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Introduction

There is a need to educate the public, as well as scientific and academic associations, to respect the rights of Indigenous peoples to privacy, cultural integrity and control of their own heritage through their own laws and institutions.

Erica Irene Daes, 1993

Central to the issues explored in this book are two main themes: these are the right of Indigenous peoples to have complete control of their heritage languages and cultural knowledges, and the false distinction made by the global scientific community between intellectual property rights and copyright. Special rapporteur, Erica Irene Daes, in her report to the United Nations Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (1993, pp. 8–9) concluded that from Indigenous people's point of view, there is no distinction between cultural and intellectual property and the global scientific community's distinctions in this regard are artificial. Daes states:

Indigenous peoples regard all products of the human mind and heart as interrelated, and as flowing from the same source: the relationships between the people and their land, their kinship with the other living creatures that share the land, and with the spirit world.

Across countries that English speakers invaded such as Canada, the USA, New Zealand and Australia we are seeing Indigenous peoples pushing back against research and asserting their rights to have control over their languages and cultural knowledge. Increasingly, this is being seen as a matter of basic human rights. The huge disparity between Indigenous peoples' realities and responsibilities around their relationships to

their cultural knowledge, which is embedded in their languages, and the non-Indigenous systems of copyright and intellectual property rights, is at the heart of the widening gap between the practices of research in the academy and Indigenous communities. As custodians of their traditional knowledge, Indigenous peoples' concepts of and responsibilities for managing this knowledge are in direct conflict with the system of copyright and the practice of linguistic research conducted by non-Indigenous linguists and, more broadly, research in any field that involves Indigenous people.

The current model of ethical linguistic research in Indigenous communities in the Australian context fails to address these issues, because there is a general reluctance by non-Indigenous linguists to let go of control over their research and projects for fear of how this will impact their careers and work practices, particularly for linguists working as academics. Also, non-Indigenous linguists and other academics have been used to the idea that they should be free to pursue their interests regardless of what other people think, including the speakers of Indigenous languages. Australian Indigenous people are asserting their rights to maintain control of their languages and cultural knowledge, and we are now at a crossroads. We are in need of a new model of ethical linguistic research that aims to address issues of human rights, which the now outdated models of linguistic research have until now failed to address.

To date, in the field of linguistics in Australia, these issues have not been proactively addressed because it is seen as too political and too sensitive—there is so much at stake on both sides—and the problem is often assigned to the 'too-hard' basket. Sometimes at gatherings where Indigenous linguists, activists, language workers and non-Indigenous linguists come together, tensions overflow and everyone is left feeling either frustrated, angry or under attack because there has been no space made for discussion or resolution of the issues between the parties, and the issues seem to get pushed even further down.

However, there are some non-Indigenous linguists who are very dedicated to seeing reform in linguistic research and practice and they partner willingly with Indigenous people and communities to address the issues on the ground. These dedicated and brave linguists are the champions of ethical linguistic practice and walk with Indigenous people on this journey.

There is a growing anti-linguist sentiment in Indigenous communities precisely because these issues have not been adequately addressed. It is not enough to have a static statement or policy on ethics that never gets acted upon or continually reviewed to keep up with current trends. This is seeing Indigenous communities and organisations beginning to reject linguistic research in their areas and aspiring to get the skills to do their own linguistic work. As an Indigenous linguist, I believe that Indigenous people gaining linguistic skills and undertaking their own language work is imperative in order to ensure that Indigenous people themselves will be able to manage and control their languages and cultural knowledge according to traditional practice in their areas. Non-Indigenous linguists worry what this will mean for their work practices and careers, particularly if they work as academics in university settings and they wonder: if our agendas are not the same, will we still have a working relationship?

However, Indigenous people need the help of non-Indigenous linguists; there is too much work that urgently needs to be done. The Indigenous languages that have not already gone to sleep are in various stages of serious endangerment, many critically endangered. The languages that have gone to sleep need to be reclaimed and spoken again. Indigenous people need non-Indigenous linguists to help Indigenous people and communities do this work, and this is beginning to be seen as an important motivation and a valid role by many non-Indigenous linguists. Indigenous people need to continue working with non-Indigenous linguists in ways that address the human rights concerns of Indigenous people and communities.

This research explores the issues in depth both from an Indigenous perspective and a non-Indigenous perspective and asks the question:

How best can non-Indigenous researchers, in the fields of applied and documentary linguistics, work collaboratively with Indigenous communities to achieve research outcomes that are in the best interests of, and for the benefit of, both the community and the researcher?

As already mentioned, many non-Indigenous linguists are working hard to find constructive solutions to help address the issues and concerns of Indigenous people around ethics in linguistic research. There is a genuine desire to see urgent reforms in the linguistic research framework, in ways that would give agency to Indigenous people and to develop genuinely ethical collaborative working relationships.

There is also consensus on both sides that there is an urgent need to have a forum where non-Indigenous linguists and Indigenous linguists and practitioners can come together and have open, robust discussions about the issues and work out a way forward as a collective.

Practical strategies discussed in this book include the implementation of agreements and licensing to use language and cultural materials that see Indigenous people retain and maintain control over their cultural knowledge, and co-authoring publications and possibly dissertations. Other issues discussed in this book are ethics applications and agreements within the academy and what constitutes a co-researcher and co-analyst of language data.

The research in this publication is qualitative in nature and is based on Indigenous research methodologies and perspectives; in this way, this book is presented in plain English and in a semi-narrative format, including my own voice. The target audience for this book is both Indigenous people and non-Indigenous linguists; however, I believe this research would also be of value to researchers in other fields who are engaging with Indigenous people.

I conducted interviews with three Indigenous linguists and language activists and three non-Indigenous linguists, who I would consider to be activists for Indigenous people and their languages. I chose these particular people because I wanted to draw from their shared experiences, honest opinions and practical solutions to show some of the very difficult dilemmas we now face in the discipline.

The aim of this book is to flesh out the issues identified in the previous pages and find a path towards developing a genuinely ethical and collaborative linguistic research framework that addresses the issues and concerns of both parties.

Chapter 2 looks at what we already know from the relevant literature. I found a huge volume of literature around the subject of ethics in research more broadly, both from an Indigenous and a non-Indigenous perspective. The topic of ethical research in linguistics has been another matter; many non-Indigenous linguists have written on the topic, but I was able to find only a couple of published papers by Indigenous linguists in the Australian context.

Critically, then, this book provides a desperately needed contribution to the literature that encompasses both Indigenous and non-Indigenous voices on the issues of ethics in linguistic research in the Australian context. It provides unique insights from both sides and lays the foundations for further research and for opportunities to further discussions between the parties.

Chapter 3 gives some background information about the people who participated in the research and the reasoning behind the choices I made about how to present the outcomes of the research.

Chapter 4 provides an in-depth look at the discussions around the issues and includes my own views on some of the topics. This chapter is divided into four main topic areas; there is some overlap in the topics, but it is considered important to discuss each separately.

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the major findings and outcomes from the research and recommendations for further discussion and research.

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