

The April 21, 2017, Edmonton event¹ was the third of five regional gatherings that will culminate in the convening of a national three-day conference in Ottawa. Project team member Kathleen Buddle began the day by introducing Reuben Quinn,² who opened the gathering. Before sharing a prayer, Ruben stated that media have “not always been kind” to Indigenous people and reminded the media makers in the room not sellout for the sake of “popularity or sensationalism.”

The morning panel, “World-Building in the Dystopian Now: Imagining and Podcasting Indigenous Futures,” featured presentations and discussion with podcasters Chelsea Vowel and Molly Swain from *Métis in Space*, and Lauren Crazybull from *This is Blackfoot Territory*. Crazybull, from Lethbridge, AB (Treaty 7), produced radio documentaries supported by the National Campus and Community Radio Association (NCRA)³ about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, intergenerational trauma and violence against Indigenous women prior to launching her podcast series *This is Blackfoot Country*. The series is comprised by seven episodes that tackle such issues as Métis identity, black Indigeneity, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, and relationships with non-Native people. It can be heard on Sound Cloud.⁴ Vowel and Swain, producers of *Métis in Space*,⁵ describe their podcast as Indigenous, feminist, sci-fi social fiction. They began the series after having been disappointed with science fiction representations of Indigenous peoples. Swain and Vowel played an excerpt from their podcast, sharing a hilarious segment called “Ask a Moniayaw.”⁶ Through working on *Métis in Space*, they discovered the “Indian and Cowboy” podcast media network launched in 2014 by Ryan McMahon that syndicates podcasts made by and for Indigenous people. He supplies the technological labour and network support. Swain considers radio a very versatile medium. Sci-fi, she said, brings a variety of stories and genres together which encourage listeners to generate solutions to some of the problems in the contemporary world. Because they receive no funding for their program, they enjoy the access to the community it provides and the liberty to do with it what they wish. By the same token, Vowel added, it is difficult to raise funds for Indigenous podcasts, which are unfairly categorized as “niche.” Swain advised that very little technological knowhow is required, so anyone who wants to take an active role in crafting a “new world” can participate.

During the discussion with the audience, Crazybull identified barriers in campus-community radio, adding podcasting is a way to create a safer space. The panel suggested that there is enormous capacity building and educational potential in podcasting projects and it therefore is important for community development. Crazybull is planning a new podcast series with youth at iHuman⁷ in Edmonton. The panel would like to engage more youth and Elder involvement in podcasting. Regarding any policy changes, Swain and Vowel spoke about the need for youth, who have innovative ideas, to be engaged in every step of the process. Swain suggested that policies must also include mechanisms “so that it can’t be weapon-ized.” She said this means policy that is flexible with the primary goal of building capacity and not punitive or controlling how Indigenous people make media. “Non-indigenous people are likely to be alienated by Indigenous media,” Swain concluded, adding, “not only is that’s ok, but that is really awesome and needs to happen more.”

¹ <http://indigenousradio.ca/Edmonton.php>

² <http://www.cfrac.com/about/our-team>

³ <http://www.ncra.ca/resonating>

⁴ <https://soundcloud.com/laurencrazybull>

⁵ <http://www.metisinspace.com/>

⁶ *Monias* is kind of a pejorative, but often accurate, term for a pushy or loudmouthed white person.

⁷ <http://ihumanyouthsociety.org/>

After the lunch break, Jodi Stonehouse - host of *Acimowin*⁸ on CJSR 88.5 FM, presented a talk titled “Revitalizing Indian Story-telling in the Media” about her history in campus-community radio and her recent experience applying for radio licences under CRTC 2017-1.⁹ *Acimowin* is the longest running Indigenous show on CJSR, founded by Isabel OKanese. Stonehouse feels that despite her mediated radio program, face-to-face contact is vital. “The root of success for *Acimowin*,” she stated, “has been in relationships” with families, communities and institutions, “There is nothing more critical or important.” With *Acimowin*, Stonehouse facilitates a safe and accessible space where elders, youth, queer people are engaged. Work at *Acimowin* is more than a radio show; the program asks, “How can we be an Indigenous, feminist radio station and take down colonialism?” She described how radio can revitalize storytelling by working in-combination with social media innovation by youth, adding this has created the winning-formula at *Acimowin*. Stonehouse shared a social media study that determined *Acimowin* ranks number one among Indigenous media in the province and number four nationally. She noted the need for more funding for content creation, saying it is difficult for campus stations to compete with larger broadcasters for qualified staff. Stonehouse also talked about her role applying for FM licences in Calgary and Edmonton. The applications aimed to create community-access Indigenous and ethnic radio stations, “broadcasting through a brown-lens” by bringing together ethnic and Indigenous communities who have a common indigeneity. This approach to radio programming is important, according to Stonehouse, for urban Indigenous and South Asian youth who face common challenges. The proposed format would also help further reconciliation, she said, in a province like Alberta that had the highest concentration of residential schools¹⁰ and at a time when there are more Indigenous children in the foster system today than in state care during the residential school era. Stonehouse also discussed the relationship between reconciliation, radio, and “Indigenous language survival.” The stations, if licenced, would broadcast in Indigenous languages with translation to make the programming accessible and even “inviting settlers and immigrants” to speak Indigenous languages. During a discussion with the audience, Stonehouse was asked to share her feelings about the CRTC process she experienced. She said the process was “terrifying,” writing application felt like “learning a new language,” and asked “how do we re-imagine the CRTC to make it relevant to Indigenous people?” In conclusion, Stonehouse stated that the upcoming review of the Native Broadcasting Policy should require face-to-face community visits by the CRTC.

