Podcasting Protocols & Pathways: land acknowledgment in outlining a process for decolonial reflexivity and audio stewardship

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ABSTRACT

As journalists and media-makers in Canada work toward reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, there has been increased discussion on how to work respectfully with Indigenous communities, stories and knowledge. However, for podcasters and audio journalists, there are still limited resources on guidelines and best practices on working in these contexts. This article describes and considers several resources which foster decolonial frameworks for mediamaking: On-Screen Protocols & Pathways: A Media Production Guide to Working with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Communities, Cultures, Concepts and Stories, published by imagineNATIVE (2019); broader Indigenous methodological frameworks by Margaret Kovach (2021), and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021); and a question sheet for critical reflexivity in academic work with Indigenous communities, developed by Dr. Candace Kaleimamoowahinekapu Galla (2021). The authors then discuss their experience working on the Canadian Mountain Podcast — a series that shares mountain-related research from academic and Indigenous perspectives — and the steps the team took to decolonize their methods and work respectfully with different forms of knowledge. Finally, this article looks at the team's use of developing land acknowledgements and how this practice provided a space for them to reflect on their journalistic practices and adjust their processes as audio stewards to better align with the values of respect, responsibility, consent and reciprocity.

KEYWORDS

Podcasting, indigenous, land acknowledgment, decolonizing, collaboration

POSITIONALITY STATEMENT

As Margaret Kovach writes, by situating ourselves in our positionalities, we are able to more clearly speak from our own personal contexts (2021: 137). The following positionality statements provide the fundamental contexts from our perspective as authors and media-makers, as we situate ourselves from the lands upon which we write from, and the audiences for which we are writing for.

Meg Wilcox

I am based in Mohkintsis, also known as Calgary, Canada — however, I was born and raised in Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc territory in British Columbia, situated within the unceded ancestral lands of the Secwépemc Nation. As a settler, I am a visitor in my current home in more ways than one, and am committed to learning from and working respectfully with the Niitsitapi, îyârhe Nakoda, Tsuut'ina and Métis Peoples who have stewarded this land for centuries. As a journalist, I believe in uncovering the truth about the world around us, and this means continuing to learn about Canada's history with Indigenous peoples, as well as to learn about Indigenous peoples, culture and practices today, and to share and incorporate this knowledge into my work as appropriate. This belief in better understanding our world is driven by a desire to improve it, by challenging our institutions and creating a more just society — which I also aim to do as a professor, working with future journalists and storytellers as they navigate their way as media-makers who will challenge and change the world on their terms. As a white, cisgender woman, I acknowledge the limitations that come with my personal experience, and am committed to prioritizing an intersectional approach and using my skills as a communications professional to seek out alternate views and perspectives in my work.

Kyle Napier

I am a Métis scholar and media-maker, from Tthebacha (Fort Smith, NWT), Lenape-Hoking (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), and Moh'kinstsis (Calgary, Alberta) — now currently living and writing from Kue Nedhe (Edmonton, Alberta). As a Métis with both Dene and nêhiyaw ancestry, I seek to re-root myself in the language, lands, and laws of my lineage. As a media-maker, I realize the roles of communication in public change, and the risks and disservices media play in sharing perspectives which are not theirs. I am a post-secondary instructor of four years, regularly teaching at the University of Victoria, the University of Alberta, and NorQuest College. I have taught at Mount Royal University, and have joined land camps at the Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning as a guest lecturer. The majority of my students are Indigenous, or new Canadians. As an instructor working within onto-epistemological pluralism, I seek to address global perspectives on Indigenous reclamation of lands, language, and laws. The rematriative stewardship of sacred, secret, or sensitive Indigenous knowledges as gathered in media sets the framework for my principal interests in navigating complexities with relationality and knowledge stewardship with Indigenous communities.

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of more than 50 Truth and Reconciliation Commissions globally, and the nearly-globally adopted United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, there is a growing recognition of the need to both decolonize institutions and systems of power and recognize the role of media in making these changes. In Canada, this is reflected in three of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action to further reconciliation under "Media and Reconciliation" (TRC 2015: 9-10) alongside the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (United Nations 2008). However, resources for media-makers on how to approach decolonizing their work are limited, particularly in the realm of podcasting. To this end, this article hopes to open the discussion on decolonizing podcasting production methods by looking at several resources that foster decolonial frameworks for mediamaking: On-Screen Protocols & Pathways: A Media Production Guide to Working with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Communities, Cultures, Concepts and Stories, published by imagineNATIVE (2019); broader Indigenous methodological frameworks by Margaret Kovach (2021) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021); and a question sheet for critical reflexivity in academic work with Indigenous communities, developed by Dr. Candace Kaleimamoowahinekapu Galla (2021). While the purpose of these documents have distinct goals in media, relationality, or methodology, many of the key concepts — respect, responsibility, consent, and reciprocity — apply to audio storytelling and can be adapted for podcasting. Further, the authors describe how developing and revising a land acknowledgement for podcasts produced in collaboration with the Canadian Mountain Network (CMN) became the key framework to reflexively implementing these four concepts over their five seasons of producing the podcast, and how these changes in their audio production process helped the team better consider and understand their role as audio stewards.

