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## COMMENTARY

# Siting the Literature Review: Dialogues on the Location of Literature

LIA RUTTAN

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We have had lots of researchers come to this community. They don't understand the people. They come here for a short time, talk to a few people, then they leave and write a report or book with their name on it that is totally inaccurate. Then other researchers quote them continuing the problem and then you have guys like at the college or the government forestry department quoting these guys to our youth instead of listening to us.

—Raymond Beaver, personal communication

At a conference hosted by the University of Calgary's Department of History in 1977 both Chief John Snow (Stoney) and Dr. Joseph Couture (Métis/Cree) called for a greater reliance on the oral history of Aboriginal peoples.<sup>1</sup> In his address Chief Snow called on historians to "recognize another form of history, the oral accounts of historic events and understandings passed down by the elders of our tribes."<sup>2</sup> He denounced the emphasis on written history as truth and noted that by denying the validity of oral history misunderstanding, prejudice, and fallacy often result.<sup>3</sup> For his part Dr. Couture held that "as a point of professional integrity, historians must come to grips with the issue of the accuracy of native oral history, in order, as a *sine qua non*, to develop a more

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comprehensive understanding and appreciation of that history.<sup>4</sup> I believe Chief Snow and Dr. Couture meant that academics need to get over the obstacles that prevent them from viewing this rich source of material as *the literature*, not only because it is ethical to do so but also because otherwise one cannot produce solid work whether it be in history, anthropology, education, or health research.

With these perspectives in mind I began to explore conceptions of the literature review and the challenges this process presented to my own approach to research. To do so, I reviewed the written accounts dealing with how other scholars have responded to this issue. I also engaged in a lengthy period of activity related to resituating myself and renegotiating roles in a northern Canadian community composed of Dene, Métis, and non-Aboriginal residents where I had lived for many years. Prior to fully fleshing out the eventual research proposal, I explored a range of community perspectives through reliance on community-based written accounts, relationally through informal conversations and interviews, and experientially through participation in ongoing community activities. I could then consider these knowledge sources not only intellectually but also experientially as aspects of the literature review and research rationale. As well, doing so more nearly approached traditional forms of teaching and learning.<sup>5</sup>

### THE ROLE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The assumption that knowledge “accumulates and that we learn from and build on what others have done”<sup>6</sup> is the basis of the academic literature review. In the Western academic tradition the literature review is seen as an essential first step toward legitimate research.<sup>7</sup> This is the case particularly in the completion of dissertation material. Literature reviews, however, are also standard in many other scholarly publishing and proposal formats, whether as material included within the text or as provided in footnotes. The literature review serves to establish the relevance of the research problem by reviewing and critiquing earlier scholarship related to the research question and by presenting the assumptions behind the logic of the research design.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the literature review serves as a rationale, allowing the writer to introduce the theoretical constructs that frame the research, to place the study in the context of its overall significance, and to highlight its relevance to current research, including gaps in that research.<sup>9</sup> By completing this process in the accepted format, the researcher is assumed to demonstrate and validate his or her readiness to tackle the subject at hand.

The choice of material for inclusion in any academic literature review is essentially a selection process.<sup>10</sup> As a selection process it is guided by and informed by the influences on and experiences of the researcher, as well as the expectations of the institution. Thus personal, interpersonal, and developmental factors play a role in what is seen and presented.<sup>11</sup> The concept of the literature review itself is based in the assumptions, traditions, and processes of Western academia and science.<sup>12</sup> The voices of other scientists, as vouched for by peers and publications, are taken to be authoritative. Yet the

growing acknowledgment of the influence of context on all research efforts requires that one be careful not to simply incorporate the biases, errors, or unexamined assumptions found within previous research in ways that have been or need to be challenged.<sup>13</sup> Thus this selection process should be conducted in a critical fashion that acknowledges biases and examines the work of others, resulting in a dialectical synthesis of validation and critique.

While the literature review is but one aspect of any research proposal, it is an important one because it establishes the basic assumptions that set the course of research and, as such, influences what is seen and the logic used to frame that view. Much has been made of the literature review as a *search* involving immersion in the material, with the end result being expertise.<sup>14</sup> One engages in the retrieval of sufficient material to reach a saturation point where critical mastery of the required knowledge base is demonstrated. Further “proofs” that will convincingly establish the relevance, significance, and importance of the argument made on behalf of the proposed research are located, analyzed, and displayed as evidence.

This essay is meant to call attention to the influence of the assumptions and structures embedded within the academic literature review. Particular issues relevant to a broader conception of the location of literature in the context of Aboriginal traditions of knowledge will be addressed.<sup>15</sup> The reactions of other scholars as well as discussion of my own attempts to address these issues are presented. Further discussion of the role of the literature review seems necessary if we are to move beyond what Marie Battiste describes as the cognitive imperialism inherent in the assumptions that often accompany Western academic institutions, their products, and forms of what constitutes “truth.”<sup>16</sup>

### THE CONTEXT OF ABORIGINAL TRADITIONS OF KNOWLEDGE

Gathering material relevant to the issue under study, summarizing it, and calling the result a literature review is always insufficient.<sup>17</sup> Critically examining one’s own assumptions, as well as the biases found in previous works, is important. This is particularly the case in research involving issues of worldviews, varying traditions of knowledge, and their political, socioeconomic, and academic marginalization.<sup>18</sup> The published material involving the interaction between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations has been almost entirely one-sided until very recently.<sup>19</sup> Errors based in cultural bias have been common and have increasingly been critiqued as such, particularly in historical and anthropological accounts.<sup>20</sup> For example, Winona Stevenson points out blinders exhibited by historians as related to a “culturally specific conceptual model” that emphasizes precision in form and chronology and testable results and that remains embedded in culturally specific values regarding objectivity and truth.<sup>21</sup> She challenges historians to widen and authenticate their views by getting out of the archives and into the community.<sup>22</sup>

