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Designing Indigenous-Led Archival Futures: The Application of Indigenous Research Methodologies Within Archival Research and Practice

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Abstract

This paper discusses the role and importance of Indigenous research methodologies in building spaces for Indigenous-led archival futures in Australia. It considers the development of professional statements of support for advancing First Nations engagement and Indigenous self-determination in the archives as an example of where Indigenous research methodologies and methods can increase Indigenous agency and decision-making in the archives. The research design, methodologies and methods, including Yarning, Indigenous Standpoint and Indigenous Storywork, utilised in the research project *Unclasp the White Hand: Reclaiming and Refiguring the Archives to Support Indigenous Wellbeing and Sovereignty* are discussed to highlight the importance of bridging gaps between research and practice. In doing this, it describes pathways for building respectful and ethical research in partnership with First Nations people in Australia. It contributes to dialogue on how these approaches can support the decolonisation of archival research, which in turn has the power to build transformations of practice to support First Nations archival priorities.

Keywords: *Indigenous research methodologies; Indigenous archives; Indigenous research paradigm; Yarning methods; Indigenous Storywork*

It is hard to want self-determination in a system that is very Westernised. I think that is a problem. Archives and libraries are naturally, Western. They were not designed with First Nations sovereignty and First Nations self-determination in mind. They are things that we are trying to incorporate now. That is why it can be difficult for it to happen now, and hopefully it will happen in the future. But it will be a slow process ... there are ways we can do it in small doses that are effective and good, but at the same time I think it also requires mass disruption, that organisations might not be ready for (Nathan Sentance, Wiradjuri).¹

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This paper considers how pathways to support First Nations' sovereignty and self-determination in the archives require institutions and professional associations to move beyond symbolic statements and instead commit to disrupting the status quo in archival practice. The application of Indigenous research methodologies is discussed as a tool to reimagine more culturally appropriate practices in the archives. The development of institutional and professional statements of support that are formulated through Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing would establish reciprocal relationships between institutions, the professions and First Nations communities. An Indigenous-led and community-driven approach has the potential to bring mutual benefits for all involved. In exploring these ideas, the paper highlights the critical role of Indigenous research methodologies in building spaces for Indigenous-led archival futures to support the decolonisation of archival practice.

The first section reflects on the broad context of global movements to support Indigenous agency and decision-making in the archives. It highlights examples of Australian leadership in this global movement, including the development of the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) (1996) *Policy Statement on Archival Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*.² It then outlines the calls to action articulated in the International Council on Archives (ICA) *Tandanya-Adelaide Declaration* (2019). As reference points for discussing First Nations priorities, decision-making and sovereignty, the statements are utilised to identify gaps and opportunities to strengthen and activate the statements through Indigenous-led research agendas. This is followed by discussion of the principles set by the international Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) movement, highlighting the need for more significant connections to be forged between these principles and archival scholarship and practice.

Next, I turn to my own research to reflect on how stepping away from professional practice and engaging in a sharp turn to research has been a significant form of empowerment to raise awareness of Indigenous priorities in the archives. I describe the approaches and methods utilised in my doctoral research project *Unclasping the White Hand: Reclaiming and Refiguring the Archives to Support Indigenous Wellbeing and Sovereignty*,³ including Yarning, Indigenous Standpoint and Indigenous Storywork. In describing the research, I consider the effectiveness of Indigenous research methodologies in supporting disruption and change to reshape archival futures for First Nations people. I explore how these methods can enable Indigenous-led approaches to memory keeping, archiving and information exchange.

Through this, the paper responds to critical questions: How can Indigenous research methodologies support Indigenous self-determination in archives? What is the relationship between research and practice to achieve these goals? How can research design and methods model more effective approaches to archives and contribute to innovation in Indigenous research methodologies? Finally, I suggest pathways for archivists to build ethical approaches to respond to these situations within practice appropriately. I then return to the importance of the archives engaging further with the IDS movement to effect change at a community level.

National and international calls for Indigenous self-determination in the archives

Archival self-determination enables First Nations people to have control over decision-making about the stewardship, management and use of materials relating to their histories and cultures. The calls for Indigenous archival self-determination have grown nationally and internationally over the past three decades.⁴ The grass-roots movement for Indigenous rights has been hard-fought, community-led and waged for generations. The 2007 *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) consolidated international recognition of the aspiration of Indigenous people to control their cultural heritage materials, including within archives. Also, in this period, First Nations stories about encounters with the archives became more prominent.

