have that sense of ownership; and can even link into pieces of knowledge that other people have developed.

We can be looking at major texts being fully digitized and put online. ...There's enormous potential. I feel that what's going to happen is that localized sources of information are going to become important players and important information providers. When they do that, other people are going to provide the links and say, "Well this is ours, this belongs to British Columbia, this belongs to our tribe, we will gather together by linking together all this information."⁵⁵

These kinds of projects can provide First Nations communities with opportunity for involvement in contextualizing these materials; it also provides more information for libraries to access:

⁵⁴ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 191.

⁵⁵ Bruce, interview. David Goodman Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree*, vol. XXXVII, pt. II, *Anthropological papers of the American museum of natural history*. (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1940); Online Computer Library Center, *Online Computer Library Center* (Online Computer Library Center, 2004 [cited 2004 2002]); available from <<<http://www.oclc.org/home/>>>.

Where we rely a great deal upon our sports networks, on our television networks and so on to tell us what information is. But we can use one that's grown from the small up. I think we have to do that: there isn't the money base that's going to drive it [organization of First Nations materials] so it could only be driven by the passion and the people who want to preserve the knowledge and information. Libraries of course could be enormous beneficiaries of this.⁵⁶

Archives can also benefit. Aboriginal people do respond when opportunity is given:

In the very recent past, when we've [the National Archives has] put information [such as scanned images] up on the internet on our website we've found, in at least two instances, is that we get the communities actually contacting us and saying, "You have this picture of So&so and it's labeled as 'Mrs. So&so' but let me explain to you the context of who she was. She wasn't actually Mrs. So&so. That was the ceremonial name given to the female leader within the tribal community who wasn't married to Mr. So&so; that was just the name she was given because he was the male chief and she was the female chief in a matriarchal kind of pattern." I was quite fascinated by that reaction. All of a sudden, this cultural knowledge arrived at our doorstep. We'd labeled it the way that it was labeled by the photographer. We provided a context within an exhibition but we didn't have any of the cultural knowledge about who this individual was [until] community said to us, "This is So&so and she was here at such and such a date; these people remember her; this is what her standing was." We were able to then add some research notes that provided what we call cultural knowledge.⁵⁷

Burant provided another example of cultural knowledge freely offered, when people contacted the archives to describe women's presence in photographs of canoe building:

The person who was labeling these photographs in the 1870s didn't know [what the women were doing in the photograph]. The women's job was to punch the holes to [prepare] the spruce bark strips to adhere the birch bark to the canoes; to me that's cultural knowledge as well.⁵⁸

Burant notes that archival researchers can benefit from this type of cultural knowledge:

I think that's something that's missing for many people when they try and understand First Nations communities and First Nations history, First Nations culture. To a large part, we don't have enough of an understanding of that so-called cultural knowledge. How did people fit in, what is their role in communities and in their societies, how important or unimportant might be this particular activity? That to me is cultural knowledge which doesn't always get explained in the context of archives.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Bruce, interview.

⁵⁷ Burant, interview.

⁵⁸ Burant, interview.

⁵⁹ Burant, interview.

Whether planned or incidental, incorporating cultural knowledge into exhibit labels and descriptive records validates community members as experts of their culture and history.

As discussed in the above section on mistrust, validation and representation of negative history and events are problematic in archives and museums. The lack of dialogue and shared understanding between First Nations people, archives and museums limits opportunity to address concerns or the underlying causes of mistrust. As discussed in chapter 3, First Nations and archivists (as well as librarians and museum professionals) lack a common vocabulary regarding archival and unpublished materials, increasing the potential for miscommunication regarding complex concepts such as authenticity, marginalization and validity. As he is familiar with these apprehensions, Burant recommends providing more information about archivists' work as well as educating the public about the nature of archival documents:

[Archivists have] two roles: there's a kind of arbitration role to make sure that all parties, as much as can be made possible, are satisfied about approaches that are taken. Archivists are not here – to take the archival perspective – we're not here to destroy records; we're not here to deny access to records; we're not here to cover-up records; we're not here to hide records. But we do have a role in making sure that the authenticity of the record is understood, the context of the record is understood and the meaning of the record is understood. All three things are important. Quite often archivists tend to ignore the educating part of their job. Most archivists feel that once something is acquired and arranged and described, then that's it. Their job is ended. They present [the records] in their unvarnished [form]. But we also have to – we're increasingly reacting to people's comments – we have to educate people as to why things are why they are.

