



Indigenous Studies Library Collection Development Toolkit

Authored and Compiled by Deborah Lee, University of Saskatchewan, February, 2023

Brief Introduction:

During the summer of 2022, I sent invitations to about two dozen librarians working in academic libraries in Western Canada to participate in an online survey inquiring about their experiences doing Indigenous Studies library collection development. This toolkit is a result of these survey responses.

In terms of the online survey invitees, all but two responded to the survey, a response rate of more than 90%! In terms of demographics, 32% of respondents worked at small academic institutions; about 38% worked at medium-sized academic institutions; and 30% worked at large academic institutions. About 45% of respondents identified as Indigenous and 55% did not. Also, about 55% were new or fairly new to this work (i.e. 5 years or less experience), with about 30% of respondents having only one or two years' experience. The remaining 45% of respondents had 7 or more years of experience in doing selection for Indigenous Studies. Given the good representation of Indigenous librarians as participants in this survey, the wide range of expertise in doing Indigenous Studies selection represented, and the wide range of sizes of universities represented, I feel that the results generated have considerable validity.

I am very grateful for the fulsome and often thorough responses provided by the online survey participants; these responses exceeded expectations especially given that the survey was fairly lengthy, consisting of 21 questions. The amount of effort and time invested in responding to the survey was substantial and, I think, demonstrates these participants' commitment to doing this work and their interest in seeing the survey results. As a result, I feel confident in the development of a useful toolkit for those who are currently doing Indigenous Studies library collection development and for those who will be doing this work in the future. Many thanks to all who participated in the survey and who contributed to this toolkit. Kininaskomitinawaw! I would also like to thank USask Communications for providing permission for me to include in this document the Indigenous symbols that have been developed over the years.

Note for non-Indigenous readers: This document was prepared with the intention of decolonizing academic library collection development practices, particularly as they pertain to



Indigenous Studies. Principles of Indigenous education and research (eg. Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility, Relationships and Representation as proposed by Kirkness, Barnhardt and others) were used in developing and carrying out the research associated with the online survey and reporting on its results.

A note for all readers: if you are interested in developing an Indigenous Studies library collection development policy, please feel free to adapt this Toolkit so that it works for your library institution, including changes that may be needed to honour your local Indigenous nations, languages, and territory or geographic area. However, I will not be including a Creative Commons License for this document.

I am also including a general note on what is meant when I use the term “collection development” in this toolkit: it also includes collection management issues, such as deselection / weeding practices. Additionally, the term Indigenous Studies and its abbreviation of IS are used interchangeably throughout this document to avoid excessive repetition.

The Toolkit:

The following are practical tips for understanding the complexity of what is involved in doing Indigenous Studies selection and some best practices in doing this work.

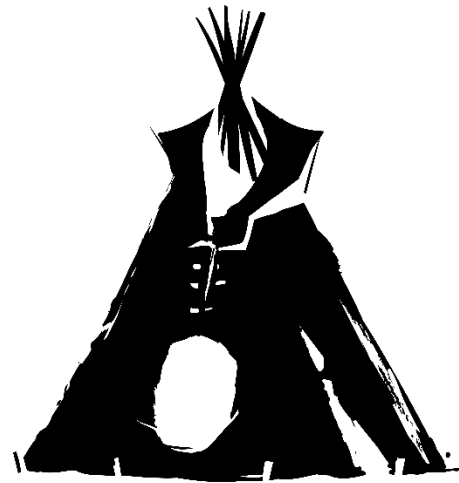




1. **Be prepared to spend more time and effort to do this type of selection work**, primarily because the major commercial and aggregate vendors (such as EBSCO's GOBI and ProQuest's OASIS) do not do a thorough job of offering relevant titles in Indigenous Studies. This sentiment was supported by 21 out of 23 respondents.



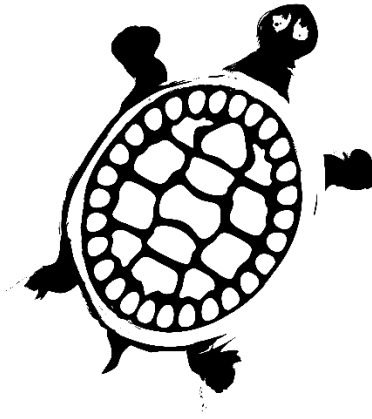
2. **Doing selection that reflects the local context is key** due to the diversity of Indigenous nations, languages and cultures as well as their differences in impacts from a wide variety of colonial strategies, practices and legislation.



