

# Decolonizing Description

## Changing Metadata in Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

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Netspeed 2017

*“The University of Alberta  
acknowledges that we are  
situated on Treaty 6  
territory, traditional lands of  
First Nations and  
Métis people”.*

# *Setting the Stage*

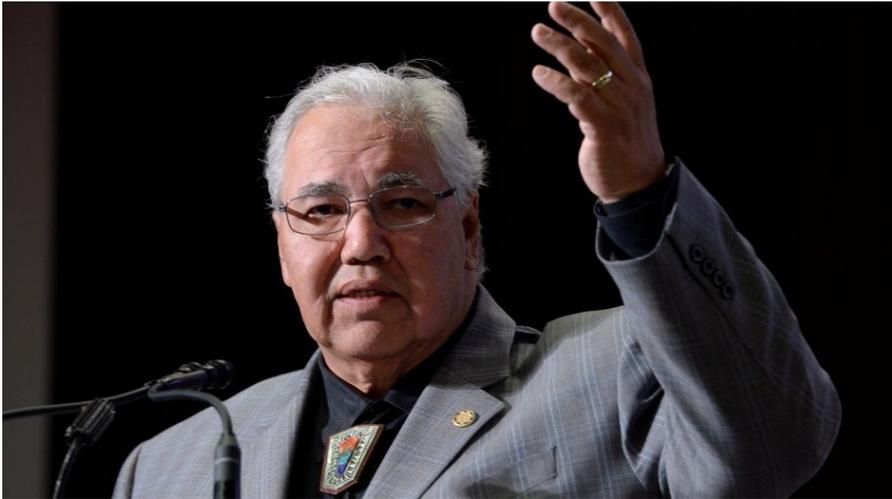


Photo: Adrian Wyld/Canadian Press

“Education is what  
got us here and  
education is  
what will  
get us out”

*(Justice Murray Sinclair, Chair, Truth  
and Reconciliation Commission)*

***The University of Alberta is “committed to respectful relations with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples” and will “develop, in consultation and collaboration with internal and external community stakeholders, a thoughtful, respectful, meaningful, and sustainable response to the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission”.***

“For the Public Good”, <http://bit.ly/2hcYXPB>



Photo: Andy Grabia

**“The CFLA Truth and Reconciliation Committee exists to promote initiatives in all types of libraries to advance reconciliation by supporting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action and to promote collaboration in these issues across the Canadian library communities”**

*(CFLA Indigenous Matters Committee Mandate)*

- **First Nations Information Connection**
- **Personal Librarian Program**
- **Indigenous Internship Program**
- **Traditional Knowledge and Cultural Awareness for Library Staff**



Photo: Anne Carr-Wiggin

# *Unsettling our Practice*

# Decolonizing Description Working Group (DDWG)

***To investigate, define and propose a plan of action for how UAL can more accurately, appropriately, and respectfully represent Indigenous peoples and contexts through our descriptive metadata practices.***

# DDWG Membership

- **Sharon Farnel** (Metadata Coordinator, Chair)
- **Ian Bigelow** (Cataloguing Coordinator)
- **Anne Carr-Wiggin** (UAL Indigenous Initiatives, NEOS Manager)
- **Debbie Feisst** (Public Service Librarian, HT Coutts Library)
- **Denise Koufogiannakis** (Associate University Librarian for Bibliographic Services, Access Services, Collection Strategies)
- **Kayla Lar-Son** (Indigenous Intern)

# Indigenous Communities in Alberta

Alberta is home to many diverse Indigenous communities, including Blackfoot (Niitsítapi), Cree (Nêhiyaw), Dene, Nakoda (Stoney), Saulteaux (Anishinaabe). There are **45 First Nations** in **three Treaty areas** (Treaties 6, 7 and 8), as well as other groups who have not signed treaties. The most commonly spoken First Nations languages are **Blackfoot, Cree** (mainly Plains Cree but some Woods Cree), **Chipewyan, Dene, Sarcee and Stoney** (Nakoda Sioux). Métis people live throughout the province, including in the Métis Settlements. In Alberta the Indigenous languages spoken by Métis people include **Cree and Michif**.