MEDIAMAKING AS A COLONIAL PRACTICE

Many scholars have established that media production is an inherently colonial practice. In Decolonizing Methodologies (2021), Linda Tuhiwai Smith opens the book by discussing how collective memory of imperialism is 'perpetuated through the ways in which knowledge about Indigenous peoples was collected, classified and then represented back in various ways back to the West, and then, through the eyes of the West, back to those who have been colonized' (2021:1). She references Edward Said's western discourse about the Other, and how this is supported by 'institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles' (2021: 1). While she mostly aims her critique at academic

research, Tuhiwai Smith points to how these ideological constructs of the Other in scholarly and 'popular' works help to 'select and recontextualize those constructions in things such as the media, official histories and school curricula' (2021: 8). The democratized media sphere, rooted in Habermas's work on the public sphere (Habermas et al,1974) and its subsequent critique, represents all of these concepts as an institution built within a male Eurocentric world-view to collect stories and reflect them back to the public.

Research shows that, whether it be in newspapers or in broadcast media, Canadian media outlets in particular are 'far more likely to frame Indigenous people in a stereotypic pattern consistent within a Eurocentric, colonial lens' (Clark, 2014: 43) that ignores Indigenous history, context, and perspective. Reworking media institutions is a key step in working towards reconciliation with Indigenous communities, and is reflected in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action 84, 85, and 86, which call for increased funding and support for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) to strengthen Indigenous programming; for the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) to support reconciliation through leadership and programming; and for Canadian journalism programmes and media schools to require education for all students on the history of Indigenous peoples (Clark, 2014: 49). Internationally, Article #16 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People identifies that 'Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages and to have access to all forms of non-indigenous media without discrimination', and that countries should take measures to ensure their stateowned media reflects indigenous cultural diversity, while encouraging privately owned media to do the same (United Nations 2008: 7-8).

'We, Indigenous journalists, have been talking about this need for the media business to change for a long time. We have been having this conversation internally in our own newsrooms for well over a decade and longer', said Duncan McCue, an Anishinaabe journalist, in an interview with J-Source. 'There is an obligation in this country, in Canada, to include Indigenous voices in a substantive way in our newscasts that goes beyond tragedy and protests' (Perdomo 2023: n.pag.).

PODCASTING AS A DECOLONIZING TOOL

As podcast listenership continues to grow, and the audiences themselves become more diverse — with 43 per cent of American listeners identifying as non-White (Edison 2021) — there is also more research being published that looks to podcasting and its influence with marginalized producers and audiences. There are many characteristics of podcasting that make it an ideal medium for people underrepresented or misrepresented in traditional media — Richard Berry

(2006) notes that the medium's open systems allow for anyone to produce or listen to content, bypassing the 'traditional model of "gate-kept" media and production tools' (Berry, 2006: 146). This break from hierarchical means of production, dissemination, and consumption opens up possibilities for anyone to create and share their own podcast. In the Canadian podcasting context, Taylor Mitchell (2017) points out that podcasting's ability to share first-person stories in one's own voice connects to Indigenous traditions of oral storytelling. He positions the rising trend of Indigenous podcasting 'at the intersection of digital media, podcasting, and Indigenous storytelling' (2017: n.pag.). Stacey Copeland and Lauren Knight (2021) also argue that oral storytelling through podcasting allows Indigenous producers to disseminate stories in new ways. Their analysis of the CBC podcast *Missing and Murdered: Finding Cleo* positions the series as an anti-colonial framework, despite the fact that it is produced for a predominantly settler audience by the CBC, an organization that has significantly contributed to the dismissive media coverage of Indigenous people. This is due in part to host Connie Walker's Cree background and personal experience as she works alongside the Semaganis family throughout the investigation, but also the 're-evaluation, reconstruction and self-recognition of [I]ndigenous cultural connection' (2020: 110) that is found throughout the series, where the family shifts from a rhetoric of reconciliation to one of truth and resolution.

Podcasting has also been an area of interest for researchers, some of whom are exploring the flexibilities of the medium as a way to decolonize research methods. For example, Day et al. (2017) explored collaborative podcasting as a form of decolonized research and determined that it fell within four of Linda Tuhiwai Smith's 25 examples of an Indigenous Research programme: storytelling, representing, reframing, and sharing (2017: 215). However, as noted in their study, there is still much to explore in this nascent area of research (2017: 207).

