

In Order to ‘Say What We Say:’ Archival Protocol that Attends to Indigenous Data Sovereignty

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Abstract: As I begin a project to tell the story of a 1974 sovereign assertion, I pause to reflect on tensions inherent between the impulse to recover the rhetors that history leaves behind and Indigenous peoples’ archival protocols. Archival investigations enrich stories about the roles that historically marginalized communities and disenfranchised rhetors play/ed in knowledge making, in coalition building, and in our collective literacy-story. But, as I reflect here, continuing to critique such interventions remains necessary when researchers engage evidence of Indigenous people’s archival presence. “The archive” is simply too implicated in contemporary, historic, and scholarly colonial practice. Using one recovery-case and an exploration of Indigenous archival activism, I offer an illustration about the necessity of attention to Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

Keywords: [Indigenous data sovereignty](#), [recovery methodologies](#), [sovereign assertion](#), [First Nations](#), [Nazko First Nation](#), [archival protocol](#)

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Introduction

Enclosed please find the report we have made. It is our report to the provincial government on the things we know and feel and have been able to write with the help of a few people. It says what we say.

Catherine Patrick (Chief of Nazko Band)

Stanley Boyd (Chief of Kluskus Band)

Dennis Patrick (Nazko and Kluskus Band Administrator)

From: Letter to British Columbia (BC) Premier, Dave Barret, 25 August 1974

The report, noted above, is “The Report to the Nazko and Kluskus Band of Carrier Indians” (RNKB). During a moratorium on logging, compelled by a First Nations’ (FN) blockade of the only road into the Nazko Valley, it was written by the “Nazko-Kluskus Study Team” (study team) comprised of settler-researchers who collaborated with Chief Catherine Patrick, her council, and members of the Nazko and Kluskus First Nations (NKFN). The RNKB’s purpose, I have learned, was to describe to the BC Government the NKFN “use” of the valley as evidence of the impact to the community of planned logging in the valley. As a settler, a Canadian, a former resident of the region called “the Cariboo”¹, and a literacy studies scholar, I am invested in analyzing a political moment, the NKFN who stood up for their land, those who supported them, those who opposed, and the ways it all was carried out and recorded by writing. I learned of the event, ultimately savvy negotiations at a significant time in BC for FN collective action, not from any history lesson in school but because my grandparents, who were cattle-ranchers in the Nazko Valley, kept copies of some of the blockade-relevant texts, most importantly the RNKB. The 55-page typed document, staple-bound with green construction paper, was originally a mystery to me; the only contributor’s names it offers are offset quotes

1 When writing this reflection, there were many considerations of naming (“Nazko” in the Dakelh language is “Ndazkoh” for example) and referring to places (“Cariboo” is written as Caribou in several places). I chose to use the most current (I could find it in an official directory or I could ask a Nazko First Nation’s person) combined with the most frequently used version of the name or referent.

from NKFN community members interspersed between NKFN history and Nazko Valley ecology. Chief Patrick contributed to the testimonials, asserting, for example, that “our natural resources are our only riches. If we lose that we are nothing” (13).

But since I first thumbed through the RNKB, I have learned more about the NKFN blockade that compelled it. Over the years, I have spoken with NKFN members who mention their historical political success, the blockade, and their patient and relentless appeals for the sovereignty the RNKB demands. I learned more from one of the only published mentions of events. A 1976 Master’s thesis, “The Caribou Tribal Council,” by David Zirnhelt pertains to the 1969 formation of the regional FN council of which the NKFN are members. Zirnhelt’s regional focus results in little mention of Nazko- and Kluskus-specific organizing. He notes that “Nazko elected its first council in 1971” (p. 15),² but does not identify Chief Patrick or the other elected council members by name; he mentions the Nazko blockade, and he describes more lengthy activist work, offering that “It was in 1973 that the Nazko and Kluskus bands developed an active stand [. . .] and sought to have a moratorium placed on the forest developments for a five year period until such time as the land claims and a joint Indian/industry development proposal could be worked out” (p. 29); but my understanding of the organizers of the “active stand” with Chief Patrick as leader of the Nazko First Nations (NFN)³ was left out of any history I knew.

It was learning of the Alan Chambers fonds at the University of British Columbia (UBC) Archives that secured my understanding of the breadth and depth of the political work of the NKFN and individuals like Chief Patrick, who initially served as the name most attached to the intervention. Forestry professor Chambers’ materials depict the actions as more than simply the “active stand” to which Zirnhelt refers. Indeed, Chambers’ collection of letters chronicle negotiations lasting from 1973-1974,⁴ the NKFN and settler-researchers’ interventions, and the government’s inaction. Most important to my reflection here is Chief Patrick’s presence in the archives and her role as leader in the initiation of the “active stand.” Indeed, Chambers’ fonds suggest that during the period of Chief Patrick’s tenure, she led her community through the initial organizing and letter writing, the blockade, the logging moratorium, and the submission of the RNKB to the B.C. Government.