Additionally, the challenge to research assumptions presented by indigenous narrative and knowledge traditions occurs within an ongoing social, economic, and political context reinforcing traditional Western views.<sup>23</sup> Given this background and the impact of imperialist experience on world systems, a

great deal of this literature is likely to be influenced by colonizing frames of reference resulting in ideological biases or blinders in these accounts.<sup>24</sup> Thus, discussion of the context, limitations, and appropriate use of this material should be included in any literature review. Devon Mihesuah notes that this concern relates not only to questions regarding the validity of what is included in written accounts of indigenous cultures and history but also to what is omitted, which often includes the most culturally valid and relevant understandings of the issues involved.<sup>25</sup>

An alternative response to this dilemma is to do a “literature review” based in Aboriginal knowledge, in Aboriginal science, and in Aboriginal pedagogy.<sup>26</sup> Gregory Cajete uses the term *native science* as a metaphor for a “creative participatory process” of coming to knowledge based in storied and active relationship with the land while remaining open to all the sensing and reasoning processes available in cultural methods of teaching and learning.<sup>27</sup> This means locating the literature outside of the institution rather than from within worldview, place, relationship, teachings, and story. Doing so within an academic context involves many systemic challenges, including those of time, funding, and lack of institutional flexibility, as well as, at times, outright resistance to and minimalization of indigenous knowledge traditions.<sup>28</sup> Given this context, stressful experiences are to be expected and personal support required. Also challenging is deciding how to present the material in an ethical and respectful manner. Additionally, in the format of a written paper the result can at best be incomplete, given the highly developed, orally transmitted, and spiritually reinforced methodology and epistemological traditions of Aboriginal peoples.<sup>29</sup>

### **Aboriginal Epistemologies**

Aboriginal epistemologies are inherently based in the authentic interaction of land and spirit, animal and human in a continuous, vital, and ongoing process.<sup>30</sup> Much of this knowledge is carried and transmitted in the form of stories, often using the device of interaction, either animal with animal or animal with human. The source of knowledge is not encoded in texts but rather embodied in the lives, wisdom, and varied skills of animals and in their interactions with humans. In this tradition, as Marlene Brant Castellano describes, knowledge comes from *empirical observation*, through the process of listening to the *traditional knowledge* of elders and from the *revealed knowledge* gathered from experiences such as dreams and fasts, which are understood to reveal spiritually based knowledge in sacred ways.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, the “literature” is based in locality, in the experience of that locality, and in the relationships involved in a way that is difficult to transfer to the page. For example, in speaking of her need to know the voice of her own history (Hawaiian) following her receipt of a PhD based in Western thought, Haunani-Kay Trask speaks of the need to return to the land, its activities, rhythms, and language.<sup>32</sup> She needed to do this not in metaphor or through academic reading and writing but by actually immersing herself in planting and tending taro, in carrying out traditional practices, in thoroughly learning

language, and in maintaining story.<sup>33</sup> Indigenous literature is also based in ceremony in a circular continuum of experiential knowledge available when one is ready and when knowledge is needed.<sup>34</sup> Spirituality is, then, powerful, alive, and relational, not institutionalized or separate from knowing and learning, as in current Western culture, but rather *fundamental to* knowledge.<sup>35</sup>

This literature is based in an oral tradition that is much richer, longer lasting, and inherently more “valid” than most Western academics understand.<sup>36</sup> Consulting the knowledge of the elders is the relational source of Aboriginal knowledge.<sup>37</sup> The knowledge of elders is based in a lifetime of connected interaction with earth and spirit.<sup>38</sup> This knowledge is most often expressed by showing, doing, or illustrating through story. It is validated through referencing systems that can be experienced as quite subtle to those who are unfamiliar with them.<sup>39</sup> Learning takes place through observation, experience, listening, reflection, and connection and is then reinforced in relationship, ceremony, and satisfying environmental outcomes.

However, from this perspective, as Momaday reminds us, words are not cheap; one does not have pages and pages of words to use for argument or for making one’s point.<sup>40</sup> Because they are both remembered and spoken, *each* word and its meaning are valuable and have ongoing (continual) meaning.<sup>41</sup> As Couture notes, the “way words are used,” what they represent, and the manner in which they are presented are integral to meaning.<sup>42</sup> Each word contains both power and potential.<sup>43</sup> The words as they are organized occur within a recognizable archetype, which itself conveys meaning to the experienced listener.<sup>44</sup> Yet the format is also fluid enough to allow words to be applied in ways that are suitable to the context and learning needs at hand.<sup>45</sup>

### Dilemmas in Translation

Thus this approach to learning involves nuances of meaning that the learner must be *ready* to hear and prepared to come to understand through a process that also respects the autonomy of individual understanding and meaning rather than ensuring that the learner holds a *correct* interpretation.<sup>46</sup> It is within this context that Western-trained researchers must show their *readiness* to receive the literature. Doing so remains a significant challenge to cross-cultural research efforts and to researchers working within and between worldviews. In a recent essay Leroy Meyer and Tony Ramirez raise this issue as addressed by philosopher Ian Hacking (in response to Kuhn and Feyerabend) as the problem of the incommensurability of worldviews that reason differently.<sup>47</sup> Whether or not it is truly incommensurable, the issue of divergent or diverging realities is one that is helpful to keep in mind throughout the research process and to discuss with mentors in both academic and Aboriginal communities.<sup>48</sup>

