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Another conference offering: we're pleased here to reproduce the transcript of *In Conversation*, a talk between Dr Sandra Phillips and Grace Lucas-Pennington representing the **black&write!** project, on the topic of **Editing work with Indigenous content**. The transcript was written up by an attendee and first published on the SLQ blog; it has been reproduced here with the permission of SLQ and the transcript writer.

Editing work with Indigenous content



Dr Sandra Phillips (left) and Grace Lucas-Pennington (right)

Grace Lucas-Pennington: What are the benefits of Indigenous writers and editors working together?

Dr Sandra Phillips: We all know a good story is built from not just the plot, not just the characters, not just the settings and not just the literary frameworks. It's also built from the small details. So the benefits of taking that as an analogy, from the question that Grace posed around Indigenous writers working with Indigenous editors, is that you get this cumulative layering of respectful, baseline insight as to where each other is coming from around all of those small details so that energies are actually invested in the build, as opposed to the questions that are on the page to start with.

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J- Words

Welcome to the November–December issue of *Offpress* and the last for the year 2017. Phew!

Is it just me, or do other people feel uninspired at the moment? It probably has something to do with end-of-year fatigue and I know we always have way too much to read, so I'll keep this short.

In order of appearance with hyperlinks to the page:

We begin this month with the final conference article: the transcript from the *Editing work with Indigenous content* session. For those who couldn't make it to the conference or to that particular session, make the most of this opportunity to find out what you missed. It starts on the [front page](#).

Find out more about the IPed mentoring program on [page 5](#) and note that our new Mentoring Coordinator is Jenny Nunn. There'll be more on that in the New Year.

In Grammar and language on [page 6](#), read Coral Hartley's witty review of the *Literati Party!*

Read the first committee report by our new president Christine Atkinson on [page 7](#). Welcome Christine! Also on [page 7](#), claim the date for the annual EdsQ picnic.

Photos from the end-of-year dinner on [pages 8](#) and [9](#) and great Christmas gift ideas for editors on [page 10](#).

Wishing you and your loved ones all the good things that Christmas brings: peace, love, happiness and maybe a miracle or two!

Have a very cool Yule — from Jule xx

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Management committee & branch contacts

President: Christine Atkinson, edqld.president@iped-editors.org

Vice-President: Ruth Davies AE, edqld.vicepres@iped-editors.org

Budget Officer: Kerry Davies AE, edqld.budget@iped-editors.org

Secretary: Charlotte Cottier AE, edqld.admin@iped-editors.org

Executive Member: Glenine Hamlyn AE

Member Liaison: edqld.members@iped-editors.org

Training: Annette Seargent, edqld.training@iped-editors.org

Events Officers: Fiona McKean, edqld.events@iped-editors.org

Events Support Officer: vacant

Venue & Catering: Robin Bennett AE and Maggy Saldais

Web Administrator: Julia Sudull, edqld.webadmin@iped-editors.org

Web Content Editor: Glenine Hamlyn AE,
edqld.website@iped-editors.org

Offpress Editor: Julia Sudull, edqld.news@iped-editors.org

Offpress Proofreader: Josephine Brown AE

Mentoring Coordinator: Jenny Nunn,
edqld.mentoring@iped-editors.org

Affiliates Officer: Belinda Pollard, edqld.affiliates@iped-editors.org

Freelance Networking Coordinator: Alix Kwan,
edqld.freelance@iped-editors.org

Facebook Administrator: Patrice Shaw, shaw@tpg.com.au

Twitter Administrator: Tamyka Bell, edqld.twitter@iped-editors.org

Archiving Officers: vacant

Regional Coordinator (Sunshine Coast & hinterland): Lisa Hill,
edqld.sunshine@iped-editors.org

Accreditation Board Delegate: Desolie Page AE,
edqld.ab@iped-editors.org

IPed Councillor: Kerry Davies AE, chair@iped-editors.org

Photography credits for this issue:

Christine Atkinson and Ruth Davies AE

A warm welcome to EdsQ!

Professional: Kirsty Anderson

Associate: Eloise Baker, Ella Chorazy, Gillian Cowden, Tina Higgins, Jessica Leighton, Jo MacLean, Katherine Arden and Marnie Hitchins

Student: Tsarie Duthie and Virginia Birt

Editing work with Indigenous content (transcript from conference)

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You've got, if not a complete fit, a more adequate fit between an understanding of the world, what is considered important through an Indigenous world view, what some of those common shared stories are. Uncle here today [Elder Uncle Joe Kirk, who gave the Welcome to Country at the commencement of the conference] had a biography about me for a mainstream audience and I had to supplement that with what we in our Indigenous discourse privilege, which is, Who are you? and



Elder Uncle Joe Kirk

Where are you from? Who are you related to? Which then locates me in relation to Uncle and other Aboriginal Elders. It's pertinent because I could be any old one. I could be anyone sitting up here saying these things, but when it comes to Indigenous story and cultural sharing we need to think about who each other is.