I have taken to calling the “active stand” in its entirety a “sovereign assertion” (for reasons I will explain further), and I am compelled, at this early stage of the larger project of analysis of the literacy practices that illuminate the NKFN 1973-1978 political work, to consider Chief Patrick’s role and the archival material in which her story sits. Indeed, her signature and presence in the archives evoke Scott Lyons’ important introduction of rhetorical sovereignty to writing studies. Patrick’s presence at the “colonized scene of writing” demonstrates the NKFN’s “commitment to place” that Lyons marks as indicative of rhetorical sovereignty (p. 457). Indeed, given the absence of her title in any settler-publication, an effort to “write her into history”

2 Zirnhelt explains that elections were novel in the 1960-70s because more represented by “customary chief” by which I believe he means hereditary, although I’ve been unable to confirm this was the case for the NKFN.

3 Much of the archival material reviewed refers to the Nazko and Kluskus First Nations but some letters as well as my relationship with the current administration involve only the Nazko First Nation (as indicated by NFN)

4 1973-1974 (the moratorium period) is specifically when Chief Patrick led the “active stand.” The sovereign assertion begun in 1973 continued until 1978. Ultimately, negotiations continue, between the NKFN and the BC Government

(Enoch, 2010; Prior, 2024; Dever, 2017) seems most pressing. Feminist recovery work, the use of archived materials to engage the work of “writing women and other traditionally disenfranchised groups into the rhetorical tradition” (Prior, 2024) has a long-established footing in writing studies and specifically in feminist methodologies. But, in this essay, I am equally compelled to reflect on my reservations about the recovery of Chief Patrick because as Dever notes: “Archives retain a sustained gravitational pull on feminist researchers. We experience them as sites of promise and desire, even as we recognize they are also sites of power and privilege that have long been implicated in acts of violence and erasure” (p. 1). In other words, prior to the broad project to understand the NKFN sovereign assertion, I am compelled to both “recover” Chief Patrick and to investigate the implications of the archive itself.

In what follows, I share reflections at the early stages of a project to understand a FN’s sovereign assertion. As I read the archived evidence of one invested leader’s work, I sought to understand the tensions between the compulsion of “recovering” Chief Patrick and the precepts of Indigenous archival protocols (IAP) and Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS). Scant published materials offer the NKFN story. The materials collected by Chambers represent the unpublished details of the work of the NKFN leaders and a group of settler-sponsors, as the NKFN worked to secure “[their] lands and give [their] children a future” (Patrick et al., 1974, “Letter to the BC Government”). Chambers’ files, though, if addressed by IAP and IDS protocol and policy, demand a researcher-praxis that is different from my settler-trained compulsion to “stop” at recovery work. IAP and IDS insist that scholars not simply celebrate the “discovery” that conjures and mimics colonial expansion⁵. Thus, in what follows, I share what I am learning. I foreground Chief Patrick’s story, then describe where that story presently sits in the Chambers fonds, and finally, describe the contemporary work of IAP and IDS advocates. I use headings and italicized subheadings to summarize my process of learning and reflecting. The layers of this early work are, I would argue, instructive for its emphasis on my process; I share the context and content of Chief Patrick’s presence in the archives prior to the broader context of Chambers’ own work, and that is followed by a historical overview of IAP and IDS. By illustrating the specific situatedness of Chief Patrick and the NKFN sovereign assertion within a western archive, alongside a review of decades of archival protocol labor, I work to stress the importance of attention to IDS.

The History and Herstory

The story and context of Patrick’s historical contribution

My people depend on animals and resources for our own lives. If logging comes in right now, it only would mean sorrow for my people.

Chief Patrick
(RNKB 15)

Patrick’s archival presence illuminates her contribution to a NKFN “sovereign assertion,” a reference that has become essential to my in-progress project. I use the term “sovereign assertion” because, although

⁵ Once I read IDS and IAP, I understood that recovery=discovery and therefore mimics colonial expansion. That is my own understanding based on an amalgamation of the policy protocols, which span decades, and which work to check the unmitigated shelving of Indigenous people’s data.

public memory is largely of the 1974 blockade, the work of the NKFN to assert their sovereignty in the face of the threat of unfettered settler resource extraction demands reference more comprehensive than “protest” or “blockade” (the more popular terms used by Canadian media). In part, this is because the blockade was but a small part of the rhetorical ecology of the NKFN work toward diplomacy. More importantly, I rely for this choice on the work of Indigenous Studies scholars who challenge inaccurate settler renditions, explaining “reliance on terms such as ‘activism’ and ‘protest’ can lead us to inaccurately interpret Aboriginal actions as token acts of political defiance rather than as deliberate strategies with explicit outcomes” (Belanger and Lackenbauer, 2014, p. 13). Sarah Nickel (2019) framed her work on the 1969 formation of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) similarly rejecting “myopic” historical focus on contemporary Indigenous activism, which completely neglects historic and “complex political systems and conceptions of sovereignty” that are not dependent on “recognition by the settler state” (p. 8).