Many indigenous scholars, while acknowledging these difficulties, have chosen to put this knowledge, based in environmental experience, the interrelationships of all beings, ceremony, and oral tradition, into the words and forms that are used in text-based, academic documents.<sup>49</sup> They note the relative challenges, advantages, and disadvantages of doing so and the resulting incompleteness.<sup>50</sup> For example, issues of language and meaning involved in

translation are multiplied when working with worldviews that are in many ways diametrically opposed.<sup>51</sup> Translation of the vitality of the cultural context is a particularly significant challenge.<sup>52</sup> Hacking reminds us that in translation what we are really trying to achieve is not simple accuracy but communication of ways of thinking that require learning ways of reasoning as much as words.<sup>53</sup> Further, Hacking holds that objectivity is based not simply in current Western scientific empirical claims but in the reasoning styles held within particular worldviews.<sup>54</sup> Given the predominance of Western forms of reasoning in academic literature, this factor is also important in terms of ownership and sovereignty.<sup>55</sup>

Language is central to worldview and presents many dilemmas in translation with both cultural and political ramifications. Interestingly, Julie Cruikshank, a non-Aboriginal researcher struggling with these issues, notes that the elderly Aboriginal women who were her research partners believed that the use of English as a medium for traditional knowledge was workable and in some ways even preferable given the language skills of their grandchildren.<sup>56</sup> However, what remained essential was the women's *continued* control and involvement in the preparation of the final written work in order to preserve ownership and ensure a continuing basis within the worldview of the original.<sup>57</sup>

I acknowledge these dilemmas while relying on the choices made by these scholars. Many of them have chosen to proceed based on their belief in the value of the work and often with the blessing of elders.<sup>58</sup> However, as many of these same scholars point out, this does not mean abandoning a critical stance. Not every "Indian voice" is acknowledged as authentic, and even the most sympathetic of academic voices, all too often, even if inadvertently, may reinforce colonizing practices of "othering," distancing, and knowledge ownership simply by being situated in this context, its assumptions, and validation processes.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, Brant Castellano notes the tendency of Western literature to give both the authority and the "just desserts" (blame or credit) to the writer rather than the holder of the knowledge, thus undermining Aboriginal epistemological traditions.<sup>60</sup>

Given the challenge to the status quo offered by many of these literatures and the potential political power of what is said, academic screening processes that question the credibility of Aboriginal literature and forms of knowledge are being challenged by Aboriginal scholars.<sup>61</sup> Simon Ortiz reminds us of the role literary traditions have as authentic grounding and sustenance for resistance.<sup>62</sup> Given the implications of these issues, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn calls on scholars to reinvent the boundaries and definitions of what may be discussed as "the literature."<sup>63</sup> She calls for acknowledgment "that Indians know what has happened to them and that knowledge is in the language, culture, custom, and literature of the tribe and, most important, that Indians are entitled to tell their own stories."<sup>64</sup> While the issue of who, when, and where remains under debate,<sup>65</sup> I hold that research with Aboriginal communities requires a more concerted effort to deconstruct this role by including a broader view of what constitutes the "literature," where that literature might be located, and how it may be responded to.

## QUESTIONING THE ROLE OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW

The debate regarding the credibility and contextual nature of the constitution of “the literature” has also been integral to the postpositivist, feminist, constructivist, postcolonial, and postmodern critiques of Western science and its basis in a rationally uniform and objective reality. The basic assumptions, the location of knowledge, and the range of appropriate methodology and validation processes have all been challenged.<sup>66</sup> The hegemonic privileging of knowledge based in a primarily male, Eurocentric science has been well documented and critiqued.<sup>67</sup> This critique has led to an increasing acceptance of subjective, qualitative, and community-based approaches to research.<sup>68</sup> These issues of representation, context, and social construction inherent in this critique, as well as approaches that aim toward decolonizing research methodologies (and researchers), are essential considerations.<sup>69</sup> Also important is the challenge to the validity, language, and content of the critical literature review and its “reasoning styles” in the context of varying epistemological traditions or ways of knowing.

Newer methodologies, such as grounded theory and narrative inquiry, have been developed where exposure to the literature is purposely minimized. In the case of grounded theory the literature review is replaced by the development of theory grounded in the actual research context rather than in the preconceptions of prior research.<sup>70</sup> In narrative inquiry the focus is on establishing connections that validate the reasoning of contextually understood experience rather than the empirically based reasoning of verifiable but decontextualized causal bits of information.<sup>71</sup> In this case the linearity of the building blocks of rational argument within the “objective” tradition of a particular field of study is not of major importance, but rather meaning as experienced and expressed in context and story is of central concern. These challenges, as well as those raised by Aboriginal scholars, call into question the weight, focus, and intention of the literature review.

Despite these challenges, a thorough review of the literature remains a prerequisite to most academic research proposals. As discussed, this review must be conducted in a spirit of critical thinking and analysis that allows one to learn from the literature, think critically about the history of the field, consider the influences on our predecessors’ research, and question the soundness of underlying arguments and assumptions. Thinking through these issues is particularly important in regard to the construction, location, and ownership of Aboriginal knowledge traditions. While hegemonic challenges remain and need to be identified as such, the opportunity exists for critique and deconstruction of this literature. In fact, Donald Fixico suggests that it is an aspect of ethical responsibility to do so.<sup>72</sup> I agree and hold that, at a minimum, expansion of how one defines the literature to include knowledge systems that may be more relevant to the multiple locations and forms of the “literature” and the influence of culturally based reasoning styles should be introduced.

Further, the literature review not only serves to situate the proposed research question in a theoretical context but also offers us a view of what is missing and highlights the significance of the proposed course of research.