In Australia, the voices of Indigenous researchers, historians, creative practitioners and information and archive workers have described the negative experiences of engaging with racist, offensive and biased colonial collections.⁵ The stories recount the tensions of people connecting with materials written from the perspective of government, church authorities or official actions rather than those of Indigenous people. First Nations people have described the emotional pain and distress of accessing collections that are discomfiting, unsafe and make people feel ill-at-ease.⁶ The negative impacts of Indigenous people engaging with colonial archives documenting massacres, the removal of children and other similar traumatic events have become more apparent. The colonial systems of archiving are under the spotlight as instruments of pain and trauma. First Nations people have described how colonial archiving systems breach cultural protocols, and Indigenous people feel distressed when they have accessed materials containing Indigenous knowledges meant for only certain people in the community⁷ – for example, secret and sacred materials or other materials collected without informed consent or the adequate protection of Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) rights.⁸ The growing literature, including my own research outlined later in this paper, explores how accessing records can cause harm to Indigenous people, ranging from Indigenous archives and information workers to those who access and use materials in physical or digital archive spaces. This increased awareness has highlighted the fact that the lack of First Nations control of the archives negatively impacts Indigenous people's wellbeing. At the same time, the stories demonstrate the critical importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing information about family and land ties for piecing histories of dispossession and removal back together, and speak of the value of people witnessing records of resistance and advocacy by First Nations people in the face of discriminatory government policies.⁹

Demand has been placed on archival institutions to respond and build engagement with First Nations people to address these tensions. Archival institutions and the broader information professions nationally and internationally have responded with various statements, protocols and frameworks for action to improve archival practice.¹⁰ In Australia, the ground-breaking *Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services* developed in 1995 by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library, Information and Resource Network (ATSILIRN) spearheaded a movement for libraries, archives and information services to engage with First Nations people and priorities meaningfully.¹¹ The ASA then endorsed the ATSILIRN Protocols and guidelines for use with the profession in 1996 in their *Policy Statement on Archival Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*. The ASA Policy Statement brought national attention to the role of records in the reconciliation process in Australia. The statement encouraged a new wave of action and support for First Nations people in the archives, recognising the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being connected with the profession and being actively involved in archival planning and decision-making about the operation of the archives. Notably, the statement recognised the offensive and insensitive nature of the content of the records. It encouraged a new focus on the design of systems and services that would provide a less discomfiting and more welcoming (or in the words of the statement, 'relatively stress-free') engagement for First Nations people entering the archives nationally.¹²

Internationally, the writings of Indigenous archival scholars Allison Boucher Krebs,¹³ Jennifer O'Neal¹⁴ and Raymond Frogner¹⁵ describe the history and depth of work undertaken to forge Indigenous archive agendas within Indigenous contexts. Similarly, within the allied library and information science fields, Indigenous scholars have examined the intersection of library and information science and practice with Indigenous knowledges, considering questions of research ethics, relational research and the implementation of Indigenous protocols.¹⁶ Collective groups including the International Indigenous Librarian's Forum (IIFL) led

conversations on the importance of Indigenous self-determination across library, archive and information services. Significant leadership for the development of IIFL was provided by Te Rōpū Whakahaui, the leading national body representing Māori people engaged with Libraries, Culture, Knowledge, Information, Communication and Systems Technology in Aotearoa/ New Zealand, the organisation of the first gathering of IILF took place in 1999.¹⁷ Elsewhere, professional associations developed protocols and statements to support better access to collections for Indigenous people and greater control of materials according to Indigenous protocols. For example, in the United States, the First Archivists Circle developed the *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials* (2008), bringing significant debate on Indigenous priorities within the Society of American Archivists.¹⁸ In Canada, the Association of Canadian Archivists responded to archival agendas identified in the 2015 Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). The TRC reporting recommended that the archives examine the extent to which institutions had complied with the UNDRIP and produce a report with recommendations on its full implementation.¹⁹ Also, in that year, the *Reconciliation Framework: The Response to the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Taskforce* developed an in-depth pathway for archives to support systemic change in the archives for Indigenous people. Their report notes that ‘archives and archivists need a tangible way to move beyond the confines of a harmful, racist system of professional practice’.²⁰

