



UNIVERSITY *of the*  
WESTERN CAPE

**Preservation of indigenous knowledge (IK) by public libraries  
in Westcliff, Chatsworth, Durban**

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in Library and Information Studies, University of the Western Cape



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Date submitted: November 2017

## Declaration

I, Farhana Yunnus, declare that the thesis entitled *Preservation of indigenous knowledge (IK) by public libraries in Westcliff, Chatsworth, Durban*, is my own work and that it has not been submitted before for any other degree or assessment at any other university. The sources used or quoted from have been acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature



Date: November 2017



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My mother, for her support, encouragement and prayers. Thank you, mum.

My son, Waheed: you have been my motivation to complete this work. Thank you.



## **Abstract**

The aim of this research was to investigate the current awareness of indigenous knowledge (IK) among the youth in the Indian community in Westcliff, Chatsworth, in the Durban area of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The research sought to establish how IK is viewed by the youth and librarians, and whether – since IK is predominantly oral – there was a need to capture, document and preserve it within public libraries.

Martin and Mirraboopa's (2003) framework for indigenist research provided a theoretical basis for the study and informed its qualitative research design. Two methods of data collection were used: (i) focus groups with youth of Westcliff, Chatsworth; and (ii) semi-structured interviews with librarians at the local public library.

The study revealed that there is a dire need to preserve IK in Westcliff, Chatsworth. IK was seen as important knowledge and the librarians and youth who participated recognised that if IK was not preserved it would be lost to future generations. Librarians interviewed also saw the need to preserve IK, recognising its importance and holding the view that the preservation of IK was a function that public libraries should perform but were not performing.

The study also highlighted the need for community access to IK. The fact that IK is not currently stored in public libraries meant that there were no formal mechanisms to access this vital area of knowledge. Digital technology was recognised as a viable means to capture, document and preserve IK. This emerged from both the focus group discussions and the semi-structured interviews. IK was seen as an important prerequisite to cultural continuity in the Westcliff community.

Librarians recognised that they lacked the skills and training to collect, document and preserve IK in their communities, but indicated that they were willing to learn how to do this, if appropriate instruction could be provided.

The study made several recommendations for immediate practical steps to be taken, including the preservation of IK in video or audio formats, for deposit in the community's public library and curation by librarians; the recording of IK as practised at home through young people keeping a diary of family rituals, prayers and customs; the preservation of IK on websites created and maintained by librarians in public libraries; and the necessary and urgent participation of elders in the community who are the living carriers of IK.

## **Keywords**

Indigenous knowledge, Indian culture, Public libraries, Oral tradition, South Africa, Preservation, Belief systems, Culture, Local knowledge

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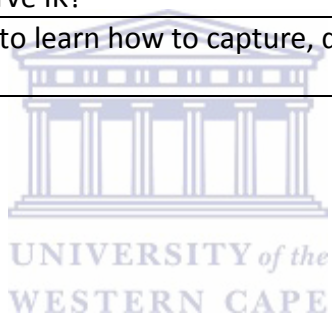
## List of acronyms

IK	Indigenous knowledge
LIS	Library and Information Science
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
IFLA	International Federation of Library Association
WCIP	World Council of Indigenous People
SADC	Southern African Development Community
PIC	Prior informed consent



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## Chapter One: Introduction

Indigenous knowledge (IK) constitutes a unique source of information and livelihood for indigenous communities in specific geographic regions. Largely communicated orally, IK serves as the basis for communication, decision-making and teaching in the indigenous communities where it is embedded. The transmission of IK is inseparable from community cultural practices. As such, this transmission is vibrant, constantly influenced by inner creativity and experimentation as well as by contact with external systems (Flavier, de Jesus, Navarro & Warren, 1995).

Msuya (2007: 3) defines IK as “a systematic body of knowledge acquired by local people through the accumulation of experiences, experiments and an intimate understanding of the environment in a given culture”. Such knowledge and skills are shared over generations. As is noted in a World Bank report on the topic, “IK is exclusive to a given culture or society; it cannot be easily codified for fear of loss of some vital properties. IK is fluid and does not work in formal organisations because it is too unstructured. It is also referred to as local knowledge or traditional knowledge” (World Bank, 1998). The “fluid” and “unstructured” features of IK, coupled with the fact that it is rarely documented, means that in an age of modernisation and globalisation, it is under threat of being lost or exploited outside of the communities that own it (Soni, 2007).

The main focus of this research is on the current awareness among the youth and librarians, of indigenous knowledge (IK) as this has evolved in Westcliff, Chatsworth, and whether there is a need to capture, document and preserve IK in libraries.

Chatsworth was formally established in 1964 as a residential area. The area is “a historically Indian township located in Durban, 14 kilometres south west of the City Centre, in the Umhlatuzana River Valley, North West of Umlazi. Initially Chatsworth comprised mainly of poor working class Indian people, whose culture is central to Durban’s individuality and a direct result of the Group Areas Act (of 1950)” (South African History Online, 2013). (The term “Indian” denotes an official racial classification in South Africa before 1994.) The many far-reaching and devastating effects of the Group Areas Act included the fact that it “enforced where non-white people were allowed to live strictly on the basis of their racial classification as Indian, Coloured or African” (South African History Online, 2013). Indians from all over Durban were thus relocated to Chatsworth, and the area developed into several neighbourhoods containing seven thousand sub-economic and fourteen thousand economic houses. It is widely acknowledged that the area was deliberately “built to act as a buffer between White residential areas and the large African township of Umlazi” (South African History Online, 2013). This is evident from the map included in Appendix 1.

## 1.1 Background and rationale for the study

Despite the fact that more than twenty years have passed since apartheid formally ended, Chatsworth remains an area that is predominantly occupied by Indian people. Its status and development as an Indian community span several generations and more than fifty years, during which time traditional knowledge and cultural forms have become localised and specific to the conditions of life in the area. This knowledge and culture is to some extent being practised and passed on to younger generations. This research therefore focused primarily on the status of IK within the Indian community of Westcliff, Chatsworth.

According to Turnbull (1993: 29-31), indigenous, “local” or “traditional” knowledge is derived from “observations of the local setting or at a specific location and held by a specific group of people”. He explains that “traditional knowledge is a growing body of knowledge and beliefs, progressing by adaptive practice and passed down through generations by cultural communication”, which he sees as important for sustainability (Turnbull, 1993: 29-31). In light of the brief history of Chatsworth outlined above, the characteristics of the Chatsworth community and its different sub-components provide the ideal conditions in which IK is seen to flourish.

Ngulube (2002) and Sithole (2007) have highlighted both the importance of IK and its vulnerability. According to Ngulube, IK is mainly oral and “reflects many generations of experience and problem solving by thousands of indigenous people . . . the loss of IK will impoverish society” (2002: 95-96). Sithole (2007: 118) makes reference to serious concerns expressed by the World Bank that IK is in danger of being lost “within one generation” if it is not “properly documented, analysed and disseminated”.

There is thus widespread agreement that concerted efforts should be made to preserve IK. Rahul Gandhi has coined the term “aam admi” (Sharma, 2010), in reference to youth who have been removed or disconnected from the traditional belief system and cultural practices of a particular community or society. Sengupta, Kannan and Raveendran (2008: 49) define “aam admi” in terms of the common man who cannot but be affected by the currents of history, in this case the forces of modernisation and globalisation. As Ngulube (2002) says, the younger generation underestimates the value of IK because of the influence of modern technology and education. Agrawal (1995: 424) agrees that IK is disappearing all over the world as a direct result of the pressures of modernisation, noting that this “loss is enormous since the indigenous people possess the potential to remedy

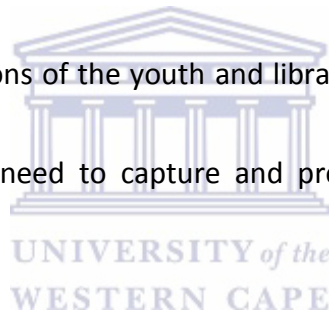
many of the problems that have emasculated development strategies in the past five decades”.

Based on personal observation of and interaction with the youth of the Westcliff, Chatsworth community, the researcher has recognised the applicability of Rahul Gandhi’s term “aam admi”. The forces of modernisation and homogenisation associated with globalisation are threatening the survival of IK in this community. The need to preserve this valuable cultural commodity therefore becomes urgent. This is the rationale for the current study.

## **1.2 Objectives of the study**

The objectives of this study were to:

- Investigate the current awareness among youth and librarians of IK in Westcliff, Chatsworth.
- Understand the perceptions of the youth and librarians with regard to preserving IK.
- Investigate if there is a need to capture and preserve IK in public libraries in Westcliff, Chatsworth.



## **1.3 Definitions of key terms**

### **1.3.1 Youth**

“Youth”, as characterised by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2017), is a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to the independence of adulthood. At the same time, children, the youth and adults are ineluctably interdependent as members of a community.

The “youth” constituted the key members of the focus groups in this study. For the purposes of this study, the youth consisted of people between the ages of 12 and 20.

### **1.3.2 Indigenous knowledge**

Indigenous knowledge is considered to be the information base and source of livelihood for indigenous communities in specific geographic regions. IK is mainly transmitted orally,

and it serves as a foundation for communication, decision-making and teaching in indigenous communities. Such knowledge and skills are shared over generations (Chisenga, 2002: 16-17).

### **1.3.3 Belief systems**

Indigenous knowledge, according to Kaniki and Mphahlele (2002), can embody the beliefs of a community based on its religion and/or culture; for example, worship of deities and the belief that ancestors are the community's intercessors with God, if not gods in their own right (Kaniki & Mphahlele, 2002). In the Hindu faith, for instance, trays bearing cooked meals are placed in the prayer room for the ancestors, as there is a belief that the ancestors visit and partake of the food. Hindus believe that by doing this the ancestors will be happy with them and peace will prevail.

### **1.3.4 Culture**

Culture is understood as socially transferred behaviour patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions and all other products of human work and thought (Hoppers, n.d.: 1). Culture is the total way of life of a people, incorporating ways of thinking, feeling, and believing Hoppers (n.d.: 1). To emphasise the breadth of the concept, Hoppers cites Visvanathan (2001): culture is the food you cook, the music you listen to, the religion, the festivals and rituals you practise.

### **1.3.5 Preservation of IK**

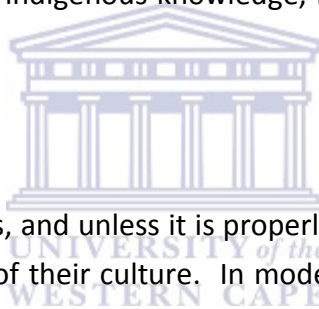
According to Kaniki and Mphahlele (2002: 6), the fact that IK is largely oral coupled with the ongoing introduction of new technologies places its preservation at risk. Preservation is the act of keeping something safe from being destroyed. The idea of preserving IK is very important and many authors have discussed it. Agarwal (1995), for instance, speaks of in situ preservation, where IK is preserved by local communities for local communities. Kaniki and Mphahlele (2002) discuss the use of technology for preserving IK. It is a finding of this study that such technology-driven preservation needs to be taken into cognisance by library administrators, to ensure that proper protocols for IK collection development and preservation are put in place within these public institutions.

### **1.3.6 Indigenist research**

Indigenist research means research undertaken by community insiders who are familiar with the community protocols of indigenous people. Such people live and work in the area and have an inside knowledge of, for example, the proper greetings, and of how to communicate with an elder in the community to gather community information. Martin and Mirraboopa (2003) propose an “indigenist” research and theoretical framework that is important for this study, as the interviewees who live and work in the area are, with proper training, likely candidates to collect and preserve IK for the community.

### **1.3.7 Western knowledge**

Western knowledge systems are built upon the idea of positivism, in terms of which truth is established by logical, scientific, or mathematical testing. Knowledge that does not go through rigorous testing, such as indigenous knowledge, is regarded with a great deal of suspicion (Agrawal, 1995).