Thus, whose viewpoint is represented and for whom the research is being conducted are essential questions in terms of one's starting point. When theory development or synthesis is an objective, the literature review serves as a way of acknowledging various influences on one's thinking. Research findings are usually filtered through the contextual interaction of academic background, personal experience, and values in interaction with the research material and anticipated research outcomes. Honesty and reflexivity about one's starting points and assumptions is absolutely essential in this research context. This is especially the case given the implications of current and historical social and political contexts, as well as the all too often unsatisfactory experience of communities with research and researchers.<sup>73</sup>

Acknowledgment of these factors is essential and must be ongoing when research involves complex ethical, economic, and political implications (this is *always* the case in the context of research with Aboriginal communities). In the case of research that takes place in the interaction between varying worldviews, the literature referred to must be representative of these perspectives and the authentic holders and forms of this knowledge. Misrepresentation has implications both in terms of the political context of knowledge acceptance and ownership but also in terms of the validity of what is being presented. In summary, I hold that only by relying on literature and authentic voice from both Western and indigenous traditions can we contribute to a dialogical process occurring at the interface of these two literatures yet a process resulting *not* in any integrating synthesis that may diminish (make invisible, disappear, co-opt, destroy) one over the other. Rather, acknowledgment, critique, and balance of the contributions of both forms of ontological and epistemological traditions to the understanding of the historical and the cultural processes involved in the research question is intended.

### EXAMPLES AND PRINCIPLES

In preparation for my own research into the strategic response of community members to the historical events of the twentieth century, I visited elders and community leaders to discuss the interface of our research interests in order to further define the research issue. These conversations occurred prior to the final formulation of the research question or any formal data collection. Many of the people I spoke with (or listened to) shared information that they believed was essential for me to understand *before* I began this work. Each of their comments served to site the research within the values and experience of the community, and each of these comments helped me to see and, as a result, transform the research question.

For example, Maria Brown, a woman in her late seventies said to me, "I'd like to teach you, but you have to learn the language and the first thing you need to learn is the word for northern lights—*yaka nágas*."<sup>74</sup> For her, before I could even begin to talk about working together, ensuring that I would place myself in the location, one in which the nights are long and the aurora strong much of the year, was required. She also insisted that although we would primarily speak in English, the knowledge came from the Chipewyan language,

which remained essential to her. She would share her knowledge only if I responded to this reality in a respectful manner. Acknowledging the importance of the river, the animals, and the forest surrounding the community was important to most community members.<sup>75</sup> How that environment was experienced, as well as the role of government in regulating it, was a common concern. For example, animal numbers were seen to be diminishing as the people no longer hunted (respected) some of the animals as they had in past times. This was seen as contrasting with the perspective of game regulations and government biologists that stressed Western concepts of conserving game through regulation, management, and control, resulting in a continuing resentment by holders of both perspectives.

Interestingly, Jim Schaeffer, the chief of one of the First Nations involved responded to my initial presentation by telling me about one of his sons.<sup>76</sup> This young man has a college education, yet he also values spending time in the bush, hunting and trapping. To his father what was important was that his son could succeed in either “world,” but by never wasting meat, taking only what he can use, he shows his respect for and grounding in traditional cultural values. Taking this “two-perspectives” approach to apply to the need for balance in my work with the community, he requested that I work directly with the band councilor most respected for his traditional knowledge and skills.

This community has been markedly influenced by the colonial experience. An older couple living near the cemetery, the Daniels, stressed to me that I needed to understand this experience and understand it as occurring not only in terms of relations with the government.<sup>77</sup> Pointing down the road, they shared the example of a priest who came to the community in the mid-1960s. Finding the cemetery in what he perceived to be a disorderly state, he simply ordered all the crosses to be knocked down, shoved into a pile, and replaced by new, identical crosses arranged in straight lines. For this priest it was of little concern that the exact location of family members was lost in the process, violating the respect due from the living to the dead. What appears to have been important to him was his own conception of order as a component of religiosity. However, for this elder, almost forty years later, loss of the exact location of his mother’s grave continues to cause emotional and psychological pain. Colonizing experiences not only have had but continue to have a personal impact.

Several older people talked about the days when this community was served by riverboats and how, in those days, people cared for each other and shared a sense of community. In those days if you saw children playing around at the busy boat landing, anyone would tell the kids to go home. Now elders say children run around all over the place, and no one watches out for them; everyone just minds his or her own business. A good future was seen to entail a return to these values. Thus, in these initial comments, often prefaced with the words “what you need to know is . . .,” are seen respect for environment, language, ownership of knowledge, the impact of colonial experiences, and a vision of the future based in traditional values and yet also in present realities.

## Guiding Principles

Given this discussion, the following principles may prove useful for consideration at the outset as well as on a continuing basis throughout the research process:

*Acknowledge the politics of literature review and research at the outset, including control and ownership of knowledge, whom the knowledge is for, and issues of control of and access to funding, opportunity, and reputation.* These are very real issues for Aboriginal communities, whose members have experienced the results of not doing so. Recognizing the dynamics of the colonial experience as intrinsic to the research process, the institutional forces exerting pressure to keep things that way, and the resulting influence on researchers and participants allows one to consider responses.

*Ground the work by reflexively acknowledging who you are, both as a knower (scholar) and as a learner (student).* This principle involves critically reflecting on the assumptions guiding one's approach to research, as well as the personal experiences that influence one's interest in or response to the research topic and to the role of a learner. Active, ongoing, and self-aware engagement in decolonization and processing of insider/outsider issues is an essential aspect of reflexivity.<sup>78</sup>

*Broaden and balance the literature review through immersion in the literature of locale, including relevant oral, written, relational, and experiential literatures.* This literature may include the so-called gray literature produced by local Aboriginal organizations, as well as government publications, audio- or videotapes completed in earlier community projects, personal or archival photographs, informal conversations and interviews, and active participation in community events. Prior to the formal research process, situating yourself experientially in location and relationship—in the community, the surrounding lifeworld, and the interconnection of both—is essential.

