

Chapter

Rising up in the 21st Century: The Integration of Contemporary Technology for the Transmission and Preservation of Indigenous Knowledge, Identity and Decolonization in Turtle Island (Canada)

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Abstract

While the effects of settler colonialism continue to be experienced within Indigenous communities all over Canada, this chapter focuses on the ways in which our Indigenous-centered research in the Blue Sky Research Lab (BSRL) at the University of Alberta integrates a range of contemporary technological tools to transmit and preserve the knowledge of the Nêhiyawak (Plains Cree Nation) and contribute to decolonial work within the Canadian context. We discuss the process of how the BSRL utilizes digital and social media and our Spotify podcast *The Auntie Is In* to share traditional knowledge (Indigenous Science), spread truths, lived experiences, and a range of perspectives from Indigenous Elders, community members, youth, as well as university scholars, students, and non-Indigenous members of the Canadian public. The main aspects highlighted in this chapter include authenticity, warmth, and sharing joy; knowledge accessibility and translation; building human connections and a sense of community; using technology to enhance community relations and give back to Indigenous communities; and deconstructing stereotypes and misconceptions about Indigenous Peoples. Moreover, we share our reflections on the use of such technologies to advance anti-coloniality, preserve Indigenous identity and Ways of Knowing, and to share Traditional Knowledge with present and future generations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island (and beyond).

Keywords: traditional culture, indigenous knowledge, Nêhiyawak, anti-colonial, identity, Indigenous Peoples, podcast, social media

1. Introduction

The representations of Indigenous Peoples in history, media, and public perception are, without a doubt, tarnished with misrepresentations, stereotypes, and assumptions of images that have never actually existed. Public knowledge is topical at best. The Canadian government and education system have actively concealed the truths about the treatment of Indigenous Peoples, refusing to acknowledge the ongoing colonialism purposefully embedded within Canadian institutions. Joyce Green [1, p. 85-86] emphasizes that the relationships between Indigenous Peoples and Settler Canadians “are perpetuated by a mythologized history and by judicial and political institutions that proclaim and defend this mythology-cloaked, un-hyphenated colonialism.” The “history” espoused about Indigenous Peoples is lacking at best and, at worst, serves to exploit, displace, and dehumanize. Settler colonialism has always worked to inaccurately portray the people that stand in the way of so-called “modernization” or “civilization,” refusing Indigenous Peoples the ability to rewrite the flawed historicities of the past and present. So, what happens when Indigenous Peoples get the chance to become the authorities and teachers of their own histories?

As Dr. Paulina Johnson marked nearly one hundred first-year term papers as an assistant professor, it became clear that many students, rather than exploring the library or online databases, turned to the most easily accessible resource they know – *Google*. Of course, *Google* can be helpful sometimes, though not in understanding the plights of Indigenous Peoples nor their histories. Additionally, AI-generated summaries cannot adequately evoke the emotion, spirituality, or intricacies imbued in the overarching colonial project [2]. Based on the references cited throughout those term papers, it became clear that the digital landscape of Indigenous Knowledges and representation continued to be outdated, as well as plagued with the misconceptions that many Indigenous scholars have continually addressed [3, 4]. This begs the question: In an increasingly online world, how do we represent the *truth* behind these misconceptions of Indigenous Peoples?

From an Indigenous worldview, there are many methods and ways of sharing that allow emotions to transcend and experiences to be embodied. For Indigenous cultures and cultures around the world, however, the power of spoken word is transformatory as it connects to individuals themselves but also as a whole. Within Indigenous storytelling, the experiences shared not only allow one to connect to themselves but also to the ancestors that once were, and those unseen who guided and shaped the world around them. For Indigenous Peoples, the power of “voice” is a way of not just connecting these truths but also sharing them beyond the confines of the settler colonial outlook. Holding *voice* as a crucial means of (re)writing the narratives of Indigenous Peoples, a podcast was created to give voice to the truths of Indigenous Peoples and to challenge the “perceived reality” of popular culture and Canadian media (and elsewhere). This voice, the voice of Dr. Johnson, is a powerful one. Her goal is:

To make this world anti-colonial and to fulfill the most important teaching of my people: to give back. Reciprocity is the driving force of relationality, and this means that I am bound to my people and community first, and an academic second.

Therefore, I leave these dialogs both in an oral presentation and in a written document, bringing my Indigenous upbringing together with the Western preference for text. [5, p. 5]

Layering the voice of an Indigenous scholar with the cultural and ancestral knowledge of community with the scholarly experience of academia, allows for new conceptions of Indigenous Peoples to be forged. Therefore, *The Auntie Is In* podcast was created not only to speak back but to *rehumanize* the way in which power and control have previously distorted Indigenous voices.