I don't think that archivists by and large are good advocates. Certainly not as good advocates as librarians tend to be. I think librarians tend to be better at trying to explain what they do and what they don't do and in defending what is considered to be [freedom] of information and [addressing] the whole difficulty of banning books and [demands to] remove books from library shelves which tends to arise much more often than it does in the archival community. I can't think offhand of an instance where there's been a public outcry that people remove material from archives because it's somehow offensive. I don't think people look at archives that way, which

*is an interesting difference. I can't think of any literature that says anywhere that someone has deliberately asked for something to be removed from an archives.*⁶⁰

As noted in chapter 3 and in the above section on mistrust, Tizya expressed concerns about archival materials relating to racist ideas or policies; she emphasized the need for those materials and the history they represent to be available to the public. However, she is apprehensive of archival institutions because of these materials and their use.

Perceptions of archives and archivists are shaped by the use of archival documents.

Tizya mentions academic research based on archival materials which dehumanize First Nations people. In his 1991 decision, Judge McEachern dismissed the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en oral traditions and stated that he "accept[s] just about everything [the historians] put before me because they were largely collectors of archival, historical documents [which] largely spoke for themselves" invalidates First Nations knowledge systems and confuses the authenticity of archival documents with their reliability.⁶¹

There are few opportunities within most archival reference encounters or research experiences to become aware of these archival concepts or archival ethics. Without this kind of awareness, there is little to counter assumptions or fears that Tizya described earlier in this chapter.

Building on discussion of Patterson and Taylors' "Indian in the Cupboard and information literacy" article, Burant discusses the need for people to be aware of the roles of archivists in addressing these questions:

That's one of the things that touches upon what you said earlier, that is the educative role which librarians use to contextualize information [and] why they have certain information. I think we as archivists don't intervene in the process as often as we should. I think that this is something that we have to start doing more of. [When] we provide information over the internet but we have to make sure that we contextualize

⁶⁰ Burant, interview.

⁶¹ McEachern, *Reasons for Decision*, 28.

that information well enough that people understand. We also have to provide that feedback tool because we can't talk down to people. I think that's one of the real problems that I've seen, is that people don't like being talked down to: they feel like information is being presented to them in [a way that] they have to take it or leave it. They don't feel they have a role in intervening in the process. It's been a difficult thing: people get angry, they get upset because they want to know. It's not enough to say, "No you can't have that", or "No you know, we can't change that". You have to establish a dialogue. The tools the new technologies present us with will enable us to have a dialog a lot more easily than we have in the past.⁶²

Much of archivists' work is invisible to researchers and the public:

I think that in order to not continue to develop misunderstandings or misapprehensions about what is being done to records we always have to explain what we as archivists do. We [have to] to explain the interventionist role of the archivist in the process. People don't tend to think of the interventionist role of the librarian: librarians buy books, index books, put them on the shelves, lend them out, get them back. But archivists intervene at every step of the process. They decide what they want to acquire. Once they acquire it, they decide, mostly important, how to arrange and describe it. Although we have rules for arrangement and description, there's a lot of leeway in what we do.⁶³

As noted in chapter 3, participants also associate archives with restricting access; providing more information regarding appraisal and description will raise the profile of archivists' efforts to facilitate access to records. Both of Burant's recommendations – incorporating more First Nations cultural knowledge into the archival descriptions and educating people about archivists' work – would facilitate the development of shared understanding of knowledge between First Nations and archivists.

DISCUSSION

Networking and developing multipurpose knowledge centres are the combined approaches raised by participants for developing connections between communities and institutions as well as connections between communities and First Nations materials. Most participants' responses focus on **either** the potential to improve access to diverse materials **or** to provide basic care for diverse materials with scarce resources.

⁶² Burant, interview.

⁶³ Burant, interview.

Approaches intended to address the lack of resources do not necessarily provide improved access while integrating access tools across institutions or types of materials are not expected to provide cost-savings.⁶⁴ Only Bruce explored the possibility of providing improved access to complex scattered materials with scarce resources.