### **1.4 Research problem**

IK is crucial to many communities, and unless it is properly conserved these communities stand to lose important aspects of their culture. In modern-day cities where people are clustered according to a shared culture it becomes vital that IK be preserved for the benefit of the community. According to a UNESCO article on intangible cultural heritage (2011) “whether they are from the neighbouring village, from a city on the opposite side of the world, or have been adapted by peoples who have migrated and settled in a different region, they all are [elements of] intangible cultural heritage: they have been passed from one generation to another, have evolved in response to their environments and they contribute to giving us a sense of identity and continuity, providing a link from our past, through the present, and into our future”.

The aim of this study was therefore to gain an understanding of how IK can be preserved in public libraries for the benefit of communities.

### **1.5 Research objectives**

Stemming from the research problem as formulated above, the study's research objectives were to:

- Investigate how IK can be preserved for the Westcliff, Chatsworth community.
- Determine how librarians in public libraries can assist with the preservation of IK in the Westcliff, Chatsworth community.
- Investigate how the youth perceive IK and its importance in their daily lives.

### **1.6 Research questions**

Several questions arose from the research objectives, among which the following were central to the study:

- Is there a need to preserve IK in the Westcliff, Chatsworth community?
- What are the current and potential roles of librarians in preserving IK in Westcliff, Chatsworth?

These questions were considered in relation to the youth, who – among other constituencies – would be a key beneficiary of IK in Westcliff, Chatsworth.

The following sub-questions were therefore investigated:

- How are these belief systems transferred to the youth?
- Are there observable impacts of these belief systems on the lives of the youth?
- How is IK preserved in the home and documented for future generations?

In considering the role of libraries, additional sub-questions included:

- Do libraries preserve IK?
- What are some of the challenges of managing IK in libraries and in the home?

### **1.7 Ethics statement**



This research adhered to the ethical guidelines of the Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape. The researcher respected the rights of participants, obtaining informed consent based on adequate information supplied to them about the project. Consent letters along with letters explaining the study were handed to participants and, where appropriate, their parents. Participants were promised anonymity. Participation in the research project was voluntary and participants were informed that they could withdraw at any stage of the research process. Participants were also informed about the use of recording instruments from the outset.

## **1.8 Outline of chapters**

### **1.8.1 Chapter One**

In Chapter One, the project was introduced and its rationale explained. Some background on indigenous knowledge approaches and practices was provided, and its particular relevance for the Westcliff, Chatsworth community was discussed.

### **1.8.2 Chapter Two**

Chapter Two reviews literature on the theme of indigenous knowledge and discusses the nature and relevance of IK. The literature review also looks at how this topic has been addressed in library and information science (LIS) literature. Finally, the review addresses recent reports and recommendations by international organisations, such as United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the World Bank.

### **1.8.3 Chapter Three**

Chapter Three focuses on the theoretical framework chosen for this study.

### **1.8.4 Chapter Four**

Chapter Four provides details of and reasons for the qualitative research design and methodology that informed this research.

### **1.8.5 Chapter Five**

Chapter Five presents, interprets and analyses the study's major findings.

### **1.8.6 Chapter Six**

Chapter Six concludes the study. There is discussions of the major issues emerging from the study, as framed by the research questions. Conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made for implementation and further research.

### **1.9 Conclusion**

Chapter One discussed the background of and rationale for the project. The research problem, research objectives and research questions were identified. Chapter Two will introduce the literature that informs and contextualises this research.



## **Chapter Two: Literature review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This literature review is divided into five themes that are prominent in the literature on indigenous knowledge (IK):

The nature of IK;

The historical marginalisation of IK;

The importance of documenting and disseminating IK;

The question of how it should be documented and disseminated; and

The role of public libraries in preserving IK.

The importance of these themes is underlined by the fact that much of the literature consulted in this study is published by world organisations such as UNESCO, the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), the World Council of Indigenous People, the World Bank, and indigenous communities in Latin America and Africa, including Nigeria and South Africa. These reports, recommendations and viewpoints offer perspectives within which the preservation of IK can be assessed. They also serve to validate the often overlooked experiences of local communities, such as the Indian community of Westcliff, Chatsworth. Agrawal's (1995) paper, "Dismantling the divide between indigenous and scientific knowledge" provides an important theoretical perspective, while Gupta's (2010) "Indigenous knowledge: ways of knowing, feeling and doing" supplements Martin and Mirraboopa's (2003) work in guiding this enquiry into the capturing, documenting and preserving of IK in Westcliff, Chatsworth.

### **2.2 What is indigenous knowledge?**

Indigenous knowledge is home-grown knowledge exclusive to a particular culture or society (Roué & Nakashima, 2002: 338). It is knowledge that people in a specified community have "established over time, and continue to develop" (Management of Social Transformations Programme [MOST] & the Centre for International Research and Advisory Networks [CIRAN], n.d.: 4). The experiential basis and historical dimension of this knowledge make it important to capture and document.

Turnbull maintains that IK is best thought of as “local knowledge”, a kind of knowledge resulting from “observations of the local setting or at a specific location and held by a specific group of people” (1993: 29-31). Belief systems, traditional values, cultural practices and rituals are components of indigenous knowledge.

Agrawal (1995: 8), citing Dei (1993), refers to indigenous knowledge as the “common sense knowledge and ideas of local peoples about the everyday realities of living”, while the now defunct World Council of Indigenous Peoples (WCIP), as quoted in a 1998 World Bank report, defined IK as the “summation of knowledge and skills possessed by people belonging to a particular geographic area, which allows them to derive value from their natural setting”. Such knowledge and skills are shared over generations.

According to the World Bank report, the WCIP also named other important characteristics of IK:

- IK is exclusive to a given culture or society;
- It cannot easily be codified for fear of loss of some vital properties;
- IK is fluid and does not work in formal organisations because it is too unstructured
- IK is the life blood of a community (World Bank, 1998).

Similarly, Agrawal uses a system of knowledge framework to explain the following characteristics of IK (1995: 9):

- IK is embedded in a particular community and exclusive to that community.
- People are dependent on this knowledge for survival.
- This type of knowledge does not conform to a certain situation or surroundings because the indigenous people believe in a certain standard or ideal.
- There are no contradictions in what the indigenous people believe, no opposing or conflicting ideas in their belief system.
- These people are committed to and practise their knowledge systems on a daily basis. They live by these rules and laws and are governed by the elders in the community. These laws and rules do not change over time to suit a situation as they are deeply rooted in the belief system of the indigenous people.

Chisenga (2002: 17) identifies the major characteristics of IK as follows:

- IK is held by any community, whether it is a rural or urban community.
- IK is based on experiences, practices and information that have been imparted by local people and merged into their way of life.

- IK is conveyed in local languages.
- It is difficult to communicate IK to those who do not share nor understand the language, tradition and cultural experiences involved.

The term “indigenous knowledge” was coined in 1980 by Warren, Brokensha, Werner and Chambers. They were seeking a more suitable term to describe traditional or local knowledge, as it was then called. For Warren et al., the term “traditional knowledge” suggested a knowledge that was “simple and static”. They wanted a term that would capture the vibrant knowledge of indigenous people and its deep-rooted contribution to their society (Warren, 1996). Chambers and his team in Sussex were concurrently working on the same problem. Independently of each other, they came up with the term “indigenous” (Warren, 1996).

As reflected in writings by Gupta (2010) and others, it would appear that the major obstacle since the inception of the term has been the fact that there is no standard approach to capturing and documenting IK. Gupta (2010: 167) argues that institutions like the World Bank seek to recognise the role of indigenous knowledge by making marginal overtures in its direction. Gupta (2010) believes that indigenous knowledge is seen as insignificant and not accorded the recognition it deserves for its role in the development of society. He observes that most of the projects the World Bank is involved with violate the concept of Prior Informed Consent (PIC). Gupta uses an example from medical science where PIC has been adopted: a surgeon will not perform an operation without prior consent. This has yet to become standardised in social science. Gupta (2010: 168) is of the opinion that organisations like the World Bank involved with IK projects do not really respect local knowledge and seldom incorporate local knowledge experts as advisors in designing their projects.

Gupta's (2010) argument is thus that organisations that have been at the forefront of documenting IK, such as the World Bank, often do not conform to appropriate “ethical and professional practices”. Indigenous people have not been invited to design and help implement IK projects, despite the fact that these affect their lives (Gupta, 2010: 167).

Thus while the role of IK in solving local problems is acknowledged by influential global organisations like the World Bank, little is being done by these organisations to develop ethical procedures and standards for working with indigenous communities, or to facilitate a relationship between indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge systems (Gupta, 2010: 167). Because IK is local knowledge, its significance is lost in the attempt to solve global problems. Furthermore, this knowledge – of herbs, for instance – has to get tested

in Western laboratories before it is accepted by global communities, even though the value and healing properties of the herbs have been known through use by local people for many years (Gupta, 2010: 168).

Both Gupta (2010) and Martin and Mirraboopa (2003) make suggestions as to how this valuable information can be captured, documented and preserved. These authors also make reference to the importance of PIC when gaining the trust of indigenous communities and getting them to share their knowledge with researchers.

### **2.3 Historical marginalisation of IK**

Historically, IK has not been credited with any importance (Agrawal, 1995). It was viewed as disorganised, sub-standard and a problem for development (Rouse, 1999: 2). Negative attitudes and/or indifference to IK are also noted by Gupta (2010: 166), who observes that the intellectual work of indigenous scientists has been largely ignored by the Western world.

It is important to note that attitudes towards traditional knowledge and methods have changed significantly over the past fifty years, as IK has gradually gained recognition as a valuable and important source of information in local communities and for development processes (Rouse, 1999: 2). Rouse notes that IK was given prominence at a conference in Rio on sustainable development as far back as 1987.

### **2.4 The importance of documenting and disseminating IK**

The idea of documenting IK is not a new one (Ngulube, 2002). Ngulube observes that missionaries and colonial district officers collected information on “customary patterns of land tenure, livestock and traditional beliefs and rites” (Ngulube, 2002: 96).

Sithole (2007: 118) argues that documenting IK will help ensure that communities are not disadvantaged because of the unique beliefs and folkways that pattern their lives: just as the world needs “genetic diversity of species; it needs diversity of knowledge systems”. By embracing indigenous knowledge and affording it a space on the library shelves, for example, indigenous communities are granted the respect they deserve.

IK is mainly tacit, embedded in the practices and experiences of its holders (Sithole (2007: 118). This knowledge is exchanged through personal communication and demonstration from teacher to apprentice and from parent to child. Sithole (2007: 118) adds that IK is disseminated through various family histories, taboos, symbols, myths and legends, rituals, festivals and so on. Indigenous knowledge is passed down through generations by word of mouth, which suggests the importance of documenting and preserving it for fear of it being lost.

The question remains: “why should development professionals and governments, who shunted aside indigenous knowledge for five decades of planned development, start using it now?” (Agrawal, 1995: 10).

An answer is available in the *Indigenous Knowledge and Development Monitor*, a journal for and of the international community of people who are interested in indigenous knowledge (Agrawal, 1995: 10). According to an editorial in this journal, “just as scientific knowledge is gathered, documented and disseminated in a coherent and systematic fashion, so should be done with indigenous knowledge” (quoted in Agrawal, 1995: 10). Although IK is mainly transferred by word of mouth, its value in the form of practices associated with herbs, livestock, farming and so on is gaining importance world-wide. It makes increasing sense to document this information and give indigenous people due recognition for their work.

Various authors note examples of success and failure in attempts to document IK. Ngulube (2002) highlights the success of a project to document the natural and supernatural healing practices of the Fulani pastoralists in the north-west province of Cameroon. Sithole (2007) discusses Zimbabwe’s National Library and Documentation Services Act of 1986, and its failure to make any meaningful impact on everyday practice in terms of documenting indigenous knowledge. This Act, he says, exists on paper but has nothing to show in terms of library development, most likely because of poor infrastructure.

