

Reconciliation > REFLECTIONS

What is Indigenization / ReconciliAction at the University of Saskatchewan Library?

Saskatchewan Library Association

May 4, 2018

Panel on "Indigenization in Saskatchewan Libraries"

Presentation by Deborah Lee

Indigenous Studies & Community Initiatives Librarian

University of Saskatchewan

(image credit: reconciliationcanada.ca)

Indigenization / ReconciliAction at U of S, SLA 2018

Introduction

My people
come from

Treaty 6 Territory
(in Alberta)



The Sturgeon River near Onoway

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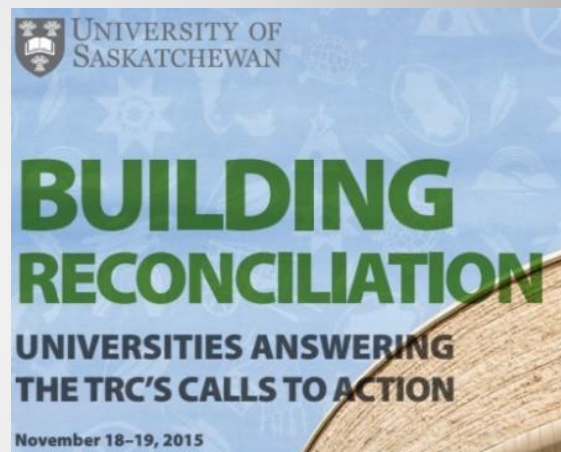
**So where did my interest
in Indigenization and
Reconciliation in Libraries
begin?**

"Aboriginal Students in Canada: A
Case Study of their Academic
Information Needs and Library Use" (2001),
pp. 259-292.



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More recently, in Nov. 2015, the U of S hosted the first Building Reconciliation Forum for universities across Canada. More than 200 participants attended, including 25 Indigenous leaders and Senior Leadership from 14 universities.



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“Education is what got us into this mess;
and education is what will get us out.”

- - Murray Sinclair



- One academic approach to reconciliation:
institute a mandatory Indigenous
Studies course for all students before
they could graduate with their degree.

- Another approach: to include
Indigenous content in all courses.

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Key messages from the U of S Bldg. Reconciliation Forum: Setting a Change Agenda for Governance Structures:

Positions and structures to build reconciliation

- Hire more Indigenous staff and faculty
- Establish fair guidelines for financially compensating Elders and Knowledge Keepers
- Maintain a Council of Elders available for consultation by the whole institution



(image credit: www.ahf.ca/about-us/board-of-directors)

Indigenization / ReconciliAction at U of S 2018

2nd Building Reconciliation National Forum, U of A, 2016

At the start of the U of A Forum:

- A walking stick was presented by the U of S Forum organizers to honour the responsibility of each subsequent Forum to Walk the Talk of Reconciliation, so that Reconciliation does not become all talk and no action.

(image credit:
[Twitter.com/brent_ish](https://twitter.com/brent_ish))



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Key messages from the U of A Forum:
(300 participants, 50+ universities represented)

U of A President, Dr. David Turpin:

- We have to acknowledge our mistakes.
We're going to make mistakes along the way -
we have to be open to that
- Teachings of the Sweetgrass Bear: we are all related; we are all Treaty people; we must engage with each other; developing respectful and meaningful relationships
- Providing structures and support so that everyone can engage in this complex process. Reciprocal relationships.
- We are having conversations that wouldn't have happened ten years ago. I'm optimistic.



Indigenization / Reconciliation at U of S, SLA 2018

Reflections:

What Could Reconciliation Look Like?



"Hire more Indigenous faculty and staff. And don't be afraid when they want to do things differently. Changing the status quo is what reconciliation is all about."

Quote from Ry Moran, CAPAL Conference, 2016

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Reflections:

What is Indigenization at the U of S (as defined by its Indigenous faculty)? A proactive and dynamic process that:

- Respects and understands the value and importance of Indigenous knowledges and practices...and recognizes that academia benefits by valuing and including pluralistic ways of knowing, thinking and doing
- Engages in critical reflection on our colonial history and its systemic effects on Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples
- Operationalizes the TRC's Calls to Action for transformative reconciliation and committing to inclusion of authentic voice and engagement of Indigenous peoples
- Promotes and supports Indigenous visions and aspirations for self-determination through transformative education for Indigenous well-being, growth and prosperity

What is Indigenization? (Dr. Keith Carlson, U of S)

On campus, it's acknowledging
Indigenous knowledges as on par
with other kinds of knowledge.

It is respecting Indigenous peoples
due to their ancestral heritage on these
lands.

It is about making a point of becoming
increasingly aware of or knowledgeable
about Indigenous cultures, histories and world views.



Why Indigenize?

(Dr. Keith Carlson, cont.)

Because:

- we need to live up to the Treaties
- it's enriching and not eclipsing
- it's an opportunity for settler Canadians to acknowledge that Western ways of thinking and learning have not provided all the answers.