INDIGENOUS RESOURCES FOR PODCASTERS

There is a dearth of available resources for media-makers in Canada looking to work respectfully with Indigenous knowledge. However, one key resource is *On-Screen Protocols & Pathways: A Media Production Guide to Working with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Communities, Cultures, Concepts and Stories*. This guide, intended for practitioners and community members, was written by Marcia Nickerson and published by imagineNATIVE — an Indigenous-run organization in Canada that is the world's largest presenter of Indigenous screen content. Nickerson built on initial research by Maria De Rosa and Marilyn Burgess, including findings from more than twenty additional interviews with Indigenous screen creators

and seven engagement sessions held across the country (2019: 3). In its 80 pages, On-*Screen Protocols & Pathways* introduces and explains working with Indigenous communities and stories through four key principles: respect, responsibility, reciprocity and consent. It then applies these protocols for filmmakers through every step of the filmmaking process, from pre-production and production (working on Indigenous lands, with Indigenous content, with Indigenous communities, cast and crew) to post-production (working with archival materials, film release, marketing and distribution).

It is worth noting that this guide is written for settler media-makers as well as Indigenous filmmakers, and is designed not as a set of strict rules but a starting place to help all creators navigate ever-changing protocols that vary by community and situation. This is addressed further in the section, 'Implementing protocols', which 'provides a context and illustrates some of the ways funding bodies, broadcasters and industry partners can assist in the promotion and implementation of the protocols' (2019: 5). It includes an appendix outlining key historical context for filmmakers, such as cultural genocide and cultural appropriation, and how this ties to other important considerations, such as Indigenous intellectual property. A second appendix provides resources for communities, including examples and possibilities for drafting community protocols, and helping inform and enforce these protocols through reciprocity agreements.

On-Screen Protocols & Pathways identifies four key principles in working with Indigenous communities and knowledge: respect, responsibility, reciprocity and consent:

Respect is considered in the context of respect for Indigenous peoples, their lands, their customary laws and traditions, as well as respect for the preservation and protection of Indigenous knowledge and cultures. The guide also highlights the importance of working thoughtfully with information and those who hold it, which is based in building and maintaining relationships (2019: 10).

Responsibility is based in what the guide identifies as a fundamental mental change 'required to shift thinking from "individual creative freedom/license" to "community responsibility"' (2019: 11).

Reciprocity is identified as a cornerstone in creating partnerships, and this includes aspects such as 'fair compensation,the sharing of benefits, informed consent, and community empowerment' (2019: 12).

Consent is at the foundation of all of these principles, and is based on ensuring that those involved have control over their stories, and are able to give informed permissions. The guide notes that, '[d]etermining consent is both a process of acknowledging and respecting. First and foremost, consent is a first principle in validating nations and people who are trying to protect their heritage' (2019: 12). Arriving at consent, especially in the case of collectively held stories, requires consultation not just at the beginning of the story, but also throughout the storytelling process.

Another key principle is **meaningful collaboration**. Noting the past industry standard of hiring Indigenous people as consultants on projects, *On-Screen Protocols & Pathways* criticizes this practice and identifies the current industry standard of meaningful collaboration that 'not only follows appropriate protocols, but provides significant opportunities for credited production employment, serving to support the Indigenous screen industry towards the goal of narrative sovereignty' (2019: 26).

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT: *THE CANADIAN MOUNTAIN PODCAST*

The Canadian Mountain Podcast (CMP) is a series funded by the Canadian Mountain Network (CMN) that describes itself as 'the country's first formal research organization dedicated to advancing our understanding of mountain systems […] CMN supports research that is centered on a holistic approach based on Indigenous and Western ways of knowing' (n.d: n.pag.). The organization's work focuses on building partnerships between Indigenous organizations and communities, universities, governments, businesses and the not-for-profit sector. The Canadian Mountain Podcast (CMP) is an extension of these concepts. Each episode discusses research that is funded by the CMN, through either interviews or panel discussions with principal investigators and research team members. While the first two seasons included Indigenous perspectives in many episodes, a change in organizational focus and the production team's goals in Season 3 shifted to a conscious effort to centre conversations with Indigenous knowledge holders in every episode, and this continued until the end of the series in season five.

From 2019 to 2023 (Seasons 2-5), the *CMP* was produced by a team of undergraduate research assistants from Mount Royal University in Calgary, Canada, overseen by Meg Wilcox and Kyle Napier as supervising faculty. Seventeen students rotated through the team over this time period — a mix of Indigenous and settler audio producers, and most studying in Mount Royal University's journalism and digital media programme. In this sense, the team approached

the podcast production from a journalistic perspective, even though the aims of the series would be best described as research dissemination or knowledge mobilization. Most team members had the opportunity to work on two or more episodes, usually serving as the host and interviewer in some episodes and as the producer and editor on others. Aside from their meetings and training sessions to produce the podcast, the CMP team participated in training sessions and activities to learn more about mountain ranges, research, and local Indigenous culture and ways of knowing. These were limited to online sessions over 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but later moved to in-person activities, which allowed the team to take advantage of our proximity to the Rocky Mountains.