An initiative regarding IK in Durban has begun with the Ulwazi Programme (Ulwazi Programme: n.d.), which – in partnership with the eThewikini Municipal Library – seeks to document the indigenous knowledge of local communities in the greater Durban area. The result is a storehouse of mainly African culture with a few entries on Indian culture. The rationale behind the Ulwazi programme was to draw the rural areas of the Municipality into the information society by providing much needed digital skills for recording relevant oral knowledge that might otherwise be lost. The library provided support, training, and data collection for the project. The technology used was open source software and the

social media. The main portal was developed as a wiki and allowed anyone to register and submit an article. Content is organised through a series of categories and sub-categories. The system is multi-lingual. The Ulwazi programme is thus a working model for a digital library. It has trained a number of volunteers and created a resource that is currently used by the community.

The Campbell Collections comprise another initiative to preserve IK in Durban and its surrounds. The Campbell Collections hold African artefacts, paintings, books and photographs. When describing her Africana collection in an article published in *Africana Notes and News* in September 1945, Killie Campbell wrote: "This Library has approximately 20,000 books, and I have specialised chiefly in history and Bantu life" (University of KwaZulu-Natal, n.d.).

According to a statement by the Leshiba Community Development Trust (n.d.), Southern African Development Community (SADC) member countries constitute a vast potential source of indigenous knowledge. The Trust's IK centre is aimed at creating an environment that welcomes the participation of indigenous people in development work, to ensure that the projects benefit local people on many fronts.

Sithole (2007: 118) discusses the importance of documenting IK. Documentation provides evidence that local communities are the owners of a complex and highly developed knowledge system. Sithole (2007) observes that documentation is an acceptable way to "validate and grant IK protection from bio piracy and other forms of abuse" (bio piracy is a practice in which a community's IK is plundered by outsiders for profit). This is an important statement regarding the value of the work of indigenous people. One thinks for instance of the problems regarding intellectual property rights associated with the hoodia plant. Hence Ngulube (2002) insists on the importance of properly managing the documentation of IK and of protecting intellectual property rights. Kaniki and Mphahlele (2002) concur that proper knowledge management procedures should be implemented in the preservation of IK, especially in Africa.

By way of comparison, Duran (2002) discusses programmes and services the US federal government and private foundations have adopted to address specific social and behavioural issues associated with the IK of American Indians. These initiatives also make special funding available for new and innovative programmes and services that address the beliefs, attitudes and behavioural norms of American Indian people. But as Duran (2002: 4) cautions, only if they can demonstrate the need, "provide empirical support for a specific



model of service and can hire qualified staff to provide the service”, will they be eligible for funding.

Indigenous knowledge and societies are disappearing all over the world as a direct result of the pressures of modernisation and globalisation. Agrawal (1995: 12) regards this as an enormous loss to humanity, since these communities possess the potential to remedy many of the problems that have emasculated development strategies during the past five decades. He emphasises that greater effort must therefore be made to save, document, and apply indigenous strategies for survival.

Agrawal (1995: 24) notes that “in their desire to find an elevated status for IK, researchers attempt to use the same instruments that western science uses”. Researchers undermine their own claims about the separability of indigenous from Western knowledge in three ways:

- Researchers want to isolate, document and store knowledge that gains its vigour as a result of being integrally linked with the lives of indigenous peoples.
- Researchers wish to freeze in time and space a fundamentally dynamic entity – cultural knowledge.
- Most problematic, their archives and knowledge centres privilege the scientific investigator, the scientific community and bureaucratic procedures (Agrawal, 1995: 24).

Agrawal (1995: 25) uses the phrase “strangulation by centralised control and management”. He is of the opinion that IK cannot be treated like Western or scientific knowledge, subjected to conventional storage and dissemination and thereby “fated to stagnation, irrelevance and ultimately oblivion”. The problem is that “international, regional and national archives for housing indigenous knowledge are likely to divorce IK from the source that presumably provides it with its vigour – the people and their needs” (Agrawal, 1995: 25).

This section has shown there is a need to capture, preserve and disseminate IK before it is forever lost to succeeding generations. Some initiatives in the Durban area for capturing and documenting IK – the Ulwazi programme and the Campbell Collections – have been briefly noted. The difficulties inherent in trying to capture and document IK have also been reviewed.

## 2.5 How should IK be documented and preserved?

World organisations such as UNESCO, IFLA, the World Council of Indigenous People and the World Bank have recognised the need for the capture and documentation of IK, but they have yet to devise formal, standardised and sustainable practices and policies for the purpose. Indigenous people should be involved in this process, as Gupta (2010) has argued. Standardising procedures is imperative in the social sciences: just as one has standardised procedures and processes for scientific knowledge, one should have recognised procedures for collecting, capturing and preserving IK.

Kaniki and Mphahlele (2002) propose the use of information communication technologies (ICTs) to capture and document IK, and this is worth considering. They cite the example of the Campbell Collections library, which uses digitisation to preserve and disseminate important African artefacts to the global community via the web. This type of sharing of IK has been successful at the Campbell Collections and the authors suggest that the practice be expanded (Kaniki & Mphahlele, 2002: 18-19). Sithole (2007) cites Chisenga's (2000) insistence that IK in Africa needs to be codified into print and electronic formats for both audio and video to make it widely accessible through global infrastructure. Chisenga says "databases of IK experts or carriers" should be developed in various communities to "act as pointers to experts on various aspects of IK" (2000: 18).

Such use of ICT is of course not appropriate for the rural communities of Africa, where the people rely on IK for their daily living. Kaniki and Mphahlele (2002: 19) suggest that IK needs to be looked into at the community level, with recording and sharing done in and among local communities. They argue that using ICTs or knowledge management principles to manage and record IK can only be done at certain levels. Owing to the nature of IK, not all of it can or should be managed like scientific knowledge. Accordingly there is a need to apply a number of principles for managing IK in order to preserve and protect it (2002: 19). Lastly the authors insist that owners of intellectual property must be recognised and rewarded accordingly. Agrawal (1995: 29) proposes using *in situ* methods to preserve the IK of the rural people, which means that preservation must occur in and be appropriate to in the original context where IK is created and used.

Agrawal (1995: 29) observes, however, that "in situ preservation cannot succeed without the indigenous population gaining control over the use of lands in which they dwell and the resources on which they rely" (Agrawal, 1995: 29). Those who are seen to possess knowledge must also possess the right to decide on how to save their knowledge, how to use it and who shall use it (Agrawal, 1995). It is important to note that in situ preservation

is likely to make IK costlier for those outsiders who wish to gain access to and disseminate it. What the Campbell Collections Library has done is take advantage of the poor rand exchange rate against other currencies like the American dollar to “generate a market-related income to finance its ongoing digitisation programs” (Kaniki & Mphahlele, 2002: 19). This is one way to protect against bio piracy, but it may also serve to reinforce the digital divide between demographics and regions that have access to modern information and communications technology and those that do not.

IK differs from Western knowledge and may have to be managed in ways that challenge conventional methods of managing knowledge. This view is supported by Ngulube (2002), who nevertheless notes that IK should be gathered, organised and disseminated systematically. The emphasis here falls on the systematic processes that Western systems adhere to, not necessarily on the application of Western methods to problems and challenges that are unique to indigenous knowledge.

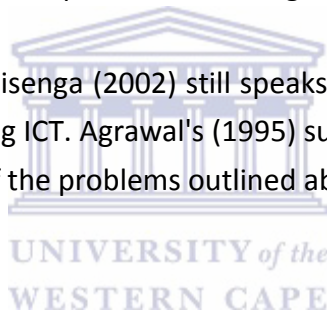
Msuya (2007) examines challenges and opportunities in the protection and documentation of IK in Africa. He argues that there is a “threat of IK extinction due to lack of recording and problems associated with documentation and protection of the knowledge from bio piracy”. The knowledge is used without the consent of the indigenous people, who are given no acknowledgement for their work. An example is the hoodia plant that has been patented for medicinal purposes. No recognition or compensation was given to the indigenous Kalahari community that shared this knowledge with the global world. This is a clear example of bio piracy. Msuya also discusses other ethical issues pertaining to IK, with the emphasis on returning IK benefits to the owners of the knowledge (see also Gupta, 2010), and highlights challenges in IK preservation. He suggests measures that can be taken to alleviate the challenges, which include, among others, developing appropriate IK policies and practices (Msuya, 2007).

Chisenga (2002) speaks convincingly of the need to capture and document IK in Africa using ICT, but in the same breath lists the problems and challenges associated with doing this:

- IK is tacit knowledge that people should be willing to verbalise and share. Yet indigenous people are not always willing to share this knowledge with people from outside their communities. One way of mitigating this problem is presumably to take the advice of Gupta (2010) and Martin and Mirraboopu (2003) on prior informed consent (PIC), and to follow proper etiquette when dealing with the people concerned.

- Because IK is tacit or implicit, it is difficult to record, transfer and disseminate. Yet Chisenga is adamant that IK *should* nevertheless be recorded, transferred and disseminated, using ICT. According to Kaniki and Mphahlele (2002: 19), citing the example of the Campbell Collections Library, ICT can indeed be used to record, transfer and disseminate IK.
- For many people IK is a livelihood. The fact that they alone are holders of such knowledge puts them at an advantage, and entitles them to be paid for consultations. Such people would therefore see sharing their IK as compromising their favourable position in the community. If they are persuaded to share their knowledge, then they should be given the recognition and compensation that they deserve.
- Certain forms of IK cannot be easily transferred to other communities. Outside of its community of origin, the knowledge may be meaningless and useless.
- There is also the danger of IK being exploited by multinational corporations, as has been the case with the hoodia plant that Chisenga (2002: 18) makes mention of.

In spite of these reservations, Chisenga (2002) still speaks of capturing and documenting the IK of the people of Africa using ICT. Agrawal's (1995) suggestion of in situ preservation should help to overcome some of the problems outlined above, especially in the case of IK in rural Africa.



Chisenga (2002: 18) goes on to remark that “where it is found necessary to share IK with others, international languages should be used”. This statement is problematic, in the sense that translating IK into international languages would destroy the specificity that is its core; the message would essentially be lost in translation. There are also certain indigenous terms that simply do not have an English equivalent. These are the reasons why it is so difficult to capture and document IK, and why it will remain to some extent tacit knowledge. However, if one adheres to the recommendations proposed by Martin and Mirraboopa (2003) and Gupta (2010) for obtaining Prior informed consent (PIC) and involving the indigenous people in the process of capturing and documenting IK, these difficulties should be to an extent remediated. This is done to build relationships like trust, respect for the communities IK; with a community you want to research.

## **2.6 The role of public libraries in preserving indigenous knowledge**

Sithole (2007: 119) notes that the library has “emancipated itself from the traditional resources of the written and printed word to incorporate other communication media and digital technologies”. But, he observes, the role of libraries will need to be further redefined if they are to participate in any meaningful way in the documentation and dissemination of IK. To harness IK locally and disseminate it globally, the library would need to use a variety of platforms, such as websites and open access platforms. The IK could be uploaded onto these platforms, thereby making it globally available.

Ngulube (2002) sees the role of information professionals as a proactive one in terms of managing society’s knowledge resources. This means that librarians who work with the public and the youth should equip themselves with the skills to engage with indigenous people in the community, and actively work with them to capture, document and preserve IK.

To ensure this happens, librarians would need appropriate training to develop skills outside the range of traditional library duties. They would need, for example, to be familiar with the proper etiquette to engage with the elders of an indigenous community (Gupta, 2010; Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003).

Libraries can promote access to indigenous knowledge by creating an environment which permits face-to-face forums and networking sessions to discuss IK. Anyira, Onoriode, and Nwabueze (2010) and Okore, Ekere and Ekere (2009) suggest having lectures by traditional healers, priests, and so on, recorded in audio or video format.