*Discuss the significant limitations involved when relying on one knowledge tradition only.* Critique existing literature and deconstruct assumptions as relevant to the research site and question. Despite the ethical issues involved and grounding acquired by doing so, not all research may allow for a lengthy initial literature search in context given the nature of time frames, funding, research goals, community dynamics, and the research question itself. Nevertheless, I believe at a minimum that the importance of literature as situated within community and worldview needs to be acknowledged and any absence of this material presented as a serious limitation to the proposed research, similarly as any other limitation to research is presented.<sup>79</sup>

*Cite literature, including oral literature, in appropriate ways.* Deal with issues related to proper citation directly. Given the history of appropriation of knowledge, as well as the need to respect traditional protocol and views on knowledge sharing, confidentiality may not always be appropriate. It may be more important, both personally and politically, to acknowledge the holder of this literature by name. This issue may be complex as both collective and personal knowledge may be involved, depending on the nature of the research. Thus issues of confidentiality and knowledge ownership and their implications must

be discussed at the outset with communities and with knowledge holders, and their preferences must be respected.<sup>80</sup>

*Keep the literature review relevant, and strive for cultural authenticity and voice.*<sup>81</sup> The production of the written literature review needs to be relevant to the research question and context. In the writing process avoid mixing culturally based metaphors or analogies (for example, do not use a Western metaphor to illustrate indigenous oral literature). By doing so, not only do we mix metaphors or spread faulty analogies, but we may reduce direct experience-based knowledge to mere symbols or to exotic examples of familiar categories, causing not enhanced communication but a potentially damaging resituating of experience and identity.<sup>82</sup>

*Collaborate with the holders of this unpublished literature in the completion of the literature review and of the resulting research question.* Discuss how and in what format these accounts will be produced for the purposes of the literature review with local partners. Explore together how this literature leads to a research question of mutual interest. Begin to explore how working relations will develop and feedback will be integrated during the research process. Acknowledge any dilemmas encountered or anticipated and how responses may be negotiated. Explore the ethical ramifications involved, and discuss them with research partners.

## Challenges

As a non-Aboriginal resident of the research community and as a PhD candidate in a traditional university setting, I struggled with these issues. Carrying out these principles, even simply as guidelines, is not easy given the assumptions and expectations of research institutions and the resulting pressures on the researcher. I found I could only proceed by talking with and listening to community advisers. At the same time that I received this support, as a member of the community I was not separate from community relationships. As I began to prepare for the research and to discuss my need to learn from within the community, my relationships broadened from those of primarily individual-to-individual to relationships with extended families as a whole. As a result, I experienced challenges related to the politics of local relationships and family alliances.<sup>83</sup> Following a very difficult election and a resulting court challenge experienced by one of the First Nations located in the community, my research and my personal relationships were caught up as a small cog in this conflict, and for a while the previous approval I had received for the research was withdrawn. Although frustrating at the time, these experiences kept issues related to the personal and community struggle to deal with the continuing influence of colonialism inescapably in the forefront.<sup>84</sup>

## CONCLUSION

As this essay has explored, prior to the completion of a research proposal a process of dialogue involving learning from community members on location is recommended in order for the researcher to begin to see the research

community in light of the experiential-based literature found in interpersonal activity. Further, getting a feel for place is essential, for example, experiencing how fire, water, and snow cover affect the lives of plants and animals and how the low sun in winter, the river breakup in spring, and the swarm of bulldog flies in July impact one's daily life. Clarification of one's role as both learner and listener in the context of the research question and community members' expertise is also important. Thus my own search for "the literature" took place not only in the library but in the interaction of community, environment, language, relationship, and historical context. Immersion in the experiential literature of activity as occurring in place of the varied, but interconnected, groups that make up this community was essential. Nevertheless, it would be misleading to minimize the personal and political challenges of this process despite the rewards; thus, reflexivity and reliance on knowledgeable advisers in both the academic and Aboriginal communities is essential throughout the process.

As Chief Snow and Dr. Couture stated more than twenty-five years ago, respect for the location of Aboriginal traditions of knowledge and the values associated with them is essential to the conduct of research. Failing to maintain that respect in this research context too often means developing research questions screened in prior assumptions, often including those of colonization, diminishing the value of one's work, however well intentioned. By continuing to emphasize only written material the Western account remains located in a privileged position that situates assumptions and research questions in ways that can be difficult to deconstruct or reframe later.

This critique has been repeated and deepened in the intervening years. As discussed, scholars from a range of fields have addressed this issue. We need to respond by relying on a broader range of relationships, skills, viewpoints, and forms of knowing and reasoning when formulating research questions with and within Aboriginal communities. Research questions developed in isolation of the complete literature and of the prior research as located in community, in experience, and in oral accounts are one-sided and incomplete, weakening their value to researchers and communities. At the same time, a review of the academic literature is quite often useful in terms of review, critique, and contextualization of existing material. However, when relying on one tradition only, the rationale for the research will likely be flawed from the outset. Failing to conduct a more complete and situated literature review becomes, then, not only an issue of ethical accountability but also one of sound research practice. In summary, the literature review is about locating words and then selecting the words that frame a justification. It is important that those words reflect location in ways that don't simply recite what has been said but rather resite knowledge and knowledge systems from within experience and worldview.

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## NOTES

1. Ian A. L. Getty and Donald B. Smith, preface to *One Century Later: Western Canadian Reserve Indians since Treaty 7*, ed. Ian A. L. Getty and Donald B. Smith (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1978), xi.