The development of the ICA’s Tandanya-Adelaide Declaration (2019) brings the calls for Indigenous self-determination in archives into sharp focus. As a guiding document, the declaration represents a culmination of the work of the broader movement of recognising Indigenous worldviews and rights in libraries and archives. Importantly, the declaration advocates for a paradigm shift in traditional archival practice to develop a ‘new model of public archives as an ethical space of encounter, respect, negotiation and collaboration without the dominance or judgement of distant and enveloping authority’.²¹ The declaration includes five priority areas for immediate action, with the fifth focussing specifically on support for Indigenous self-determination in alignment with the principles articulated in the UNDRIP.²² The priority areas are summarised as follows:

- 1) Knowledge Authorities – Calls for acknowledgement of Indigenous knowledge frameworks and the need for archives to engage in reciprocal and respectful relationships to weave Indigenous worldviews into institutional collections to decolonise state-sanctioned memories.
- 2) Property and Ownership – Understanding and recognising Indigenous ownership of Indigenous traditional knowledge, cultural expression, knowledge and intellectual property.
- 3) Recognition and Identity – Understanding internationally the long histories of colonisation that have impacted Indigenous people’s struggle for recognition. Urging the archives to recognise Indigenous people across archival systems as holding unique kinship, identity and cultures as distinct peoples. Expresses the need for participatory descriptive practices and recognition of Indigenous knowledges as living and connected to place.
- 4) Research and Access – Recognises the tensions between European and Indigenous ways of knowing. Stresses the importance of Indigenous control over access to information in colonial archives, changes to recordkeeping legislation and practice to incorporate IDS, a right of reply and redress.
- 5) Self-Determination – Recognises the principles of the UNDRIP as forming the basis of the declaration in an archival context.²³

While limited information is available on the implementation of the declaration, there is no doubt that it has served as an important tool for raising awareness of Indigenous priorities in the sector. In an Australian context, the declaration has been promoted across archival institutions and associations, including, for example, being referenced as a key guiding document by the National Archives of Australia in their submission made for REVIVE, *The National Cultural Policy*²⁴; endorsed by the National and State Libraries of Australasia (NSLA); and referred to as a guiding document by AIATSIS (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) and the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities (CAARA).²⁵ More broadly, it has been debated and discussed in scholarly research in Australia,²⁶ helping to generate discussion about the importance of greater reporting on the implementation of the declaration for understanding how it is being utilised in practice.²⁷ Nationally, the declaration has brought hope that a refiguring of archival practices can take place to support Indigenous self-determination. Like UNDRIP, there is recognition that the declaration can guide peak bodies and professional associations to articulate social justice commitments. This advocacy, in turn, influences organisational approaches and practices across GLAM institutions.

Ensuring Indigenous self-determination is embedded in the activation of declarations and frameworks

The declaration and associated statements of support have been designed to support significant transformations of Indigenous archiving approaches, and this requires that principles of Indigenous self-determination are built into all implementation and review processes. Indigenous governance and decision-making are critical. The international IDS movement provides a pathway for Indigenous self-determination to be built into the activation of declarations and frameworks. Broadly, the IDS movement empowers Indigenous people to exercise rights of ownership and control over data to inform self-determined priorities and goals. The rise of the IDS and Indigenous Data Governance (IDG) movement highlights the growing trend towards Indigenous-led ethical approaches to data collection and management across a range of disciplines and sectors. As a global endeavour, the application of IDS principles in Indigenous community contexts is an emerging area of research exploring a range of concerns, from legal and ethical dimensions around data storage, ownership, access and consent to intellectual property rights and practical considerations about how data are used in the context of research, policy and practice.²⁸ The leading international *Care Principles of Indigenous Data Governance* (CARE), which focus on self-determination and Indigenous innovation, and the national *Maiam Nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Communique* are roadmaps for embedding Indigenous governance to support self-determination.²⁹ They assert Indigenous-led data management practices and approaches to ensure respect for Indigenous decision making.