This appears to be a more appropriate way to capture IK for posterity than physically writing it down. In the reduction to writing of stories, belief systems and so on, their essence can easily be lost. It is because of this fact that IK cannot be captured, documented and preserved in the same way as scientific knowledge.

Okore, Ekere and Ekere (2009) claim that libraries in the Delta region of Nigeria have made progress in the preservation of local culture in paper and digital formats, and thereby promoted the exchange of information in Nigeria. However, they acknowledge the problem that IK has not received the recognition it deserves, and that librarians need educating in order to meet the information needs of indigenous people and appropriately manage IK in libraries and information centres. Benchmarking sessions should be held with librarians in the Delta region to discuss what has gone wrong, and how it can be fixed for the future training of librarians.

Librarians have to adopt new roles to capture and preserve IK, according to Kaniki and Mphahlele (2002), Ngulube (2002) and Sithole (2007). Apart from learning new skills, librarians have to ensure the proper storage and management of this information if it is to be made available and accessible to all. Ngulube (2002: 96) notes that inadequate management of IK has resulted in the loss of most of the indigenous knowledge captured by colonial district officers.

The first step would be to teach the management of IK to trainee librarians in library schools. Another strand would be for world organisations to involve indigenous people in this task. Indigenous people can assist in drawing up frameworks and maybe even lecture on what is expected for an interview to take place in an indigenous setting. This suggestion is in line with the recommendation by Okore, Ekere and Ekere (2009) that libraries work in partnership with library schools to create indigenous knowledge collections, which can be repackaged and made accessible. It is important for graduates of library schools who will work in libraries to have knowledge regarding the preservation of IK. Stevens (2008) shares the view that library and information professionals should partner with indigenous communities.

Underhill (2006) insists that libraries and archives look at the broad issues involved in the preservation of IK. The author emphasises that libraries must consider IK not simply as part of a historical archive but a contemporary body of relevant knowledge.

Stevens (2008) explains that whilst libraries have not traditionally focused on these areas, they can assist indigenous communities to manage and preserve IK by providing “resources and expertise in collection, organisation, storage and retrieval”. This is true of public libraries, because the librarians work directly with members of the public and most especially the youth.

According to the International Federation of Library Associations’ statement on indigenous traditional knowledge (International Federation of Library Associations [IFLA], 2014), libraries can help in the following ways:

- In the collection, preservation and dissemination of IK.
- To inform the public on the contribution and importance of IK.
- To involve indigenous people in the community with collection, dissemination and preservation of IK.
- To support efforts aimed at ensuring that indigenous people and their IK are protected by intellectual property laws.

Although IFLA has issued this statement it does not explain how library and information professionals should go about collecting and preserving IK. Again, the importance of IK and the need to preserve it are emphasised, while no guidance is provided on how to actually go about this. Although several authors have made suggestions or hinted at ways that information professionals can incorporate the preservation of IK into libraries, there are no definite rules or guidelines in place to direct library interventions of this kind.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has presented a review of relevant literature on indigenous knowledge. There is little disagreement among authors on the need to document, preserve and disseminate IK. However, there are a number of complicating factors. There is, for example, the problem of translating a community's IK – the fear that through translation the real essence of the IK would be lost on the national and international community. Certain local phrases or words have no English equivalent. There are also factors that are beyond the reach or authority of local communities, for example, intellectual property laws. Perhaps this is where librarians can play a vital role in assisting community leaders to gather information about how they might incorporate intellectual property laws in their communities' IK – much like the San people who now have a code of ethics for researchers (Daley, 2017).

This study takes place in a small community and adds a community perspective to concerns expressed more generally in the literature consulted.

The next chapter introduces and discusses the theoretical framework chosen for this project.

## Chapter Three: Theoretical framework

### 3.1 Introduction

Martin and Mirraboopa (2003: 203) believe that Aboriginal people are over-researched by Western researchers and that this has led to resistance, mistrust and animosity towards researchers on the part of Aboriginal people. Western researchers, according to the authors, have been unethical, adhering to no proper consultation process, often not obtaining permission from Aboriginal people, and observing no appropriate community communication protocols. Examples of the latter would include particular ways of greeting and interacting with community elders. Martin and Mirraboopa therefore make the argument that only a native is able to undertake “re-search” in indigenous communities, in a way that encourages participants to willingly share information that is valuable to the “re-search” being undertaken. Martin and Mirraboopa’s position brings an important perspective to bear on the idea of “re-search”, hereby meaning research undertaken by community insiders who are familiar with the practices, community protocols and communication etiquette of indigenous people. Martin and Mirraboopa therefore propose an “indigenist” research and theoretical framework that is important for this study.

### 3.2 Indigenist research framework

The most important protocol in indigenist research is introducing one’s self to the indigenous people in the community that one is researching. An appropriate introduction affirms to the elders in the community exactly who you are, where you come from and which family you belong to (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003: 204). In providing these details, the authors say, one is “identifying, defining and describing the elements of indigenist research” (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003: 204). However, this does not mean that all indigenist research has to be conducted by insiders or people living in the community. As a Westerner doing research in an indigenous community one should be au fait with community protocols. The San people, for example, have developed their own set of ethics for researchers (Daley, 2017).

Martin and Mirraboopa (2003:211) use three interrelated concepts to explain their indigenist research framework: ways of knowing, ways of being and ways of doing. They explain that without ways of knowing, we are unable to be, hence our ways of knowing inform our ways of being. Similarly, ways of being, which are transmitted by the older generation in the community, shape ways of doing. Ways of doing, according to the authors, are therefore a direct reflection of ways of knowing and ways of being.



According to Martin and Mirraboopa (2003: 206), it is through “ontology that we develop an awareness and sense of self, of belonging and of coming to know our responsibilities and ways to relate to self”. They argue that the integration of the beliefs, behaviours, experiences and realities from their own Aboriginal tribe into their research becomes the framework for indigenist research.

Martin and Mirraboopa (2003: 209) point out that no one person in the community knows everything, but each person has a range of knowledge to fulfil a particular role. In the Westcliff community, for example, a father will teach his son a set of skills, prayers and rituals, whilst a mother will instil in her son a different kind of knowledge about the belief system and culture. So too will a pastor, priest or moulana in the form of teaching the Quran or Bible. Thus each person has a different form of knowledge to pass on to the youth of the community. This is a cycle whereby the child is taught specific skills and cultural practices by elders in the community, to prepare his or her “ways of knowing”.

Sometimes these teachings can be gender specific (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003: 209). For example, in the Muslim faith in Westcliff, there are certain cultural and religious practices that only a father can impart to his son. These include burial procedures, and which prayers are performed at funerals. Women in the Muslim faith are not allowed to be at the gravesite during funerals, or to participate in certain funeral rituals.

It is these lessons that we continue to draw upon as we mature and grow older (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003: 211). What has been taught to us by the elders in the community is the foundation according to which we live, learn and survive.

The most important basis for indigenist research is trust, because the researcher in a sense assumes responsibility for the lives of indigenous people, for their land, their past, their present and, particularly, their future.

At this point it is important to note that the San people have issued the first code of ethics for researchers in Africa, on 3 March 2017 (Daley, 2017). Although it has no legal standing in that it has yet to be approved by a higher committee or council, is it a historically important document for indigenous communities in Africa. The First Nations people of Canada and the Aborigines in Australia have already developed similar codes of ethics, and these have been officially recognised (Daley, 2017).

This San document highlights rules that researchers have to adhere to if they want to conduct research about the San people and their land. “Researchers are expected to respect the privacy of the San, not publish or take out photographs without consent, and not bribe community members to partake in their studies or to misinterpret the work of the San people” (Daley, 2017). Proposals have to be submitted to the San council for approval. The code also describes how benefits from the research should be shared with the community in the forms of skills and the training of translators and researchers, “not limited to money” (Daley, 2017). If researchers violate this code of ethics they stand to be prevented from working with the San in future.

A similar approach can be adopted by the Westcliff, Chatsworth community. Research being undertaken in this community should follow similar protocols to those mandated by the San. Librarians can involve themselves in this process, learning how to conduct indigenist research and thereby assisting the elders in the community when they are approached by researchers. Librarians can (with proper training) adopt the role of educators to the indigenous communities, with regard to matters such as research ethics and intellectual property rights that community elders need to be aware of.

### **3.3 Conclusion**

This discussion of indigenist research is by no means complete, not least because the notion is continually evolving. What has been provided here is a theoretical framework for thinking about the need for “re-search” in indigenous communities, and what this means for ensuring that their IK is afforded adequate preservation and protection. This theoretical framework can be used as a basis or guide for indigenous communities to draw up their own code of ethics for researchers. The next chapter will introduce the research design and methodology used in this project.



## Chapter Four: Research design and methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methods and techniques used in the study. It provides an explanation for the research design and methodology selected. The latter are defined by Miller and Brewer (2003: 192) as a set of rules and procedures to guide research and to evaluate its claims. The research design describes the research structure and stipulates everything that needs to be done to complete the research. It is a detailed plan for how the research is to be conducted and how the data is to be collected and analysed (Thyer, 1993: 94).

For the purposes of this study a qualitative design was chosen. Qualitative research can be described as an approach rather than a particular design or set of techniques (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005: 188). Furthermore, the term “covers an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate and come to terms with the meaning of naturally occurring phenomena in the social world” (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005: 188). The techniques that characterise qualitative research allowed for sensitive and emotional issues to be probed, which would not have been possible with telephonic interviews and structured questionnaires.

The qualitative research design was appropriate as this study is mainly exploratory and not based on established knowledge about the role of IK in Westcliff, Chatsworth. The aim was to explore by asking open-ended questions and not making assumptions about causes and effects (Wallace, 1984: 182). The research design chosen assisted the researcher to ask a combination of semi-structured and follow-up questions needed to gain a deep understanding of how participants felt, and thus answer the research questions regarding the perceptions of the youth and librarians about the preservation and documentation of IK in Westcliff, Chatsworth. The design enabled the researcher to gain an understanding of implicit and unarticulated phenomena in the community. Qualitative research is a powerful tool often overlooked and undervalued by researchers used to dealing with numbers (Wallace, 1984: 182-183).

Martin and Mirraboopa (2003) insist that researchers need to interact appropriately with community elders by observing the relevant cultural protocols. These authors go as far as to assert that only a community member will be able to get the elders in the community to impart information willingly. Since the researcher has lived and worked in the Westcliff,

Chatsworth community, she was well placed to approach members of the community to conduct interviews and focus group discussions.

## **4.2 Data collection methods**

Two methods of data collection were used in this study: (i) focus group discussions with the youth of Westcliff, Chatsworth; and (ii) semi-structured interviews with librarians at the local public library. Participants were informed about the use of recording devices, which assisted the researcher to capture and analyse the stories and experiences the participants shared, ensuring that important details were not lost.

### **4.2.1 Focus group discussions with youth**

According to Liamputtong (2001: 6), focus group interviews allow for group dynamics and interaction among the respondents. This interaction enabled experiences and stories shared by the young participants to emerge. It also helped the researcher to elicit perspectives that often remain hidden in a conventional interview set-up and thus attain a deep level of understanding. Liamputtong explains that focus groups can provide rich and detailed information about the feelings, thoughts, understandings, perceptions and impressions of people, rendered in their own words (Liamputtong, 2001: 6).

As is noted by Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006: 122), a focus group should consist of between four and eight respondents who are interviewed together. For the purposes of this study, young people between the ages of twelve and twenty were interviewed. This age group was selected because, on the brink of adulthood, its members perhaps stood to benefit most from IK, and it was felt that their perceptions on preserving and documenting IK would add value to the study. Two focus group interviews were conducted. One focus group consisted of youth from twelve to seventeen years old and the second consisted of youth from eighteen to twenty years old. The group of 12-17 year-olds is referred to as group 1, and the 18-20 year-olds as group 2.

