



How Indigenous Sources Have Been Treated Historically

Some historical, academic contexts of citing Indigenous oral sources

Before we begin writing about Indigenous Knowledges in our research, there are many questions we must ask ourselves. We need to consider the accurate and respectful ways to engage with Indigenous sources (Miheesuah, 2005). When in doubt, we can always read more Indigenous research, listen to more Indigenous authors, and think more about topics as understood from Indigenous perspectives.

However, we should also be mindful of the emphasis and the value that Western academia has placed upon **the written word** at the expense of thinking about **the spoken word**. This point is especially important when we consult with Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers who often share knowledge orally.

Historically speaking, post-secondary institutions and non-Indigenous scholars have failed the modern standards of academic rigour when they did not respect Indigenous oral sources as legitimate sources of knowledge. On one hand, Western academia's reliance on writing and archiving technologies has silenced, appropriated, or fixed in stasis the living, dynamic Oral Traditions of Indigenous Peoples. In doing so, the stories told by Western academia about Indigenous Peoples have obscured and misrepresented the histories of Indigenous Peoples meeting newcomers (Fixico, 1996). On the other hand, Western academia has problematically historically engaged with Indigenous Peoples only as research participants or objects of study, and not as agents who share, protect, and sustain Knowledges of their own right (Smith, 2021). These Knowledges are as rigorous, empirical, and verifiable as Western ways of analyzing animate and inanimate worlds (Cruikshank, 2012).

The politics of citation, especially for Indigenous students and scholars, can be frustrating as questions about who counts and what counts as legitimate sources of knowledge remain a debate (CBC Radio, 2018). What counts as the canon of Western academic literature often defaults to so-called dominant scholarly perspectives (European, white, male, heterosexual, settler-colonial, etc.) (Mott & Cockayne, 2017). Many modern scholars of all backgrounds commit to unsettle the boundaries of these reading lists by primarily citing and centering Indigenous sources, including Indigenous oral sources, in research. Citing Indigenous oral sources is a move towards resurgence and regeneration of Indigenous Peoples and their ways of knowing, being, and doing. As Mohawk academic Taiaiake Alfred (2005) wrote,

“Regeneration means we will reference ourselves differently, both from the ways we did traditionally and under colonial dominion” (p. 34).

Moreover, to redress the history of extractive research about Indigenous Peoples, both Indigenous communities and scholars exercise intellectual sovereignty over any Knowledges about themselves including the right to refuse speaking. They do not need to communicate and to disclose information to scholars, non-Indigenous and Indigenous alike, just because someone asks a question (Simpson, 2007; Tuck & Yang, 2014). For example, some Knowledges, such as those contained within Sacred Stories, are not meant to be shared with those outside of the community to protect the Knowledge and to protect the community as well (Wilson, 2008, p. 98). If Indigenous Peoples choose to share information, like Traditional Knowledge, with students and scholars, these students and scholars hold the responsibility of being accountable to those whom they cite.

Final considerations before doing academic writing about Indigenous oral sources

Like MacLeod (2021), Younging (2018) has generated materials to aid anyone who wants to write about Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Knowledges, and Indigenous research. His book, *Elements of Indigenous style: A guide for writing by and about Indigenous peoples*, is an invaluable resource to locate and situate Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. Academic audiences, be they students and researchers alike, can learn from the in-depth discussion Younging provided about researching, writing, and publishing contents from Indigenous perspectives about Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Knowledges.

In writing his style guide, Younging has stressed at least two important points that bear mention when we use citation templates for Indigenous oral sources. First, his guide “does not replace standard references on editing and publishing, ... Neither does it replace the house styles of individual publishers” (p. 6). We should maintain academic citation style of our discipline/field whenever and as much as possible. Younging qualified this point, adding, “In some cases, however, Indigenous style and conventional style or house style will not agree. When that happens, Indigenous style should override conventional style and house style” (p. 6). For APA and MLA citation styles, MacLeod (2021) has explained the types and amounts of information one could include when citing an Indigenous oral source, which depends on the level of information an Indigenous oral source may want to share about themselves (pp. 3-4).

Second, Younging (2018) remarked that his Indigenous writing style guide was “a first attempt... and a first volume” of such work, and that he “intend[ed] that Indigenous and non-Indigenous publishers and editors, and other interested parties, will consider these as *proposed* principles and guidelines, and provide feedback that will inform subsequent editions” (p. xi).

The documents, such as the one you are reading now, developed by the University of Calgary’s Student Success Centre attempt to follow Younging’s design of writing about Indigenous Peoples by building upon MacLeod’s (2021) efforts. These documents are not meant to be exhaustive nor authoritative. Many citation styles exist within academia besides APA, MLA, and Chicago. The efforts of creating templates to cite Indigenous oral sources for these other

citation styles, such as the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) and Council of Science Editors (CSE) citation styles, are likely taking place right now. The Student Success Centre's documents also cite scholars involved on the ground of where Indigenous research, and use of Indigenous oral sources, is taking place. These scholars are those whom we should read for more context and deeper understanding.

Conclusion

The development of better, more accurate, and more respectful citation, and the complex politics surrounding this important work, is an ongoing conversation. Post-secondary institutions, style guides, Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, and Indigenous communities are engaging in this conversation in terms of sharing knowledge and generating research. These conversations are vital for matters such as land title and treaty, health, cultural safety, national security, the environment, economic development, climate change, and more. As this conversation unfolds, the Student Success Centre at the University of Calgary looks to add to this document to include more citation styles in research areas where Indigenous voices and scholars are gaining prominence.

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