Chief Patrick’s role fits with much broader sovereign assertions that local newspapers’ “blockade” stories obscure. Comprehensive historical context is not possible here, but recovering Chief Patrick also locates her and the NKFN in the wide variety of 1960–and 1970s activism of North American Indigenous Peoples. Two key organizations, the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the National Indian Brotherhood (Canada’s AIM), were formed in 1968 and served to support Indigenous sovereignty. Indeed, the “1960s represent a qualitative change in indigenous political history” when “land rights became a central symbol around which disparate indigenous groups could find a common voice” (Belanger and Lackenbauer, 2014, p. 11). Specifically, the exigency for the moratorium period, with Patrick as Chief, directly connects to unprecedented provincial First Nations (FN) “political unity” (Nickel, 2019, p. 19).⁶ The publication of Prime Minister Trudeau’s 1969 White Paper, described by Nickel as “an important political tool for mobilizing support,” catalyzed a province-wide collection of FN (p. 47). Ostensibly, the “policy document” was intended to support Canadian FN and to “correct Indigenous People’s inequality and oppression.” but this “misguided and paternalistic” policy proposed to do so by “abolishing the Indian Act and historic treaties and eliminating the special rights and recognitions of Canada’s Indigenous population” (Nickel, p. 27). FN saw the Canadian government dealing with the “Indian problem” by willing it away and by legislating “equality” (Belanger and Lackenbauer, 2014). What the White Paper did accomplish was the collective organizing required to respond to it and thus force its ultimate rejection in 1970.

In British Columbia, the First Nations’ history of collective organizing along with the White Paper activism facilitated the formation of the UBCIC in 1969. This union involved nearly “two hundred First Nations bands” (Nickel, p. 3), and the UBCIC remains a powerful political force in BC to which is attributed much social and political change (Zirnhelt, 1976; Nickel, 2019; Belanger and Lackenbauer, 2014). Important to the Cariboo Region and Chief Patrick’s archival presence, the UBCIC “is undoubtedly the most important organization affecting political evolution” in the Cariboo region, as they immediately organized a “Commu-

6 To stress, the 1960s political unity is noted with the essential note that scholars take care to emphasize the rich political work of Indigenous people pre- and post colonization to assert the history of “ongoing tradition[s] of diplomacy” (13 Belanger and Lackenbauer). Examples closer to the Nazko, the “Allied Tribes of B.C. was formed in 1915-1916 [. . .] to carry the land claim to Parliament in Ottawa” (Zirnhelt 16), as well “Native Brotherhood of B.C. in 1931” (16). Zirnhelt continues further, offering a series of long and short lived local alliances, from 1931-1969, which pressed for issues such as land claims and economic and social Band-welfare.

nity Development program” (Zirnhelt, p. 19). Thus, from the UBCIC the NKFN gained bureaucratic and economic support, as well as a designated Community Development officer. Zirnhelt notes that the NFN then held “council” elections in 1971. Chief Patrick is not named here as the first elected official, but Zirnhelt made clear that, of all the regional FN, NFN was the first, in 1973, to then develop “an active stand on independence and sought to have a moratorium placed on the forest developments for a five year period until such time as the land claims and joint Indian/industry development proposal could be worked out” (Zirnhelt, p. 29). Importantly, recovering Chief Patrick adds her name to what has previously been understood, more generally, as FN organizing in the Cariboo regions.

Chief Patrick in the archives

Chief Patrick’s work is illuminated in the “correspondence 1973-74” file in the Chambers fonds. The file includes letters, beginning in March 1973, from the NKFN to various ministers in the BC Government, each of which argued for a pause in timber harvesting in favor of NKFN involvement in the development of the Nazko Valley. Through multiple 1973 exchanges, the BC Government offered terse responses in which various ministers and the premier pass responsibility to a different ministry. In the spring of 1974, clearly in the absence of substantive communication from the BC Government, the NKFN submitted a “Band Council Resolution” to the (federal) Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIA) requesting a five year “socio-economic and environmental” “study period” to determine “the extent” of the NKFN “claim and dependence on the area” (Alec et al., 1974). Information about the dramatic steps taken, on May 14, 1974, to blockade the road are absent from Chambers’ collection, but the BC government’s concession is clear from a May 22 “agreement confirmation” letter written by Solicitor Eugene Kwan, who ordered a three-month-moratorium to “allow the [BC Government] to re-evaluate [. . .] plans for development and for the Bands to gather the necessary information to enable them to evaluate their position” (Kwan, 1974). Three months later, the RNKB was submitted, evidenced by two cover letters. The first indicates that the study team submitted the report to the NKFN, “to assist in negotiations with the government” (Study Team, 1974); the second indicates the NKFN submitted the report to the BC Government (Chief Patrick, 1974, “Letter to Premier”). The submission of the report, for the purposes of my current research, “finalized” the moratorium period of Chief Catherine’s leadership.

Chief Patrick’s contributions to written diplomatic work, the patient activism of a blockade, the moratorium and the submission of the RNKB are made clear from Chambers’ correspondence file. The file’s content illustrates the rhetorical ecology of the sovereign assertion; in other words, they make clear that the NKFN, with Catherine Patrick as leader, are executing a diplomatic campaign and not just “a confrontation between Nazko Indians and crews working on a logging road” (“Nazko Logging Road Construction Delayed,” 1974). Importantly, Chief Patrick is first author and is copied on most of the correspondence during this period. The initial March 1973 letter is from Chief Patrick to “The Honorable Robert William, Minister of Lands and Forests.” In it, she and three others from the administrative team asserted their position as the “original residents” of BC and request that any government plans for their valley be “forestalled” until the NKFN is “included in all phases of planning” (Patrick, 1973). Two months later (May 15, 1973), Williams responded

addressing “Chief Catherine Patrick” with a very brief acknowledgement, both of her letter and of his understanding that the matter was being addressed by the “District Forest Office” (Williams, 1973). One month later (June 15, 1973), Chief Patrick and “Band Administrator” Dennis Patrick, wrote to Premier Dave Barrett, after, as they explain, learning from the “BC Gazette the plans of the government and more particularly the Forest Service to sell timber in the Nazko area” (Patrick, 1974, “Letter to Premier Dave Barrett.”). Chief Patrick and Dennis Patrick explained that the NKFN have voted to oppose any logging in the Nazko and that they plan to do all they can to ensure their “rights and environment are protected from exploitation.” Most specifically, Chief Patrick, again, requested a “moratorium” until the Band can create a plan that will “allow development without destroying” the Nazko Valley (Patrick, 1974, “Letter to Premier Dave Barret”). Two weeks later on July 4, 1973, Premier Barrett responded, just as briefly as Robert Williams, to explain that he had sent a copy to Williams “for his immediate attention” (Barrett, 1973).