2. Chief John Snow, "Treaty Seven Centennial: Celebration or Commemoration?" in *One Century Later: Western Canadian Reserve Indians since Treaty 7*, 3.

3. *Ibid.*

4. Getty and Smith, preface, *One Century Later*, xii.

5. See Jean-Guy A. Goulet, *Ways of Knowing: Experience, Knowledge, and Power among the Dene Tha* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998), for an excellent discussion on traditional learning approaches of northern Athabaskan peoples and the need for the anthropologist to learn as the people do, through experience.

6. W. Lawrence Neuman and Larry W. Kreuger, *Social Work Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003), 461.

7. From this perspective the literature review is one aspect of the linked chain in the "conversation" of the "community of science." See Lawrence F. Locke, Waneen Wyrick Spiriduso, and Stephen J. Silverman, *Proposals That Work*, 3rd ed. (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1993), 66; Neuman and Kreuger, *Social Work Research Methods*, 461.

8. Locke, Spiriduso, and Silverman, *Proposals That Work*, 72; Neuman and Kreuger, *Social Work Research Methods*, 461.

9. Janice M. Morse and P. A. Field, *Qualitative Research Methods for Health Professionals*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995).

10. Linda Tuhiwai Smith notes this dynamic as well in her important book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 36.

11. Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Ourselves and Others* (London: Routledge, 1999), 4.

12. This includes the assumptions inherent in the scientific method (i.e., empiricism, objectivity, and validation) and in the manner that various social science fields have responded to this framework. James Youngblood Henderson provides interesting background in "The Context of the State of Nature," in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, ed. Marie Battiste (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), 11–38.

13. Morse and Field, *Qualitative Research Methods*, 46.

14. Locke, Spiriduso, and Silverman, *Proposals That Work*, 66; Kjell E. Rudestam and Rae E. Newton, *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992).

15. As many of the scholars quoted in this text have noted, there is no single Aboriginal perspective. Many peoples with varying culturally based norms and traditions

are included in the use of this term in Canada. However, holistic conceptualizations of environment, being and relationship, responsibility and respect, as well as forms of learning and coming to knowledge, are at the heart of many of these perspectives.

16. Marie Battiste, "Maintaining Aboriginal Identity, Language, and Culture in Modern Society," in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, ed. Marie Battiste (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), 192–208.

17. Locke, Spiriduso, and Silverman, *Proposals That Work*, 72; Rudestam and Newton, *Surviving Your Dissertation*, 7; Neuman and Kreuger, *Social Work Research*, 461.

18. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; James Youngblood Henderson, "Ayukpachi: Empowering Aboriginal Thought," in *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*, 248–78.

19. Donald L. Fixico, "Ethics and Responsibilities in Writing American Indian History," in *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, ed. Devon Mihesuah (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 84–99; Devon Mihesuah, introduction to *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, 1–22; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 9; Angela Cavender Wilson, "American Indian History or Non-Indian Perceptions of American History?" in *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, 23–26.

20. Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas, 1492 to the Present* (Winnipeg, MN: Arbeiter Ring Press, 1998); Vine Deloria Jr., *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria Jr. Reader*, ed. Barbara Deloria, Kristen Foehner, and Sam Scinta (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1999); Donald L. Fixico, "Ethics and Responsibilities," 86; Georges E. Sioui, *For an Amerindian Autohistory: An Essay on the Foundations of a Social Ethic*, trans. Sheila Fischman (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1992); Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 9, 67.

21. Winona Stevenson, "Indigenous Voices, Indigenous Histories, Part I: The Othering of Indigenous History," *Saskatchewan History* 50, no. 2 (fall 1998): 24–27.

22. *Ibid.*, 25.

23. See Neal McLeod, "Cree Narrative Memory," *Oral History Forum* 19–20 (1999–2000): 37–61.

24. Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Viewpoint* (Saskatoon, SK: Fifth House, 1989); James M. Blaut Jr., *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York: Guilford Press, 1993); Pam Colorado, "Bridging Native and Western Science," *Convergence* 21, nos. 2/3 (1988): 49–67. Fixico, "Ethics and Responsibilities," 93; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 8.

25. See Mihesuah, introduction.

26. One of the reviewers of this article rightly brings up the challenge of the hegemonic assumptions of the terms and location of science, pedagogy, and knowledge in Western society. For publications that address this issue see Marie Battiste and Jean Barman, eds., *First Nations Education in Canada: The Circle Unfolds* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995); Battiste, *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice*; Gregory Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence* (Chicago: Clear Light, 2000); Colorado, "Bridging Native and Western Science"; and Deloria, *Spirit and Reason*.

27. Cajete, *Native Science*, 14.

28. Joe E. Couture, "Native Studies and the Academy," in *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts: Multiple Readings of Our World*, ed. George J. Sefa Dei, Budd L. Hall, and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 157–67; L. M. Findlay, foreword to Battiste, *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice*, ix–xiii; Carolyn Kenny, "A

Sense of Place: Aboriginal Research as Ritual Practice,” in *Voice of the Drum: Indigenous Education and Culture*, ed. Roger Neill (Brandon, MB: Kingfisher Publications, 2000), 139–50; Devon A. Mihesuah and Angela Cavender Wilson, “Commentary: Indigenous Scholars versus the Status Quo,” *American Indian Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (winter 2002): 145–48; Nora M. Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer, “The Paradox of Talking on the Page: Some Aspects of the Tlingit and Haida Experience,” in *Talking on the Page: Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts*, ed. Laura J. Murray and Keren Rice (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 3–41; Donald L. Fixico, “The Struggle for Our Homes: Indian and White Values and Tribal Lands,” in *Defending Mother Earth: Native Perspectives on Environmental Justice*, ed. Jace Weaver (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 29–46.