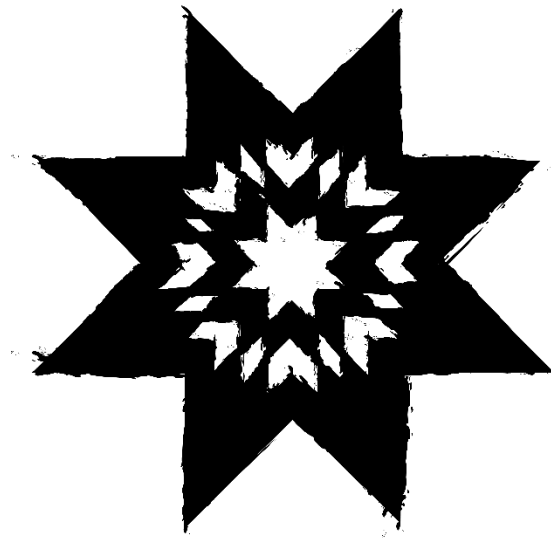
- 3. Understanding the experiences of Indigenous peoples and local First Nations and how they might publish materials** is essential for doing a thorough job of Indigenous Studies selection. Many participants spoke to the need to learn for themselves about what the current and historical issues are in Indigenous Studies.



- 4. Be willing to explore what is being published and produced by Indigenous community members** (and outside of the four walls of the university) is a common theme for finding relevant materials that reflect “the local context”.



- 5. Prioritize the acquisition of materials by Indigenous authors** is also key (rather than work that imposes colonial frameworks and world views into the content). This is not difficult to do given the “explosion” of Indigenous publishing in the last ten years and the large increase of Indigenous faculty members in the academy during this time. This does not mean that non-Indigenous authors’ work relating to Indigenous topics should not be considered for selection. Many non-Indigenous authors who work in this area have done really good work and are considered the best of allies. But those whose work has persisted in supporting colonial policies should be avoided in order to support the decolonization of library collections (which have collected colonial works for more than a century). The idea is to prioritize voices who have been erased / ignored / downplayed / undervalued in the past.



6. Use a wide range of venues (outside of the big commercial vendors) to find out about Indigenous studies materials:

- Indigenous-owned and allied, independent bookstores (such as Massey Books in Vancouver, McNally Robinson on the prairies, Glass Books in Edmonton, etc.). Selection of IS materials can be made easier when bookstores curate Indigenous collections, either physical or online.
- Indigenous-focused distributors such as “Strong Nations” and “Goodminds.com”;
- social media (eg. tribal FaceBook groups. Native Twitter, Instagram, and podcasts);
- Canadian University Presses;
- Indigenous publishers in Canada (such as Inhabit Media, Kegeponce Press, Theytus Books, and Gabriel Dumont Institute);
- allied small presses (such as Fernwood Publishing, Portage & Main Press, High Water Press, etc.);
- community members on-and-off campus (eg. faculty, students, staff, the Indigenous Centre, and beyond, such as Indigenous cultural centres and museums, as well as at powwows and Round Dances, and conferences).



- Indigenous organizations such as the Office of the Treaty Commissioner. Note that other such organizations are listed in Tip #22 (Other Resources).
- Additionally, Indigenous community members will sometimes recommend materials in alternative formats such as zines and films.
- Also, sometimes relevant IS materials can be found via mainstream museums and galleries, and through the mainstream media.



7. Recognize that the **interdisciplinarity / multi-disciplinarity of Indigenous Studies** makes selection a challenge; a selector cannot just go to one or two Library of Congress call number ranges as in other subject area selection. Some examples of the wide-ranging subject areas for selecting Indigenous Studies materials include: climate change, social conditions, traditional ways of living, language revitalization, linguistics, education, literature (including children's literature), water rights, human rights, governance and law, gender-based issues, history, political studies, Indigenous research methodologies, health and well-being, urban studies, traditional ecological knowledge (and other science / STEM areas), food sovereignty, and visual arts.