PODCAST PRODUCTION AND STORY STEWARDSHIP

Both Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021) and Kovach (2021) address the roles of insider-outsider approaches when working with Indigenous communities and knowledge. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes,

> A critical aspect of the struggle for self-determination has involved questions relating to our history as indigenous peoples and a critique of how we, as the Other, have been represented or excluded from various accounts. Every issue has been approached by Indigenous peoples with a view to *re*writing and *re*righting our position in history.
>
> (2021: 31, original emphasis)

There are sensitivities particular to the stewardship of Indigenous stories related to the sacred, secret, or sensitive nature of each story. This is particularly relevant as most members of the *CMP* team are not Indigenous. With the stewardship of these stories come additional responsibilities and accountabilities to community. Regardless of background, the act of stewarding a story with Indigenous ancestral significance is not necessarily intuitive.

It should also be noted that being an ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ is not a fixed identity; team members may find it shifts depending on the episode topic, guests, production roles, or other factors. Notably, even the Indigenous media-makers on the team may not have shared specific ancestral Indigenous heritage with the guests. Just because an interviewer and a guest are Indigenous does not mean that they share Indigenous heritages or perspectives. Even though both may be Indigenous, they may be from different Indigenous communities, from opposite parts of the country, or from different Indigenous ontological perspectives. Even when sharing stories with one’s own nation, it is critical for the learners to consider that they would still hold

the dual insider-outsider role: they are still representing a non-Indigenous organization or institution, while stewarding Indigenous knowledges from which they may have intuition of stewardship. As such, particular nuance and sensitivity is still paid to the media dissemination process, even if the media-maker and guests are Indigenous.

GALLA'S QUESTIONS REGARDING CRITICAL REFLEXIVITY

In 2021, Dr. Candace Kaleimamoowahinekapu Galla gave the keynote speech at the *International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation*, or *ICLDC*. The conference was mostly aimed at non-Indigenous linguists who were involved in language documentation with languages which were not of their ancestry. At the outset of the conference, Dr. Galla stated: 'If you are here representing an Indigenous language, and you're not a member of that language family, and you didn't invite a member of that language family — you're the savage' (2021: n.pag). This sentiment reflects the precedent for our transformative work with the *CMP*.

At the *ICLDC*, Galla gave a presentation that included a list of thirteen questions for linguists to consider when working with Indigenous languages. Some of these questions focus on the nature of the research (e.g. does the community see and feel the benefits of your research and work? Who benefits?) while others ask the researchers to consider their position within the community (e.g. how do you strengthen and nurture your relations in community? Does your relationship to Indigenous peoples only exist through the language, or does it go beyond?) Other questions look to the findings of the work (e.g. who gets to share, tell and publish stories, knowledge and languages of the community? Whose name goes on publications?). The last question looks to the futurity of the work: what kind of ancestor do YOU want to be? (Galla 2021).

By re-interpreting these questions through a media lens, we can more broadly apply Galla's series of questions to encourage critical reflexivity in our own media practices. As we will discuss below, these key concepts — respect, responsibility, reciprocity, consent, stewardship and reflexivity — helped the team frame their work with the *CMP* and influenced many of our production choices as the series continued.

PODCASTING PROCESS

As a team trained in journalism, the early seasons of the *CMP* followed what would be considered standard journalistic practice. For each episode, the team would start with **research and planning** into the topic, which would involve looking up information on the research project,

the researchers and experts involved, and identify the key points and themes to discuss. A team member would then reach out to the guests (if they were available) to conduct a short pre-interview to build upon their research and ensure that they have a good understanding of the key points of the research and its story. From there, the team members would develop an interview question line, which would be vetted by a faculty member, before conducting the interview. After the interview, the team members would review the tape, write a script for narration, which would be vetted by a faculty member, and then the host would record the narration. A team member would then edit the episode and send the draft for review by a faculty member and the CMN. Any notes or feedback would be incorporated into a final edit before the episode was published online by the CMN. Once the episode was published, a team member would reach out to the episode guests with a thank you and information on how to access the podcast.

In its second year (the third season of the podcast), the team made a shift to reconsider how they worked with Indigenous experts and knowledge in the series. Uncertain of where to begin and recognizing the importance of land and place (it is, after all, a mountain podcast!), the team members, made up predominantly of settlers, chose to start by developing a land acknowledgement for the series. This work was undertaken by research assistants Gabrielle Pyska, Ethan Ward, Eric Tanner and Sarah Buffalo, supervised by Meg Wilcox.

DEVELOPING A LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

A land acknowledgement, also known as a territory acknowledgement, is defined by Native Land Digital as ‘a way that people insert an awareness of Indigenous presence and land rights in everyday life. […] It can be a subtle way to recognize the history of colonialism and a need for change in settler colonial societies’ (n.pag.).