MULTIPURPOSE KNOWLEDGE CENTRES

Several participants considered a single multi-purpose First Nations centre as a necessary approach when resources are insufficient to care for or provide local access to these important materials in any other way. Joseph and Bonaparte seem to have the most divergent perspectives about the value of creating a single institution in First Nations communities to care for these diverse materials, but are speaking about two ends of the same spectrum. The significant difference between these perspectives is the emphasis the Bonaparte places on the expertise of three professions.⁶⁵ Joseph considers that a single system for all types of collections may be necessary. However, Bonaparte is concerned that a single system would be insufficient if it did not incorporate factors such as the need to respect donor's restrictions on archival material. Joseph's response focuses on what First Nations can afford while acknowledging their need for the different functions while Bonaparte acknowledges that merging the functions may be necessary because of cost but that she thinks the functions should remain separate unless absolutely necessary.⁶⁶ The distinctions reflect Bonaparte's focus on her community's long term needs and Joseph's experience setting up and guiding numerous small resource centres in First Nations

⁶⁴ Since the interview, the National Archives of Canada and the National Library of Canada merged to become the Library and Archives of Canada. The intent of this merge was to improve access not as a simple cost-saving measure. Canada. Department of Canadian Heritage, *Minister Copps Announces the Creation of a World-Class Knowledge and Preservation Institution* (October 2, 2002 [cited December 12, 2002]); available from

<<http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/newsroom/news_e.cfm?Action=Display&code=2N0227E>>.

⁶⁵ See discussion of the perceptions of archival materials and gray literature in chapter 3.

⁶⁶ Joseph, interview; Bonaparte, interview.

communities throughout British Columbia. Another important distinction is that Bonaparte's community does have people with training in records management, librarianship, archival standards and museums while Joseph worked in many communities which do not have people with these types of expertise or training. Joseph does not describe combining types of institutions as ideal, but simply "the most reasonable" under current conditions. Joseph focuses on doing the best work possible in many under funded communities while Bonaparte focuses building her community's capacity to achieve the ideal.

The challenge for First Nations knowledge centres is to be effective enough, to care for the things that are important to their communities, and to respond to their communities' interests, needs, and cultural protocols with limited and unpredictable resources. It will be difficult to adapt the diverse and sometimes contradictory standards of archives, libraries and museums to the cultural needs of First Nations knowledge and protocols, particularly in underfunded and understaffed organizations, in ways that protect evidentiary value and provide appropriate access to the information.

Multipurpose knowledge centres can be networked as well. Bruce and Burant explored the potential of combined approaches through coordinating the development of access tools between institutions or professions as a way to improve access for anyone looking for information, not just First Nations people. Networking across different institutions and professions could involve cooperative projects or standards.

NETWORKING INSTITUTIONS TO RECONNECT PRECIOUS FRAGMENTS

Previous chapters identified the problems of fragmentation of First Nations materials. First Nations centres with combined approaches are uniquely positioned to

reconnect fragments in ways that are culturally meaningful and respectful, not only to the other fragments but also to the lived culture which generated them.

The separation of materials across different institutions and types of institutions does fragment First Nations bodies of knowledge in a way which is a serious barrier to access. In addition to building their collections and preserving material which is already with the communities, First Nations knowledge centres can reconnect their communities with their knowledge fragments through searching union catalogues of library, museum and archival materials such as WorldCat, AMICUS, the Virtual Museum of Canada (VMC), the BC Archival Union List (BCAUL), and the Canadian Archival Information Network (CAIN). These catalogues, descriptions and guides can help mitigate the barriers described in previous chapter if their descriptive (cataloguing) standards and practices reflect First Nations concepts or if the staff at the First Nations knowledge centres can translate the descriptive and catalogue records into First Nations concepts. If these translations are possible, either through the standards or through knowledgeable staff, these union databases can act as bridges between Western and First Nations knowledge systems. As Burant stated, it's difficult for Western institutions to really help First Nations find their precious fragments until they learn to cooperate and communicate across disciplines better.

As with other projects, the union catalogues could hinder First Nations access and reconnection instead of facilitate it. Olson's study of the globalization of union catalogues based on Western classification systems, such as the use of Library of Congress in WorldCat, finds that the standardization also homogenizes the subject

headings and other access points.⁶⁷ This standardization is based on a perceived universality of meaning which is untrue. This homogenization reduces the locally developed and locally meaningful access points, which reduces access for non-Western communities.⁶⁸ Large institutions, as can be seen with the American Museum of Natural History's refusal to use the name "Kwa k'wakw wakw" instead of Kwaguilth in the *Chiefly Feasts* exhibit, are in a position to hinder use of names and other terms which would facilitate community research and reconnections.⁶⁹ Facilitating First Nations access with these tools may only happen if First Nations needs and vocabulary are sought while these tools are still being designed. Networking mainstream knowledge institutions with First Nations communities through First Nations knowledge centres can be an effective and respectful approach to restoring connections between First Nations books, records and objects in archives, libraries and museums.