While many still believe that Indigenous Peoples are against “technology,” “modernity,” or “advancement,” the reality is that Indigenous Peoples are the most adaptable people in the world – they are simply still connected to the land and the ways of their ancestors. Therefore, to challenge the misconceptions and hidden realities of Indigenous Peoples, the podcast sought out ways to tell new truths and share Indigenous humanity through a new platform and landscape – a digital landscape.

As such, to change the digital landscape, we examine the history of technology and ways to utilize Indigenous voices in new media, rooted in their ancestral connections to time and place. The connection to community was prevalent from the conception of our podcast to ensure that the voices that had been left to the periphery could be centered. *The Auntie Is In* podcast was developed and grounded in Nêhiyawak (Four-Spirit or Plains Cree) intellectual traditions and produced by the Blue Sky Research Lab (BSRL) at the University of Alberta (U of A).

A core mission of *The Auntie Is In* podcast is to intentionally disrupt pervasive stereotypes and harmful misconceptions about Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island. As Francis argues, colonial representations of “The Indian” are constructed in such a way that keep Indigenous Peoples as relics of the past, ignoring our continuity, contemporality, and survival [4, p. 59]. These colonial and simplistic narratives continue to circulate within mainstream media, institutions, and the court of public opinion/bias, shaping how Indigenous Peoples are viewed and how Indigenous Knowledge is (de)valued within a Westernized worldview. Such pervasive but damaging narratives misrepresent Indigenous Peoples and actively erase the diversity, dynamism, and modernity of Indigenous Peoples and their ways of life. Ultimately, this never-ending cycle erroneously reinforces the false assumption that “Indigenous Knowledge is incompatible with modern academic, professional, and technological spaces.”

This chapter tells the story of coming together to utilize contemporary technology to transmit and preserve an understanding of Indigenous Peoples within Turtle Island (Canada). Although done within a Nêhiyawak context, this model serves to disrupt the realities of settler colonialism for the liberation of Indigenous Peoples and Knowledges. However, to tell this story, we must first address the roots of settler colonialism that have framed how we understand technology.

2. The coloniality of technology

Technology is inextricably linked to the histories of European civilization and the continuation of settler colonialism [2, 5, 6]. Although technology is a universally recognized concept, a narrow definition has centered itself within Western academic and non-academic discourses [7, 8]. This restrictive framing tells the story of

technology as a Western invention, touting industrial machinery and digital advancement as the overarching examples of progress. Although colonial powers have played a role in technological advancement, the erroneous notion that this narrative of technology is the only story to tell is a product of settler colonialism.

Settler colonialism operates with the logic of elimination and replacement. It frames the bodies, ideas, and practices of the settler as superior to the colonized, therefore challenging the right of the colonized to exist [2, 9]. In addition to suppressing Indigenous Peoples, bodies, and practices, settler colonialism has suppressed Indigenous Ways of Knowing and Indigenous technological practices that would, thereby, challenge the Eurocentric settler colonial narrative of technology. Indigenous technological understandings and practices have been reduced to archaeological excerpts of arrowheads, oral narratives recorded and mis-transcribed by settlers, and thus turned into folk knowledge [6, 10–12].

The truth is that Indigenous Peoples are thriving, and countless Indigenous resurgence and decolonial measures are being taken both within academia and beyond. However, there remains a power imbalance that prohibits access to the narrative of self-determination [6, 11–14]. Indigenous Knowledges and technologies are purposefully diminished within academia, as the academic institution itself is a construct of the settler-colonial project.

Indigenous Peoples across the globe have been skilled users of technology far before its contemporary industrial and digital origins in Europe [11]. Technology has only been framed as European due to the settler colonial project's refusal to relinquish the power of access to the means of knowledge production. By expanding the narrative of technology and decentering the Western assertion that has diminished Indigenous voices, the complete scope of technology can be employed to problem-solve rather than eliminate.

2.1 Technology as a tool in social justice movements and Indigenous knowledge sharing

Technology has always been a part of history. The Internet is one of the most life-changing technological advancements in recent history. The Internet not only provides people with space to interact with each other and with technology itself [15], but it is also characterized by specific features, such as the permanence of information and the speed at which it is disseminated. It is essential to note that the internet itself is neutral; how it is used is not. In the Blue Sky Research Lab, we have decided to use the internet via podcasts, documentary series, and animated content as tools to uplift the Indigenous Knowledges and Ways of Knowing that inform our work, while creating a space to promote community and build a meaningful legacy for the seven generations that follow us.