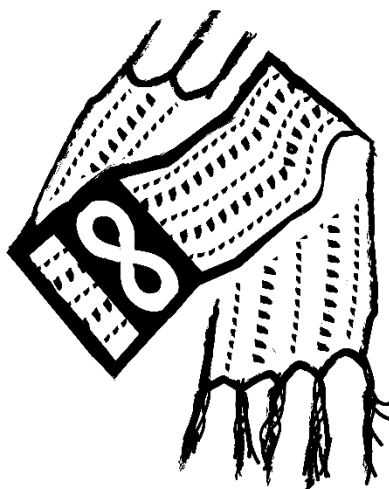


8. Collect for “global Indigeneity”, especially when it supports programs and courses at your institution, such as on works that covered Indigenous publications from Australia, Aotearoa / New Zealand and the United States, but also from Taiwan, Japan (Ainu) and Scandinavia (Saami) or Samiland.





9. Consider the many factors involved when making decisions to select for **electronic vs print format**. These decisions are often not easily made as both have their pro's and con's, particularly for Indigenous Studies materials. However, because of the pandemic, many academic library institutions have a preference (or policy) for selecting e-books, given the shift to online teaching and learning. While e-books provide greater accessibility (especially if there are enough funds to purchase multiple simultaneous user-options), the e-book version is almost always considerably more expensive and many Indigenous Studies titles are available only in print format (especially local context materials). Other criteria for selection of format include whether or not the book will be used for a class (requiring multiple user access), or whether the book is an anthology / edited collection of essays (where readers may only be interested in one or two chapters) – in both cases, the e-book format is preferred. Also, some Indigenous Studies library users prefer electronic formats but others prefer the print format, for varying reasons, including unstable Internet connections at home. Another preference for the print format is that they are used for when the library creates displays for Indigenous-related events and increases visibility of these materials. Thus, there are many considerations that go into making the decision on format. The ideal would be to purchase in both formats if possible. This adds to the cost of doing selection for Indigenous Studies materials.





10. Recognize that Approval Plans for Indigenous Studies materials that are set up with the large commercial aggregators (such as GOBI or OASIS) are generally not effective nor efficient (they regularly pick up a lot of unsuitable materials, thereby often costing institutions more for materials) due to the interdisciplinarity of these materials. On the other hand, if the approval plans are set up with Canadian University Presses, Indigenous publishers and sometimes with allied publishers (such as J. Charlton Publishing, and, as mentioned earlier, Fernwood Press) and local bookstores (one example provided was Iron Dog Books), this can often be an effective strategy for doing Indigenous Studies collection development.



11. Advocating for funding for doing Indigenous Studies selection is an important factor in doing this work. It's important to advocate for funding if at all possible, given the interdisciplinarity of Indigenous Studies ("students from other faculties tend to access these titles as well"). Often times, funds are set aside specifically for faculty and student requests. As well, sometimes other selectors are collaborative in selecting Indigenous Studies materials that fit within their mandates and their fund allocations. In some cases, academic library leadership are providing a "boost" to funding for Indigenous Studies selection, either from grant money, or funds found from general funds to



support special projects and particular courses, or other means. Some related comments include:

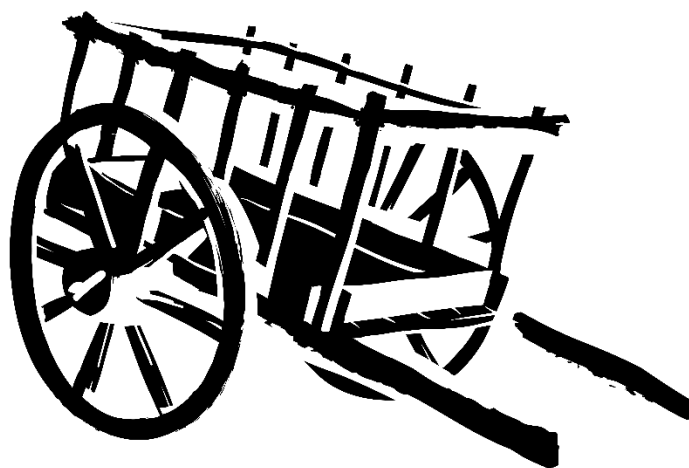
- “Indigenous Studies is a high priority at my institution so it’s well-funded.”
- “My budget has grown exponentially in three years to support this campus-wide demand. We have received a steady increase in funds, so that our on-going Indigenous Studies budget is now on par with...our major programs.”
- “Indigenous Studies is one of the major focus areas of the University and, as such, this area is both well-funded and well-used.”
- “Again, my colleagues use their funds for Indigenous topics and authored books in their areas, so it’s not just my funding required to maintain a robust, relevant collection.”