This potential for collaborative, parallel or alternative cataloguing and description work raises the need to identify the power structures and related factors which could hinder the development of more decentralized network. For example, the lack of stable funding for First Nations knowledge centres could make it difficult for First Nations centres to participate equally in networks with mainstream knowledge institutions. It also raises the need to review classification and subject headings. This need was not mentioned by participants but is necessary to address issues they raised regarding the desire to incorporate First Nations ways of knowing and reflect First Nations protocols for restricting and sharing access.

⁶⁷ Olson, *Power to Name*.

⁶⁸ Hope Olson, personal communication, 2004.

⁶⁹ Aldona Jonaitis, Douglas Cole, and American Museum of Natural History., *Chiefly Feasts: the enduring Kwakiutl potlatch* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991).

COMBINED APPROACHES AND INDIGENOUS RESEARCH AGENDAS

The issues and potential of combined knowledge institutions are related to several of twenty-five indigenous agendas that Smith describes in *Decolonizing Methodologies*. Indigenizing and discovering are relevant to discussions about convergence and interoperability in archives, libraries and museums. Within the dynamic context of reconsidering boundaries between archives, libraries and museums there may be more reflective and open-minded environment within mainstream professions to look at First Nations knowledge systems more deeply. This may provide opportunities for respectful sharing about the various types of knowledge systems that will help First Nations “discover” archives, libraries and museums and may lead to the “indigenization” of some aspects of mainstream professions which will help the general public as well as First Nations users. Approaches developed in First Nations agencies such as Cultural Education Centres for handling the different types of media as well as the information and evidentiary values of the diverse materials can be shared between First Nations communities, and may also be useful for non-Native community heritage centres, several of which are small museums with archival material and a local history reference library.

The political issues and conflicts described in the section regarding mistrust of archives, libraries and museums above are related to the discussion of the history of research and documentation of indigenous knowledge described by Smith.⁷⁰ These political issues and the underlying power relationship will shape the potential and challenges for networking First Nations knowledge centres. These issues will be very different for First Nations knowledge centres than for local non-Native community heritage centres.

⁷⁰ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 1999.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

CONCLUSIONS

The First Nations knowledge workers who participated in this research shared their experiences, concerns and insights. They shared theories about knowledge and culture; more theories emerged from analysis of the interviews. The richness of the information they provided and the lack of shared terminology made writing a challenge. Many of these theories do not have a single straightforward connection to specific theories within archival science, library studies or museology. For example, First Nations protocols regarding transmission of rights to use some kinds of stories relate to theories regarding trustworthiness, intellectual freedom, trustworthiness, and intellectual property but also relate to First Nations spirituality. Compatibility, disagreement and dissonance all exist between the interview responses. Dialogue and awareness of other professions are necessary for bridging Western and First Nations knowledge systems.

All the people interviewed have expertise in both First Nations cultures and Western information or education professions. Their expertise in both cultures are diverse: they belong to several different cultures, have differing areas of responsibility within traditional knowledge systems and expertise in differing Western fields. While any of the theories and insight they share through the interview responses are compatible and often very similar, there is also great diversity in the responses. This thesis employs a number of terms which are not commonly used in either the information fields or in indigenous scholarship. Where possible, the terms used by participants were employed. The need for new terms arises because of the lack of shared terms, theories and

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understandings between First Nations knowledge workers and Western information professionals.