In a sense, we have appropriated Western technological practices for the greater good, focusing on the societal impacts of technoscience research and development, and reuniting the public with the knowledge they have not yet had the chance to learn [16]. Although the appropriation of knowledge and technology can go both ways (e.g., ethnobotany and Indigenous knowledge being co-opted by the pharmaceutical industry), we are interested in reimaging the use of technology to benefit the redistribution of social power. In our case, the Blue Sky Research Lab has appropriated the podcast, a settler phenomenon, which first gained popularity as downloadable “internet talk shows” in the early 2000s [17], transforming this

technologically assisted means of knowledge dissemination into a joyful facilitation of Indigenous Ways of Knowing.

Taking ownership of the digital space allows us to showcase the heterogeneity of Indigenous identities and the diversity of the team working on the decolonization projects led by Indigenous Peoples. We are constructing a digital space to “strengthen and solidify a collective political unity that resists settler attempts at erasure” [18, p. 33]. Showing our identities with pride is a direct challenge to the ongoing settler colonial project, which utilizes shame, harm, ignorance, and forgetfulness to mask itself.

The Internet is constantly evolving, which is why the way we interact with its tools has an impact on the digital environment and on our daily lives, especially when connecting with historically marginalized populations. Dinero explains that few people are aware of Indigenous People’s concerns and desires because of settler colonial efforts to categorize them as “savage,” “exotic,” or “distant” [19]. As such, the Internet offers a canvas for social justice advocates to play, create, and explore, based on our right to exist and experience life with joy, rather than only focusing on the harm done to our communities. In other words, taking up space in the digital ecosystem and using its tools on our own terms addresses the need for truthful public discourse on Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination.

Carlson and Frazer state that “Indigenous people are routinely defined by that which they supposedly lack, and research overwhelmingly emphasizes the ‘deficits’, ‘gaps’, and traumas that apparently define Indigenous people” [18, p. 121]. This sentiment is readily found on social media; however, social media is also a platform for creativity, joy, and community building expressed through jokes, memes, and humorous critique of the colonial project. Information, relationships, and emotions extend beyond the online environment and have a lasting impact offline. It is “a subjective and intimately embodied experience. It is a playful, productive, and affective force – bringing people together, breaking down boundaries, reifying others, and circulating pleasurable feelings across and between bodies” [18, p. 122].

Co-creating a digital space that uplifts Indigenous identities is a way to contribute to the anti-colonial project, enabling us to experience new realities and forge connections around the world, while challenging the idea that Indigenous wisdom belongs only in the past. At the same time, our social movements and the use of new technologies to speak our truths are concrete ways of answering our ancestors’ dreams of a better future for today’s generation [20]. We also uplift anti-coloniality over decoloniality in our work, since we cannot build a better future on the foundations that have brought Canadian society to this point. Therefore, we must be anti-colonial in our actions as we oppose control over Indigenous narratives and voices, while decoloniality examines the logics of domination still rooted in colonial power.

3. The Blue Sky Research Lab’s research: Approach and methodologies

Within the Blue Sky Research Lab (BSRL) (**Figure 1**), our team believes that people always come before our findings. The work and research we conduct is not *about* Indigenous Peoples and their communities, but *with* them. Therefore, our approach focuses on the community through respect, showing care, and building trust with Elders and Knowledge Holders. Respect comes through acknowledging the



Figure 1.
The Blue Sky Research Lab (BSRL) team at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada.

history of research as a form of knowledge extraction focused on information about Indigenous Peoples rather than the people themselves [21]. We avoid perpetuating these improper practices by ensuring our work follows appropriate cultural processes according to the traditions of the Indigenous communities we work alongside. Generally, this includes, but is not limited to, adhering to cultural protocols as well as providing honoraria (gifts and/or monetary contributions for the knowledge and time shared). Additionally, we ensure our participants are well-informed of our research projects and what they entail, as well as what our final output will look like. We explain to them how we protect the data, what our interviews are for, and give our word that the knowledge will be returned to its respective community. We show care by paying attention to the needs, desires, and hopes of the Indigenous Peoples that we work *with* and *for*. When conducting research, such as qualitative interviews, we ensure that our interviewees are comfortable – physically, mentally, and spiritually – and encourage interviewees to take breaks at any time. To further counter the extractivist history of academic research, the BSRL maintains its relationship-building with communities before, during, and after the research project has ceased. We recognize that the work we do would not be possible without the Indigenous communities we work with.