Grace: And that's about trust, really, at the heart of it. At the editing level, not to say it's impossible with a non-Indigenous editor, it's just easier ...

Dr Phillips: Yeah exactly. The trust every editor already knows that's part of the strain of an editing relationship and at QUT, where I work in Creative Industries, I refer to editing as an act of diplomacy. So we are all ambassadors for good writing, for literature, for storytelling and I'm sure that professionally those ethics of care, of concern and recognising always that the author is the creator of the work. Our role, as Charlotte Wood said several years ago when she won the Beatrice Davis Fellowship, is to make the writing the best it can be and to fill that gap or any gap there might be – to help the writer to fill those gaps.

I think that there's a lot of our personal way involved in all editing processes, so if you understand that your way of doing things is relevant to editing, you have to then go that next step of [understanding] who you are, where you come from culturally and how you view the world is also part of that lens and that process.



Dr Sandra Phillips

Grace: We talked about working with Indigenous authors but there's also the issues of being an Indigenous writer or a non-Indigenous writer, writing with Indigenous cultural content included, so what is that? What do we mean by that?

Dr Phillips: I'm not real keen on binaries and dichotomies, but I am going to enforce one at the moment just for the sake of brevity. Indigenous cultural content can be that which is long-standing millennial knowledge that predated British invasion and colonisation, so those stories that relate to our creation, creation of the land and our worlds both physical and metaphysical. That's the first half of the binary which is only functional to a limited extent but bear with me. The other aspects of Indigenous cultural content that we're talking about relate to what I've called Shared Histories following Invasion.

The first part of the binary is essentially hands-off (or enormous care and protocol clearance) for everyone; it's equally as problematic for Indigenous creative writers to dwell in that space as it is non-Indigenous.

Grace: Can you say why it might be problematic?

Dr Phillips: It is problematic because those stories belong to certain territories and the custodians of those territories. Those stories of antiquity hold standing in light of that which other religions hold, so [firstly] in descriptive terms, secondarily but equally importantly as custodians of those stories pertinent to particular territories people are responsible for those stories being treated appropriately. It's not public knowledge, it's not for

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everyone to play with. As Alexis Wright spoke about in Angel's Palace (BWF 2017) on the weekend, if you're a custodian of a story and someone messes with that story, you could get sick – it's corporeal, it's actually real and bodily and it relates to the here-and-now as well as the antiquity.

When it comes to what happened after the British invaded and colonised our nations, or at least attempted to colonise our nations, there are stories within that which I see non-Indigenous writers and non-Indigenous editors building competency in relation to. Because of those stories being shared histories and shared stories, but – I'm deliberately using the words colonisation and invasion, if that's making people uncomfortable I suggest that you don't edit writing that involves facing the fact that our nations were invaded and that for the most part you're all descendants of the people who gained privilege out of that invasion. If that makes you uncomfortable, don't edit Indigenous writers.



Grace: How can you tell if a writer is using Indigenous themes or content in an appropriate manner?

Dr Phillips: It goes back to nuance and detail. Sometimes people can pull it off really well; we won't name names, we won't refer to some of the past scandals, we won't bring that too much into the conversation. But sometimes people can pull it off, they can see the vernacular that Indigenous writers use, they can see the shades, the tones, the subject matter. You can actually pull it off and fool people which I'm not promoting but I'm just saying that it's possible to do, so there are characteristics.

The next step from understanding is that there are certain characteristics of Indigenous writing that signpost the richness of the work. Sometimes people can't pull it off but they still sell hundreds of thousands of books in the United States because their readership is largely ignorant and captive to those discourses of exoticism and primitivism and wanting to believe things about the First Peoples of any colonised continent or country. So you can tell, the majority of the time you can tell, and it is around the cumulative impact of thousands of small details.

Grace: Whose responsibility is it to ensure that the work meets a basic level of cultural competency or ethical standard for publishing? Is it the author? Is it the editor? Is it the publisher?

Dr Phillips: Great question. The easy answer is everyone. And I would add in there of course that the Australia Council has published and revised guidelines, protocol kits, that in some way tangentially influences their funding decisions. So in some ways we've got a bit of a landscape where it's generally understood that if a writer hasn't pursued appropriate protocol clearances on a particular matter then they're not necessarily worthy of being funded through the public purse.