Several participants contributed to the theory that knowledge is deeper, more meaningful, more holistic and more contextualized than information. Several also contributed to the theory that much of an object's meaning and significance resides within its culture of origin, rather than the object itself. Seepeetza provided the central metaphor of First Nations materials in archives, libraries and museums as knowledge fragments: objects which carry meaning and culture, which came from a larger body of cultural knowledge and which are currently disassociated from that culture. The First Nations materials in archives, libraries and museums do not represent the accumulated knowledge of First Nations; in their current form they are fragmented and distorted. This theory leads to the concept that the fragments can be reconnected to their communities and the living culture where they become more meaningful again. Bruce and Burant's responses support the theory that reconnecting the fragments will make them more meaningful. Seepeetza also provided the theory that the materials are **precious** fragments, valued by the people of their community of origin. Tizya and Bonaparte support this theory, as they theorize that helping people rediscover how they are connect to other people, to the land and to history will help communities heal. All the participants provide insight into the maintenance of cultural knowledge, through diverse approaches including community administered educational programs from elementary to post-secondary level, storytelling, language programs, the work of elders, spiritual practices, and traditional ceremonies and by following cultural protocols.

Several participants examined the role of First Nations knowledge centres in cultural maintenance and reconnecting knowledge fragments. The main concern is the lack of stable funding. These centres are well positioned to reduce knowledge loss and distortion and to reconnect precious fragments with living communities. Joseph, Bruce and Bonaparte discuss theories relating to *capturing* First Nations knowledge within knowledge centres. Burant and Tizya theorize that computers are capable of transmitting knowledge; Bruce and Joseph hypothesize that libraries are incapable of holding the spirituality of First Nations knowledge. Tizya speaks of learning from books by listening to the spirit of the author, as well as reading the written words. Jeannette Armstrong asserts that recordings can not replace knowledgeable, properly trained people. While collections at knowledge centres are not a substitute or an improvement on the network of elders and knowledge specialists within First Nations communities, they are also valued. First Nations knowledge centres are in desperate need of stable funding, educated personnel, and dry, safe, secure storage. They validate people's experiences and help them heal from traumas such as residential school abuses. They help people recover their identity and revitalize their culture. They help people "achieve their dreams."¹

Western philosophy and symbolism are embedded in the classification and other organizing systems of archives, libraries and museums. It is these embedded aspects of culture that contextualize the holdings of these institutions and in turn maintains their meaningfulness. This phenomenon is what gives archives, libraries and museums their power as knowledge institutions and as memory institutions.² Instead of supporting the

¹ Bonaparte, interview. Unless otherwise noted, all references to the participants are from the interviews with the author

² These systems incorporate bias that is not inclusive of all groups in Western society. See also Olson's discussion of mainstream systems excluding people who are different than WEBCHAM (white ethnically

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meaningfulness of objects for non-Western cultures, they fragment it instead – separating material across institutions and types of institution and organizing it according to categories that do not reflect its true meaning. These organizational systems can be adapted to reflect local knowledge systems. Incorporating elements of First Nations knowledge systems such as traditional place and community names are acceptable practices within mainstream cataloguing and description.

Participants envisioned knowledge systems to reconnect precious fragments with their communities. They envision places, practices and networks to maintain those materials in their cultural and historical context while remaining part of and relevant to living cultures and communities. Technology has the potential to make this work more effective, but also has the possibility to further fragment and reduce the meaning of these fragments. Participants examined a range of approaches, including repatriation, copying and contextualizing the materials through catalogue and descriptive records. Bruce and Burant speculate that the connections between First Nations material and communities can be restored and maintained in a meaningful way in ways other than housing the materials in First Nations communities. There is potential for archives, libraries, museums and First Nations knowledge centres to contextualize and maintain connections to living cultures. Both require investment, work, and good working relationships. It would not be possible without involvement of elders or people with a deep knowledge of the culture; and not within under funded, understaffed institutions which are struggling to

European, bourgeois, Christian, heterosexual, able-bodied male). Hope A. Olson, "Patriarchal Structures of Subject Access and Subversive *Techniques* for Change," *The Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science* 26, no. 2/3 (2001).

keep the material in their care dry and safe.³ Ames, Burant and Joseph all note that this essential work is time-consuming. Ames also notes the need to educate funding agencies regarding the increased time commitment required for collaborative projects. Staff at archives, libraries and museums who are aware of First Nations vision to reconnect with the materials in their collections can provide invaluable help. Participants' suggestions for improving working relationships between First Nations and information professionals include: consultations, improving communications, training information professionals to be more approachable; developing projects which are relevant to the First Nations community's needs; and recruiting more aboriginal people into their institutions.

FURTHER RESEARCH

The participants raised theories and questions which could not be adequately covered within this research. Analysis of their interviews has brought the participants' perspectives together in a artificial dialogue; a real dialogue would provide opportunity for their reactions to each others ideas and deeper insight into First Nations and Western knowledge systems. This section is an overview of several topics which warrant further discussion.