There follows an eight-month gap in the collection, when Chief Patrick and two NFN Councilors appealed to the federal government in a “Band Resolution” form sent to the DIA signed by Chief Patrick and two NFN Councilors. Here, they continued to press for a “moratorium” on timber harvesting in the Nazko Valley for five years (Alec et al., 1974). Presumably because of the Nazko blockade, and shortly thereafter, Solicitor Kwan sets the conditions for the three-month (May–August) moratorium, making clear that “compromise” on “planned development” is the agreed-upon goal (Kwan, 1974). Here lawyers addressed the “Nazko Indian Band” and not Chief Patrick specifically. Indeed, this is the case for several of the moratorium documents that Chambers collects, which largely reflect exchanges between study team members. Chief Patrick is addressed directly in two letters from a forester, “DT Grant,” who, following a meeting with the NKFN, confirms permission to continue with planned Nazko survey work, unrelated to timber harvesting (Grant, 1974). But, more frequently it is the case that Chief Patrick is carbon-copied for example, on June 12 1974, a DIA official “checks in” with his superiors on the progress of the study team in preparing the RNKB (Ragan, 1974).

When the report is complete, in August 1974, the study team submitted it to the NKFN, for their submission to the BC Government. Thus, the final NKFN letter sent during this moratorium period is a cover letter for the RNKB from Chief Patrick, her recently elected peer Chief Stanley Boyd (Kluskus Band), and Band Administrator Dennis Patrick. The cover letter is clear about the NKFN’s demands to ultimately “protect our lands and give our children a future” (Patrick, 1974, “Letter to the BC Government”). Chiefs Patrick and Boyd and Administrator Patrick cite the recommendations listed in the RNKB; for examples, that a “special conservancy area” be designated, which would include “human and cultural resources” and that the NFN and “Kluskus Bands take the lead, in cooperation with the provincial government, in setting up an effective planning process for human development and resource use and protection” (RNKB, p.44). Chief Patrick and other contributors concluded their cover letter with a generous appeal to the broader local and provincial settler-communities with whom they wish to “cooperate on development.” (Patrick, 1974, “Letter to the BC Government”).

Settler Archives

The problem with collecting: the settler archives

The cooperative diplomacy evidenced in the archival materials, hearken, again, to Lyons' rhetorical sovereignty, particularly as the NKFN repeatedly stressed the protection of the Nazko Valley. But, I delay analysis in order to pay attention to "the colonized scene of writing"—in this case, Chamber's fonds as a locus for settler research. Chambers' archived collections must be explored with the acknowledgment of the history of violence that research has caused Indigenous people. Krystal Payne's (2022) assertion that "the inequitable power relations that exist in archives and archival practices contribute to the harms done to Indigenous people and communities" (p. 154) is repeated throughout the material I reviewed, and I believe this understanding to be foundational to any, and specifically my own, exploration of archival protocol. Even a cursory study of disciplines most clearly concerned with archives, archival science and history, lays bare the complicity of North American archival projects in the silencing of Indigenous story, history, and sovereign assertions. If indeed "the power to exclude is a fundamental aspect of the archive," which indicates obvious "distortions, omissions, erasures, and silences" (Carter, 2006, p. 216), then that power has served settler colonizers far more often than First Nations Peoples.

Indeed, settler benefit and Indigenous cost frames much archival criticism. In this critique, settler-colonizers serve as gatekeepers to an archive that supports dominant cultural narratives. Reid Gómez (2005), for one, shares the argument that settler colonizer reliance on the archives to understand their own sovereignty, over land and culture, is merely one way to consider sovereignty, and it is one that ignores Indigenous worldviews. Gómez argues that the very reason for North American archives "require strategic manipulation of written evidence and narration, specifically tribal roll numbers; passports; and historical, governmental and ethnographic narrative documents" (2005, p. 146). As such, settler-colonial archives circumscribe (in her case) Navajo notions of accountability to the land (not simply "title"), to people (not simply a "tribal roll"), and to oral tradition (not simply "documents"). The settler-colonizer's use of archived historical records is more specifically explored in J.J. Ghaddar's (2016) review of two contemporary Canadian court cases for which judgements were made about the inclusion and exclusion of Indigenous (not-settler-created) records. Ghaddar made the case that, as the court ruled to preserve some and destroy others, "the incorporation of records by or about Indigenous people into the national settler archival repository" remains "crucial for the constitution of a settler historical archival memory" and one that is "at the expense of an Indigenous one" (p. 3).