Image: Wikimedia Commons

*“uplifting the whole people”*

— HENRY MARSHALL TORY, FOUNDING PRESIDENT, 1908

- challenges of describing Indigenous materials with **existing, inadequate schemas**
- foundations of **Indigenous knowledge organization** compared to current practice
- appropriate subject access and descriptive practices are a **social justice issue** and a **moral imperative**
- need for **relationship building** in the creation of descriptive metadata

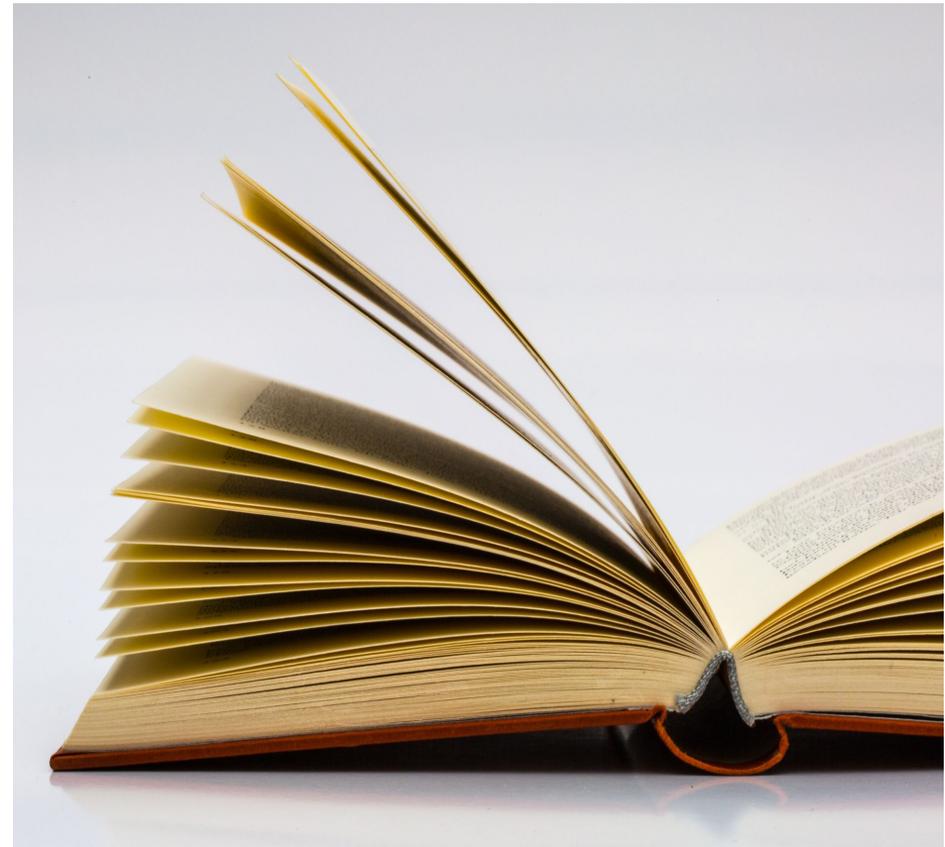


Image: Pexels (<https://goo.gl/images/5eMAUs>)



Image: Pixabay (<https://pixabay.com/photo-1719479/>), CC0

## Local/Internal

- UAL: Archives, Digital Repositories, Digitization
- UA: students, alumni

## External

- University of British Columbia
- Association of Manitoba Archives
- Library and Archives Canada
- Vendors (OCLC, Proquest)

LCSH\_changes\_in\_MAIN\_FinalDraft\_2016\_04\_12.xls ☆ 📁

File Edit View Insert Format Data Tools Add-ons Help [Last edit was seconds ago](#)



Current LCSH

A	B
<b>Current LCSH</b>	<b>Change to... OR delete</b>
Abused Indian children	Abused Indigenous children
African Americans--Relations with Indians	African Americans--Relations with Indigenous peoples
Algonquian Indians	Algonquians
Algonquian Indians--First contact with Europeans	Algonquians--First contact with Europeans
Algonquian Indians--Folklore	Algonquians--Folklore
Algonquian Indians--Religion	Algonquians--Religion
Algonquian Indians--Social life and customs	Algonquians--Social life and customs
Algonquian mythology	DELETE
Allotting agents (Indian allotments)	Allotting agents (Indigenous allotments)
American drama--Indian authors	American drama--Indigenous authors
American fiction--Indian authors	American fiction--Indigenous authors
American literature--Indian authors	American literature--Indigenous authors
American poetry--Indian authors	American poetry--Indigenous authors
American prose literature--Indian authors	American prose literature--Indigenous authors

- **5,374,506 UA titles**
- **62,459 identified with relevant subjects**
- **9149 unique headings identified**

=260 \1\$a[Minneapolis] :\$bMilkweed Editions,\$c2015.