The archives sector must consider IDS and IDG principles in national and international declarations and frameworks. It is also critical that we identify and address tensions related to the strategic approaches that the declaration and frameworks articulate, particularly in understanding if the priorities are focused on institutional archives and their needs rather than local community needs.³⁰ The success of the declarations relies on institutional archives working meaningfully with Indigenous people and communities to support their aspirations for archival self-determination. An institution needs strategy to support Indigenous engagement otherwise the work risks being ad hoc and reactive. This is of particular concern where governance structures are not put in place to support First Nations decision-making in archival practice. It can result in continued tensions and distrust between First Nations communities and institutional archives. Open communication and transparency must be

developed to support two-way engagement between the archives and communities. To improve the implementation and realisation of the goals expressed in professional declarations, we must bridge gaps between research and practice. To bring the statements to life and indeed activate them through principles of Indigenous self-determination, we need to be transparent about the methods and approaches for their implementation. Greater accountability on Indigenous participation, aligned with IDS and IDG principles, is required for the statements to be more than merely symbolic gestures without tangible measures for changing practice.

Designing research to support first nations self-determination in the archives

In this section, I turn to my own research to discuss the role that Indigenous research methodologies and research methods could play in developing a focused agenda for change in line with the aspirations found in professional declarations and statements.

In 2019, I wrote about my personal journey of professional practice in supporting Indigenous priorities and self-determination in Australian libraries and archives. At a time when I decided that I would make a sharp turn to academic research, I discussed the need for the sector to engage in more rigorous and difficult dialogue about the complex and contested nature of the archives for First Nations people. I stressed the importance of Indigenous research methodologies being developed and applied to support a transformation of libraries and archives aligned with Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. It was a call to action for libraries and archives to increase the use of Indigenous research methodologies – across both research and practice – to seek ways to decolonise and simultaneously indigenise the archives.³¹ In the article, I discussed areas of tension and gaps that needed addressing including:

- A lack of critical dialogue about First Nations self-determination and cultural safety.
- The existence of poor project design, which although developed with good intention, ignored deep structural issues and power dynamics related to the contested nature of the archives.
- A lack of projects co-designed with First Nations community input and lack of acknowledgement and incorporation of community priorities and desires.
- Repeated decadal conversations around the same complex problems.

Four years after the article was published, I feel empowered by the opportunities that have arisen from bridging the gap between research and practice. Being engaged in developing critical participatory research projects has helped me to develop an evidence base for advancing Indigenous self-determined priorities across library and archival practice. I am aware of the importance and impact of redirecting my labour to work with communities to explore the application of Indigenous methodologies and frameworks in reimagining Indigenous archival futures. In my view, archival practice can only change with a commitment to research. While I recognise the importance of professional statements for action, I am also aware that a lack of focus can lead them to be performative tools that move the sector no further than mere symbolism.

To demonstrate the use of an Indigenous research paradigm, I further describe research undertaken as part of my doctoral project *Unclasp the White Hand: Reclaiming and Refiguring the Archives to Support Indigenous Wellbeing and Sovereignty*. I do this to provide a clear example of how research can enable an in-depth analysis of questions related to Indigenous self-determination in the archives. Broadly, the doctoral research explored whether the current dominant approaches to archiving and managing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

knowledges support the wellbeing of Indigenous people and recognise Indigenous sovereignty in an archival context. It investigated the contested nature of the archives and the level of agency that Indigenous people have to control and own their archives. The research, framed in an Indigenous research paradigm, helped build cyclical and reflexive research grounded in supporting reciprocity and respect in research relationships.

Relational research and Indigenous research paradigms

Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2021), who led critical conversations internationally about the need to decolonise Indigenous research, outlined the history of distrust within research *about* Indigenous people and the need for a new agenda to support Indigenous self-determination in research.³² An Indigenous research paradigm establishes a pathway for building this trust to work towards the goal of self-determination. According to Shawn Wilson, an Indigenous research paradigm is guided fundamentally by the belief that knowledge is relational. It is a research paradigm that rejects the view of knowledge being held by an individual or something that can be gained.