A list of questions compiled for the focus group discussions is attached as Appendix II. The researcher did not want to make assumptions about the importance of IK in the daily lives of the youth of the community, which meant that the questions asked were open-ended and aimed at gaining a fresh understanding of the subject. The open-ended questions allowed the researcher to probe further where necessary.

The focus group discussions took place at the Woodhurst Public Library, a venue frequented by the participants.

#### **4.2.2 Semi-structured interviews: Interviewing of librarians**

Marshall and Rossman (2006: 97) note that a distinct advantage of interviews is that they involve personal interaction and cooperation. Both of these factors are essential to developing a deep understanding of the research topic. The interviews were semi-structured, thus making provision for follow-up or probing questions to be asked when necessary. The researcher drew up questions prior to the interview as per Appendix III, including some precise questions and sub-questions.

For the purpose of this study the two librarians interviewed are referred to as Librarian 1 and Librarian 2.

A list of questions in the interviews is attached as Appendix III. The list of questions allowed the researcher to understand if IK was being preserved by public libraries in the community. The two librarians interviewed work closely with the community and understand the needs of the youth as most of them frequent this library. The questions posed to the respondents tie in with the research questions about the importance of IK for the community, and whether their library preserves IK.

Many of the interview questions and sub-questions asked dealt with the preservation of IK and the challenges of working with IK in public libraries. The questions were open-ended and allowed the researcher to probe further for more detail. The insights gained from answers to these questions are available in Section 5.3.

#### **4.3 Participant selection**

With the assistance of the librarians, who are familiar with the patrons of the library, a notice was pinned to the notice board in the library, inviting potential participants to volunteer for focus group discussions. Consent forms and letters were handed to those who responded to the invitation. In cases where the participants were under the age of eighteen consent forms and letters were sent to their parents for the requisite permission. Participants under eighteen also signed assent forms. The older participants were required to hand their signed consent forms back to the librarians. Participants were therefore selected using the principles of convenience sampling.

The researcher used purposive sampling when selecting the two librarians to be interviewed. Purposive sampling according to Bless, Higson-Smith and Kagee (2006: 106) is based on the judgment of the researcher: "A sample is chosen on the basis of what the researcher considers to be typical units" (2006: 106). Since the librarians work with the community, they were considered well placed to answer questions on the need for the preservation of IK in Westcliff, Chatsworth. As it turned out, they were able to contribute valuable perspectives and insights.

#### **4.4 Ethical issues pertaining to research with children and youth**

Fine and Sandstrom (1988: 58) claim that the term participation means "empowerment" rather than simply "taking part". This is in line with the general theme of this project, which sought to understand what the youth of a particular community thought about IK and its preservation. According to Fine and Sandstrom (1988: 41), it is important to make the role of the researcher clear so as to ensure that the people being researched are given a voice in the research process. This rule applies particularly to children and young adults. Fine and Sandstrom (1988) insist on attention to this and other ethical issues before, during and after the research.

Krueger and Casey (2009: 159) affirm the importance of parental permission when conducting youth focus group discussions. This is in keeping with United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) rules on informed consent, as well fulfilling standard adult responsibilities to children and youth (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988: 42-43). These involve:

- ensuring that no child suffers harm as a result of the research;
- recognising one's moral obligations and protecting a child placing itself at risk. This may involve altering the behaviour or situation being researched.

As it is not always possible to interview children or youth on their own, the need for or effect of the presence of other adults must be carefully assessed (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988: 44). In this research, librarians as well as parents were not allowed to attend the focus group discussions, on the grounds that their presence might have influenced the participants' responses. The youth were acquainted with the library as frequent patrons, and the researcher made sure that the participants were comfortable, in familiar surroundings, and felt safe to engage in the discussion.

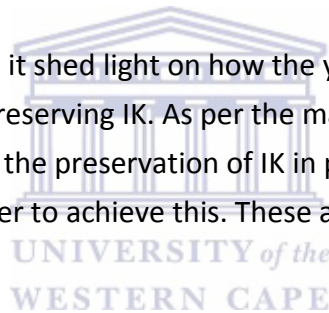
Each person had a turn to have their say and contribute to the discussion, as recommended by Krueger and Casey (2009: 156). This practice is seen to be especially important in the case of children and young adults.

#### **4.5 Data analysis**

ATLAS.ti was used as an analytical tool to develop memos and to support the identification of codes and themes in the data obtained from the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. The interviews were transcribed, which helped the researcher to develop a code list and definition of codes. The transcriptions retained the original and actual words used by participants, rendered verbatim to capture as accurately as possible their feelings, perceptions and attitudes. These were analysed and interpreted.

#### **4.6 Research significance, limitations and biases**

The value of this project was that it shed light on how the youth perceived their belief systems and the importance of preserving IK. As per the main research questions, the research also offered insight into the preservation of IK in public libraries, and into the roles required of librarians in order to achieve this. These are issues on which little research has been done.



There is a sizable literature on the documentation of African and Native American IK, and even on the beliefs and culture of Indians in India (e.g. Gupta, 2010; Soni, 2007). But there appears to be nothing on the IK of the Indian diaspora in Africa. In this sense this is a pioneering study, albeit only exploratory in terms of scope.

The researcher would have liked to interview elders as part of the project, because they are responsible for transmitting traditional values, culture and belief systems to the youth. This was unfortunately not possible due to constraints of logistics, time and cost.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on the research design and methodology of the project, and has outlined the steps taken to conduct the study. It has explained the reasons for the use of focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with librarians in the public library.

The chapter that follows summarises the data gathered, analyses it and presents the findings.





## Chapter Five: Presentation and interpretation of data

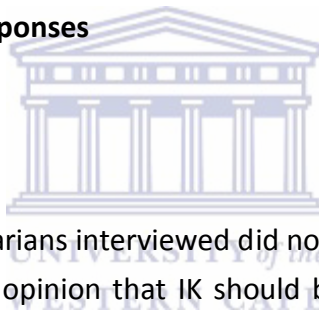
### 5. 1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present and analyse all the data collected pertaining to the preservation of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in the Westcliff, Chatsworth area.

Data collected from the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews is organised into a series of themes depicting how IK was perceived by librarians and youth in Westcliff, Chatsworth.

The presentation of the outcomes of the study includes a selection of verbatim responses from participants illustrating aspects of the themes identified.

### 5.2 Overview of participants' responses



#### 5.2.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Despite the fact that the two librarians interviewed did not engage with IK in their current working roles, they were of the opinion that IK should be documented and preserved. Currently, their roles as librarians include standard library activities such as charging library materials, returns, renewals and shelving. They showed a keen interest in this study and even requested assistance regarding how they might play a more active role in the preservation of IK in their library and the community.

Librarian 1 stated that: *“Chatsworth is made up mostly of Indians and most of them are not clued up about their culture”*. Librarian 1 also stated that: *“you need more information, kids nowadays need to know why they are doing something, and so it is important that it gets down to the kids”*.

Librarian 1 lives and works in Chatsworth and has a good rapport with members of the community. The librarian has been employed by the library since its opening on 07 June 1982, but has no formal library qualification and is therefore unclear as to what technical procedures may be appropriate for collecting and preserving IK. Still, Librarian 1's good relationships with community members, especially elders, put the library in an advantageous position as an “insider” to collect comprehensive and credible information

from community members As proposed in the study's theoretical framework (Martin & Mirraboopa, 2003), insider research and knowledge is advantageous to working with and capturing the experiences of indigenous communities. It became clear that Librarian 1, having forged strong relationships over a period of thirty-five years, has – with appropriate support and training – the necessary charisma and understanding of community protocols to collect and document IK in Westcliff, Chatsworth.

Librarian 2 did not have these many years of community experience, but as a graduate in Library and Information Science, she demonstrated a clear understanding of the topic of IK and its importance. Librarian 2 spoke eloquently about the need for access to IK and the importance of preserving it. This willingness indicates that with appropriate support and training Librarian 2 could also make an important contribution to collecting, documenting and preserving IK in Westcliff, Chatsworth.

Managing access to IK was perceived as a major challenge. Both librarians felt they were not equipped to collect, preserve and provide access to IK. One reason, cited by Librarian 2, is the absence of IK from formal LIS training, while Librarian 1 stated that, *“with proper training, I am sure it can be done”*.

The librarians insisted that they were prepared to undergo further training if this kind of training were to be made available to them.

Librarian 2 concluded the interview by stating: *“when you done with your studies and get results we can find way[s] and see if this can be put into practice because I am interested in IK”*.

Both librarians were unaware of other IK initiatives within the Durban Metropolis. Specifically, they did not know about the Ulwazi programme, which is an initiative run by the Municipal Libraries and the Durban Metropolitan Council. This may indicate that other IK programmes such as Ulwazi are not publicised enough among municipal librarians and affiliates of the Durban Metropolitan Council, including the public libraries in Chatsworth.

Librarian 1 concisely summed it up: *“I am surprised we don't have any centres regarding preserving this knowledge. I would like if libraries could get space for it”*.

Many of the interview questions asked dealt with the preservation of IK and the challenges of working with IK in public libraries. The insights gained from answers to these questions are reported on more comprehensively in Section 5.3, below.

### **5.2.2 Focus group discussions**

The focus group discussions were lively. The older participants were especially eloquent. The discussion in focus group 1 required more probing and prompting by the researcher, but important information was shared by the participants once they felt relaxed enough to contribute. Both groups understood the concept of IK, the need for its preservation, and its importance for cultural continuity.

Two focus group sessions were conducted. The groups were divided by age in order to facilitate considered and coherent responses. Focus group 1 consisted of eight participants within the age group 12 to 17 years. Focus group 2 consisted of eight participants ranging between 18 and 20 years old. There was clear synergy between the researcher and both groups, who understood the concept of IK and the need for its preservation, as can be seen from their responses.

Both the focus group discussions and the semi-structured interviews helped to answer the research questions of this study and make recommendations that align with the literature on IK.

### **5.3 Themes from focus group discussion and interviews**

The most prominent themes that emerged from the interviews and focus group discussions were:

- 5.3.1 Access to IK
- 5.3.2 Preservation of indigenous knowledge
- 5.3.3 Ways of preserving IK
- 5.3.4 Belief systems
- 5.3.5 Religion
- 5.3.6 Globalisation
- 5.3.7 Extinction of IK
- 5.3.8 Hope
- 5.3.9 Recording of IK
- 5.3.10 How is IK interpreted and understood?
- 5.3.11 Skills and training needs of librarians

Each of these themes is addressed in the remainder of this chapter.

### 5.3.1 Access to IK

Access to IK was a recurring theme in the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. Focus group participants agreed that some of them practised IK in their homes in the form of prayer and rituals which are easily accessible with the help of their elders, who explain the prayers and rituals to them. However, they also claimed that in many homes IK was not practised and that no information was available in libraries to remedy this.

Table 1: Examples of how IK is practiced in the home

DATA SOURCE	PERSPECTIVE
Focus group 1 participants	“By praying every morning and night” “By reading the Quran” “We pray before we eat”
Focus group 2 participants	“We wear the Luxmi string, we believe it is good luck” [A red string worn by Hindus believed to bring luck] “It all boils down to rituals. As Hindus we have to know what to do in a ritual”

It is noted that the focus groups associates praying and certain rituals associated with prayer as part of IK. Examples quoted are “why you pray”, “what time of the day are you supposed to pray”, “why do we light camphor or incense sticks”, and so on.