4. The role of The Auntie

4.1 Authenticity, warmth, and sharing joy

Dr. Paulina Johnson is *The Auntie* (Figure 2), the host and creator of *The Auntie Is In*, an open-access podcast about topics and realities close to her heart as a Nêhiyaw (Plains Cree) woman living in settler colonial Canada. Dr. Johnson is an Assistant



Figure 2.
Dr. Paulina Johnson, the host of The Auntie Is In podcast at the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada.

Professor of Sociology at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. While she occupies the role of professor within the academic institution, she is an auntie everywhere she goes. As an Indigenous woman in academia, Dr. Johnson is very familiar with how settler society discourages and belittles Indigenous Peoples within Canada and within research. As mentioned, both the general narratives of Indigenous Peoples and the research narratives within academia *on* Indigenous Peoples are damage-centered. Although these research approaches often attempt to draw attention to systemic injustices, they reinforce the narrative that the Indigenous experience is one of deficit [22]. Dr. Johnson and the Blue Sky Research Lab aim to combat this notion.

The Auntie Is In is, at its core, a **celebration of Indigeneity**. This celebration emerges through Dr. Johnson's banter with guests, her bodacious laugh, or the tender moments of reflection that surface when speaking about her family, community, and lived experiences. Even when episodes engage with heavy topics like dispossession, dehumanization, and colonial violence, the podcast refuses to

flatten Indigenous life into solely pain. Instead, Dr. Johnson mobilizes contemporary technology in a way that affirms Indigenous listeners, nurturing pride, recognition, and relational connection rather than extraction or spectacle.

The love, joy, and authenticity of storytelling are not only present in the released podcast episodes but are all deeply embedded within the processes of creating each episode. From scriptwriting to recording to editing, Indigenous relational ethics guide every decision made. Western academic and media traditions often elevate neutrality, distance, and emotional detachment as indicators of credibility. This privilege of detachment assumes that the researcher or producer can stand outside the story, untouched by it. For Indigenous Peoples, such distance is neither possible nor desirable. Indigenous Ways of Knowing require *relational accountability*. Knowledge is not extracted; it is carried.

Furthermore, *The Auntie Is In* actively resists gendered stereotypes. Green's analysis of the "Pocahontas Perplex" illustrates how Indigenous women have been historically confined to narrow and contradictory stereotypes. Indigenous women are romanticized, seen as compliant cultural mediators, or dismissed as hypersexualized, tragic, threatening, or vanishing altogether [23]. These representations still exist today in the media and academia, shaping public expectations of how Indigenous women should act, speak, and exist in the modern world. As such, *The Auntie Is In* breaks down these stereotypes by centering Indigenous women who are academics, caregivers, professionals, community members, and family—all equal in value and respect. Dr. Johnson's presence as an academic, a member of Samson Cree Nation, and an auntie goes against colonial expectations of what an Indigenous woman "should be."

Behind the scenes of *The Auntie Is In*, audio editing is not purely technical; it is an intimate and emotionally dependent practice of care. When editing episodes, careful attention is paid to how Dr. Johnson tells her stories: where a pause signals reflection, where a breath carries weight, where tears emerge and need to be honored rather than erased. Equally important is knowing when moments may be too vulnerable for public circulation and protecting them out of respect for personal and collective boundaries. *This* is relational ethics in practice. Moreover, the editing process is filled with joy. Dr. Johnson's laughter often spills across recordings. While some laughter is softened to protect listeners' ears, it is never treated as excess or a distraction. Even when trimmed, that joy lives on in her cadence, tone, and rhythm. These editorial choices ensure that what reaches listeners is not a sanitized or flattened voice, but instead a true and authentic one; a voice that carries warmth, humor, humanity, and most importantly, Indigeneity.

In this way, audio editing becomes a site of Indigenous methodology. It protects the affective truths of storytelling while resisting Western expectations of objectivity, restraint, and emotional absence. Rather than reproducing deficit-based narratives, *The Auntie Is In* affirms storytelling as a living, relational mode of knowledge transmission. Storytelling that honors vulnerability, safeguards community, and insists that laughter, love, and care are not distractions from truth; instead, they are *essential* to it.

The persona of "The Auntie" is not just a metaphor but an embodiment of Indigenous joy, humor, relationality, and care. Auntie conversations, jokes, and laughs would be dismissed as informal, invalid, or unserious within Western epistemologies. In contrast, for Indigenous Peoples, it demonstrates how Knowledge is carried through love, laughter, teasing, and storytelling. By resisting

colonial binaries that separate intellect and emotion or professionalism and kinship, *The Auntie Is In* reaffirms Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Western-dominated media/spaces. In doing so, our podcast not only challenges stereotypical representations of Indigenous Peoples but also reclaims Indigenous authority over how Knowledge and stories are shared, understood, and brought to life using a contemporary medium.