That said, having sat at the table during some of those discussions, there are no criteria that go with that so it's this kind of general understanding and general ethics and commitment but it's not something people can be marked down on or marked up on. So all change is slow and everything is in constant iteration. I'm flagging the funding bodies, the authors ... the creative process as we know is an incredibly complex one but once again taking the long-term view of things, creative writers are not geniuses unto themselves – creative non-fiction as well, non-fiction technical writers.

The West promulgates this view that a writer is a unique being and that what they've created is not welded, is not connected, to the world because it's come out of their genius. I do not subscribe to that view whatsoever and I think that editors are part of the process of ensuring appropriateness in creativity. We quality control every other element of a published work; why can't a professional editor also be part of the quality control on the richness and nuance around appropriate representation?

Audience question: I don't deal with fiction editing at all but I've been editing in educational publishing for many years. Our biggest issue is maintaining that appropriateness in the non-fiction stuff that we publish. The current Queensland syllabus has a strong emphasis on including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives across all areas of the curriculum, so when we get the material from the writers who are largely not Indigenous writers and it's being edited by largely not



Suggested resources compiled by Grace Lucas-Pennington

Indigenous editors we would really like some specific guidelines and training in that appropriateness. Because by sheer numbers the people who are editing Indigenous content are going to be often non-Indigenous people. How do we go about ensuring that?

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Editing work with Indigenous content (transcript from conference)

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Dr Phillips: Thank you for that question. Grace will navigate to a slide that she has created with some links to guides that are already in circulation – have been for a long time – that you might find useful.

I encourage you to search for Indigenous professional associations and approach them directly on any advice they might be able to offer you. Clearly, educational publishing – as Craig Munro and Robyn Sheahan-Bright wrote in *Paper Empires* – took Australian publishing out from under the coat-tails of British publishing but then educational publishing continues to be a huge part of the market and a huge opportunity for Indigenous writers to be facilitated, to take advantage of those opportunities in relation to national curriculum about their voices.

Audience [Kerry Davies] question: I need some advice, as an editor whose background is known across a broad spectrum. I often get enquiries from non-Indigenous writers who are writing Indigenous content. I got quite an interesting one recently [from someone] who I advised to think very seriously about what he's doing. It's a work of fiction that draws on post-invasion cultural breakdown, drawing on pre-invasion traditional cultural practice to try to solve problems through a very spiritual way, and I afforded him Alexis Wright's recent, quite long, essay on this topic and told him to have a think. He still wants to go ahead and said that the original story

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came from his experience in Canada and he's translating that over and he thinks he can do it. I advised that maybe he could find an Indigenous writer as a mentor, perhaps Alexis, perhaps your good self. What further can I do? Should I dissuade this guy or help him by connecting him with the right people?

Dr Phillips: Great question Kerry. At one of the sessions at the Brisbane Writers Festival, Alexis Wright herself, Nakkiah Lui (a playwright, screen writer and actor) and myself were on a panel looking at Aboriginal perspective in writing and the two questions from the floor were the same questions. And it's the same question:


I am doing this or I want to do it and how best can I do it?

So we know in Australia we have a big problem with extractive industries, right. I call that another extractive industry. It's trying to mine Aboriginal cultural knowledge cultural

perspective, mine the post-invasion on the binary, mine—

Grace: —mine Aboriginal experience altogether.

Dr Phillips: And it would be a very rare non-Indigenous Australian writer who could pull it off well. So my equal concern has always been around the reading and reception of the work so that we can raise the bar, so we don't see another Marlo Morgan.

We need to raise the bar as all practitioners in Australian literary culture around what is ... what works and doesn't work. 

IPEd National Mentoring Program

Ted Briggs and Elizabeth Manning Murphy are the National Coordinators for the IPEd national mentoring program, with Geoff Dawson working as their deputy. Here's a bit about Ted and Elizabeth:

Ted Briggs AE is a past president and Honorary Life Member of the Canberra Society of Editors, and is also a member of the NSW branch of IPEd. He has been an IPEd Councillor and was chair of the Accreditation Board until September 2017 as well as being one of the national coordinators for the National Mentoring Program. Originally trained in IT, Ted has worked as an editor and technical writer for the past 15 years. He is currently working for the Department of Defence as a senior editor, technical writer and multimedia specialist but has also worked as a freelance trainer and has presented training courses and workshops on communication, team leadership, public speaking, business writing and human-computer interaction.

Elizabeth Manning Murphy DE is also a past president and Honorary Life Member of the Canberra Society of Editors, and is a member of the Victorian branch of IPEd. She is a trained

linguist and teacher, specialising in editing and providing writing help to authors with English as another language. She has been working at this for more than 30 years, and over that period has also written a number of books about writing, English grammar, plain English and many aspects of running a freelance business. She lives in Canberra, but works all over the world, sometimes running her Grammar in a nutshell workshop by Skype. Her two latest books are *Working words* (2011) and *Effective writing: plain English at work* (2014).