Table 2: Access to IK in the community

DATA SOURCE	PERSPECTIVE
<p>FOCUS-GROUP PARTICIPANTS</p>	<p><i>“If we practise this knowledge then we will know how to pray and do our customs” (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>“It is important for families to pray every day. It is important for parents to instil this in their kids. My parents brought us up to pray daily. We pray because we want to pray and not because of irritation because our parents said so. My parents also explained why we doing a prayer, they took the time to explain to us. I think this is the difference” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“It all boils down to our ritual. As Hindus we have to know what to do in a ritual. It is important, we cannot stand there not knowing. We have to partake. We need to know how to partake in a certain way” (Focus group 2)</i></p>
<p>SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS</p>	<p><i>“It (the knowledge) is embedded in their minds (of the elders in the community) and we don’t have access to it” (Librarian 2)</i></p>

It was established in the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews that the community needed access to IK for general use, like prayer and rituals. They realised the importance of this knowledge and the lack thereof was a major challenge. Interviewees acknowledged that their libraries did not preserve IK, and that the library could often not assist when asked for such information to support projects and school assignments.

Table 3: Accessing IK in public libraries

DATA SOURCE	PERSPECTIVE
<p>FOCUS-GROUP PARTICIPANTS</p>	<p><i>“So if we forget we can always look it up in the library. For example, if we need to do a prayer like our parents did and we forgot how to do it, then we can look it up in a book or on the internet and learn how to do the prayer correctly. But libraries don’t have this information” (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>“I also think access to IK is important because there are certain things they [students] are not sure of and will be able to understand with further knowledge whether it’s the internet, the library or gatherings. It is important to an individual especially with culture because it is where you find yourself basically” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“I think access is important because a lot of people when they doing school projects like children, they usually choose to do it on cultures outside of SA, so why should a learner in Chatsworth do their project on someone on North America when they can about people who live in the same place they live. It would be easier if all the information is in one place, they go to the library spend two hours writing it down, go home and do their project” (Focus group 2)</i></p>
<p>SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS</p>	<p><i>“Having access to IK at all. That is the main challenge in public libraries” (Librarian 1)</i></p> <p><i>“Yes definitely. Something that is not getting attention from libraries from what I have observed. It is something that deserves to be recorded. We need to find ways to record and get this knowledge out there. Someone is sitting there with this knowledge that is so useful. They know something that the youth today don’t know. It is embedded in their minds somewhere and we don’t have access to it. So therefore it is important to record it somehow” (Librarian 2)</i></p> <p><i>“We don’t have access to it (IK) and patrons assume we as librarians are aware of this type of information” (Librarian 2)</i></p>

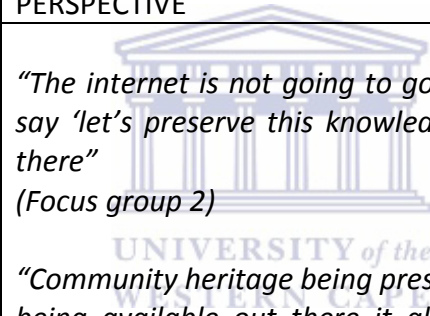
Access to IK was therefore perceived as a challenge by both the librarians and the focus groups, who saw the value of having IK readily available in libraries to fulfil the community’s information needs.

### 5.3.2 Preservation of indigenous knowledge

All the participants in both the focus groups and the semi-structured interviews were asked if they believed there was a need to preserve IK. Their responses provided overwhelming evidence that the preservation of IK was considered to be a vital issue.

One respondent likened IK to community heritage, stating that one’s heritage *“defines one’s community,”* and for this reason needs to be preserved.

Table 4: Preserving of IK

DATA SOURCE	PERSPECTIVE
FOCUS-GROUP PARTICIPANTS	 <p><i>“The internet is not going to go walking around one day and say ‘let’s preserve this knowledge,’ someone needs to put it there”</i> (Focus group 2)</p> <p><i>“Community heritage being preserved because on top of it just being available out there it also defines the community. It would be helpful if it is preserved. It is like the history of that community. Preserving heritage, preserving its culture so that is passed down from generation to generation”</i> (Focus group 2)</p>
SEMI-SRUCTURED INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS	<p><i>“It is actually important knowledge the people who possess this knowledge do not have the resources to get it out there. Maybe some others do not even know how to write down this knowledge so it is important to get access to it and preserve it”</i> (Librarian 2)</p>

Particularly within Focus group 2, the 18-20 year-olds, participants were acutely aware of the positive role that technology can play in preserving IK. They were also cognisant of the negative impacts that technology can have on the youth, for example MTV, dance videos and so on. Furthermore, they believed that technology drew the youth away from practising their religion and culture in favour of what is perceived as a more modern outlook on life.

Table 5: Effects of technology

DATA SOURCE	PERSPECTIVE
FOCUS-GROUP PARTICIPANTS	<p><i>“For example the music videos and the dressing is causing kids nowadays to emulate this. They know all the lyrics to the song but not to the prayer that is recited at Kavady” (Focus group 2)</i>                      [Kavady is a festival celebrated by Hindus]</p> <p><i>“Our community is moving away from our culture and becoming too modern and want to follow modern dressing, listening to music from other countries and are slowly losing sight of our culture” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“Because of this there is too much of focus on internet and technology. Kids want to play games and download movies. Their behaviour is depicting this, which is why the teenage pregnancy is so large” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“Now there is an evolution taking place from normal children playing outside to tablets and phones etc. I feel it will be a problem now that we growing up we more advanced because of technology but we lack spiritual aspects in our life, we lack respect” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“When we were growing up, I am now in University, but I am talking about growing up in primary school we did not have that (cell phones, tablets and so on). But we had better family relationships. We had time well spent with families. Now if you look kids nowadays are either watching TV or on the internet or cell phones and there is less time for families and instilling important values in children. This is where you get parents going in one direction and children in another because children are getting all their education from the TV and internet and not from family time” (Focus group 2)</i></p>

In as much as the focus groups acknowledged the advent of technology as important and unavoidable, they pointed out that the introduction of the internet was slowly drawing the youth away from practising their religion. The term “aam admi” is consistent with this sentiment.



### 5.3.3 Ways of preserving IK

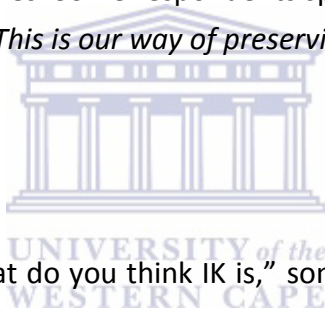
The question – “Where do you think is the best place to preserve this knowledge?” – elicited answers that are quoted in the table below.

Table 6: Where is the best place to preserve IK?

DATA SOURCE	PERSPECTIVE
<p>FOCUS-GROUP PARTICIPANTS</p>	<p><i>“In the library” (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>“At home” (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>“Books” (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>“TV” (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>“Media” (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>“On the internet” (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>“In the library” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“At home” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“I think it should be stored in libraries and also on the internet because some people don’t have access to a library but they have a phone so they can go on the internet and search for this information. I think it is important for libraries because people come here to do projects. Maybe they would want to do a project on their past, so there is information and they can use it” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“Public libraries, mass gatherings, where they can teach kids all the information they need to know about” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“I think it would only become a very viable solution if every library in the country has to do it relating to their area. Once this happens you can learn a lot more about the past and you can make an archive, like on the internet for example. So if you want to do a project about the Malays in Cape Town, you go to your computer, you type it in the archive and everything about their past will come up. Instead of looking in 500 different web pages for a few sentences. And then half of that is wrong. I think that if every library and every bank of information has to keep information about their</i></p>

	<p><i>past and the area they live in; it would help a lot of the people. Even if no one uses it daily, the point of knowledge is not for people to use it daily. It is to be recorded in case someone needs to use it” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“On the internet like Google specifically” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“Museums are nice, but you don’t often find people going to a museum to do projects” (Focus group 2)</i></p>
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Most participants suggested that public libraries could play an important role in preserving IK, whilst others mentioned mainstream media outlets like books, social media and the internet. Some participants mentioned museums as an ideal place for preservation, but were concerned that not many students would frequent museums for school assignments as they preferred the public libraries. Some respondents spoke about writing down rituals or prayer, “so we don’t forget”; “This is our way of preserving IK in the home”.



### 5.3.4 Belief systems

In response to the question “what do you think IK is,” some of the participants made an association between IK and belief systems. This perspective is reflected in Table 6.

Table 7: Associating IK with belief systems

DATA SOURCE	PERSPECTIVE
FOCUS-GROUP PARTICIPANTS	<p><i>“I think it is about our culture, beliefs and traditions” (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>“We are growing up now as adults, we will have kids of our own. It is important to know our indigenous knowledge so we don’t lose sight of our religion, culture and beliefs. So we can instil this culture and beliefs to our children” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“Also religion, culture and beliefs start from home. People need to do research about their families and find out about our grandparents. When I was at school I did this and it was very useful. I learned so much about my grandparents and great grandparents what they believed in and life back then” (Focus group 2)</i></p>

	<i>“As I said before, if you don’t have culture and belief systems in your life then where do you go if you do not know where you come from?” (Focus group 2)</i>
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It was noted that members of the focus groups made a strong association between belief systems and IK. They were therefore able to offer perspectives on what belief systems meant to them, how belief systems had been passed on to them, and what some of the observable impacts of these belief systems have been.

### 5.3.5 Religion

According to the focus group discussions, religion encompasses concepts like norms, values, spiritual aspects, respect, rituals, and traditions. Religion was interpreted by the groups as being part of IK. These are some of the responses to a probing question about IK and what the youth understood by it:



Table 8: Focus groups’ perception of religion and IK

DATA SOURCE	PERSPECTIVES
FOCUS-GROUP PARTICIPANTS	<p><i>“It has to go from generation to generation. Our culture religion must continue” (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>“It is about customs and religion” (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>“As was said, if you don’t have religion and culture in your life then where do you go?” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“So it has to stay alive, we grew up with religious values and culture so it has to stay alive or where do we go from here” (Focus group 2)</i></p>

### 5.3.6 Globalisation

One focus group participant mentioned the concept of globalisation when the group was asked about the possible extinction of IK if it was not recorded. This issue was probed further, producing responses that reflected both negative and positive attitudes to globalisation.

Table 9: Effects of globalisation on IK

DATA SOURCE	NEGATIVE PERSPECTIVES	POSITIVE PERSPECTIVES
FOCUS-GROUP PARTICIPANTS	<p><i>“Now there is an evolution taking place from normal children playing outside to tablets and phones etc. I feel it will be a problem now that we growing up we more advanced because of technology and globalisation but we lack spiritual aspects in our life, we lack respect” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“Globalisation is a form of advertisement. It’s how you analyse it” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“Because of technology and globalisation our community is losing sight of all of this (in reference to losing culture, rituals and belief)” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“I agree with that, it is important because I said it before and I am saying it again you need to know where you come from. You can never forget your roots” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“Some things go against our beliefs so it depends on the person and how they think” (Focus group 2)</i></p>	<p><i>“It can be used to further the knowledge and it can be used to forget about it. In order for it to be furthered someone needs to step up and do something about it” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“There is a time for everything, but religion comes first. This is our guide to life and if lived properly we can achieve greatness” (Focus group 2)</i></p>

The youth perceive religion, belief systems and IK holistically. They see their belief systems as an important part of their lives. While globalisation was regarded as something useful for their studies and learning new concepts daily, it was also perceived as having a negative effect on the lives of the youth. The responses quoted above confirm this.

### 5.3.7 Extinction of IK

In response to the question: “Do you think there is a chance of this type of knowledge becoming extinct or dying?” focus group participants showed serious concern, perceiving the possible extinction of IK as a real threat. The quotations in the following table illustrate this.

Table 10: Extinction of IK

DATA SOURCE	PERSPECTIVE
FOCUS-GROUP PARTICIPANTS	<p><i>“If we don’t talk about this type of knowledge it will die” (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>“If my mum or granny dies then there will be no one to teach us about a prayer at home for example” (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>“If this knowledge is not practised it will die” (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>“If no one records it down it will become extinct because you not going to remember something forever” (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>“I think it can be extinct because there are people who choose to not bother about what happened in the past and focus on making their lives better” (Focus group 2)</i></p>

### 5.3.8 Hope

During the focus group discussions, the notion of hope emerged. It appeared in a serendipitous way, as indicated by the following extract:

In response to the question “Why do you think it is important to preserve this type of knowledge,” one respondent answered that *“People will lose hope”* without any direction in life (Focus group 1).