You are not just gaining information from people; you are sharing your information. You are analysing and you are building ideas and relationships as well. Research is not just something that's out there: it's something that you're building for yourself and for your community.³³

Wilson's articulation of an Indigenous research paradigm gave me a sense-making tool. It helped me consider my research within an Indigenous research paradigm based on the four key elements of ontology, epistemology, methodology and axiology. Wilson explains that ontologies (the belief in the nature of our reality) and our epistemologies (the way we think about that reality) connect with research methodologies as a way of gaining and building more knowledge about our own specific realities. He describes a research paradigm as being informed by these ontological and epistemological positions and our own judgments about values, ethics or axiology. The four elements are not considered linear or bound by time but flow and connect in a circular and interrelated way.³⁴ I situated the research firmly within an Indigenous research paradigm to give depth, insight and accountability to the questions I was investigating in a way that acknowledged the relationality of the research. Importantly, I could not shy away from the fact that I was deeply related to the research questions, not just on an intellectual level but also in mind, body and spirit.

Early in the research design stage of my doctoral studies, I found myself laying out a tangled web of what I saw as the significant research problems about the relationships of Indigenous people with libraries and archives. I entered my doctorate with the purposeful aim of designing research that would give back to First Nations people and communities in Australia. I also wanted to contribute to scholarship in library, archival and Indigenous studies with a view to transformation, as I was very aware of the critical lack of research in the field. It was also vital that I considered the four principles set out in *The AIATSIS Code 2020*, namely, to support (1) Indigenous self-determination, (2) Indigenous leadership, (3) Impact and value and (4) Sustainability and accountability.³⁵ Through a series of yarning sessions and the use of autoethnography, the research design enabled an ethical framework to examine the holistic needs of Indigenous people in the archives to support Indigenous archiving and memory keeping and the need to repair and seek justice from the impacts of colonisation.

I selected methods congruent with Indigenous worldviews and the Indigenous research paradigm.³⁶ Wilson (2001) provided useful questions to evaluate the appropriateness of research methods, including:

- What is my role as researcher, and what are my obligations?
- Does this method allow me to fulfil my obligations in my role?
- Does this method help to build a relationship between myself as a researcher and my research topic?
- Does it build respectful relationships with the other participants in the research?³⁷

I utilised data collection and analysis methods that explicitly addressed the research questions, drawing in data on my personal and professional experiences and engagement with research participants. The suitability of the research design enabled me to engage with the stories of First Nations people and allies who were engaging with the archives in Australia.

Within the research I undertook a series of 15 yarning sessions with participants covering four cohort groups including Indigenous people from the GLAM sector; Indigenous scholars who have researched or engaged with libraries and archives; Indigenous Elders who have knowledge and or experiences of libraries and archives and Advocates for Indigenous priorities (non-Indigenous professionals and workers) who are allies in the sector. Research participants were recruited to contribute insights to the study based on their previous experience and knowledge of the area. I used autoethnography to reflect deeply on my own professional experiences working as an archivist to support Indigenous engagement and the development of protocols and policy across library and archive settings. The research identified immediate reforms required to support Indigenous people's archiving needs and outlined a transformative model of Indigenous Living Archives on Country to support Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing in the archives and redress for the impacts of colonisation.

Applying Indigenous research methodologies and methods

Here I will describe how the research drew on Indigenous standpoint theory, Yarning methodologies and Indigenous Storywork within a critical theory framework to consider the engagement of First Nations people with the archives.³⁸ I also outline the data collection and analysis methods utilised to support these Indigenous research methodologies, and highlight how each methodology and method supported respectful and reciprocal engagement within the research.

Indigenous standpoint theory

Indigenous standpoint enables opportunities for researchers to understand more about their place in the world and how that position determines *what we do* and *what we don't know*. Within academic research, marginalised groups have utilised standpoint theory as a method of inquiry to raise the voice of those people whose accounts or experiences were previously excluded or subjugated within intellectual knowledge production.³⁹ Behrendt's description of Indigenous standpoint outlines that 'your positioning or your standpoint – will fundamentally influence the way you see the world. Indigenous standpoint notes up front that we, as individuals, are shaped by our cultures, cultural values, and experiences with society's institutions'.⁴⁰