FURTHER RESEARCH ON THE NATURE OF INFORMATION, AND CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

There are several areas of practical research or consultations which could follow from the participants' theories regarding the nature of information, knowledge and cultural knowledge. Exploring values, definitions and concrete examples through community based research as a visioning, community development or cross-cultural bridging exercise could be valuable for generating interest and determining community

³ See also Canada. Office of the Auditor General., "Report of the Auditor General of Canada," (Ottawa: Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2003).

priorities for maintaining or revitalizing knowledge. These research results would also be a basis for improving communications with non-aboriginal communities and institutions. The questions can also inform or set the context for research on the educational role of cultural education centres, archives, libraries and museums, particularly in First Nations communities. These kinds of questions could be incorporated into outreach studies, which should include validation of the users' strengths as well as identification of needs.

There are several areas of theoretical research which could build on discussions of the nature of information, knowledge and cultural knowledge. Exploring the implications of Tizya's statement that knowledge "doesn't make us who we are" within the question of indigenous societies' relationships with their knowledge is relevant in indigenous scholarship. This topic relates to the disciplines of philosophy, anthropology, communications and linguistics. Local or community based research in this area may be effective for visioning or improving community relations. While there are many other related topics which could be studied, research and action may be better directed to the issues raised in the interviews.

FURTHER RESEARCH ON KNOWLEDGE FRAGMENTS AND KNOWLEDGE CENTRES

There are several areas of practical research or consultations which could follow from the discussions in chapter 3. Researching the history of knowledge disruption and loss can be a good basis for building effective knowledge based healing programs within First Nations communities. It would be valuable for archives, libraries and museums to work with First Nations cultural workers to examine how services such as bibliographic instruction, outreach, finding aids and exhibits can better address their knowledge recovery projects. First Nations communities and the institutions which work in or with them could reexamine and articulate their perspectives on the concepts of preservation,

protection, maintenance and recovery of knowledge. An understanding of the history of developing records and writings about First Nations will help staff to evaluate these materials more critically. First Nations information institutions such as Cultural Education Centres and school libraries should be documented. Knowledge projects such as the Sechelt language project and the *Makivik* project described by Burant should be documented, at least for the communities' own use.⁴ Visioning studies can provide guidance for the development of First Nations own information or knowledge institutions and the development of more relevant programs in mainstream information institutions.

There are several areas of theoretical research which could follow from the discussions about maintaining knowledge. An examination of education, documentation projects and the history of research in First Nations communities from an information studies perspective can look at the transformation of First Nations oral knowledge systems to hybrid oral/ print and electronic knowledge systems.⁵ An examination of archives, libraries and museums following *Decolonizing Methodologies* can look at the effects of colonization, suppression of culture and marginalization on indigenous knowledge systems and the place of Cultural Education Centres in recovering knowledge.⁶ Concepts such as cultural erasure and cultural genocide could be examined within the context of the information professions and institutions. The concepts of heritage, cultural archives and memory institutions could be examined from First Nations perspectives. The impact of residential schools on First Nations knowledge systems could be examined. The concept of 'salvage anthropology' could be examined as an

⁴ Burant, interview. Jeffries, interview.

⁵ See Greg Young-Ing's discussions of the history of aboriginal publishing in Greg Young-Ing, "Aboriginal Peoples' Estrangement: Marginalization in the Publishing Industry," in *Looking at the Words of Our People*, ed. Jeannette C Armstrong (Penticton, British Columbia: Theytus Books, 1993).

⁶ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*.

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attempt to capture knowledge along with its affect on knowledge loss and potential for knowledge recovery. The history of documentation of First Nations knowledge has affected the meaningfulness of recordings and writings as well as the trustworthiness of records in ways in which are not well understood. Data mining and other approaches common to Western knowledge management can be contrasted with the ways in which traditional protocol societies, elders and storytellers care for knowledge. Many descriptions of knowledge management from Western perspective do emphasize the importance of people as dynamic elements within a knowledge system but do not incorporate cultural aspects such as values, protocols or ethics. Contrasting the roles of protocol systems in an oral society and knowledge management programs in a large corporation may provide insight into both approaches. Further research can examine the ways in which First Nations describe their relationship to the fragments of their knowledge with the theory and specialized vocabulary of archives, libraries and museums. For example, research can contrast and bridge the concepts of “community of origin,” creator, and manufacturer from museology with similar terms from librarianship, (such as author, publisher, and copyright owner) with those of archival studies, (such as creator and author). Models of knowledge and memory institutions can be examined in the context of First Nations communities. The concept of “total archives” could be contrasted with the model of cultural education centres. The concept of “total archives” can be examined to see if it can be expanded to encompass library and museum materials in a meaningful way without compromising its archival role, particularly for managing the material manifestations of oral tradition and oral records.