=300 \1\$a1 online resource (312 pages)

=336 \1\$a text\$btxt\$2rdacontent

=337 \1\$a computer\$bc\$2rdamedia

=338 \1\$a online resource\$bcr\$2rdacarrier

=506 \1\$a Access restricted to authorized users and institutions.

=520 \1\$a "A novel about the role of stories in our lives, those we tell ourselves about ourselves and those we agree to live by." Globe and Mail  
When Franklin Starlight is called to visit his father, he has mixed emotions. Raised by the old man he was entrusted to soon after his birth, Frank is haunted by the brief and troubling moments he has shared with his father, Eldon. When he finally travels by horseback to town, he finds Eldon on the edge of death, decimated from years of drinking. The two undertake difficult journey into the mountainous backcountry, in search of a place for Eldon to die and be buried in the warrior way. As they travel, Eldon tells his son the story of his own life—from an impoverished childhood to combat in the Korean War and his shell-shocked return. Through the fog of pain, Eldon relates to his son these desolate moments, as well as his life's fleeting but nonetheless crucial moments of happiness and hope, the sacrifices made in the name of love. And in telling his story, Eldon offers his son a world the boy has never seen, a history he has never known.

=588 0\1\$a Print version record.

=650 \0\$a Storytelling\$vFiction.

=650 \0\$a Fathers and sons\$vFiction.

=650 \0\$a Interpersonal relations\$vFiction.

=650 \0\$a Indians of North America\$vFiction.

=650 \17\$a Fathers and sons.\$2fast\$(0)(OCoLC)fst00921899

=650 \17\$a Indians of North America.\$2fast\$(0)(OCoLC)fst00969633

=650 \17\$a Interpersonal relations.\$2fast\$(0)(OCoLC)fst00977397

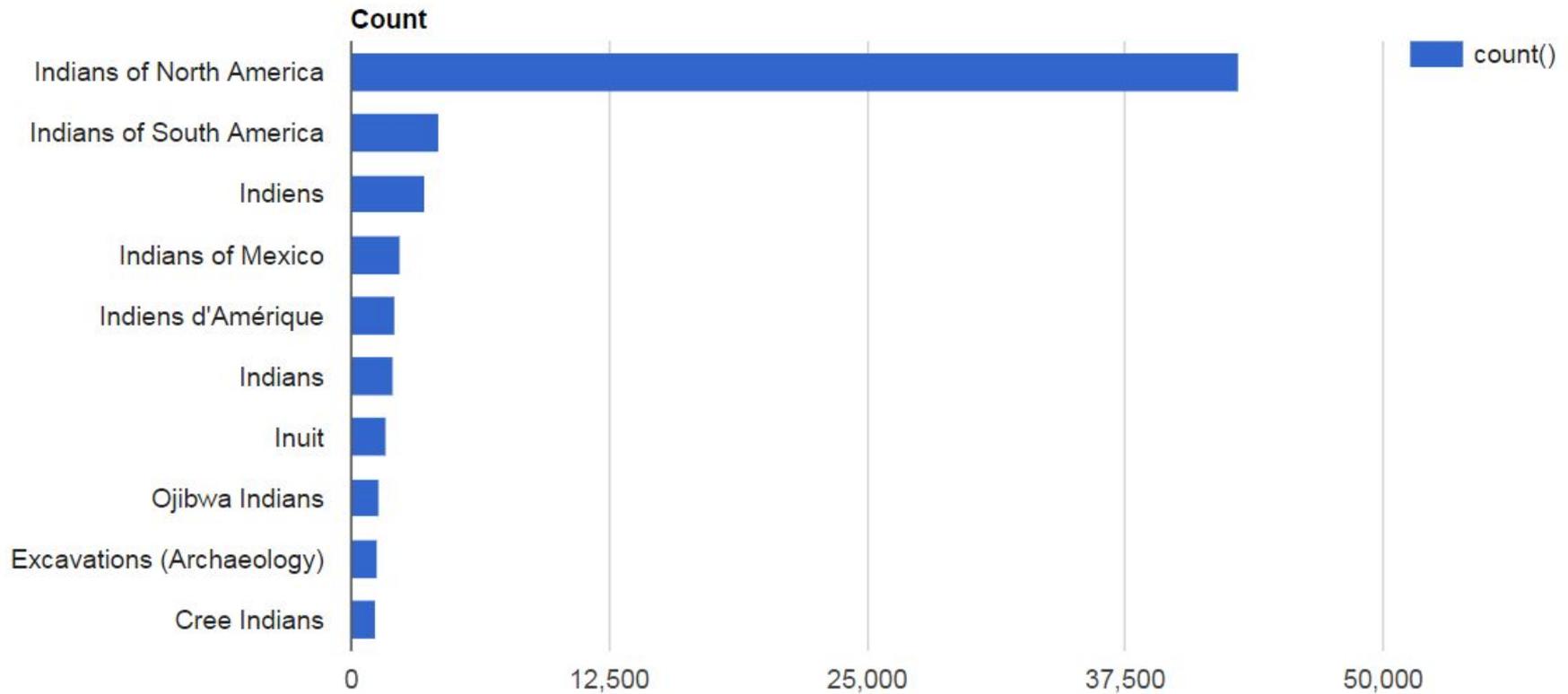
=650 \17\$a Storytelling.\$2fast\$(0)(OCoLC)fst01134169

