

## University of Alberta Libraries Opens Traditional and Indigenous Healing Collection

*Sandy Campbell*

On October 26, 2010, Sundance Chief and Assistant Professor of Medicine and Dentistry, Clifford Cardinal, cut a red ribbon to formally open the University of Alberta Libraries Traditional and Indigenous Healing Collection. Assisting with the formalities were academic and practitioner leaders in the field of traditional and indigenous healing, as well as library representatives.

The Opening Ceremony included a Traditional Blessing by Clifford Cardinal, speeches from Dr. Joel Wilbush, Emeritus Adjunct Faculty member, Dr. Earle Waugh, Director of the Centre for Cross Cultural Health and Healing, Dr. Steven Aung, traditional Chinese medicine practitioner and Clinical Professor in the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry and Mary-Jo Romaniuk, Acting Chief Librarian of the University of Alberta. The Ceremony closed with an Honour Song from Lakota healer Keith Horse Looking of the St. Francis, South Dakota.

The Traditional and Indigenous Healing Collection, located in the John W. Scott Health Sciences Library, is designed to give students and faculty the opportunity to augment their studies of western healing systems with knowledge of traditional and indigenous practices. In particular, students who are planning international electives will find this collection useful. The collection is also open for Elders and members of the community to use on-site.

While the Collection is designed to be world-wide in scope, it currently has two strengths. The first is in North American Indigenous healing. The core of this part of the collection was donated by the University of Alberta Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry's Centre for Cross-Cultural Health and Healing.

The Indigenous collection includes not only trade books, such as the classic [Coyote Medicine](#) by Lewis Mehl-Madrona, but also government publications and grey literature such as [Traditional Dene Medicine Database](#) (print), which contains transcripts of elders' descriptions of their healing methods.

The second area of strength is in Oriental healing. This Collection is being developed through a generous donation by emeritus faculty member, Dr. Joel Wilbush, who at age 93, is still passionate about complementary healing methods. The books, many of them bilingual, are being ordered through specialized dealers in Beijing, China. Among those acquired are the six volumes of the [Compendium of Materia Medica](#), a standard work in Oriental plant-based healing.

For the opening of the collection, related materials from the Rawlinson Rare Book Collection were also displayed, including Christi Belcourt's [Medicines to Help Us: traditional Metis plant use](#) and a reproduction of the 15<sup>th</sup> century herbal, [The Book of Simple Medicines](#), which contains exquisite medieval botanical illustrations.

The Healing Collection is non-circulating. The space has comfortable seating for people who just want to come in and explore the collection, as well as tables where small study groups can meet. Next to the space is a media viewing room, where videos from the collection can be viewed. A web-guide to electronic collection in Traditional and Indigenous Healing is under development.



*Users have a comfortable and welcoming space in which to study traditional and indigenous medicine.*