I had pre-existing relationships with the research topic, and these experiences influenced my research approach. My employment experiences and engagement in professional practice provided a significant backdrop to the study and my standpoint in the research. My experiences developing policy, protocols, practice and spaces for Indigenous people to have agency in libraries and archives situated how I knew and understood the research topic, and my knowledge through these professional and lived experiences and interactions could not be ignored. Due to my experiences, I also had insider positionality, meaning that I was an insider researcher. This provided a closeness to the research topic and questions, which meant the research was deeply subjective. Merriam and colleagues (2001) explain the challenges

associated with questions of power and positionality within insider and outsider researcher roles. The authors discuss questions and complexities related to researching class, gender and culture and note that the framing of insider and outsider research allows for people to understand power dynamics when researching within and across one's own culture.⁴¹ Similarly, Fredericks discusses insider research focusing on researching Indigenous women, as an Indigenous woman. Fredericks notes that the skills that are required to negotiate this positionality are that 'Indigenous researchers work within a set of "insider" dynamics, and it takes considerable sensitivity, skills, maturity, experience and knowledge to work these issues through'.⁴²

I used autoethnographic methods within the research, specifically from the literature on Indigenous Autoethnography, to reflect on my own professional experiences through a process of journaling and reflection.⁴³ It became a critical tool for me to draw out issues that had emerged over my professional career on both an 'experiential and intellectual level'.⁴⁴ Utilising these Indigenous methodologies and methods helped me to occupy the position of an insider researcher clearly and transparently. Overall, it required me to be a reflexive researcher and to practice reciprocity in the research thoughtfully and respectfully.

Yarning methodologies

Yarning is our way. The narrative way is always the way we have done stuff, so it is the best way. It is the cultural way. It is the safe way. (Aunty Glendra Stubbs)⁴⁵

Yarning is a vital methodology to build trust and an open and respectful space for engaging in Indigenous research topics. In my case, I used yarning as a tool to discuss Indigenous well-being and sovereignty in the archives. Initially, I considered yarning as a vital data-collection method. However, as the research progressed, yarning became a critical participatory methodology to guide the overall research engagement. The yarning approach aligned with Wilson's earlier articulation of relational research. The use of yarning in research is not only about building relational accountability with the living but also about caring for and respecting Country and Ancestors who are a part of the research stories. I connect deeply with a description provided by Barlo and colleagues (2021) as follows:

Yarning is a powerful methodology from the vantage point of a relationship journey because the process engages the researcher in a web of relationships which includes research participants, the knowledges and stories themselves, Ancestors and Country, and histories and futures as they live in the telling and hearing of stories.⁴⁶

Bessarab and Ng'andu described how, as a research method, yarning is used to learn a person's story or to find out more about their knowledge and experiences.⁴⁷ Other scholars have described the importance of yarning as a culturally safe method of data collection and a tool for building partnerships in the research process. It is a way to build strength around Indigenous voice and participation, particularly with 'knowledge systems, ways of doing, perspectives and participation in research'.⁴⁸ Fredericks and colleagues (2011) describe yarning as an action research method and a tool for empowerment to work with Indigenous Australian people as it allows for 'a relaxed and familiar communication process'.⁴⁹ Adams and Faulkhead similarly describe yarning as a narrative research method that involves self-reflection and deep discussion about a particular issue and which involves exploring similar or different ideas in explaining concepts, leading to new information and understandings.⁵⁰

I found that yarning aligned with the focus of my research being about relationships as it suited these participatory approaches. I considered that the research participants were partners in the research, and yarning helped facilitate a process for ongoing dialogue and rigour

around the accountability of the data and stories used in the research. On a practical level, it meant that my research relationships extended beyond the data-collection phase through data analysis and then finally built feedback into the overall use of material in the research write-up. I sought consent for the use of any quotes or material that was from the direct voice of participants. I built into my ethics process the ability to provide full attribution of people's knowledge and experience in any written content.

Indigenous storywork

Story is a way forward in the decolonizing movement as deep meaning-making encounter, as expansive creative collaboration.⁵¹

Indigenous Storywork is considered both a methodology and a method that supports Indigenous storytelling and the transmission of knowledge through orality.⁵² Archibald describes the power of knowledge transmission and the important role of collecting and sharing that knowledge through respectful processes. 'The storyteller's responsibility toward others is linked to the power that her/his stories may have'.⁵³ There are seven elements to Archibald's (2008) Indigenous Storywork principles: (1) respect, (2) responsibility, (3) reciprocity, (4) reverence, (5) holism, (6) interrelatedness, and (7) synergy. Broadly, the principles remind us about the importance of holism and that when acquiring new knowledge, like being involved in research, these practices continue to be linked to cultural practices.⁵⁴ Drawing on the Storywork methodology, De Santolo described how Indigenous storytelling is a decolonising research approach, enabling possibilities for transformational resistance through a research approach grounded in relationships.⁵⁵