The settler-memory to which Ghaddar refers is perhaps most evidenced in the historically pernicious settler-colonizer "use" of archival materials in the service of land-claims disputes since the preference of North American courts for settler-researched, written and archived documentation over oral history is clear. Adele Perry (2005) refers to this preference as the "unmitigated triumph of history and archives in the service of empire" (p. 326) in her review of a British Columbia case. In *Delgamuukw V. British Columbia*, a 1991 ruling against the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en land claims, a judge ruled against the First Nations Bands largely because their (copious) oral arguments were not admissible as evidence and were surely not as reliable as the

historically recorded “facts.” That archives are employed “for empire” in the enduring 19th century Indian Land Question has implications for any scholar encountering Indigenous archival presence.

If the historical record wields such power in a legal proceeding, then what matters, in consideration of records not created or condoned by Indigenous communities, is an understanding of “where” and also “what” a researcher is retrieving from an archive. Chief Patrick’s is present in a particular settler-archive because Professor Alan Chambers of the Department of Forestry was involved in the NKFN sovereign assertion, initially at the behest of the DIA, a government organization created to “administer” to First Nations people. It resonates that the most comprehensive information about Chief Patrick’s work lives in a set of materials remarkable to scholars but separate from participants. In other words, to consider Chambers’ fonds is to consider that he, out of vocation and interest, collected a version of history presently not immediately available to the historical actors and their descendants.

Chambers’ direct involvement is described by archivist Jane Turner’s, “Fonds Description,” which is both a narrative and a list of three “series,” each composed of all of the materials related to projects for which Chambers was recruited. Chambers collected numerous and varied documents (for example, correspondence, maps, and forms), while involved in the three research projects, which illuminate his history of research consultation with the provincial and federal governments. His involvement in each is indicative of the Vancouver-based BC Ministries growing their hinterland-resource extraction reach combined with their inexperience in (and avoidance of) FN relations. For example, Turner explains that the materials for the first of the fonds’ “research projects,” the “Purcell Range Study series,” were created in the spring of 1973 when Chambers had been recruited by Robert A. Williams, B.C Minister of Lands, Forests and Water Resources to lead a study team of the Purcell Mountains, located far east and south of the Nazko Valley. This was a time when BC’s Government was investing heavily in determining all of the ways to extract the province’s wealth of natural resources. The study team, titled “Environment and Land Use Committee,” comprised of ministers from multiple BC Ministries (e.g., Ministries of “Mines and Petroleum” and “Recreation and Conservation”) was formed to “solve major environmental and resource management issues throughout the province, and to facilitate the flow of information, ideas and approaches between various departments in solving resource management and land allocation problems throughout the province” (Turner, 2022). Notably, no FN or community members were involved in the study.

Following the submission of the Purcell Study, and ten-days into the three-month moratorium-period, Chambers was recruited to participate in “Nazko Kluskus research” work by DIA representative Brian Carter. Three weeks later, and thus one month into the moratorium-period, he met with Carter and Brendan Kennedy (a member of the NKFN study team). Chambers “agreed to visit Nazko to try to get some feeling for the problem and to propose a course of action” (Chambers, 1974, “Letter to Ralph Ragan”). One month into the moratorium, Chambers did travel to Nazko, and he subsequently submitted a brief report of the visit to the DIA. But, following that visit, he stepped away from full-involvement, explaining to the DIA that he had to attend to “other commitments” (“Letter to Ralph Ragan”). Despite his recusal, and perhaps in spite of his own busy schedule, Chambers remained a participant as indicated by the subsequent 18 out of 37 letters that he collected or in which he was included.

These “included and collected” documents comprise Chambers’ correspondence file and offer information about the breadth of the moratorium period, which, although limited in accuracy (in terms of a complete timeline of NKFN’s perspective and collective work towards this sovereign assertion), give a sense of its rhetorical ecology. The file contains 37 chronologically organized letters. Eleven letters predate Chambers’ involvement, presumably shared so he could “catch up.” Thus importantly, the file’s “first” letters are those of Chief Patrick to BC Minister of Forest and Lands and to Premier Dave Barrett regarding her people’s “concern about the proposed developments in timber harvesting in the Nazko area” (Patrick, et al., March 8, 1973, “Letter to Honorable Rob Williams”). But other letters, exchanged after Chambers had recused himself, speak to the nature of the particular sponsorship of the DIA and the study team. Chambers, having just completed the Purcell study, was viewed by members of the study team as the expert among them. For example, “Study Director” Brendan Kennedy drops Chambers’ name in an effort to involve the “Minister of Human Resources” (MHR) in negotiations; Kennedy noted that MHR staff would benefit from getting “in touch with” Chambers “UBC Forestry Department and author of the Purcell Study” (Kennedy, July 23, 1974). Further, study team member Walt Taylor writes a lengthy handwritten letter to request Chambers “help in identifying the most relevant questions to be presented to” the BC Government (Walt Taylor to Chambers July 31, 1974). The final collected letter, sent 22 months after the first, is Chambers’ copy of his own thank-you note to the study team for keeping him apprised of their ongoing work (Chambers, 1974, “Letter to Nazko and Kluskus Indian Band Office”).