4.2 Oral storytelling and spreading truths

Colonial scholarship, narratives, and academia have long framed Indigenous Knowledges as endangered, fragile, or static, positioning them as artifacts in need of rescue rather than as living systems of truth and Ways of Being. This narrative of disappearance obscures the fact that Indigenous Knowledges have always been adaptive, relational, and dynamic.

Within Indigenous epistemologies, storytelling is not merely a cultural practice but the *primary* means through which truths are transmitted, contested, and affirmed. Kovach emphasizes that Indigenous inquiry is rooted in oral narratives because it aligns with Indigenous thought patterns that do not rely on settler-imposed binaries, where meaning is carried through metaphor, symbolism, and interpretation rather than categorical or qualitative definition [24]. Kovach writes that oral history allows listeners to “walk inside the story to find their own teachings,” making truth a relational and participatory process that requires us to look inwards [24, p. 60]. This approach challenges Western assumptions that truth must be singular, fixed, empirical, or detached from lived experience.

The Auntie Is In operationalizes this epistemological grounding by creating a digital space where Indigenous truths – about land, identity, colonial violence, care, humor, and survival – are spoken aloud and carried through Dr. Johnson and her guests’ storytelling. Podcasting enables tone, cadence, pauses, and emotional inflection to remain intact, preserving the integrity of oral truth-telling.

4.3 Accessibility

The history of settler colonialism within Canada has rendered many Indigenous Peoples today disconnected from their cultures. This is not by accident; rather, it has been an intentional attempt at assimilation by settler society to dispossess Indigenous Peoples within Canada from their lands, cultures, and communities [2, 9]. For example, *The Indian Act of 1876* brought about the nation-wide banning of the Potlatch – performed by Indigenous Peoples along British Columbia’s northwest coast – and the Sun Dance – performed by Indigenous Peoples across the prairies. The respective bans were in effect from 1885–1951 and 1895–1951. Although neither of these sacred ceremonies ceased completely during these bans, they were forced underground and shrouded in secrecy [25, 26]. As the Potlatch and Sun Dance were forced underground, their cultural significance was dimmed, their impact risked being lost in the generational transfer of knowledge, and the assertion made by the federal government that Indigeneity was to remain in the shadows was internalized.

Today, many Indigenous Peoples, young and old, walk through life without a connection to their cultures, their Peoples, and their lands. Although we, as the

Blue Sky Research Lab, are grateful to have a comprehensive understanding of Canada's history, we also recognize that not everyone has had the privilege to learn about the history of Indigenous Peoples within Canada. Many people within Canada – whether Indigenous or settlers – do not know the complete story of how this settler state came to be, or even the intricacies behind its contemporary operations. *The Auntie Is In* aims to change that. Without access to their community, an Indigenous individual often seeks knowledge about their culture and identity on the internet. The BSRL shares stories in an easily accessible format that allows individuals to learn and attain knowledge about Indigenous Ways of Knowing that come from communities. Knowledge Holders and Elders are invaluable within a community. For individuals without a community, *The Auntie Is In* podcast shares and acknowledges where these stories come from in a way that centers Indigenous individuals and communities (Figure 3).

In the fast-paced world we find ourselves in today, the importance of sitting down and listening to a story is so easily lost. Today, everyone has access to a phone, computer, or tablet. By presenting this knowledge via a podcast, our approach utilizes the contemporary digital landscape, easily accessed in the pockets of nearly every individual within Canada (and beyond), to reconnect Indigenous Peoples with a sense of community, while also educating settler listeners on the depth and breadth of the Indigenous experience right now. Additionally, each podcast episode minimizes discipline-specific jargon, opting instead for an accessible and conversational tone to meet any listener where they are. This is in direct contrast with Western academia's penchant for exclusivity and needlessly complex glossaries of terminology inaccessible to the non-academic. By doing the research, presenting it in an accessible way that is free for all to enjoy, and bringing the community, culture, knowledge, and joy to the listener, we are taking an active role in undoing the legacy of assimilation, dispossession, and shame enacted by the Canadian settler state. We hope to reconnect those with their Indigeneity, allowing them a foundation from which to further explore who they are and where they come from, while simultaneously making a few settler accomplices in decolonization along the way.