Land acknowledgements are often held at the start of ceremonies, lectures or public events – however, they are not often found in podcasts. As the team members noted, ‘[o]ne of our biggest struggles was actually finding podcasts with examples of land acknowledgements as a reference. The ones we did find were either made by Indigenous producers or strictly academic’ (Pyska et al. 2022: n.pag.). In the team’s words, ‘[w]e wanted to explore how our current perspectives could be further moulded to understand the true meaning behind land appreciation, while remaining concise to suit the needs of the podcast’ (2022: n.pag.).

The team first met with Prof. Patti Derbyshire, who works in social innovation and reconciliation, and Spirit River Striped Wolf, an Indigenous student and then-president of Mount Royal University’s student association. In an online meeting in early 2021, the team discussed

the background and history of this land, and ‘the importance of moving past the performative mentality of an acknowledgement and creating a deeper understanding of what this land means for us and our guests on the show’ (Pyska et al. 2022: n.pag.). One suggestion from Prof. Derbyshire was to begin asking each guest to provide their own introductions and asking what ‘home’ means to them – an idea to which the team would later return.

After this meeting, the team created an action plan to research further on land acknowledgements, particularly in a journalistic and podcasting context. They identified what they liked about different statements, and each developed their own personal land acknowledgement. Through this, they learned what are considered best practices for a land acknowledgement, which includes not only identifying the local Indigenous people and recognizing their history and current connection to the region, but identifying themselves within the colonial systems that play a role in these events, and a commitment to action towards reconciliation (Pyska et al. 2022).

From there, the team combined favourite elements of different acknowledgements to create one for the episode – but there were still some challenges to address. First, the draft statement was far too long for an audio format. While one of the advantages of podcasting is there is no time limit, like in radio broadcasting, listeners still have a limited attention span and will tune out or turn off if something feels too long or too formal. The team decided to address this by breaking the statement into two parts – one at the beginning of the episode and one towards the end. This allowed for the team to share what it wanted to say, but in shorter lengths that fit better within a podcast format.

The other challenge facing the team in developing an acknowledgement was ‘what counts as here?’ When land acknowledgements are inherently local in nature – when they are part of an event – it is easy to determine where ‘here’ is. But, for a podcast, listeners and guests can be from all over the world – in this case, the team was all based in one location, but interviews were mostly done remotely with experts from across Canada and around the world. How, then, could we create an acknowledgement that recognized these many places and their highly individualized contexts? To solve this, the team came back to Prof. Derbyshire’s suggestion of asking guests about their home and connection to the land. Every interview would begin by asking the guest to identify themselves and explain where they are from, and how this is important to them.

This approach created three sections in each episode that would address a different aspect of the land acknowledgement. First, early in the episodes for Season 3, listeners can hear:

> The Canadian Mountain Podcast acknowledges that our conversations engage with diverse knowledge holders who live and work on unceded land and Treaties one to eleven of Indigenous Peoples. We also recognize the historical and ongoing oppression that many different cultures, lands, and nations have continuously faced within Canada. We hope to continue our work to help decolonize, change, and inspire media platforms to further collaborate with Indigenous Peoples through storytelling and partnerships.

This first section is national in scope – the rationale was to connect these ideas and themes to a Canadian audience, which has been the main listenership for the series.

Second, after the narrated introduction discussing the episode topic and themes, listeners hear the guests introduce themselves and describe their connection to the land. An example from Season 5, 'Restoring the Klinse-Za Caribou and Maintaining Wildlife Balance' (2023), first has an introduction from Chief Roland Wilson:

> I'm Roland Wilson, chief for the West Moberley First Nations. I have been elected chief there for the past 22 years. I was first elected in 2000. We're a small Dunne-za Cree community located in northeastern bc, the west end of Moberley Lake. The Dunne-za People have been the Indigenous people in northeastern B.C. for 13,000 years, time immemorial I guess you could say. Our ancestors hunted the bison and the mammoth that walked in the valley here. We have had a connection to the land forever. We're a nation that consists of 360 members. We were small, nomadic family groups that would travel the land, hunt the animals through what they call now a traditional seasonal round; we would move seasons and follow the animals back and forth. In the last 100, 120 years, we accepted treaty – this is Treaty 8 territory – and we have taken up permanent residence on the west end of Moberley Lake and been there as far back as anybody can remember. It was an area we would have constant settlement in. We are part of what was considered to be the Hudson's Hope Beaver Band back in 1914 – when we adhered to treaty, we would gather in Hudson's Hope, us and the Halfway River First Nations, they are our sister community; we were actually considered one community at that one time.

Listeners then hear the second guest, Clayton Lamb, introduce himself:

> I'm Clayton Lamb, I'm a wildlife scientist at Biodiversity Pathways, which is a research institute out of the University of British Columbia. And I work on wildlife-related science all across western North America – I work on caribou with Roland, West Moberley and Saulteaux First Nations, and I work on grizzly bears down here in southeast B.C., and wolverine and elk and sheep and all kinds of different animals – I'm located here in southeast B.C., which is the homeland of the Ktunaxa Peoples. The connection to the land for me, I was privileged to grow up in an outdoor-oriented household; I grew up hunting and fishing and spending lots of time in what is now called British Columbia. I grew a pretty deep relationship with the animals and trying to understand, even through hunting, where they are and what they do and learning more about them, and that's basically what I do for a job.