Also, rich information about the proclivities and rhetorical strategies of the parties involved is made clear in Chambers’ file, even minimally, by the amount and length of participants’ letters. Despite the legal commitment for both the NKFN and the BC government to evaluate Nazko Valley “development” plans, implied by the Kwan letter, interest in the NKFN sovereign assertion ranged from deeply invested (for example study team letters) to “compelled” (e.g., terse replies from Premier Dave Barrett). In these determinations, document length speaks volumes. I found the story of the moratorium period to reflect the reality of BC’s heartland/hinterland geography; the remote study team sends a substantial review of a history of concerns, and a request for a meeting to seek resolution or agreement; a “lower mainland” based government official responds tersely and, most often, with a “passing of the buck.” In this way, Chambers’ fonds offer both a glimpse into the NKFN’s sovereign assertion, but much more so, the settler need to document and negotiate the NKFN sovereign assertion.

Indigenous Archival Protocol and Indigenous Data Sovereignty

The archives are haunted.

Writing studies scholars have contributed a rich sub-genre of archival research methods to inform the work I undertake. Particularly relevant is the recent collection, *Unsettling Archival Research: Engaging Critical, Communal, and Digital Archives (Unsettling)* because the editors acknowledge the “reckoning” required of a researcher as she retrieves settler-collected material from a western institution (Kirsch et al., 2023, 7). Contributors invested in “unsettling” affirm critical contentions that the settler-colonizer archives are “never neutral instruments of storing information, but rather always already involve knowledge production, and

hence, involve literacies, images, and rhetorics of power” (7). The “never neutral” frame is supported by (previously noted) archivist Ghaddar’s acknowledgment that the archive is “crucial for the constitution of a settler historical archival memory” (3), and by Emily Legg’s similar assertion, as she theorizes the archive as a traumatic space for Indigenous people because it “was never meant to preserve” their culture, but instead to “reinscribe what folks want to think about Indigenous people” (74). *Unsettling* productively faces the traumatic space by acknowledging its “haunted/ing and wounded/ing” (2) and by entreating scholars to confront or to “bear witness” in order to advance an “ethos and praxis” of unsettling (1).

The archives are an invention/Write with not about.

That the archives are haunted spaces must matter to my ethos as a researcher. I find equally important praxis-considerations in the work of Ellen Cushman, whose investment in language perseverance has been foundational for my own conception of the necessity of decolonizing archival projects. Cushman’s research has long attended to the decolonizing work that has gained increasing traction in the past decade (in writing studies and in IDS). Cushman’s (2019) assertions about the “troubled and troubling roots of the archive” inform the writing studies work cited above (p. 116). But, further, it is her interventions and collaborations to not only identify or “bear witness” (Kirsch et al., 2023) to the damage done but also to counter the “tenets of colonial thought” that “structure the archives” (Cushman, p. 119). Further, she began this work at least 20 years ago by working with “teams [...] that included Cherokee elders, language teachers, program directors, community leaders, and tribal leaders” (p. 117). I see Cushman’s collaborations and relations-work presently being advocated across the humanities. For example, the focus of the 2020 American Philosophical Society’s conference on “community-engaged projects” “reflect the larger shift over the past decade of institutions and researchers collaborating and building respectful relationships with Native American and Indigenous people whose collections they steward or with whom they want to conduct research” (O’Neal, 2024, p. 2).

Heed the protocol (Indigenous Archival Protocol) and policy (Indigenous Data Sovereignty)

With Cushman’s community engagement in mind, I find essential connections in IAP and IDS, which have come to matter very much to my early investigation, and, I would argue, should matter to any scholar who encounters Indigenous material in an archive. I am confident in this assertion not because I have exhausted my review of these policies (I haven’t) and not because any of them offers a particular researcher (be it writing studies scholar, archeologist, or geneticist) a clear road map or definitive protocols, (they do not –yet). Instead, my confidence stems from a.) the political and ontological foundations of the policies (IAP and IDS), which are grounded in the sovereignty of Indigenous nations, as reflected in their deference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and b.) an understanding of the repeated and repetitive work (over many years) of the proponents of these important guidelines indicates that institutions and scholars need to be made aware of the continued-colonizing nature of data “about” Indigenous people. Two other important considerations are as follows:

1. IAP and IDS work largely lives in policy documents and is largely done by Indigenous community members, Indigenous scholars, invested researchers, and collaborators involved in GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums) institutions, who have formed coalitions and networks because they deeply understand the need, as writing studies scholars do, to decolonize archival practice.
2. IAP and IDS protocol and policy are contemporarily relevant. The 2007 Protocols for Native American Archival Materials took a “decade of debate” to be adopted by the Society of American Archivists (Ghaddar and Caswell, 2019, p. 71), for example. Further, following the Global Indigenous Data Alliance’s (GIDA) 2023 Summit, participants posted a “Communique” asserting that “Universities are failing to affirm and uphold Indigenous Data Sovereignty and operationalize Indigenous Data Governance” (GIDA site).

At minimum, when I am concerned with my own ethos as an archival researcher invested in understanding the work of one Indigenous leader, the repeated work of collectives, composed largely of Indigenous scholars, and the contemporary history of these efforts, demands attention.⁷

Essential archival coalitions and networks

IAP work “precedes” the most recent IDS activism and are best illustrated by two documents. Although nearly 15 years apart, they are similar in exigency and process. Both were collaboratively conceived. The first, the 2007 Protocols for Native American Archival Materials (Protocols), were created at a working meeting by “a group of nineteen Native American and non-Native American archivists, librarians, museum curators, historians, and anthropologists.” The second, Indigenous Archives Collective’s (IAC) 2021 “Position Statement on the Right of Reply to Indigenous Knowledges and Information Held in the Archives” (ROR, Indigenous Archives Collective, 2021), was developed at a 2019 symposium by IAC members (presently 18 named on their website) who are “Indigenous and non-Indigenous professional archivists and researchers” (Indigenous Archives Collective, p. 244).