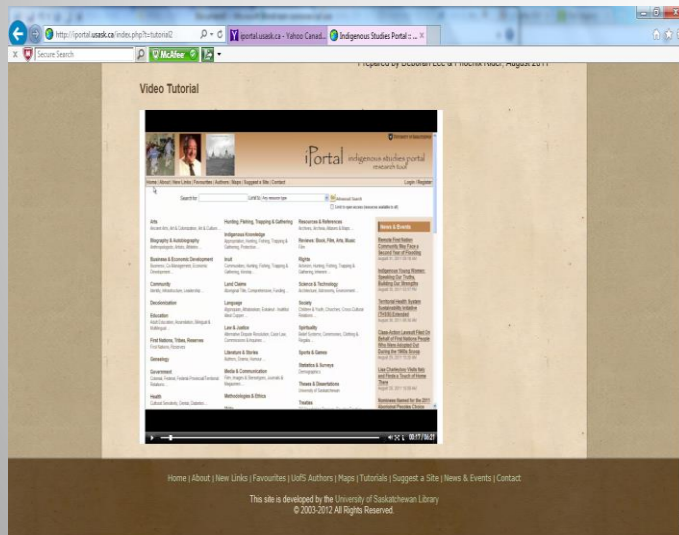


(image credit: BimadjiAawasowin, Institutes for Cultural Affairs Canada)

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Long Road to Indigenization at the U of S Library

Indigenous Studies Portal (2005 - 2011)



Indigenous Studies Portal (2012 -)



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Long Road to Indigenization in the U of S Library

- Through community engagement





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Long Road to Indigenization in the U of S Library (cont.)

Visiting Lecturer: Kateri
Akiwenzie-Damm, First
Nations poet, writer, editor,
activist and publisher, Nov.
2013

Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm
ANISHNABE POET, EDITOR, WRITER,
PUBLISHER, LECTURER AND ACTIVIST




NOV. 4 2013
2:30-3:30PM
RM 102
MURRAY LIBRARY
U OF S


**ABORIGINAL
WRITING AND PUBLISHING**
KATERI'S EXPERIENCES. PLUS A DISPLAY OF HER PUBLISHED WORKS

PLEASE RSVP TO deborah.lee@usask.ca (FOR LIGHT REFRESHMENTS)


SPONSORED BY THE U OF S VISITING LECTURER'S FUND AND THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY



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SWG
Saskatchewan
Writers Guild

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Long Road to Indigenization in the U of S Library (cont.)

Knowledge Keepers Exhibition
of Indigenous Materials
located in the U of S Library
and Archives, in conjunction
with the TRC National Event,
June, 2012, in Saskatoon

(image credit: David Bindle)



KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS

AUTHORSHIP - ARTISTRY - ARCHIVES

EXHIBITION - MAY 7 - DECEMBER 18, 2012

MURRAY LIBRARY



Long Road to Indigenization in the Library (cont.)

- Other community engagement activities:

Saskatchewan Aboriginal Storytelling Months Events
funded through grants obtained via the Library Services for Saskatchewan Aboriginal Peoples (LSSAP) Committee



- (image credits: Deborah Lee and Yvonne Vizina)

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Long Road to Indigenization in the Library (cont.)

- The Library has hired two Aboriginal Interns, one in 2014 and the other in 2016.

Jessica Genereux



(image credit:
On Campus News, U of S)

Danielle Bitz



(Image credit:
Danielle Bitz)

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New Mandate in the U of S Library (since July 2016),
as Lead of a Working Group of a Strategic Action Item:

To develop a strategy to share in the
responsibility of making the Library the best it
can be for Indigenous students



Deborah Lee



David Smith



MaryLynn Gagné

ReconciliAction in the Library Employee Development Program:

- Screening all 4 episodes of the CBC documentary series, *The 8th Fire*, facilitated by Indigenous U of S faculty and community members



- Development of 3 other workshops delivered by Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty and community leaders

(image credit: cbc.ca)

ReconciliAction in the Library Employee Development Program:

One of the workshops was on
Anti-Racism Education for Library Employees
With Guest Facilitators

Dr. Verna St. Denis



Dr. Sheelah McLean



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Two further developments:

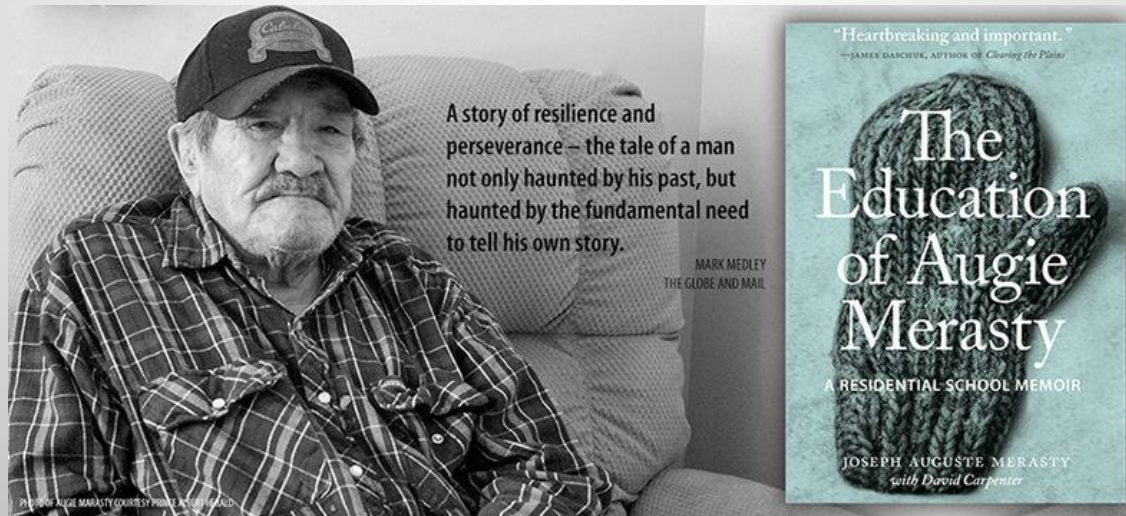
1. ReconciliAction LibGuide:

<http://libguides.usask.ca/c.php?g=634191>



2. ReconciliAction Book and Media Club:

1st Discussion was on *The Education of Augie Merasty*



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- A good outcome is when Indigenization initiatives become transformative:
- Impactful comments on workshop evaluations
- Increased engagement by Library employees on Indigenous Librarianship issues (Eg. reform on subject headings / metadata related to Indigenous materials)
- More inclusive hiring practices

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- **Future Possibilities for Indigenization:**
- According to Pam Palmater and others, Reconciliation is not possible without Justice, i.e. Truth, Justice (or Reparation), and then Reconciliation (from her talk at the U of R Woodrow Lloyd Lecture, 2018)

Good Truths:

Indigenous Peoples are nourished (in mind, body and spirit) by the collective strengths, closeness, love and humor within our communities.

Our identities and languages are directly connected to the land.



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- Pam Palmater on Truth, Justice and then Reconciliation: Sad and Hard Truths:
 - "What Canada has done to us is genocide, not just cultural, but also physical and biological. Canada has met all of the criteria of the UN's definition of genocide."
 - Pam provided examples of colonial violence against Mi'kmaq peoples. In her area of Mi'kmaki, there are "Heritage Days" where they celebrate re-enactments of this happening.
 - "While there may be Native art in your Board Rooms, some people are still celebrating the crimes that have happened to us."

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- Pam Palmater (cont):

Justice: it's action-based. It means: "Stop doing the things that hurt us!"

Examples:

- Stop Indigenous children being taken and put in care. Instead, set up an emergency crisis unit to support the family and community to keep the child.

- Justice for Indigenous peoples means Canada has to root out white supremacist groups, hate groups, anti-women groups, etc., and deal with the problems they've created.

- "The next land acknowledgement of a Minister that I want to hear is: 'I'm standing on the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaki and we've just given back 1000 hectares!'"

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- Pam Palmater on Truth, Justice and then Reconciliation:
- -"Reconciliation comes with the difficulty of transferring land, power & wealth back to Indigenous peoples. There's no way around it. You don't get to check another box."



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How does this apply to Libraries / SLA?

- Hire and retain Indigenous employees. Lots of them, so they can share the work and not feel tokenized.
- Start a scholarship for Indigenous students at library schools and/or tech programs.
- Revitalize/ preserve/ provide access to Indigenous languages.
- Allies need to self-educate. It shouldn't be the burden of Indigenous people to always do the teaching. But be prepared to listen and absorb if we do decide to talk.
- Create safe spaces for dialogue about the tough issues.
- Don't make Reconciliation / Indigenization another colonial project.
- Stand up and call out injustices against Indigenous peoples.

The Goal of Indigenous Freedom:

“I want my great-grandchildren to be able to fall in love with every piece of our territory. I want their bodies to carry with them every story, song, and piece of poetry hidden in our Nishnaabeg language. I want them to dance through their lives with joy. I want them to live without fear because they know respect, because they know in their bodies what respect feels like....I want them to be valued, heard, and cherished by our communities.” - Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

(As We Have Always Done, pp. 7-8)

Ally Self-Education Starter Pack:

- Hubbard, T. & Poitras, M. (2014). *The Land is Everything: Treaty Land Entitlement*. Saskatoon: The Office of the Treaty Commissioner.
- Manuel, A. & Derrickson, R. (2015) *Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-up Call*. Toronto: Between the Lines Press.
- McLean, S. (March 7, 2017). "Anti-Racist Research as Praxis", at the University of Saskatchewan's internal *Building Reconciliation Forum*, Saskatoon:
<https://live.usask.ca/iframe.php?file=/16204/Session3.f4v>
(please use IE or Firefox to view)
- Regan, P. (2010). *Unsettling the Settler Within*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Vowel, Chelsea (2016). *Indigenous Writes: A Guide to First Nations, Métis & Inuit Issues in Canada*. Winnipeg: Portage and Main Press.
- Williams, A. (2015). *The Pass System*. Toronto: V-Tape.