FURTHER RESEARCH ON CONTROLLING KNOWLEDGE

Practical research and consultation are needed in several topics relating to control of First Nations information and knowledge. Examination of the varied concepts relating to ownership of knowledge and rights to use knowledge is warranted. International indigenous discussions regarding controlling knowledge include concerns about biopiracy, keeping knowledge secret, and international legal mechanisms such as patents and trademarks. This literature regarding indigenous efforts to protect knowledge should be connected to the literature of the information professions. Research can build an understanding of First Nations protocols within a cross-cultural context.

The First Nations theoretical concepts relating to the control of knowledge are complex and intertwined. Examination of First Nations protocols are key to understanding First Nations knowledge. There is little documentation or description of First Nations' protocols regarding openness and access restrictions on knowledge; ownership of knowledge; sacredness of knowledge; and rights to use or benefit from knowledge, particularly within the field of information studies. Knowledge of First Nations protocols will provide an opportunity to examine underlying First Nations concepts about knowledge itself. An examination of the political conflicts and history of knowledge suppression will expose power relationships which have shaped current First Nations knowledge systems, and which generated First Nations mistrust of mainstream knowledge institutions.

First Nations concepts regarding control of knowledge can not be directly equated to any single theory in information studies, as they relate to memory, spirituality, protection of authenticity and trustworthiness, cultural concepts of truthfulness; individual and collective ownership, cultural survival, cultural concepts of privacy and

openness, political conflicts, and conflicting juridical systems. An understanding of the interaction between First Nations and Canadian juridical systems, especially regarding intellectual property, will also facilitate negotiation of shared approaches to control of knowledge. Tensions between preservation of meaning and content with preservation of context, protocols and authenticity could be explored within any of the information fields. First Nations protocols relating to the authenticity of knowledge can be examined within the context of archival theory. Those protocols could be contrasted with protocols relating intellectual property concerns. Research can examine the potential to incorporate First Nations protocols into existing standards. Other approaches to bridging First Nations protocols and Western ethics regarding intellectual property, protection of privacy and protection of authenticity can be examined. The theoretical concepts and ethical perspectives for these topics differ between different aboriginal cultures, just as they differ between the archival, library and museum fields.

FURTHER RESEARCH ON ORGANIZING KNOWLEDGE

Applied research about organizing knowledge can examine compatibility and divergences between Western and First Nations terms and name authorities, classification or subject headings. Any areas of compatibility and divergence can be used to make union catalogues more effective for representing First Nations subjects and for connecting First Nations communities with their knowledge fragments in mainstream institutions. Bridging these standards with First Nations concepts and terminology can facilitate aboriginal people's use of knowledge institutions and knowledge centres. A user study of First Nations needs for union catalogues of archives, libraries and museums materials will also contribute to developing bridges between Western and First Nations knowledge systems. Research can examine areas of compatibility and difference

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between a specific First Nations knowledge system and existing archives, libraries and museums standards. The feasibility and effectiveness of an integrated collections management system for First Nations knowledge centres can be studied to examine issues of cost-effectiveness, training requirements, and effectiveness for the basic protection of the centre's holdings. Can an integrated system be developed to manage and protect the informational and evidentiary value of the material, as well as properly care for any sacred objects?

First Nations ways of knowing present challenges and opportunities for innovation classification. Relationships and other types of contextual information are basic elements of First Nations knowledge systems; can they be incorporated into cataloguing or descriptive standards, at the local, regional or national level? Aboriginal adaptations of collections management practices may provide interesting tangents for examining mainstream practices and theories. For example, archival theory can be used to examine the collections management systems at the Makah Cultural Research Centre: is using the households of origin as a central organizational principle the artifactual equivalent of the archival principle of *respect des fonds*?