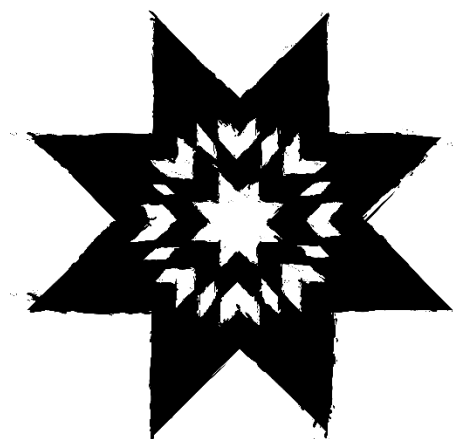
12. Selection of textbooks can be handled in many ways. While many academic library institutions have a general policy to not purchase textbooks (sometimes because editions change frequently), often Indigenous Studies selectors will make exceptions where possible for Indigenous Studies courses. Example: “I’d rather remove barriers than strictly adhere to policy, which has been fine with collections management, by the way.” Others review course syllabi and investigate the possibility of acquiring new required textbooks and some of these are not the “usual” kind of textbook, so they



would be purchased regardless. For instance, many library texts are used as required readings. Others may support textbook and other course reading acquisition “by purchasing a few print copies for course reserves and / or purchasing an unlimited access e-book (when possible)”. Others make exceptions when textbooks are specifically requested by faculty. And sometimes, Indigenous Studies selectors have the autonomy to purchase textbooks based on their experience and knowledge of the courses that are offered. Still others are encouraged to acquire open education resources.



- 13. Selection of IS Reference materials:** Usually these are purchased in electronic format, “both for space and ease of access”. On occasion, a print format may be better, eg. For the Sto:lo Coast Salish Historical Atlas. Some IS reference titles that are excluded are those that are of general interest or at the high-school level. Another comment was to avoid explicitly colonial / oppressive / or stereotyping reference books. Those that are very expensive are usually not acquired unless other funding is available. In some cases, reference materials are selected by instructional faculty and put on course reserves. One tip was to be aware that a considerable amount of reference material doesn’t include content written by Indigenous authors.



14. Selection of IS films is a complex aspect of doing selection work. Very often, selection of films is done by faculty request – sometimes Indigenous instructors take in a lot of films and film festivals and recommend purchases (often Indigenous-led productions) for use in their classes. In some cases, the A/V material doesn't get used unless it's requested by faculty. In other cases, some of the faculty have hosted or produced TV shows and these are acquired by the Indigenous Studies selector. One disadvantage to having solely faculty requests for films is that there isn't a purposeful development of the film collection. Sometimes, films are selected through the initiative of and research done by the Indigenous Studies selectors. They find out about titles from a variety of venues: community, publicity materials, film festivals, local filmmakers, library subject guides, the National Film Board, V-Tape, McIntyre Media, and sometimes they will go directly to the producers of the films. In terms of format, some selectors will determine that DVD format is the best way to go, especially if cost is a concern. Many academic libraries have streaming film services through the National Film Board, Kanopy, and Criterion on Demand. During the pandemic, the preference was usually to purchase streaming access to films. One of the drawbacks to streaming services, however, is that sometimes vendors will remove titles from their collections with little warning and this creates a situation where the librarian is scrambling to find a replacement. For this reason, purchasing a DVD or streaming format directly from distributors or filmmakers is the better way to go; however, the bureaucratic process involved to do that at some academic libraries can be a barrier. Purchasing the streaming format from a distributor



may also be a solution, especially if it can be hosted on the institutional repository but sometimes it will be vendor-hosted. Streaming services can also be problematic if the only option to purchase is for a link that is a lease (3-years) that has to be renewed. One advantage to streaming films is that there is less access to DVD players or disk drives on computers to play DVDs. For those films purchased in physical format, they will usually go to a film collection location but sometimes they are located in with the general collection (i.e. in the stacks).