These introductions provide an opportunity for the guests to share how they would like to be introduced and provide key context that frames both how the interview is conducted and how listeners can approach the interview content. Third, at the end of the episode, is a section that acknowledges where the podcast is produced:

> This podcast was produced from Treaty 7 territories, of which is immersed in ancient culture and storytelling. With the Canadian Mountain Podcast, our goal is to share both western and Indigenous ways of storytelling – and we give appreciation to the stories that have been told on this land, and shared through generations. Therefore, we give acknowledgement to the hereditary keepers of these lands – the Niitsitapi, Stoney Nakoda, Tsuut'ina and Métis Nations.

In the fall of 2021, Kyle Napier joined the *CMP* team as a co-supervisor. His journalistic training, audio production expertise and experience working in Indigenous contexts was a welcome addition to the team. As the Season 4 production team – Gabrielle Pyska, Ethan Ward, Eric Tanner, Catalina Berguno, Sydney Klassen-Rosewarn and Vanessa Forbister – met to start the new year, he led the group in multiple online sessions to review and revise the series land acknowledgement. This was a good time to engage in this work as the new season saw a change in team members, with some new and some returning for a second year, and was a chance for the team to create an acknowledgement that reflected the new team. These sessions were an opportunity for the team to engage in reflexivity (Galla 2021), revisiting the team's assumptions and beliefs that might influence how the series was being produced. In

these sessions, the team decided to keep the structure of three parts throughout the episode; however, the language of the first section was refined to cut the specific treaty names as a way to limit colonial references, and a discussion around the terms collaboration and inclusion led the team to decide that the podcast was best identified as including Indigenous knowledge holders rather than collaborating with them. The second section, with guests introducing themselves and their connection to the land, stayed the same. The third section stayed relatively similar in overall content, but there were changes in wording. At the end of the episode, listeners can hear:

> This podcast was produced from Treaty 7 territories, a place that holds generations of culture and stories. With the Canadian Mountain Podcast, our goal is to share both Indigenous knowledge and settler perspectives – and we give appreciation to those stories. We are committed to collaborating with Indigenous Peoples through storytelling and partnerships. Therefore, we acknowledge the hereditary keepers of these lands – the Niitsitapi, îyârhe Nakoda, Tsuut'ina and Métis Peoples.

The term 'ancient culture and storytelling' was adjusted to reflect the ongoing and current influence of Indigenous culture, which is often referred to as historical or existing only in the past. In acknowledging that our team was not yet collaborating with our Indigenous knowledge holders, we chose to make this part of our commitment moving forward in our production. Lastly, the team identified an inconsistency in how we referenced Indigenous peoples in this section. In the first season, the team chose to identify groups by their cultural group in Indigenous languages rather than by their government-asserted Nation name or colonized English names. However, we had neglected to translate one of the groups – and so Stoney Nakoda was changed to îyârhe Nakoda to align with this.

At the start of Season 5, the new team – Sydney Klassen-Rosewarn, Catalina Berguno, Sherry Woods, Noel Ormita, Julie Patton and Grace Heavy Runner – met again to review and revise the land acknowledgement, considering the lessons learned in producing the podcast so far. While the team chose to continue spreading these elements across the episode in three sections, the team made a significant change in the first part of the episode. Critically, the team realized that land acknowledgements ring hollow without a commitment to action. In the episodes throughout Season 5, listeners first hear:

> This podcast is produced across the ancestral Indigenous territories now referred to as Treaty 7. The Canadian Mountain Podcast acknowledges the land where we work on as the home to the Niitsitapi, îyârhe Nakoda, Tsuut'ina and Métis Peoples. As journalists and media-makers involved in Indigenous knowledge mobilization, the collective responsibility of our podcast is to strengthen our relationship with Indigenous Peoples through storytelling and partnerships.

The team wanted to highlight the importance of where the podcast was produced and to move the recognition of local Indigenous peoples higher in the episode. This was a way to acknowledge information according to journalistic practice, where the more important elements of a story are at the beginning. Additionally, the team wanted to identify our positionality as journalists and media-makers from the start, as well as our commitment and responsibility, as it provides a framework for listeners to better understand the episode content that follows. The second section, hearing from guests, remained unchanged.

The third and final section of the acknowledgement was changed to:

> The Canadian Mountain Podcast is produced from Treaty 7, with the goal of bringing together Indigenous knowledges with settler research and sciences through this shared platform. We are committed to collaborating with Indigenous Peoples in respect of the contributions of Indigenous voices and knowledge holders. We are actively learning to decolonize our production practices throughout this series – and encourage other media professionals and organizations to decolonize their practices as well.