In my research, Indigenous Storywork allowed a conversational method to come into play throughout the research process. It was also strongly aligned as an approach to support the connection in the research with Indigenous standpoint theory. Archibald's principles were guiding principles used throughout the research to listen to, read, interpret and consider the research stories. I contextualised the autoethnographic and yarning approaches in the broader view of Indigenous Storywork as a method to intertwine the voice and stories of other research participants within my own research insights. It enabled the voices and stories of my own lived experiences and other Indigenous participants to be combined within the research. Putting my stories and others together was a powerful process that spotlighted peoples' resilience and determination to support better approaches to Indigenous archiving and engagement with collections.

The effectiveness of Indigenous research methods in meeting the goals of the research

The Indigenous research methodologies and methods outlined earlier in the text enabled a respectful research approach to delve deep into questions about Indigenous-led approaches to archiving and memory-keeping in an Indigenous context in Australia. Trust and reciprocity were crucial elements of the research design process, as the yarning sessions opened a space for the respectful sharing of stories. Participants understood that the information they shared would be considered deeply beyond a transactional approach and that, from the data collection stage, there was a commitment to share and validate research findings through continued yarning. Building a trusted space for discussion and by centring Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, the research privileged First Nations research priorities. In addition, this required that the design responded to colonial legacies of distrust in research.

Being aware of this impact of colonisation was critical, and particularly to understand the relationships between First Nations people and archival institutions.

Indigenous research methodologies are critical tools for archives to support Indigenous self-determination. The research findings identified that the use of Indigenous research methodologies was effective and they could support disruption and change within the sector. They also demonstrated the importance of embedding Indigenous research ethics in studies. In particular, the principles of respect, trust and reciprocity were essential to support the telling of stories. The research design was empowering, and it privileged Indigenous voices and representation. The relationship between research and practice was evident in the research project. Both the autoethnography and the yarning sessions provided significant insight into ways in which the archives are contested for First Nations people. The major findings of my doctoral studies directly relate to action required in archival practice. This clearly demonstrates the importance of the research and practice relationship.

First, the *Critique of the term cultural safety as insufficient to support Indigenous people in an archival context* identified the problematic nature of the term 'cultural safety' in an archival context. While the term was originally utilised to discuss the topics relating to Indigenous people's calls for greater control of the archives, the research identified that the term was insufficient to encapsulate First Nations people's needs. The definition in an archival context lacks attention to the systemic and structural issues that resulted from the ongoing colonisation of Australia. In particular, it oversimplifies the complex and multifaceted requirements needed to support an effective critique of the tools of colonisation as they are manifested in the archives and institutions of Australian society. These findings are vital for archival institutions to understand if they are to build appropriate responses for the training and education of staff.

Secondly, the research identified new approaches for understanding Indigenous wellbeing in the archives more compatible with Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing that could also communicate the broad needs of First Nations people in the archives beyond the term cultural safety. These new approaches are described in a working definition of *Indigenous wellbeing, sovereignty and archival sovereignty*. The definition enables a view of what a healthy and safe archive looks like for First Nations people and as such is a benchmark for archives to consider whether in co-designing services for communities, or building greater engagement and decision-making over the control and use of data from communities. The working definition is future focused and shines a light on the important work that the archives can be involved with to support Indigenous people's social, emotional and cultural wellbeing in the archives.

Next, the research findings included an *In-depth analysis of the harmful impacts on Indigenous wellbeing and sovereignty of the colonial archival model and approaches* by listing the current challenges that exist within the archives. The research stories provided detailed descriptions of the immediate harms and dangers that exist to Indigenous people's social and emotional wellbeing. These harms and dangers are critical for archival institutions to understand to mitigate risks within their organisational policies and procedures.