A deliberative forum on the CRTC policy and process took place next. After a brief summary of the development of the Native Broadcasting Policy CRTC 1990-89,¹¹ participants read the determinations. During the discussion, a policy professor from Athabasca University spoke about the need for the upcoming review to “catch the wave” by catering to the needs of Indigenous youth and not focusing on the problems of today’s “mature broadcasters.” This would make the policy relevant over time, especially needed given the current Native Broadcasting Policy has not been reviewed in 27-years.¹² Another comment from Les Carpenter concerned the section of the current policy that states: “The Commission recognizes that ... it is the aboriginal broadcasters themselves who are best qualified to

⁸ <http://www.cjsr.com/shows/acimowin/>

⁹ <http://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2017/2017-1.htm>

¹⁰ <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=4>

¹¹ <http://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/1990/PB90-89.htm>

¹² See Auer, Monica (2017). Re. Notice of hearing, Broadcasting Notice of Consultation 2017-1 (Ottawa, 5 January 2017). A submission by the Forum for Research and Policy in Communications (FRPC) concerning the absence of a review of the CRTC’s 1990 Native Radio Policy. Retrieved from: <https://services.crtc.gc.ca/pub/DocWebBroker/OpenDocument.aspx?DMID=2807291>.

determine and meet the needs of their audiences.” Les says that in his experience this is not how it works. He believes it is Heritage who decides through allocating funding.

The afternoon panel featured Les Carpenter¹³ from the Native Communications Society (NCS) of the NWT speaking on “Why we will never be treated as equals?” Operating since 1982, the NCS –NWT operations include radio broadcasting, over CKLB,¹⁴ and television production in five Aboriginal languages to NWT communities, northern Alberta, Nunavut, and beyond. Carpenter feels that the Native Broadcast Policy is too vague and is often interpreted in such a way as to disadvantage Native broadcasters. He thinks that the way equipment has been purchased for Native Broadcasters is short-sighted as much of it is out-dated and no one seems to have the capacity to maintain and repair it. He feels that this antiquated approach has the effect to penalize those who live in the north. Meanwhile, he asserts that radio can serve as an important conduit for culture and language survival. Les said broadcasting in Indigenous languages is important to bring languages “into the mainstream and into the home.” After the major cuts to Native broadcasting in the 1990s, CKLB struggled to re-establish staffing and operations at his station. Some of the more successful documentaries he has produced have been, out of necessity, privately funded. He feels that many of the greatest challenges he faces have to do with fighting both legislation and funding cuts, especially during the Harper administration. Current broadcasters are only now recovering from a decade of harmful relations with the federal government. He wants Ottawa to recognize the geographic differences between areas in the north and what these necessitate in policy. He would like to see the CRTC enact an Indigenous arm of its organization to deal separately with Indigenous issues. Les concluded, “Promises need to be kept and policies need to be repealed or expanded.”

Afterwards, Rob McMahon¹⁵ (University of Alberta) and Michael Lithgow¹⁶ (Athabasca University) spoke about “Engaging the CRTC.” First Mile Connectivity Consortium¹⁷ is a community-based, ICT, SSHRC-funded, research project that upholds the four components of OCAP: Ownership, Control, Access and Possession.¹⁸ Of his experiences with First Mile in CRTC processes, McMahon insisted that industry professionals often proceed with the presumption that they are doing communities a favour by providing services, when in fact; it is the communities who are purchasing connectivity. First Mile’s “whole community approach” allows them to value and assert that the communities are the innovators. First Mile also sees a strong connection between digital content and connectivity, insisting that policy should reflect this. The common challenges northerners experience, according to First Mile, are the high need for connectivity, the disproportionately high price they pay for services, and the poor service quality they receive. Then, Lithgow shared his study of citizen interventions in the CRTC’s “Let’s Talk TV”¹⁹ process and interviews with CRTC staffers. From the citizen’s point of view, Lithgow shared that the experience of a submitting an intervention is like “putting a message in a bottle” – you don’t know what will happen. Of the data he collected among CRTC staff, Lithgow said there is no methodology for reviewing interventions from citizens, despite public participation and consultation being cornerstones of regulatory decision-making at the CRTC. To support citizen participation at the

¹³ <http://www.ncsnwt.com/staff/les-carpenter/>

¹⁴ <http://cklbradio.com/>

¹⁵ <https://www.ualberta.ca/extension/about-us/people/faculty-members/rob-mcmahon>

¹⁶ <http://cmns.athabascau.ca/faculty/mlithgow.php>

¹⁷ <http://firstmile.ca>

¹⁸ <http://fnigc.ca/ocap.html>

¹⁹ <http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/talktv-parlonstele.htm>

CRTC, Lithgow shared a zine he published called “Making Submissions to the CRTC: A Citizen’s Guide.”²⁰ Illustrated by Karen Wall, the accessible content introduces the CRTC and outlines how citizens can participate with the CRTC. The booklet describes the policy process that the CRTC uses, how to make written submissions (offering tips based on feedback from CRTC staffers like, “Be funny”), and prepares users for making presentations at public hearings.

Special thanks goes out to:

-Rob McMahon and Anita for assisting the gathering with accessing the Telus Centre.

This review was prepared by Kathleen Buddle and Gretchen King, with translation by Lauriane Tremblay.

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<http://indigenoustradio.ca/Conference-Archives.php>

²⁰ <http://indigenoustradio.ca/resources/CRTC-Submission-Guide-v04-19April2017.pdf>