Both protocol documents resulted from their proponents’ understanding that the UNDRIP compelled a different relationship between Indigenous Peoples and the information and artifacts about them collected and held by institutions. Contributors to the Protocols (2007) worked to “identify best professional practices for culturally responsive care and use of American Indian archival material held by non-tribal organizations” (Protocols); more contemporarily relevant was the IAC’s goal to “address developments in technology and the management and preservation of collections, which have the potential to either undermine or support Indigenous self-determination and data sovereignty” (Indigenous Archives Collective, 244). One essential component of Protocols policy is “the importance of consultation with and concurrence of tribal communities in decisions and policies” (Protocols). The RoR coheres with this practice and codifies “the rights of Indigenous peoples to challenge and respond to their information and knowledges contained in archival

7 A historical trajectory facilitates my understanding of the depth and breadth of Indigenous Nations’ sovereign assertion-policy work but ignores centuries of Indigenous Knowledge practices. In other words, both IAP and IDS protocols in spirit or letter acknowledge that “Indigenous Peoples always were data stewards, collectors, analyzers and users” (Rodríguez, 144).

records held in Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museum [...] through a Right of Reply” (p. 246).

The RoR offers a list of principles beginning with the one most applicable to my work, which is to consider “the right to know,” as it refers to the scattered and fragmented nature of documents archived about specific Indigenous Peoples in settler archives and the need to “facilitate access” (249). Further, in terms of prioritizing my own attention to the Protocols and the RoR, they both prioritize the following: consultation (Protocols) and consent (RoR); cultural sensitivity (Protocols) and safety (RoR) (i.e. “organizations holding Indigenous material must become more adept at identifying, acknowledging, and proactively addressing concerns relating to cultural safety and cultural appropriation”); and, finally, that settler institutions are facilitators and not owners of Indigenous materials.

IDS “reflects Indigenous Peoples’ collective rights to self-determination and to govern data about our peoples, lands, resources and knowledges” (Walter and Carroll, 2021 p. 11)

My review of IDS is not exhaustive, but I have learned it is dependent on the presently-energized labor of multiple Indigenous scholars from First Nations across the globe whom I argue are staging their own sovereign assertion. IDS and attendant work on Indigenous Data Governance (IDG) denote collective efforts to secure comprehensive data-rights using multiple political, legal, and disciplinary means. Like IAP, IDS is premised on UNDRIP and framed using examples of colonial institutions’ obsessive collection of Indigenous data about but not in the service of, Indigenous people. IDS proponents note two meetings (of many, many meetings, symposiums and conferences) crucial to catalyze the global movement. The first, in 2017, was to connect the IDS movement, at that time involving “three Anglo-colonized societies” (Walter and Carroll, 2021, p. 12), to the globally strong Research Data Alliance (RDA) by forming the International Indigenous Data Sovereignty Interest Group at the Research Data Alliance” (IIDSG) (p. 13). IIDSG shared the RDA’s investment in “building the social and technical infrastructure to enable open sharing and re-use of data” (Research Data Alliance, 2016). To that end RDA itself promotes the FAIR Principles, that research data be “findable,” “accessible,” “interoperable,” and “reusable.” But, IIDSG recognized that the “open sharing” advocated by the FAIR principles “creates a tension for Indigenous Peoples who are also asserting greater control over the application and use of Indigenous data and Indigenous Knowledge for collective benefit” (CARE Principles). Thus, the 2017 alliance resulted in the IIDSG crafting of the CARE principles to complement FAIR. The CARE principles assert that researchers operationalize “collective benefit,” “authority to control,” “responsibility,” and “ethics” (CARE Principles). In addition to the CARE principles, the alliance benefitted the IDS as it “expanded activities and advocacy beyond North America and Australasia [. . .]; engaged mainstream data actors; convened leading Indigenous data scholars in person for strategy, advocacy and policy advancement; and formalized a global movement” (Walter and Carroll, p. 13).

A 2019 meeting further cemented the global alliance that the IIDSG meeting “formalized” (Walter and Carroll, 2021, p. 13). At an IDS workshop to “collaboratively advance the legal principles underlying collective and individual data rights” (Founding), the Global Indigenous Rights Collective was formed that recognized the need for and the strength of “a global alliance [...] to advocate for and advance a shared vision for Indigenous Data Sovereignty” (Founding), and GIDA elected to “endorse and host” the CARE principles.

GIDA's goal is "to progress International Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance in order to advance Indigenous control of Indigenous Data" (Promoting).