29. Joseph E. Couture, “The Role of Native Elders: Emergent Issues,” in *Visions of the Heart: Canadian Aboriginal Issues*, ed. David Long and Olive Patricia Dickason, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Harcourt Canada, 2000), 31–48; Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer, “Paradox of Talking,” 6; Fixico, “Struggle for Our Homes,” 29; Elsie Mather, “With a Vision Beyond Our Immediate Needs: Oral Traditions in an Age of Literacy,” in *When Our Words Return; Writing, Hearing, and Remembering Oral Traditions of Alaska and the Yukon*, ed. Patricia Morrow and William Schneider (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1995).

30. Marlene Brant Castellano, “Updating Aboriginal Traditions of Knowledge,” in *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts: Multiple Readings of Our World*, eds. George J. Sefa Dei, Budd L. Hall, and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 21–36; Vine Deloria Jr., “If You Think about It You Will See That It Is True,” in *Spirit and Reason: The Vine Deloria Jr. Reader*, eds. Barbara Deloria, Kristen Foehner, and Sam Scinta (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1999); Robin Ridington, *Little Bit Know Something: Stories in a Language of Anthropology* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1990).

31. Brant Castellano, “Updating Aboriginal Traditions,” 23–24.

32. Haunani-Kay Trask, *From a Native Daughter: Colonialism and Sovereignty in Hawai‘i*, rev. ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

33. *Ibid.*, 118.

34. Deloria, “If You Think about It,” 46, 55; Fixico, “Struggle for Our Homes,” 29; Joseph Marshall III, *On Behalf of the Wolf and the First Peoples* (Santa Fe, NM: Red Crane Books, 1995).

35. Brant Castellano, “Updating Aboriginal Traditions,” 24; Deloria, “If You Think about It,” 52; Fixico, “Struggle for Our Homes,” 39; N. Scott Momaday, *The Man Made of Words: Essays, Stories, Passages* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1997); Ridington, *Little Bit Know Something*, 62.

36. Couture, “Native Studies,” 162; Deloria, “If You Think about It,” 41; McLeod, “Cree Narrative Memory,” 40; Momaday, *Man Made of Words*, 15; Trask, *From a Native Daughter*; Wilson, “American Indian History,” 24.

37. Couture, “Native Studies,” 159; Peter Kulchyski, Don McCaskill, and David Newhouse, eds., *In the Words of Elders: Aboriginal Cultures in Transition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Mather, “With a Vision,” 22.

38. Couture, “Role of Native Elders,” 44; Leanne Holmes, “Heart Knowledge, Blood Memory, and the Voices of the Land: Implications of Research among Hawaiian Elders,” in *Indigenous Knowledges in Global Contexts: Multiple Readings of Our World*, ed. George J. Sefa Dei, Budd L. Hall, and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 37–53; Robin Ridington, *Trail to Heaven: Knowledge and Narrative in a Northern Native Community* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1988).



39. For example, references to the person, place or context in which information or story is received or experienced is often based in a cultural shorthand that validates the way in which knowledge is received, shared, and legitimately told.

40. Momaday, *Man Made of Words*, 15.

41. Basil Johnston, "How Do We Learn Language? What Do We Learn?" in *Talking on the Page: Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts*, ed. Laura J. Murray and Keren Rice (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 43–45; Momaday, *Man Made of Words*, 16.

42. Couture, "Role of Native Elders," 44.

43. Julie Cruikshank, "Myth and Tradition as Narrative Framework: Oral Histories from Northern Canada," *International Journal of Oral History* 9, no. 3 (1988): 198–214; Linda Hogan, "Who Puts Together," in *Critical Perspectives on Native American Fiction*, ed. R. F. Fleck (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1993), 134–42; Johnston, "How Do We Learn," 50; Momaday, *Man Made of Words*, 15–16.

44. Paula Gunn Allen, "Bringing Home the Fact: Tradition and Continuity in the Imagination," in *Recovering the Word: Essays on Native American Literature*, ed. Bruce Swann and Allan Krupat (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 563–79; Cruikshank, "Myth and Tradition," 210; Johnston, "How Do We Learn," 46.

45. Julie Cruikshank, in collaboration with Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith, and Annie Ned, *Life Lived Like a Story: Life Stories of Three Yukon Native Elders* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990); Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer, "Paradox of Talking," 7.

46. Johnston, "How Do We Learn," 46; Deloria, "If You Think about It," 44.

47. Leroy N. Meyer and Tony Ramirez, "'Wakinyan Hotan': The Inscrutability of Lakota/Dakota Metaphysics," in *From Our Eyes: Learning from Indigenous Peoples*, ed. Sylvia O'Meara and Douglas A. West (Toronto: Garamond Press, 1996), 89–105; Ian Hacking, "Language, Truth, and Reason," in *Rationality and Relativism*, ed. M. Hollis and S. Lukes (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1982), 48–66; Ian Hacking, *Representing and Intervening* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

48. Richard A. Shweder, "Divergent Rationalities," in *Metatheory in Social Science: Pluralisms and Subjectivities*, ed. Donald W. Fiske and Richard A. Shweder (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

49. Kim M. Blaeser, "Writing Voices Speaking: Native Authors and an Oral Aesthetic," in *Talking on the Page: Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts*, ed. Laura J. Murray and Keren Rice (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 53–68; Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer, "Paradox of Talking," 23; Victor Masayevsa Jr., "It Shall Not End Anywhere: Transforming Oral Traditions," in *Talking on the Page: Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts*, ed. Laura J. Murray and Keren Rice (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 91–95; Mather, "With a Vision," 20, 13–26; Winona Stevenson, introduction to *Oral History Forum* 19–20 (1999–2000): 13–16.