15. Selection of Indigenous-specific databases can be informed by the following list:

- Some are archival (or primary source)-based and involve one-time purchases:
 - American Indian Newspapers;
 - Frontier Life: Borderlands, Settlements & Colonial Encounters;
 - Indigenous Peoples of North America;
 - the Ruth Fulton Benedict Papers;
 - North American Indian Thought & Culture;
 - American Indian Movement & Native American Radicalism;
 - North American Indian Drama).
- Subscription-based databases that are fairly common include:
 - the Bibliography of Indigenous Peoples in North America;



- Indigenous Peoples North America;
 - American Indian Histories & Culture;
 - Informit Indigenous Collection
- A few databases are open access (note that some derive from Canadian federal government departments):
 - Treaties, Surrenders & Agreements (LAC);
 - LLMC Digital Indigenous Law Portal;
 - the Blackfoot Digital Library;
 - Our Legacy: Material Relating to First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples
 - the Yukon Biodiversity Database;
 - White Mountain Apache Collection;
 - First Nations Gazette and
 - the Native Health Database (U.S.)
 - Additionally, some lesser-known Indigenous specific databases include:
 - the First Nations, Métis & Inuit Playlist – Secondary (McIntyre Media);
 - the George and Joanne MacDonald Northwest Coast Image Archive;
 - Arctic & Antarctic Regions;
 - Global Commodities: Trade, Exploration & Cultural Exchange (includes holdings from the Hudson's Bay Company Archives).
 - Some respondents noted the problematic metadata that is often generated by database vendors to describe their content with varying degrees of responsiveness to complaints about the inappropriateness / offensiveness / outdatedness of their metadata.
 - Some respondents also included the more general or interdisciplinary databases that include considerable Indigenous content, such as America: History & Life, Alternative Press Index, ERIC, MLA International Bibliography, etc.



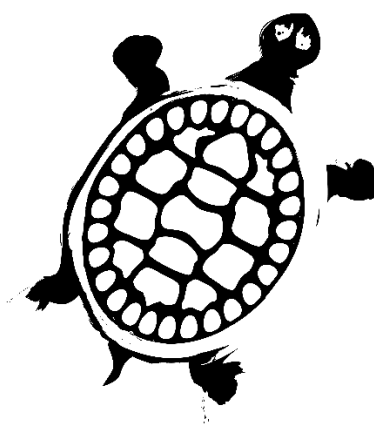
16. What about canceling an Indigenous Studies database? At most institutions, it is unlikely that they would cancel an Indigenous Studies database. One rationale provided was to argue for retaining a low-usage database in IS because it may reflect a temporary shift. Another rationale is that other databases would likely be cut before any IS ones, especially for those whose IS department is steadily growing. The need to enhance Indigenous collections is high priority.





17. Selecting duplicate copies of Indigenous Studies titles may be dependent on local policy. Many academic libraries have a policy for not selecting duplicate copies of titles in any discipline; however, some selectors have options to select for both print and electronic copies of titles, particularly for Indigenous Studies. There are several reasons for this:

- faculty and students request both formats;
- duplicate copies are often well-used at several branches of the academic library or at regional campuses, and a copy in Special Collections is also sometimes warranted (especially those by local authors);
- those titles that are expected to have high demand (which is the case for many Indigenous Studies titles);
- if a title is only available in print and there is a request for multiple copies to be placed on reserve for course readings.
- Sometimes, a selector will need to make a case for purchasing duplicate copies; other times, the selector has the authority to make the decision to select multiple copies.