IDS (and IDG) represent ongoing policy work that demands careful researcher attention. But attention to IDS policy is complex. Indeed, because the principles are meant to encompass any and all data collected from any and all disciplines, and, although many scholars are currently working to operationalize the principles, I cannot yet "take away" a specific methodological path for my own archival work. Indeed, according to Maggie Walter (one of the founders of IIDS) and Stephanie Russo Carroll, two Indigenous scholars who are prolifically publishing about IDS/IDG, "currently, efforts are underway to identify what implementing the CARE Principles might look like for both policies and mechanisms" (Walter and Carroll, 2021, p. 13); the efforts they describe are evidenced by the number of recent IDS/IDG publications, in scientific journals, forum, and open source publication venues. Particularly prolific are scholars, from a variety of disciplines, proposing means and methods of operationalizing FAIR and CARE.⁸ IDS's contemporary conversations and the Protocols' 2017 adoption mean that researchers remain "debating" the operationalization of procedures for proceeding, particularly where my work is concerned, in archives that hold Indigenous materials. This fact alone gives me pause, as a settler-scholar.

Reflective Conclusions

Over 35 years ago, Indigenous scholar Henrietta Fourmile gave a lecture in Australia titled "Who Owns the Past: Aborigines as Captives of the Archives." Fourmile (1989) asserts that settler-colonizer control of "collections of information and documents concerning Aborigines" (p. 1) impedes Indigenous access to history thus denying the "making of our own history" (p. 2). I read Fourmile's argument for the need for Indigenous access to and legal ownership of archival materials pertaining to their citizens' history, culture, and health, as prescient of the IDS and as a framework for the contemporary archival-research protocols in which I am interested. But, in my cursory exploration of the history of such frames, I also note that Fourmile herself maps her own lecture (and title) from historian William Hagan's 47-year-old argument made in "Archival Captive: The American Indian." In Hagan's 1978 address to historians and archivists, he argues that an inordinate amount of historical data "about" Indigenous North Americans was in their settler-control when it, much more productively, should be stewarded by its subjects, for land and resource court cases. To consider 50 years of criticism of settler use of Indigenous archival material and the most recent GIDA message that universities are failing to pay attention troubles any project considering Indigenous work.

Importantly, I must take into account that Chief Patrick's story is best represented in the "fonds" of a professor, in a university archive, and more than 500 miles from the NKFN. In other words, to consider Chambers' fonds is to consider that he collected a version of history presently not immediately available to the historical actors and their descendants. To heed the repeated exhortations of IAP and IDS/IDG, the essential fact remains as articulated by Linda Smith, who, herself, remains ubiquitously cited in arguments for decolonizing research. Smith (2015) writes of spending time in the archives while visiting America and learning/

⁸ I collected far more publications pertinent to IDS/IDG than would be productively cited, but it is worth noting that most were published in the last 2 years and they cover many, many disciplines.

understanding that artifacts and information about her Maori culture were scattered to the countries-of-the-empire and that “colonialism has undermined, ridiculed, diminished, and fragmented Indigenous knowledge while at the same time it has been enriched by that knowledge” (p. 473-74). The tenacity of settler-researchers and GLAM institutions’ collections and disseminations of Indigenous Knowledge and artifacts is evidenced by the repeated work engaged by collectives to involve FN in data collection and storage.

In the absence of policy recognized, as per the GIDA communique, by universities, I believe I can best depend on the repeated advocacy described in what follows:

Given the majority of Indigenous data is controlled by non-Indigenous institutions there is a responsibility to engage respectfully with those communities to ensure the use of Indigenous data supports capacity development, increasing community data capabilities, and the strengthening of Indigenous languages and cultures. Similarly, Indigenous Peoples’ ethics should inform the use of data across time in order to minimize harm, maximize benefits, promote justice, and allow for future use. (Carroll et al., 2021, p. 1)

It is clear that the most important part of my research is to confer with NKFN, to ensure they are kept apprised of any material I encounter and, in particular, the materials in the Chambers fonds at UBC. Accordingly, while writing this reflection article, I was engaged in an important meeting. I was able to visit The Nazko First Nations Band office in Quesnel, BC and meet with the NFN current Chief, Leah Stump and Referrals elder Terrence Paul. It was my intention to begin relations-work necessary for my broader project and to tell Chief Stump about the materials that I have found to date. In addition to connecting me with Terrence Paul, who will be my point person in the Band Office, Chief Stump told me the story of a NFN member who was surprised to find archived Nazko material in Ottawa. She was equally surprised to know of the Chambers fonds at UBC. We agreed that work toward access to the sovereign assertion, for the NFN members, matters greatly to children’s education and to the broader Canadian project of Truth and Reconciliation. My discussion with Terrence Paul went equally well. Importantly, Paul echoed Smith’s assertion about “research” being “one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary” (Smith, 2012, p. 1). He also challenged me to create written publications that could accommodate true reconciliation.

Chief Catherine Patrick’s presence in the Chambers’ fonds offers a unique opportunity for the recovery of a leader in a protracted sovereign assertion that remains largely unwritten history. As the granddaughter of Nazko settlers and as a writing studies scholar, I find the absence of the work done by NKFN Band members, in public and scholarly sites, to be remarkable, and I am excited to learn the complete history and rhetorics of the participants. But, as compelled as I am by the work of Catherine Patrick and her status as first elected Chief of the NFN, I have learned, here, that what I must be wary of is that scholarly compulsion to be the one who tells the story. There are too many Indigenous scholars and public figures warning me otherwise, too many who demand recognition “that Indigenous people and communities, as the experts in the management of any record involving, made by, or invested in Indigenous knowledge, should ultimately have the opportunity to be stewards of these records.” (Payne., 2023, p. 159).

Biography

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