=651 \0\$a British Columbia\$vFiction.

=651 \17\$a British Columbia.\$2fast\$(0)(OCoLC)fst01205265

=655 \17\$a Fiction.\$2fast\$(0)(OCoLC)fst01423787

# Subject Headings by Count



*“uplifting the whole people”*

— HENRY MARSHALL TORY, FOUNDING PRESIDENT, 1908

# Existing Workflows: ILS



Image: WinterforceMedia (<https://goo.gl/images/qpAsd1>), Public Domain

## Resource description

- Original
- Copy
- Vendor metadata review

## Automated control maintenance

- Review
- Automated processes

- **5,000 Peel records identified**
- **1200 ERA records identified**



<input type="radio"/> indian art--north america	Indians of North America--Alberta--Education.	15
<input type="radio"/> indian dance--north america	Indians of North America--Canada--Education.	13
<input type="radio"/> indian reservations	Tlingit Indians	12
<input type="radio"/> indians of north america	Clothing & dress	11
<input type="radio"/> indians of north america--alberta	People	11
<input type="radio"/> indians of north america--alberta--residential schools	medicine	8
<input type="radio"/> indians of north america--alcohol use	Alberta	5
<input type="radio"/> indians of north america--art	Indians in literature.	5
<input type="radio"/> indians of north america--attitudes	Alberta--Antiquities.	4
<input type="radio"/> indians of north america--british columbia	Cree Indians--Education.	4
<input type="radio"/> indians of north america--british columbia--languages	infants	4
<input type="radio"/> indians of north america--british columbia--residential schools	Antiquities	3
<input type="radio"/> indians of north america--canada--newspapers	Archaeology	3
	Artifacts	3
	Eskimo Prehistory	3
	History	3
	Indian Prehistory	3
	Indian philosophy--North America.	3
	Indians of North America--Alberta--Government relations.	3
	Indians of North America--Alberta.	3

# Existing Workflows: Local Repositories

## Resource description

- Original created by UAL staff
- Original created by content contributors
- Derived from other sources
- Small-scale projects with vendors

## Quality assurance

- In-house review and update on a project basis



Image: Strobilomyces, 2012, <https://goo.gl/images/622soQ>

- That UAL take the lead on working with Indigenous communities and partners to develop revised subject headings reflective of the **Alberta** and **appropriate Northern contexts**.
- That UAL **engage an individual** to coordinate and conduct consultation and outreach which is groundwork critical to the success of moving forward with this project.
- That UAL **retroactively apply** revised subject headings to appropriate library resources, including cataloguing records within the ILS, and metadata applied to the institutional repository, archives, and locally digitized collections.
- That going forward, the same approved subject headings will be **applied to new content** added to our library resources.