FURTHER RESEARCH ON NETWORKING KNOWLEDGE CENTRES AND INSTITUTIONS

A deeper shared understanding of the mandates, responsibilities and practices of archives, libraries and museums and First Nations ways of knowing is needed to evaluate the feasibility, effectiveness and desirability of integrated and networked knowledge centres. The process of developing this shared understanding between First Nations knowledge workers and Western knowledge professionals will itself create a network of people which will help bridge First Nations and Western knowledge systems. Discussion of metaphors about knowledge and cross-cultural knowledge sharing, such as the

computer metaphors used in Schoenhoff's *The Barefoot Expert* and the ecological metaphors in Nardi and O'Day's *Information Ecologies* are worth exploring as a starting points for dialogue and building networks.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The First Nations knowledge workers who participated in the study do all effectively bridge First Nations and Western knowledge systems. Their ability to do so depends upon their own understanding of both knowledge systems; little of this ability to has been built into any formal or permanent systems such as shared protocols or standards for organizing and controlling knowledge. The participants present a long term vision of multipurpose First Nations knowledge centres which are networked with mainstream knowledge institutions. These visions can build on the processes of discovering and indigenizing archives, libraries and museums. There are many steps to develop these visions; begin with discussions between First Nations knowledgeable people and Western knowledge professionals. These bridges have the potential to profoundly affect cross-cultural communications. Others may have little impact on mainstream institutions or the general public but could greatly increase First Nations communities' capacity to care for their own knowledge and their health.

Currently, First Nations knowledge workers and professionals in archives, libraries and museums lack a shared vocabulary and a shared understanding of each others' core values. It is difficult to determine how compatible or incompatible the core values are. Robyn Ridington writes "If academic theorizing is usually a product of argument and monologue, First Nations theorizing would have to be the product of

conversation and dialogue.”⁷ It is unlikely that these tensions will be resolved without a dialogue between First Nations and archivists, librarians and museums professionals.

⁷ Robin Ridington, "Re-creation in Canadian First Nations literatures: when you sing it now, just like new," *Anthropologica* 43(2) (2001): 222.

PREAMBLE FOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

The School of Library, Archival and Information Studies at UBC has programs that provide an understanding of the values and professions of libraries and archives. Through interviews with you and other First Nations cultural and community workers, I'd like to hear about some of the values, ethics and approaches to information which are important for First Nations. I am looking to you to identify concerns, issues and discussion topics, more than to provide solutions to these concerns and issues.

I am not asking you to act as a representative of your organization, community or nation, but would appreciate your experience and expertise.

This interview will not evaluate your knowledge, understanding or experience, but, in part, will evaluate the effectiveness of archives, libraries and museums in serving First Nations.

I would like to use the ideas you provide to encourage more discussion between professional associations and First Nations communities, so would appreciate hearing about things that you want to see discussed publicly.

I am using the term "First Nations information systems" to refer to ways that First Nations create, search for, organize, share and manage information. I use the term "First Nations cultural information" to talk about knowledge which was created by First Nation people.

I would especially appreciate any stories, anecdotes, or metaphors you use to describe issues or concerns.

QUESTIONS

1. For some people, the difference between "information" and "knowledge" is very meaningful. Particularly when talking about First Nations culture, what do these words mean for you?
2. What kind of knowledge do you mean when talking about "cultural knowledge"?
3. Regardless of how other people may use this phrase, what do you think that good "knowledge management" should look like?
4. As you understand them, are the ways that western information agencies (archives, museums, libraries) handle information well-suited for addressing the concerns or needs of First Nations?
 - (a) Based on your experience, what do you think about the way archives handles information?
 - (b) Libraries?
 - (c) Museums?
5. Archives, libraries and museums usually operate independently from each other, but some agencies have combined these services. How well suited do you think a combined approach like that would be for addressing the concerns or needs of First Nations?
6. Do you know of any services provided by archives, libraries, or museums which you feel are useful or necessary to First Nations people or communities?
 - (a) Can you give me any examples from archives?
 - (b) From libraries?
 - (c) From museums?
7. Recent changes (such as new technology, changes in funding, or development of new ways to share information) have affected the work done at libraries, museums, and archives. Professionals working at these institutions have met to discuss the implications of these changes, talking about themes such as "Libraries of the Future". What should future information services or systems for First Nations knowledge look like?

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