The final two research findings provide pathways for immediate reforms of the archives and transformations that are required in the long-term to support Indigenous self-determination and priorities by keeping archives locally connected to community, and on Country. The *Indigenous Archiving Reforms* include six key areas: (1) Indigenous Protocols to support Indigenous wellbeing, sovereignty and archival sovereignty; (2) Recognising the archives as a place of Sorry Business; (3) Indigenous stewardship and custodianship of materials held in the archives; (4) Indigenous cultural practices and ceremonies in the archives; (5) Returning love to ancestors who are captured in the archives and (6) IDS and the archives. Finally, a *Transformative Model of Indigenous Living Archives on Country* was proposed. The core features identified in the model include support for: Indigenous wellbeing and

archival sovereignty holistically embedded in the archives; Indigenous knowledge management protocols in the archives, that are locally defined, and place based, and that incorporate spiritual and emotional needs and Indigenous archival sovereignty recognised through transparent local decision-making.

Discussion and reflections

The Indigenous-led research methodologies and methods discussed here provide an example of how research can support an agenda of disruption and change for Indigenous priorities in the archives. The findings demonstrate the layers of information exchange that took place in the research. Earlier in the paper I described how national and international professional declarations and statements of support set pathways for increasing Indigenous engagement with the archives. However, while recognising the importance of these as tools for change, I also signalled the vital need for greater transparency about Indigenous participation in decision-making in bringing the statements to life, notably by including principles articulated in the IDS and IDG movement. The Indigenous research methodologies and methods of Yarning, Indigenous Standpoint and Indigenous Storywork illustrate how research can help build the relationships required to support this.

Because of the nature of their international, national or state-based approaches, archival declarations and statements homogenise First Nations priorities rather than recognising communities as diverse groups with diverse and locally situated needs. These statements and principles aim to support First Nations priorities; however, to date, they have been developed in professional and institutional contexts rather than making the direct voice of First Nations people and their community needs visible. Indigenous research methodologies seek to engage Indigenous people through yarning and hearing people's stories, which supports the recognition of their unique standpoint. Combined, the methodologies open space for reciprocal relationships for deep listening to take place and for trust to be built. Developing an ethical foundation of exchange enables opportunities for archival institutions to find solutions for addressing complex and systemic issues with more rigour. The methodologies and methods provide an approach for relational accountability and transparency on what questions are being asked and who is participating in dialogue about the research questions. An Indigenous self-determination agenda is further realised by shifting the focus from institutional agendas to balance Indigenous-led community-driven priorities.

At the minimum, archival practice should be guided by principles of Indigenous self-determination articulated across the UNDRIP, the AIATSIS Research Code and the Tandanya-Adelaide declaration. Any projects that include First Nations cultural heritage should include representation of Indigenous people. This representation must focus on co-design and participation in decision-making to ensure that First Nations people's interests are understood in a governance context. Returning to the examples of the *ASA Policy Statement on Archival Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* and the ICA's *Tandanya Adelaide Declaration*, it is evident that Indigenous research methodologies and approaches would be beneficial tools for implementing action to support their agendas. In the case of any upcoming reviews of the declarations and statements there is a case for the profession to consider IDS and IDG principles within the activation of the statements. The assertion of rights outlined in the growing IDS movement requires that archives engage deeply with locally defined Indigenous priorities. In the future, more scrutiny will be placed on institutions to be accountable for their support for IDG and decision-making. Applying Indigenous Research Methodologies further enhances this work to bring transparency to the fore.

Pathways to strengthen the research and practice relationships for Indigenous archives

It is an exciting prospect that archivists and information workers in Australia and internationally increase their understanding and literacy of Indigenous research methodologies and approaches to build respect and reciprocal accountability in projects. Indigenous research methodologies bring transparency to projects and further opportunities for rigour in defining and answering questions that need examining. The articulation of declarations and statements demonstrates the goodwill of the archives sector in increasing support for Indigenous engagement. However, there are significant opportunities for embedding more grounded approaches that bring mutual benefits to both institutions and communities.

The Indigenous research methodologies of Yarning, Indigenous Standpoint and Indigenous Storywork are approaches that can support archivists and information workers in responding to community needs within practice. The archives profession must avoid approaching complex questions with band-aid solutions. This paper has encouraged more significant support for archivists to engage in reflexive practice guided by Indigenous research methodologies and methods. Open and transparent planning around research and projects can support the building of trust to surface areas of action required for Indigenous self-determination in the archives. They also help break down barriers and guide robust dialogue across institutional and community contexts.

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