It was interesting to note that, especially in the discussion involving the 12-17 year-olds, hope was mentioned by the participants, especially in reference to religion. Hope is vital

to people, helping them to navigate their daily lives. The participants tended to see the practice of religion or indigenous knowledge in their homes as a form of hope that all could be well. They appeared to believe that as long as one had religion or belief in the divine one had hope.

Hope spurs interest, strengthens perseverance, and is a motivation for people to believe in a better future and to find a way to attain that future (Huy, 1999: 26). In the focus group discussions, it became clear that the respondents associate hope with religion, cultural continuity and identity. These aspects of IK constituted a guide as to how they should live their lives.

It was also understood that some of these respondents came from disadvantaged backgrounds and saw prayer, rituals, belief systems and rites as a way of transcending their circumstances and reaching out to the Divine.

Table 11: Expressions of hope

DATA SOURCE	PERSPECTIVE
FOCUS-GROUP PARTICIPANTS	<p><i>"By prayer we get hope" (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>"We get a hot meal, go to school, and so on because we pray. Because we pray, we believe and this gives us hope" (Focus group 1)</i></p>

### 5.3.9 Recording of IK

Participants agreed on the need to preserve IK, and that it should somehow be recorded. But not even the librarians interviewed had any idea of how to go about this preservation.

Table 12: Importance of recording IK

DATA SOURCE	PERSPECTIVE
FOCUS-GROUP PARTICIPANTS	<p><i>"If no one records it down it will become extinct because you not going to remember something forever" (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>My mum writes down stuff in a book for us in case we ever need it if she is not around. (When we are grown up with kids of our own). She says we will always know our rituals if we write it down. We started doing this at home. (Focus group 2)</i></p>
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS	<p><i>"It is something that deserves to be recorded. We need to find ways to record and get this knowledge out there. Someone is sitting there with this knowledge that is so useful" (Librarian 2)</i></p>

### 5.3.10 How is IK interpreted and understood?

The following quotations illustrate responses to the question, "What do you think indigenous knowledge is?"



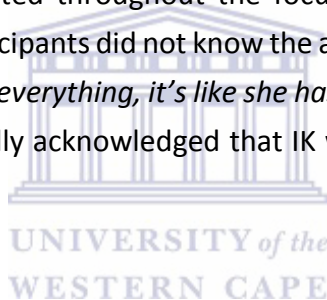
Table 13: Interpretation of IK

DATA SOURCE	PERSPECTIVE
FOCUS-GROUP PARTICIPANTS	<p><i>"my Gran knows everything, it's all in her mind, it's like she has a computer in there" (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>"What you believe in your culture" (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>"It is something the adults know" (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>"I think indigenous knowledge is very important because it is our knowledge" (Focus group 1)</i></p> <p><i>"I think it is about our culture, beliefs and traditions we preserve. That kind of knowledge. It's like the history of the type of culture of a group of people in a certain area. So it's like the history of the Indians in Chatsworth, like how they used to cut cane long ago, not us but the forefathers" (Focus group 2)</i></p> <p><i>"It is very rare to find. It is restricted to a specific community as well. Or region or area for that matter" (Focus group 2)</i></p>

	<i>"In so much as we grow up we never forget what was taught to us by our parents, or in madressa, it's always there in our minds somewhere" (Focus group 2)</i>
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS	<i>"IK is knowledge embedded within specific individuals in the communities like religious leaders, and by the traditional leaders. It is basically traditional knowledge. It is a way that people do things but it is not recorded anywhere. This is what I understand" (Librarian 2)</i>

There is a great deal of literature affirming that IK is embedded in the minds of the elders in a community. It is interesting to note that focus group members and interviewees also made mention of this.

"Embedded" as a notion resonated throughout the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. Some participants did not know the actual term "embedded," saying *"it's in our minds"* or *"Gran know everything, it's like she has a computer up there"* pointing to his or her head. It was generally acknowledged that IK was something that was stored in the minds of people.



### 5.3.11 Skills and training needs for librarians

In response to the question, *"Are librarians equipped to capture, document and preserve IK in public libraries?"* the following answers were received:

Table 14: Do librarians need special skills and training to capture, document and preserve IK?

DATA SOURCE	PERCEPTIONS
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS	<i>"I am not sure" (Librarian 1)</i>  <i>"Yes I think they do." (Librarian 2) "Why do you say this?" [researcher's follow-up question]</i>  <i>"Going back to the curriculum at university it does not concentrate much on this. You have to do a different course altogether. Like if you just do library and information studies, diploma or BA degree level, the main</i>



	<i>focus now is on published works, but when it comes to IK you don't get much exposure. You have to do a course in history or archaeology or other courses to be equipped more to deal with this type of knowledge. Then we need people who work at this and think of published books. You don't have the responsibility to the community that you work for. That the knowledge they possess must find a way into the library so that everyone can have access to this information" (Librarian 2)</i>
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It was interesting to note that Librarian 1 had no idea what skills were needed to capture, document and preserve IK, but showed an interest in learning how to do this. This is illustrated in the Table 15, below.

The researcher probed the interviewees further by asking:

*"Do you believe librarians would like to learn how to collect and preserve IK if such a thing was offered to them?"*

Table 15: Are librarians willing to learn how to capture, document and preserve IK

DATA SOURCE	PERCEPTIONS
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS	<p><i>"If this is provided I am sure the librarians would be able to do this and learn" (Librarian 1)</i></p> <p><i>"Yes I think they would. I know I would like to be equipped with that kind of skills and resources" (Librarian 2)</i></p>

This section directly addresses a sub-question regarding the challenges faced in the preservation of IK.

#### 5.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented the results from focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews conducted in order to answer the research questions. For example one of the interview questions asked "Does the public library in the Westcliff area preserve IK" It was an important question and the answers received clearly states otherwise. Both the focus groups and interviewees gave insight into the research questions which was important for

this project. Themes and codes were identified using ATLAS.ti and these were then used to interpret and analyse the data.

The focus group discussions and semi structured interviews provided evidence that there is a dire need to preserve IK in the Westcliff, Chatsworth community.

In considering the role of libraries the interviewees acknowledged that the Woodhurst public library did not preserve IK. They were aware of the importance of this knowledge, and that the knowledge was available in the community, yet they had little idea of how to preserve it in their libraries for the greater community. This is the biggest challenge the librarians faced.

The interviewees also acknowledged that they did not possess the necessary skills to assist with preserving IK. It was apparent that even with a qualification in librarianship one would need special training and skills to capture, document and preserve IK. The interviewees both indicated a desire to learn how to do these things.

The sub-questions were considered in relation to the youth in Westcliff, Chatsworth, who should be a key beneficiary of IK. Answers to sub-questions were clearly evident in Tables 1, 2 and 12. Partly because of the strong identification the focus group participants made between IK and “belief systems” and partly for reasons of economy, other aspects of IK – such as folklore, shared informal history, community legends, etc. – were not included in the study. Members of the focus groups were able to offer perspectives on what a belief system meant to them, how it was transferred to them and some of the effects that it had on them.

Participants in both focus group discussions spoke of practising IK in their homes in relation to their own specific circumstances.

The following chapter will reach conclusions and make recommendations regarding the preservation of IK in public libraries. The researcher will also suggest directions for further research.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion and recommendations

This project has comprised an investigation into the preservation of indigenous knowledge in a public library in Westcliff, Chatsworth, in the Durban area of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The theoretical framework for the study was derived from Martin and Mirraboopa (2003) and Gupta's (2010) paper, "Ways of knowing, feeling and doing".

The perceptions of both the youth and librarians were sought in order to investigate whether there was a need for IK to be preserved in libraries. The study collected, interpreted and analysed data from focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews.

This chapter offers a conclusion and some recommendations, as well as thoughts for future research on the subject.

### 6.1 Conclusion

The findings addressed the objectives and the research questions that inform them.

The study gathered significant information from focus group discussions and interviews on a community's perceptions of and attitudes towards indigenous knowledge and the preservation thereof. Its key findings contribute to an understanding of how the youth and librarians perceive the concept of IK in Westcliff, Chatsworth, and indicate whether there is indeed a need to capture and preserve IK in public libraries.

The findings are as follows:

- It was evident from focus group discussions and interviews that IK was seen as important by the youth for the community. This answered a central research question.
- Interviewees saw the need to preserve IK in Westcliff, Chatsworth. As librarians they realised the importance of this knowledge and agreed that the preservation of IK was a function that public libraries should perform but were not performing.
- The need for community access to IK was highlighted. It was noted that interviewees were aware of IK in the community but had no idea of how to access this vital area of knowledge. It is important to note that public libraries in the community do not house IK. This is a significant fact for the study as it answered another key research question.

- Digital technology was recognised, in both group discussions and semi-structured interviews, as a means to capture, document and preserve IK. It appears that the principles and procedures proposed by Kaniki and Mphahlele (2002) can be implemented successfully in Westcliff, Chatsworth to capture, preserve and disseminate IK. This is evident in the digitisation work of the Campbell Collections and The Ulwazi Programme (University of KwaZulu-Natal, n.d.; Kaniki & Mphahlele, 2002).
- The focal point in the focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews was that IK, if not preserved for future generations, would become extinct with the deaths of elders in the community. There would be no continuity.
- An expression of hope emerged from the group discussions. Hope is vital to people, enabling them to navigate their daily lives. The participants saw the religion or indigenous knowledge practiced in their homes as a source of hope that all could be well, despite the cultural pressures of modernisation and globalisation.
- It was agreed that the best place to preserve IK was in public libraries.
- Librarians recognised that they lacked the skills and training to collect, document and preserve IK in their communities. But they were willing to learn how to do this, if appropriate instruction could be provided.

The study revealed that there is a dire need to preserve IK in Westcliff, Chatsworth. IK was seen as important knowledge and the youth recognised that if IK was not preserved it would be lost to future generations. It was also clear that librarians needed training and skills to capture, document and preserve IK.

## 6.2 Recommendations

The findings of this study derive from the literature about IK, various additional readings, and, centrally, interviews with librarians and discussions with the youth. On the basis of these findings, the researcher would like to make the following recommendations:

- The preservation of IK in Westcliff, Chatsworth was seen as imperative. The focus group discussions highlighted the fear that with the death of elders in the family and the community, this knowledge would be lost. The researcher proposes the following procedures for gathering and preserving IK for the community of Westcliff, Chatsworth:
  - IK can be recorded in video or audio formats, and this can then be preserved in the community's public library for the community at large.

- IK practised at home can be preserved by the youth writing down rituals, prayer and customs. This should be recorded in a book and preserved for the future generations growing up.
- IK can be collected, documented and preserved in libraries with the assistance of librarians in public libraries. A space dedicated to IK should be considered in public libraries.
- IK can also be preserved on websites created and maintained by librarians in public libraries.
- It is also important to secure the participation of elders in the community for the preservation of IK.

IK differs from Western knowledge and must be managed in ways that may challenge conventional methods of managing knowledge. Ngulube (2002) agrees, but insists that IK should nevertheless be gathered, organised and disseminated systematically. The emphasis here is on a systematic process characteristic of Western systems, not necessarily on applying Western methods to problems and challenges that are unique to indigenous knowledge. Sithole (2007) cites Chisenga (2000), who argues that IK in Africa needs to be codified into print and electronic formats, both audio and video, to make it widely accessible through the global infrastructure.