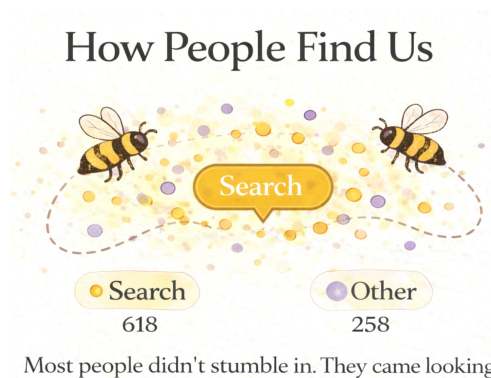


Figure 3.

Listeners discover our podcast primarily through intentional search, rather than passive algorithmic exposure. This suggests that audiences are actively seeking out relational, community-centered conversations, positioning the podcast as a resource accessed through trust and relevance rather than sale or platform-driven recommendations.

4.4 For community

When future academics are taught how to conduct Social Science research through university courses and fieldwork, it is often situated in the belief that we are to become omnipresent observers whose goal is to preserve and document. However, the research process is not so cut-and-dry. To better understand this, two concepts that are important in Cree culture, but not typically found within a textbook, must be highlighted. The first is *wîcihitowin*, which “refers to the life-giving energy that is generated when people face each other as relatives and build trusting relationships” [27, p. 7]. The second is *wâhkôhtowin*, which “refers to kinship relationships and teaches us to extend our relational network” [27, p. 7]. Indigenous academics are not the same as settler scholars; as a result, one must shift their attitude. When this shift does not happen, the research process risks becoming extractive. When the research process becomes extractive, people and communities are put in harm’s way, knowledge is misinterpreted, and the output lacks a connection to the community that informed it. Extraction never produces quality material. Nevertheless, it is an academic’s job to publish – and to publish often – especially if they have yet to form an established career. This leads to an ethical dilemma: one’s own career aspirations achieved via extractivist research may seem more appealing than a commitment to maintaining meaningful relationships. Generating work to gain acclaim is one thing. It is another thing to invest in a body of work that represents the community you are documenting, a body of work with their voices shining through that belongs to them just as much as to you.

A researcher’s job is to become immersed in culture and community to properly understand what they are writing and documenting. The behind-the-scenes research, interview preparation, transcription, and writing are just as important as showing up to a ceremony and being in the moment. It is a tremendous request to ask Indigenous communities to share intimate knowledge and open themselves up to outsiders from post-secondary institutions, who historically have very rarely had the community’s best interests in mind. When you connect with those you are learning alongside, your work becomes richer in value and insight. Indigenous knowledges and worldviews are “interconnected intergenerational webs of relationships” [27, p. 2]. Thus, stories are not just stories, and being together is not a waste of time, but a chance to create a deeper understanding of *why* you are doing this work.

4.5 Building an interdisciplinary team: From undergraduate and graduate students to community members

It is important to be present and to understand the multiple facets of Indigenous cultures. There is no one-size-fits-most model for conducting research with Indigenous Peoples. Research within Indigenous communities is inherently interdisciplinary. Indigenous research requires collaborators to adapt with changing circumstances and to welcome changes to the research plan. At the Blue Sky Research Lab, we have assembled a team that spans differing levels of education and a range of academic disciplines, including faculty, graduate and undergraduate students at the University of Alberta, as well as community members/assistants, *owîihtâsowak*. A team is not complete if it is not representative of the work you are doing.

4.6 A range of perspectives captured

One of the main goals of *The Auntie Is In* has been to highlight a range of perspectives, knowledge, truths, and lived experiences. So far, our podcast has been able to showcase scholars, professionals, Indigenous Elders and community members, youth, and non-Indigenous accomplices in anti-colonialism. Throughout the third season of *The Auntie Is In*, Dr. Johnson interviewed several guests who have been part of her life at one point or another, allowing them to share their stories. In Episode 4, Dr. Johnson interviewed her parents, Paul and Luci Johnson, where they shared their perspectives on Dr. Johnson's academic journey, her being away from home, and their roles in guiding her through the struggles she has faced within academia [28]. Episode 9 highlighted the perspectives of friends and fellow podcasters Alix Bret and Amy Smith, two non-Indigenous allies, accomplices, and educators. Bret and Smith discussed relationship building and maintenance with Dr. Johnson, and what it means to be an accomplice, as well as advocacy work, and finding ways to discuss Indigenous issues and realities in a way that does not feel forced [29]. Dr. Johnson [30] introduced her new little sister/niece, "Honey Girl," in Episode 3. She describes the joys and experiences of being an "auntie" to a little human being, whom she can teach and share life experiences with, as well as the reciprocal love, joy, and wisdom that she experiences from an Indigenous child, who has warmed the hearts and spirits of the Johnson family. In Episode 13, Dr. Johnson interviewed her closest friend and confidant, Auntie Kim Bruno [31]. They shared multiple laughs as they recalled how they met and reflected on how they support and uplift one another daily.