50. Blaeser, "Writing Voices," 56; Masayevsa, "It Shall Not End," 91; Mather, "With a Vision," 23.

51. Meyer and Ramirez, "Wakinyan Hotan," 91.

52. Blaeser, "Writing Voices," 53.

53. Hacking, "Language, Truth, and Reason."

54. *Ibid.*

55. Masayevsa, "It Shall Not End," 94.

56. Julie Cruikshank, "The Social Life of Texts: Editing on the Page and in Performance," in *Talking on the Page: Editing Aboriginal Oral Texts*, ed. Laura J. Murray and Keren Rice (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 97–119.

57. *Ibid.*, 103.

58. See, e.g., Linda Akan, "Pimosatamowin Sikaw Kakeequaywin: Walking and Talking, a Saulteaux Elder's View of Native Education," *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 27, no. 2 (2003): 16–40; Blaeser, "Writing Voices"; Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer, "Paradox of Talking"; Johnston, "How Do We Learn"; Couture, "Role of Native Elders"; McLeod, "Cree Narrative Memories"; Greg Sarris, *Mabel McKay: Weaving the Dream* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

59. Here I am not referring to the range of Aboriginal identities and many ways of living such identities but rather to issues of appropriation of "identity." For discussion of the colonizing implications of knowledge representation, see Ward Churchill, *Indians Are Us? Culture and Genocide in North America* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1994); Vine Deloria Jr., "Comfortable Fictions and the Struggle for Turf: An Essay Review of *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions and Government Policies*," in *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, ed. Devon Mihesuah (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 65–83; Laurie A. Whitt, "Cultural Imperialism and the Marketing of Native America," in *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, ed. Devon Mihesuah (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 23–26.

60. Brant Castellano, "Updating Aboriginal Traditions," 31.

61. See the collection in Mihesuah's *Natives and Academics* for a good introduction.

62. Simon J. Ortiz, "The Historical Matrix, towards a National Indian Literature: Cultural Authenticity in Nationalism," in *Critical Perspectives on Native American Fiction*, ed. R. F. Fleck (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1993), 64–68.

63. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, "How Scholarship Defames the Native Voice . . . and Why," *Wicazo Sa Review* 15, no. 2 (fall 2000): 92.

64. *Ibid.*

65. See, e.g., Duane Champagne, "American Indian Studies Is for Everyone"; and Karen Gayton Swisher, "Why Indian People Should Be the Ones to Write about Indian Education"; both in *Natives and Academics: Researching and Writing about American Indians*, 181–89 and 190–99, respectively.

66. Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method*, 3rd ed. (London: Verso, 1993); Egon G. Guba and Yvonna S. Lincoln, "Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1994), 105–17; Sandra Harding, *Feminism and Methodology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Sandra Harding, *Is Science Multicultural? Postcolonialisms, Feminisms, and Epistemologies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993).

67. Harding, *Feminism and Methodology*; Harding, *Is Science Multicultural?*; Evelyn F. Keller and Helen E. Longino, *Feminism and Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Dei, Hall, and Rosenberg, *Indigenous Knowledges*; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*.

68. Denzin and Lincoln, *Handbook of Qualitative Research*; Nancy Gibson, Ginger Gibson, and Anne Macaulay, "Community-Based Research: Negotiating Research Agendas and Evaluating Outcomes," in *The Nature of Qualitative Evidence*, ed. Janice Morse, Janice Swanson, and Anton J. Kuzel (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001), 161–83.

69. See Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* for a thorough discussion of these issues.

70. Barney Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine de Gruyter, 1967).

71. Laurel Richardson, "Narrative and Sociology," in *Representation in Ethnography*, ed. John van Maanen (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), 198–222.

72. Fixico, "Ethics and Responsibilities," 84.

73. Raymond Beaver, personal communication, 21 February 2000; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 92.

74. Maria uses a *ya* sound for the first letter of this word, so I have kept this dialect form. Jonas Adam, currently the Chipewyan language coordinator in the community but originally from another community a little further southeast, indicated (8 July 2004) that the proper form is *hokanāgas* with *ho*. He indicated the word comes from two root words *hoka* and *nagas*, the first meaning moving lines, the second meaning straight lines.

75. Frank Laviolette, personal communication, July 2001; Frank Laviolette and Gabe Sepp, in *As Long as I Remember*, by Sharon Maldaver (Fort Smith, NT: Cascade Graphics, 1993); Theresa Ferguson, "Native Perspectives on the Northern Diseased Bison Issue: An Outline," *Northern Diseased Bison Environmental Assessment Panel: Compendium of Government Submissions and Technical Specialist Reports in Response to the Panel Information Requirements Document* (Edmonton, AB: Northern Diseased Bison Federal Environmental Assessment Panel, 1989): 201–15.

76. Jim Schaeffer, personal communication, 21 February 2000.

77. Bernice and Buster Daniels, personal communication, July 2001.

78. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 137.

79. Wilson, "American Indian History," 24.

80. Gibson, Gibson, and Macaulay, "Community-Based Research," 162.

81. Devon Mihesuah has written about this issue in the introduction to *Natives and Academics*, 5.

82. For a good discussion of this issue see Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, "End of the Failed Metaphor," in her *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner and Other Essays* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996).

83. For discussion of this experience see Lia Ruttan, "Exploring Ethical Principles in the Context of Research Relationships," *Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal and Indigenous Community Health* 2, no. 1 (spring 2004): 12–28. The issues involved are complex and will take another article to explore sufficiently.

84. This was especially the case in that the older men and women involved wanted to continue, raising complex issues regarding ownership of knowledge given traditional roles and First Nations government as experienced under the Indian Act.