- From the literature reviewed and from the findings of this study, it is evident that library and information professionals are not suitably trained or equipped to collect, document and preserve IK. It is further noted that the curricula in library schools do not include IK as a subject or an elective. In order to collect, document and preserve IK, librarians need special skills and training. It should be taken into cognisance that IK and its collection and preservation are very different from the collection and preservation of scientific knowledge.
  - The researcher suggests that library schools should investigate the possibility of incorporating IK into their curriculum, geared towards a range of different users.
  - IK can also be offered as an elective should a library student show a keen interest in the subject.
  - Municipalities should mandate librarians working in public libraries to acquire the necessary skills and training to assist in the collection, documentation and preservation of IK in their respective districts. They should also make it possible for their librarians to attend courses in IK in conjunction with library schools

It is hoped that the theoretical framework of this study will be useful to librarians who show an interest in IK. Martin and Mirraboopa's (2003) framework makes sense in the context of the Westcliff, Chatsworth community. One of the librarians interviewed is an "insider" in that he is embedded in the community. He lives and works in the community and has a relationship with members of the community. The librarian and the library are well placed to engage with the community and facilitate IK research. It is important that people who own this knowledge have a say in how this knowledge is preserved and disseminated. The library in partnership with the community elders can ensure the preservation of IK in Westcliff, Chatsworth.

### **6.3 Future research on the subject**

Further research on this subject should investigate the standardisation of collecting, documenting and preserving IK. Organisations like the World Bank, IFLA and LIASA should lay down acceptable rules, regulations and procedures for the capturing and preservation of IK. The value of protocols and guidelines would lie in their securing the standardisation and sustainability of practices, globally, for the capturing, documenting and preserving of IK. At the same time, indigenous peoples should be involved in drawing up these procedures. The discourse on IK continues to suffer from such paradoxes. Perhaps they are inevitable, given that IK is generated in the immediate and intimate context of the lived lives of people, and that it is a dynamic entity that undergoes constant modification as the needs of the community change.

The study clearly revealed IK was not being captured and preserved in Westcliff, Chatsworth. To do so would make a contribution to a potential database of immense value, providing humankind with insights into how numerous communities have interacted with their changing environments (Sithole, 2007: 118). Further study of the subject can be undertaken to preserve Indian IK in Durban and its surrounds. From exploration of the extant literature for this project it was noted that there is an information gap that needs to be filled.

It is proposed that a task team be set up to include librarians working with IK or interested in the subject, indigenous people, youth and proponents of IK. This can take place in association with professional bodies, for example LIASA. This team can work on recommendations, suggestions and procedures for IK.

LIS curricula should also be the subject of future studies. LIS schools need to decide if they want to incorporate IK into the range of subjects offered. The researcher suggests that library schools should partner with professional library organisations like LIASA and IFLA to put appropriate procedures in place.

Most importantly, future studies should concentrate on innovative and effective methods for preserving IK.



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## Appendix I: Map of Chatsworth



## Appendix II: Interview Protocol for Focus Groups

The following questions will serve as a guide for the focus groups.

- What do you think indigenous knowledge is?
- Why do you think this type of knowledge is important?
- Do you think there is a chance of this type of knowledge becoming extinct or dying?
- What will happen if this type of knowledge becomes extinct or dies?
- Do you use IK in your daily lives?
- Why do you think it is important to preserve this type of knowledge? Why?
- Where do you think is the best place to preserve this knowledge?
- Do you have any comments of your own?



### Appendix III: Interview Protocol for Semi-structured Interviews with Librarians

- What do you understand by the term indigenous knowledge?
- Why do you believe there is a need to preserve IK? Please elaborate your answer
- Can you think of any way in which IK is preserved in your library?
- What challenges might you experienced in preserving IK?
- Do you believe librarians are equipped to assist in the collection and preservation of IK?
- Is there a community need for IK?
- How will preserving IK benefit the community?
- Do you have any comments of your own?



## Appendix IV: Letter to Parents



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Letter to parents explaining the study

24 March 2016

Dear Parent

My name is Farhana Yunnus I am a second year Master's degree student in Library and Information Science at the University of Western Cape. As part of my degree programme, I am conducting research on the preservation of indigenous knowledge in Westcliff, Chatsworth in Durban.

To explain further, my research will look at traditional belief systems and practices within the Westcliff community, and investigate if there is a need to capture these traditional beliefs and practices so that they are not lost to future generations. To assist with this research, I would like to have conversations with young people with the 12-18 year old age group. These conversations will take the form of small group meetings of 8 – 10 young people, in which they will be asked to comment on and discuss questions on the relevance of indigenous knowledge today, and if they see the need to preserve these traditional systems for the future. With your permission, I would like to invite your child research. The discussions will take place at Woodhurst and Bayview public libraries.

If you are in agreement that your child can participate, please read and sign the attached consent form. As the consent form indicates, participation is completely voluntary and the identities of all participants will remain anonymous.

I would like to thank you in advance for considering your child's participation in this discussion. You may contact me if you have any further questions and or comments regarding my study, or if you can in any way assist with valuable information to enrich my study. I would gladly appreciate any communication. My email address is [hanaayat@gmail.com](mailto:hanaayat@gmail.com) (0741726712)

Stay blessed.

Kind regards

Farhana Yunnus

Master's Degree student

University of Western Cape



## Appendix V: Assent Form

**Title: “Preservation of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) by public libraries in Westcliff, Chatsworth, Durban.”**

Researcher: Farhana Yunnus

### **Why am I meeting with you?**

I want to tell you about something I am doing called a research study. A research study is when a person collects a lot of information to learn more about something. After I tell you about it, I will ask if you’d like to be in this study or not.

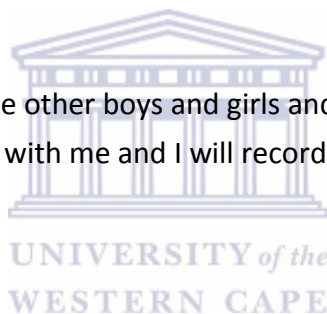
### **Why am I doing this study?**

I want to find out if there is a need to preserve Indigenous Knowledge in public libraries. So I am getting information from lots of boys and girls like you.

### **What will happen to you if you are in this study?**

Only if you agree,

You will sit in a small group of nine other boys and girls and we will talk about indigenous knowledge, you will share stories with me and I will record all our discussions on a tape recorder.



### **Do you have any questions?**

You can ask questions any time. You can ask now. You can ask later. You can talk to me or you can talk to your mom or dad or the librarian.

### **Do you have to be in this study?**

No, you don’t. No one will be mad at you if you don’t want to do this. If you don’t want to be in this study, just tell me. Or if you do want to be in the study, tell us that. And, remember, you can say yes now and change your mind later. You can also decide to leave the study at any time if you feel uncomfortable. It’s up to you.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to be. If you decide to stop after we begin, that’s okay too. Your parents know about the study too.

If you decide you want to be in this study, please sign your name.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, want to be in this research study.

Sign your name here

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date



## Appendix VI: Consent Form: Parents



**Consent Form – Focus Group Discussions**

University of the Western Cape

### **Preservation of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) by public libraries in Westcliff, Chatsworth, Durban**

**Researcher: Ms Farhana Yunnus**

**Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline.  
(If I wish to withdraw I may contact the lead research at any time)

3. I understand my responses and personal data will be kept strictly confidential. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses.

I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the reports or publications that result for the research.

4. As a participant of the discussion, I will not discuss or divulge information shared by others in the group or the researcher outside of this group.

5. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research.

6. I agree for to take part in the above research project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant  
(or legal representative)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person taking consent  
(If different from lead researcher)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lead Researcher  
(To be signed and dated in presence of the participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature



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*Copies: All participants will receive a copy of the signed and dated version of the consent form and information sheet for themselves. A copy of this will be filed and kept in a secure location for research purposes only.*

**Researcher:**

**Supervisor:**

Dr. Anthea Josias  
Department of Library and  
Information Science  
University of the Western Cape

**HOD:**

Dr. Sandra Zinn  
Department of Library and  
Information Science  
University of the Western Cape

## Appendix VII: Information Sheet for Librarian Interview



Dear ...

My name is Farhana Yunnus. I am a second year Master's degree student in Library and Information Science at the University of Western Cape. As part of my degree programme, I am conducting research on the role played by public libraries in preserving indigenous knowledge in the Westcliff, Chatsworth community. The title of my research project is "Preservation of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) by public libraries in Westcliff, Chatsworth, Durban."

My research on indigenous knowledge will focus on traditional belief systems and practices within the Westcliff community, as well as local knowledge within the Westcliff community. I will be investigating how this knowledge is preserved, and if there is a need preserve this knowledge so that it is not lost to future generations.

The objectives of my research are therefore to:

- Find out more about the current awareness of traditional and local knowledge in Westcliff, Chatsworth.
- Find out more about attitudes of the youth towards traditional and local knowledge, and the future preservation of this knowledge.
- Determine if there is a need to capture and preserve traditional and local knowledge in public libraries in Westcliff, Chatsworth.

I am therefore seeking to interview public librarians in the Westcliff community, and would like to request an interview with you. The interview will be a maximum of an hour, and it will address questions on how indigenous knowledge is understood in libraries, whether indigenous knowledge needs to be preserved, what the community needs may be, and the possible roles of the library.

If you agree to participate the interview will be recorded, but will be kept strictly confidential. If you agree to participate, please read and sign the attached consent form. As the consent form indicates, participation is completely voluntary and the identities of all participants will remain anonymous.

Please contact me if you have any further questions and/or comments regarding my research. I would gladly appreciate any communication. My email address is [hanaayat@gmail.com](mailto:hanaayat@gmail.com) and my telephone number is [0741726712](tel:0741726712). You could also contact my supervisors in the Department of Library and Information Science at the University of the Western Cape: Dr. Anthea Josias - email: [ajosias@uwc.ac.za](mailto:ajosias@uwc.ac.za); tel: (021) 959-3651 OR Dr. Gavin Davis – email: [gdavis@uwc.ac.za](mailto:gdavis@uwc.ac.za); tel: 0823358565.

Stay blessed.

Yours sincerely,

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A place of quality,  
a place to grow, from hope  
to action through knowledge

## Appendix VIII: Reflections from Focus Group Discussions

This section will be written in the first person to convey the essence of the discussions.

I introduced myself to the groups as Hana to create a familiar and friendly environment. I did not want the younger groups to feel intimidated by calling myself Miss Yunnus. The idea was for the groups to be relaxed and not feel they are in a classroom situation. During the entire group discussion, group 1 referred to me as Miss or Ma'am. After our discussion we sat around chatting and two incidents left a very poignant impact on my mind and for the study itself.

I asked the group 1, why did you guys keep calling me Miss or Ma'am and not by my name. Now as we all know every group has a leader and a young chap answered, "Miss I was brought up to never call an elder by their name. This was taught to me by my mom. I think this is a type of IK. This my mom instilled this in my brother and I, so by calling you Miss I was merely showing you respect and practicing my IK".

After the group discussions each participant received a goodie bag containing chips, chocolate, juice and a fruit. This was to say thank you for participating. As we sat around chatting, some kids starting snacking on their chips or chocolate and so on. One young person held onto her bag tightly and refused to eat anything. When I asked don't you want to drink your juice or eat the fruit; the young person answered "Ma'am I need to share my goodie bag with my little brother. Mum always says sharing is caring and in our religion we have to share our "Prasad". I think, Ma'am this is also a type of IK.

The older groups referred to me as Miss Hana. I asked why not Hana. In unison it was responded. It a form of respect. "Respect is part of religion and I am practicing my religion by referring to you respectfully because all religions teach us to respect our elders, our elders are our 'Gods'" explained a young man.

These discussions made me realise how important it is to instil simple decorum to kids like respect, sharing and caring for adults. This I believe is where IK stars in the home. As the groups succinctly pointed out these are forms of practicing one's religion and in turn this is a form of IK. Indians are humble without any pretence and working with these two groups I have come to realise how true this statement is; even though their ages ranged from 12-20 years old it made me believe that these kids will one day grow up into beautiful hearted adults in spite of the hardships some come from. These discussions after the group interviews gave me so much insight into these kids, their lives and homes and for this I am eternally grateful. It was indeed an eye opener.