Moreover, Dr. Johnson interviewed Indigenous actress, film maker, producer, and storyteller Jennifer Podemski in Episode 14 [32]. In this live-recorded episode, Dr. Johnson and Podemski discussed the lack of Indigenous representation in the film industry, academia, and how Indigenous women and healthy matriarchal support systems are so important. Their discussion, as two Indigenous women who often find themselves to be the only Indigenous women in the room, illuminates the reality many Indigenous women face in their day-to-day lives. In the season's last episode, Dr. Johnson invited her research assistants, the BSRL team members, to share what the four elements, *Fire, Earth, Water, and Air* mean to them [33]. The BSRL team members had the space to share their learnings and knowledge, and reflect on what they had learned and experienced in the making of the third season of *The Auntie Is In*. By capturing the voices of the community, of peers, of professionals, and of friends and family, *The Auntie Is In* highlights the myriad ways that harnessing contemporary technologies of the digital landscape can be used by Indigenous Peoples to assert narrative self-determination (**Figure 4**).

5. Digital and social media

5.1 Promotion of research outputs and the podcast through social media platforms

The BSRL works to share knowledge and stories of Indigenous communities in a way that is accessible and far-reaching. *The Auntie Is In* currently has 6,529 plays on Spotify, with listeners coming from all around the world. Through statistics collected by Spotify, we can see specific insights about our listeners. Through social media, *The Auntie Is In*

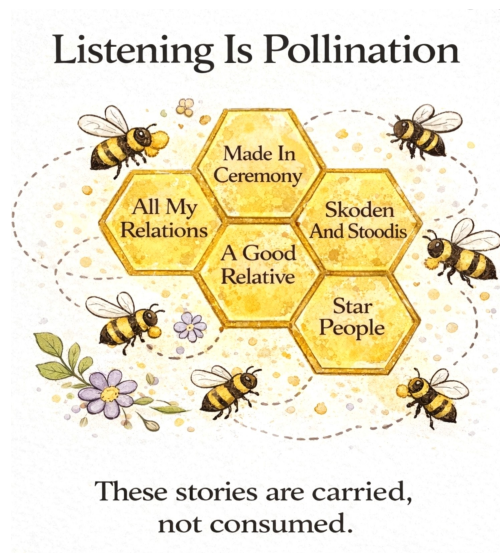


Figure 4.
Repeated engagement with specific episodes suggests that listeners are not merely consuming content but carrying stories across contexts and relationships. Framing listening as pollination emphasizes circulation through care, return, and transmission rather than extraction or passive consumption.

has reached 30 countries globally, with the top five countries that listen to our podcast being Canada (85.1%), the United States (7.5%), Germany (2.7%), India (0.9%), and the United Kingdom (0.8%) (**Figure 5**). The age range of our listeners varies significantly, with most of our listeners being over 35 years old. This average age highlights the ways in which adults are seeking out truths about Indigenous Peoples within Canada.

The Blue Sky Research Lab also promotes other research outputs on social media through Instagram. This allows our work to be shared and revitalizes Indigenous Knowledges with the communities we work with and for.



Figure 5.
The podcast's international reach reflects small-scale distribution circulation, rather than mass broadcasting. Teachings move through trust-based networks, where knowledge travels through relationships and intentional sharing, rather than profit/platform-driven scales.

5.2 Audio enhancing tools to preserve indigenous knowledge and give back to the communities we work with and for

Beyond the production and digital dissemination of the podcast, the BSRL also understands audio technologies as tools of care, preservation, and reciprocity when working alongside Indigenous communities. Audio enhancement and restoration are not neutral or purely technical practices; they are relational acts that can support intergenerational connection, memory, and the continuity of Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

An example of this, which is near to our hearts, emerged through our relationship with an Elder in the Kluane First Nation (Yukon Territory). The Elder entrusted the BSRL with several CDs containing audio recordings of songs originally recorded in the late 1940s. These recordings held significant personal and cultural value, carrying the voices of relatives whose presence is no longer experienced through physical forms. After carefully digitizing the recordings and returning the original CDs to the community, a member of our team recognized that the skills developed through editing *The Auntie Is In* could be used to improve the listening experience of these recordings.