Because much of what was in the old third section was moved up to the first, it allowed some space for the team to reaffirm a commitment to collaboration and engaging in ongoing learning. This version of the land acknowledgement was used throughout the fifth and final season of the podcast.

REVISING OUR PROCESS AND OUR PRACTICE

In considering the four principles in *On-Screen Protocols & Pathways* (2019) – **respect, responsibility, reciprocity** and **consent** – developing a land acknowledgement for the *CMP* was instrumental in helping the team better understand **respect** towards Indigenous knowledge and experts, and our collective **responsibility** in working in this area. First, learning about land

acknowledgements meant the team began to learn more about Indigenous perspectives and approaches, which helps create a better understanding of and respect for them. Second, creating a land acknowledgement means learning more about local Indigenous communities, their history and context. This included not only important topics such as residential schools, but for a team of producers based at a university and working within a research context, this also involved learning about the many ways that institutions have excluded Indigenous peoples while mistreating communities in the name of research, extracting knowledge and keeping it inaccessible to those who provided it in the first place. As journalists, this also meant acknowledging and learning more about how the media have and continue to harm Indigenous communities. By identifying these realities, past and present, the team was able to better identify our positionality in this work, which helped direct the team's commitments in producing the podcast. The acknowledgement was also an opportunity for team members to consider the land we live on, and what it means to us individually; this was particularly meaningful for the Season 2 team, who developed the first series land acknowledgement remotely while COVID-19 lockdown and remote learning measures were in place. As Gabrielle Pyska, one of the team producers, noted in a podcast interview:

> The question 'What does this land mean to you?' has always stuck with me. Because for the first time it wasn't just writing a script to get by, it wasn't just saying the words and going through the motions. It made me stop and think, 'Wow. I live in this awesome place' […] and it was the first time that I stopped and I was like, I have a lot to appreciate about this land […] So it was the first time I stopped and reflected, and was just able to write about home.
>
> (Wilcox et al. 2023: n.pag.)

From these learnings and conversations, the team was better equipped to consider *how* it produced the podcast, and this is where the principles of **consent** and **reciprocity** came into play. Generally speaking, consent was not a challenge for the team, as the episodes involved knowledge holders and researchers who had been awarded grants through the CMN and were well-versed in talking about their projects and areas of expertise. The team created e-mail templates for reaching out to guests that clearly outlined the podcast, its goals and the recording process so they could make informed decisions in agreeing to the interview. Guests also had the opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns in the pre-interviews and interviews.

Considering reciprocity, however, was not so straightforward. Reciprocity is the basis for meaningful collaboration, and the team had already acknowledged that the original podcasting

process did not give participants the opportunity to truly collaborate on the podcast. Journalistic practice in and of itself is purposefully not collaborative – often because it has been seen that allowing the guest to participate in the output contributes to bias, affecting journalism's objectivity and distance. As McCue notes,

> That's part of the reason why journalists, old school journalists, get their backs up when we start talking about this kind of thing […]. But herein lies the challenge. It is that we need to start understanding that we *can adapt* our journalism practices in ways that do not fundamentally challenge our role as fact-finders, as truth-tellers. That there are ways that you can do both, that we can bridge those relationships. It is possible to adapt our practice.
>
> (Perdomo 2023: n.pag., original emphasis)

While objectivity is a pillar of journalism, it is important to note that accuracy is as well. Journalists typically are not experts in the topics on which they report. In the case of the *CMP*, the team felt that, given the fact that we had no expertise in mountain ecosystems and the track record of media outlets' history of misrepresenting Indigenous issues and perspectives, prioritizing relationships and accuracy were our most important goals. To that end, the team created space for guests to provide feedback and input at two points in the podcasting process: sharing the interview questions ahead of time so guests could provide suggestions and sharing the edited podcast episode before it was published to allow for any inaccuracies to be corrected. The team felt this created a more respectful environment with podcast guests and ensured accuracy in the episodes while not taking up too much of the guests' time and did not compromise overall objectivity in terms of podcast content.

In sharing the questions ahead of time, the team noted that the focus of the interview did not change, but specific areas of research and findings could be highlighted – information that the team would not usually have ahead of time as not all teams had published yet on their work. Additionally, it was an opportunity to ask the guests – often teams of settler and Indigenous experts who had been working collaboratively over significant periods of time – how they wanted to balance the interview, allowing one to answer certain questions while another focused on their expertise. This allowed the guests to have more control in how their work was represented, while guiding the production team to direct questions to the best person suited to answer them. Once the podcast was edited, guests would have a week to review the podcast and provide any feedback or corrections before publication. It was rare for guests to write back with corrections – perhaps because they felt confident in the content based on their input in

preparing the interview – but those who did send in corrections helped ensure accuracy in vital areas. In particular, one round of feedback from a guest corrected some of the episode's scripted language referring to local Indigenous groups. With more than 600 First Nations in Canada, local context and language varies greatly, and so having feedback and corrections from experts on the ground was invaluable. Ultimately, the team would classify these changes as encouraging contribution from guests and knowledge holders rather than meaningful collaboration. The production team and the CMN determined the series focus, format and episode topics, and these core elements are the types of decisions that should and would be part of a meaningful collaboration. Realistically, guests of the series were not looking for this level of collaboration to be on an episode of the podcast, but having opportunities to open dialogue provide before the interview and before the episode is published was a way for the production team to ensure that they were stewarding the information shared in an accurate and appropriate way.