Elizabeth Manning Murphy DE emmurphy.words@gmail.com

Ted Briggs AE tedbriggs@grapevine.com.au

Geoff Dawson AE (deputy) geoffdawsoneditor@gmail.com

Your Queensland Mentoring Coordinator is Jenny Nunn

You can email Jenny at edqld.mentoring@iped-editors.org 

Grammar and language

by Coral Hartley



Dear Maxim,

What a pity you had to miss the Literati Party. It was held this year at the Palindrome, and all the ultimas came out of solecism for the event. The first person to arrive was Anna Gram, still wearing that same indefinite article. Poor dear has no dash at all. You should have seen the Hyperboles, overstating themselves as usual. They seem to have elisions of upper case grandeur, unlike the Metaphors, who mix so well. The Infinitives arrived separately. Did you know they've split up again?

Those boring Clichés were there, too. They never have anything fresh to say and were seen tapping on their homophones most of the evening. Lexie Conn came with the Synonym twins. He's rather a bad lower case, obviously phrased out by too many interjections of morpheme. In no time at all he had parsed into a state of inverted comma. Quite disgusting, I thought. Silly old Syllable appeared to be stressed, not sure whether her root is Greek or Latin. What a strange complex!

I could hardly believe my eyes when that ostracised Adjective showed his face! Too much exposure ruined his popularity. Would you believe he prepositioned the improper noun? She's a relative of those Pronouns, and they do not keep their place any more, do they?

I felt quite sad for our old friend Adverb, suffering from plural inflections and an intransitive colon. Did you know he was fined for evasion of syntax and given an embedded sentence?

Grandfather Gerund was also in a subjunctive mood. He has trouble with his dangling participle, and is no longer consonant. A sad case!

The twelve Apostrophes departed early, looking tense. They're not well placed any more. Some people, particularly greengrocers, subject them to undeserved catachresis. The Active Verbs were playing nostalgic music on the grammar-phone, but no one felt like dancing.

I think we are all too passive now. We really belong in the past perfect, don't we?

Yours to a full stop,

R. K. Issum

Committee report

by Christine Atkinson

Woo, what a year! This year we held eight member meetings with a fantastic range of guest speakers including Nick Earls, Tim Low and Rhianna Patrick. We had four social events and an outstanding three-day conference with five excellent workshops and many inspiring presentations.

Our final event for 2017 was our member dinner on 24 November. As promised, the banquet was delicious (my faves were the garlic vegies and coconut ice cream) and the music from Mark Cryle and Richard Evans was excellent. We took a moment during dinner to charge our glasses in celebration of the fifth anniversary of the IPEd mentoring program.

A huge thank you to everyone who helped make this year so fantastic. Ruth Davies and Kerry Davies shepherded the conference to its wonderful success, supported by a dedicated conference committee. Thank you to everyone who has served on the Editors Queensland committee and to the other people who've put their hands up for jobs – writing newsletter articles, working on IPEd committees, teaching workshops, speaking

at meetings, managing the social media, liaising with other organisations. It takes a lot of effort to be a volunteer and it's greatly appreciated.

We are currently looking for speaker and training ideas for next year so please contact Fiona McKean or Annette Sergeant if you've got suggestions. Our first event of 2018 will be a picnic in New Farm Park on Sunday 21 January. The first member meeting will be Wednesday 7 February. I hope to see you all there.

Member news

In membership news, we've welcomed Professional member Kirsty Anderson; Associate members Eloise Baker, Ella Chorazy, Gillian Cowden, Tina Higgins, Jessica Leighton, Jo MacLean, Katherine Arden and Marnie Hitchins; and Student members Tsarie Duthie and Virginia Birt. Currently, our active membership is 245.

Thank you all for being so lovely to me this year as well in my various roles as Events Coordinator, Conference Communications and now President. I hope to do you proud in 2018.

Whatever you're doing over the festive season, be safe and have fun. See you at the picnic! 🍩



At the end-of-year Editors Queensland dinner



L to R: Desolie Page, Kerry Davies and Robin Bennett toasting the Mentoring Program



At the end-of-year Editors Queensland dinner



Gifts for word lovers from The Letter Lounge Café



Lightweight Storiarts scarves are finally here! Literally wrap yourself in words! *Pride & Prejudice* or *Anne of Green Gables*.



Storiarts cushion covers: *The Raven* or *Sherlock Holmes*



Christmas special! Only \$20 for a set of these Letter Lounge exclusive items:
1 x 'Mightier than the sword' pen
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Literary quote set of soft coasters

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