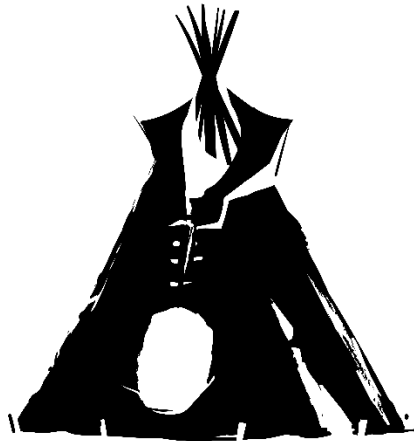


18. Develop strategies for de-selection / weeding of Indigenous Studies materials that have inappropriate / offensive / outdated / or racist content. It is likely that all academic libraries house Indigenous Studies books that have this type of content – Indigenous community members may have already contacted selectors about these problematic works. A rule of thumb is to be aware that there are materials like this in every



collection. Selectors may be asked to deal with these materials but may be unsure of what to do. In these cases, it may be important to remove them from the stacks and place them in a closed-stacks area, such as in Special Collections, so that these materials are not thought to be “speaking the truth” for those who are doing research early in their academic journeys and wanting to quote from these books. Most librarians would not want to destroy these materials because they have historical value, i.e. they are proof of the values and beliefs of western researchers from a historical perspective. An exception would be to possibly repatriate to the communities being researched those items that have content that should never have been shared with settler Canadians. It might also be appropriate to consult with Indigenous community leaders and Knowledge Keepers to seek guidance on how to handle any problematic materials that are identified. Another possibility is to indicate if a book is considered problematic with a note that states “Ownership is not endorsement”. Other options may be to remove the items to an off-campus storage facility (if one exists). As for items that have not been identified as problematic, some that have not circulated in ten years or more are also removed from the stacks and then discarded or destroyed or dealt with in other ways. In the case of obsolete formats such as VHS tapes, sometimes these can be reformatted to a streaming format, following the process provided by the Copyright Act of Canada exceptions for libraries. The following is a comment to consider regarding the impact of not weeding:

“Risky but important. Some old titles are so outdated and frankly racist. We keep some things because of COPPULSPAN, but I worry that students who browse will find them on the shelves and use them, thinking that is all there is because all the good stuff is out on loan.” [Note that this quote was from a non-Indigenous participant.]



19. Other issues: If a selector for Indigenous Studies does not have subject expertise, there needs to be accommodations made to assist in providing professional development opportunities to develop some of this expertise. This may not be easy to do, especially if the selector wears many other hats (including other selection areas or administrative responsibilities) – in these cases, there is a general unease or uncertainty in not knowing if they are doing a good job of selection or not. Some academic librarians have grown considerably in their awareness of the importance of doing a thorough job of Indigenous Studies selection, where selectors for many disciplines are selecting Indigenous materials in many disciplines.





20. Successes in doing IS selection: These are many and are organized into the following categories.

Collections and budget growth: Substantial growth in the IS collection (including databases) is considered a success, especially for local context materials and especially over the last ten years (being overwhelmed by all the options to select is a welcome challenge). Sometimes a new branch or collection is created in order to support various aspects of Indigenous Studies - it's also a success in that this new collection can challenge library users to think about different perspectives (eg. Indigenous folklore can now be seen as Indigenous Knowledge). As well as prioritizing material written by Indigenous authors. Others were able to advocate successfully for a larger budget, not only for their own selections but for other disciplines to purchase Indigenous materials that fit with their mandates.

Happy Indigenous Studies Library Users: it's very fulfilling to know that community members appreciate encountering materials that resonate deeply. Being able to acquire materials that are unexpected in academic libraries (such as materials produced by a local youth organization) is a success, even though these kinds of materials are a challenge "to navigate bureaucratically". When library users provide positive feedback on the collection and circulation of that collection is steady, that's a success. One participant said it best: "We have many comments from professors saying, 'I looked everywhere for this book, and turns out it was here all along!'"

Personal and Professional Growth: Developing local relationships which leads to surfacing and acquiring unique and locally published resources is a huge success because it connects students and other users to knowledge relevant to their identities. Developing relationships with the Indigenous campus community has provided some selectors with an informed approach to weeding and donation assessment. The following comments demonstrate some of the personal growth that has evolved from doing Indigenous Studies selection:

- "I enjoy it the most out of all my selection!"
- "I really appreciate the people-to-people interactions and constant growth that it engenders in myself and those with whom I work."