Overall, the team felt that developing – and more importantly, regularly reviewing and revising – the series land acknowledgement was an important step in helping consider how to help decolonize our podcast production methods. That said, it is critical to consider that land acknowledgements are not enough, nor are they the beginning of setting the precedent of relationship building. Land acknowledgements are, however, an opportunity for non-Indigenous peoples to set forward a public commitment which establishes a standard for their relationship with the lands upon which they are currently situated, and the impacts of colonization upon those lands. As ubiquitous as land acknowledgements have become in public events, their verbiage is often rehearsed and hollow. By establishing commitments, revisiting these commitments through reflexivity, and grounding our axiologies in Indigenous research methodologies, we have a better opportunity to state such relationships with sincerity and authenticity. Across continental North America, land acknowledgements are often enacted contemporarily as an obligation in public-facing events and media. They are often written by ad hoc committees and approved by a board of directors, to be repeated ad nauseam by event emcees and hosts. They remain impersonal, scripted and often without commitment. The exercise this team has undertaken calls for an establishment of commitments, continual review with input from the team, and a grounding shift in conduct through such commitments. In many ways, this iterative process reflects the way podcasts are made: every interview, every episode, every season is an opportunity to learn and improve for the next.

For media-makers looking to make changes in their own processes, one potential way to approach this work is looking to Galla's questions of critical reflexivity (2021), adapted to

consider a decolonial media framework rather than a language framework. Such reworked questions for the media could be re-imagined as follows:

1. Is the media work you are engaged in community-led, community-driven and community-centred?
2. How is your media work co-created, co-designed and co-developed with community?
3. Does the community see and feel the benefits of media dissemination and work? Who benefits?
4. How do you strengthen and nurture your relations in community?
5. Is your work erasing the people, community and land from their own media? How is your work COUNTERING the erasure of Indigenous peoples?
6. How does your media work amplify community voices?
7. Does your relationship to Indigenous peoples only exist through your media work, or does it go beyond?
8. How are your methods and practices accountable within a framework of relationships to land and people?
9. What does it mean to be an ally in community?
10. How do you build capacity within community for language and cultural work?
11. How are you actively decolonizing your practice?
12. Who gets to share, tell and publish stories, knowledge and languages of the community? Whose name goes on publications?
13. And lastly, what kind of ancestor do YOU want to be?

By continually considering and revisiting these questions, we as mediamakers can begin to address and counter the colonizing narratives still prevalent within the media, whether in Canada or elsewhere.

CONCLUSION

In this article, we first described and considered several resources which foster decolonial frameworks for mediamaking: *On-Screen Protocols & Pathways*, published by imagineNATIVE (2019); broader Indigenous methodological frameworks by Margaret Kovach (2021) and Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021), and questions for critical reflexivity in academic work with Indigenous communities, developed by Dr Candace Kaleimamoowahinekapu Galla (2021). We then detailed our work on the *CMP* and how the team developed a land acknowledgement for the

series, which led to several transformative changes in how we conducted interviews and revised episode drafts. Finally, we considered how reviewing and revising the series land acknowledgement provided a space to reflect on our journalistic practice as audio stewards and to adjust our processes to better align with the values of respect, responsibility, consent and reciprocity.

For media-makers, working with Indigenous communities, stories and knowledge is an ongoing and ever-changing process. In the four years of producing the *CMP*, the team found that developing a series land acknowledgement – and revising it yearly – was an important part of engaging in reflexivity that was essential to identify our positionality in the podcast and helped us consider our roles as audio stewards more carefully. This process led to significant changes in how we produce the series, and the team sees further ways to decolonize our production, particularly in the context of expert knowledge. Specifically, rematriating rights around information shared can ensure that knowledge holders and communities maintain control of their stories, even though current copyright law privileges journalists and audio producers. This is an area of research that requires more attention.

While there is a growing body of work by Indigenous media-makers and academics to help guide responsible reporting and storytelling with Indigenous communities, this article contributes to the discussion by addressing the existing research gap around land acknowledgements in podcasting in two ways: first, as academics, we are amplifying existing Indigenous research and work in the field and hope this encourages further research in this vitally important area of media production; second, as media-makers, we propose changes to practise and provide a model for how these concepts can be applied.

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