The offer to enhance the audio was made without expectation of exchange, recognition, or authorship. It was not framed as a research output, a collaboration for publication, or a contribution toward academic objectives. Instead, it emerged from a place of relational responsibility: we had the tools and the skills, and the community had shared something precious. Offering those skills back was simply the right thing to do.

The audio was carefully cleaned to reduce crackling and distortion caused by the recording capabilities at the time of the recordings. No changes were made that would alter the songs themselves. The goal was not to modernize or reinterpret the recordings but to allow the voices within them to be heard more clearly by those they mattered most to. When the enhanced recordings were returned, the Elder shared that their mother was deeply moved to hear the songs so clearly.

This example reflects how the BSRL approaches technology, not as a means of extraction or ownership, but as a set of tools that can be utilized in service of community needs (**Figure 6**). Audio enhancement in this context becomes a form of



Figure 6.

The increase in audience size, followers, and listening time occurred through personal and relational engagement. This cultivated form of growth emphasizes relational accountability, reciprocity, and care as central to podcast engagement.

giving back – an extension of *wícihitowin* and *wáhkôhtowin* – where skills are shared to strengthen relationships and support intergenerational continuity. It also challenges Western academic assumptions that technological expertise must be tied to clearly outlined research outputs such as publications, authorship, or institutional recognition. Instead, value is found in the impact on lived experience, emotional connection, and community wellbeing. In this way, technology becomes a vessel through which Indigenous Knowledges are not only preserved, but returned and maintained in a good way, carried forward by the communities to whom these belong.

6. Conclusions: Reflections on the use of technology and looking into the future

Although technology can be understood in different ways, it is clear that audiovisual technologies, in particular, entail immense possibilities for knowledge dissemination. For the BSRL, this is key when working to advance anti-colonization efforts through the sharing of Indigenous realities, Indigenous Knowledges, and a comprehensive scope of settler Canada's past, present, and future. These different means of knowledge dissemination have allowed for a dismantling of harmful narratives and stereotypes, in addition to the preservation of Indigenous Knowledges. Not only does our use of technology advance decoloniality and the preservation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, it also allows everyone the opportunity to reconnect with family, learn about lost heritage, or find community online if not afforded one in person. We are at a time in which technology presents the opportunity for knowledge dissemination without the insidious influence of the settler colonial agenda. Furthermore, technology is not something Indigenous Peoples are just now discovering but are reclaiming and harnessing to serve one another with intention. Most importantly, this process of reclamation must not be done *for* Indigenous Peoples, but *with* them. Walking alongside each other, helping one another when we stumble, fall, or veer off the path with a sense of caring and obligation to our relations will see us all step confidently into the future.

As a team, we understand that technology is a valuable tool in the dissemination of Indigenous Ways of Knowing(s) and a crucial measure in community building in digital spaces. It allows individuals to be connected to the stories, teachings, realities, and experiences that colonial forces have sought to sever them from. We also understand that technology is not inherently neutral; who harnesses it, how much power is wielded over it, and its intended use are deciding factors in both encouraging and discouraging technological implementations with Indigenous Peoples. Therefore, there needs to be serious discussion and action on how to protect Indigenous voices and Traditional Knowledges when preserved and disseminated online, both for the BSRL as well as all others engaged in similar work. We wish to know further the degree to which these technologies – and those who create and maintain them – can act as accomplices in the decolonial mission, allowing Indigenous Knowledges to be memorialized and disseminated through these means, to be kept in the hands and hearts of Indigenous Peoples and communities.

The future of technological employment, in the name of anti-coloniality, should focus on data sovereignty. This means allowing cultural protocols surrounding Indigenous Knowledges to drive its preservation and dissemination, in place of

academic or governmental policies. Additionally, current and future technological implementations should serve to aid the communities from which they are sourced, as well as pointing out aspects of the colonial agenda that may be embedded within the technologies we take for granted. This requires maintaining a critical eye on potential sites of harm where colonial extraction may occur in the process of implementing technologies. We must go forward in this work, willing to accept every gift of knowledge and experience we encounter, and use these teachings to inform best practices to ensure meaningful work is done. This is why *The Auntie Is In* podcast grounds itself in the teachings of the community and advocates for a better tomorrow for all Indigenous Peoples. Most importantly, it acknowledges the role of aunties who have carried their communities' hopes as their own, given advice even when they were not at their best, and, ultimately, the laughter, care, and love that is needed in Canada's colonial society today.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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