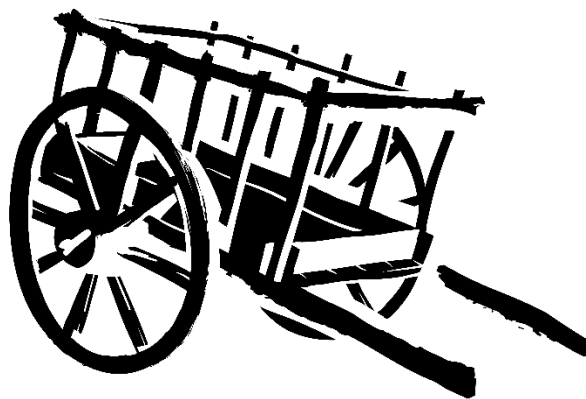


- “I have many liaison assignments that include collections work. Indigenous Studies is the most interesting area and it transcends my professional work. I have a growing home library of Indigenous Studies books that I’m in the process of reading.”



21. Concluding thoughts / tips on doing Indigenous Studies selection:

- “Seven years in, it’s been a powerful learning journey. The multifaceted nature of collecting in this area has shaped my understanding of collection development.”
- “It is an absolutely huge job, especially when combined with another subject area or operational duties.”
- “Acquisition is one thing, but I wanted to mention the importance of promoting the materials in the places where they will be seen and used and help create wider understanding of the content.”
- “Relying only on evidence-based acquisition and approval plans is highly risky [for doing Indigenous Studies selection].”



22. Other resources:

Institutional documents provided by respondents:

University of Manitoba LibGuide on their graphic novel collection:

<https://libguides.lib.umanitoba.ca/mazinbiige>

Vancouver Island University: Recommendations for Guidelines on Acquisitions, Retention and Deselection of Information Related to Indigenous Peoples, Communities and Knowledges: https://library.viu.ca/ld.php?content_id=36195692

Kwantlen Polytechnic University Library Strategic Plan (in particular, see Goal 3 re Indigenization):

https://www.kpu.ca/sites/default/files/Library/KPU%20Library%20Strategic%20Plan%20Draft_Final_0.pdf

University of Regina policy for purchasing textbooks:

<https://library.uregina.ca/borrowing/textbooks>

Simon Fraser University collection development policy for the Indigenous Curriculum Resource Centre: <https://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/academic-integrity/indigenous-initiatives/icrc/icrc-collections>

UBC list of Aboriginal Studies databases:

<https://guides.library.ubc.ca/aboriginalstudies/articlesanddatabases>



U of Manitoba, Indigenous Studies Databases libguide :

<https://libguides.lib.umanitoba.ca/c.php?g=297503&p=1985757>

U of Regina list of Indigenous Studies databases:

<https://library.uregina.ca/az.php?s=116170>

Vancouver Island University list of interdisciplinary databases:

<https://library.viu.ca/az.php?s=39832>

Simon Fraser University list of databases relevant for Indigenous Studies:

<https://databases.lib.sfu.ca/browse?subjects=Indigenous+Studies>

U of Regina, Duplicate Copies policy, Section 2.2 of the General Collections Policy:

https://library.uregina.ca/general_collections_policy

Kwantlen Polytechnic University LibGuide for Indigenous Information Literacy:

<https://libguides.kpu.ca/indigenous/indigenousinformationliteracy>

Non-comprehensive list of lesser-known Indigenous content provided by respondents:

Gabriola Museum: https://gabriola-historical-and-museum-society.square.site/product/snuneymuxw-history-written-in-places-and-spaces-geraldine-manson-c-tasi-a/1626?cp=true&sa=false&sbp=false&q=false&category_id=2

Voices: Indigenous Women on the Frontlines (online magazine):

<https://www.voicesfrontlines.com/>

Kci-Niwesq: Native Women's Association of Canada Magazine: <https://nwac.ca/kci-niwesq>

MÁKOOK PI SÉLIM: BIV's Indigenous Business Magazine:

<https://biv.com/magazine/makook-pi-selim-bivs-indigenous-business-magazine-2021>

Blackfoot Digital Library: <https://www.blackfootdigitallibrary.com/digital/collection/bdl>

Book about the Regina Indian Industrial School: https://casls-primo-prod.hosted.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/f/2k7505/01CASLS_REGINA_ALMA21139688040003476