# *Decolonizing Description*

# Current Work



Image: Pixabay (<https://pixabay.com/photo-386673/>), CC0

- **community consultation**
- **building new relationships**
- **strengthening existing relationships**
- **listening and learning**

# Things to Consider

## Multiple processes needed

- metadata in different formats (e.g., MARC, XML)
- metadata in different systems (e.g., ILS, IR)

## Choice of metadata element for coding

- e.g., 6xx #7 \$2

## Developing procedures and tools

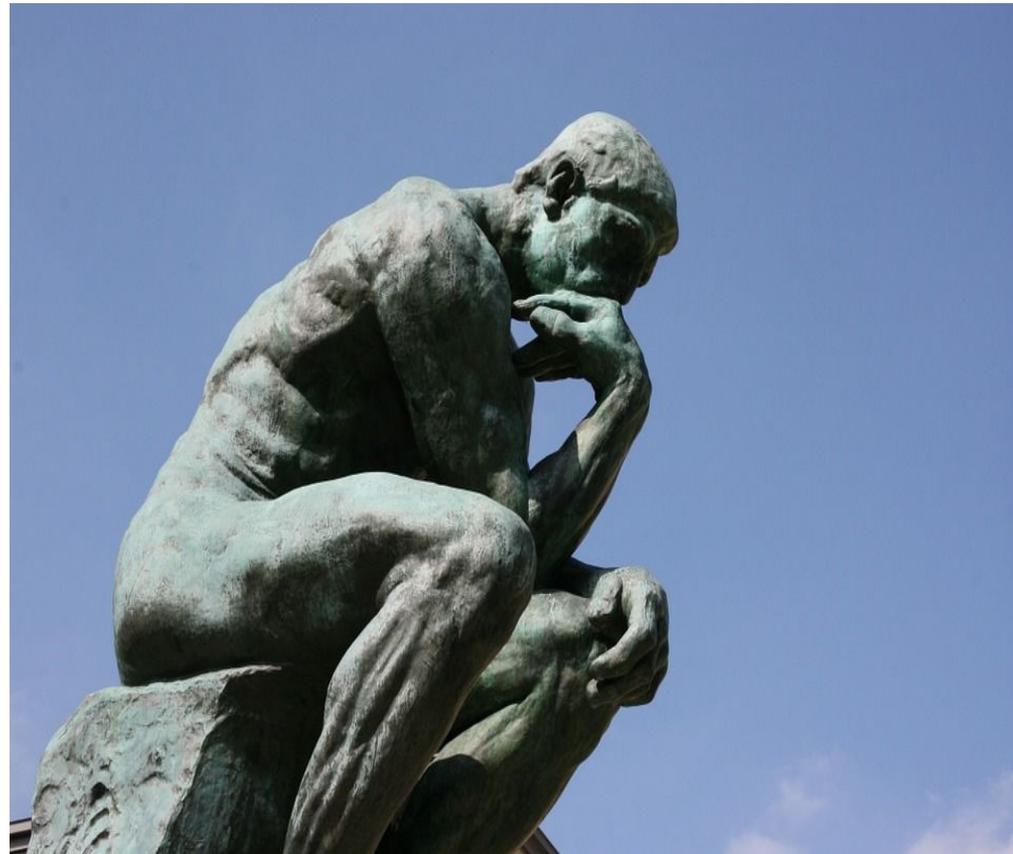
## In-house process or via a vendor service



Image: WInterForce Media (<https://goo.gl/images/DzPi3n>), Public Domain

## Things to consider

- **relationship to existing headings**
  - keep and display?
  - keep but shadow?
- **communication with staff and user communities**
- **ensuring timely updates to external aggregators (e.g., WorldCat, HathiTrust)**



## Things to consider

- **required human and financial resources**
- **staff training**
- **processes for**
  - consultation on and revision of new and changed headings
  - ongoing staff and user community feedback



# Challenges

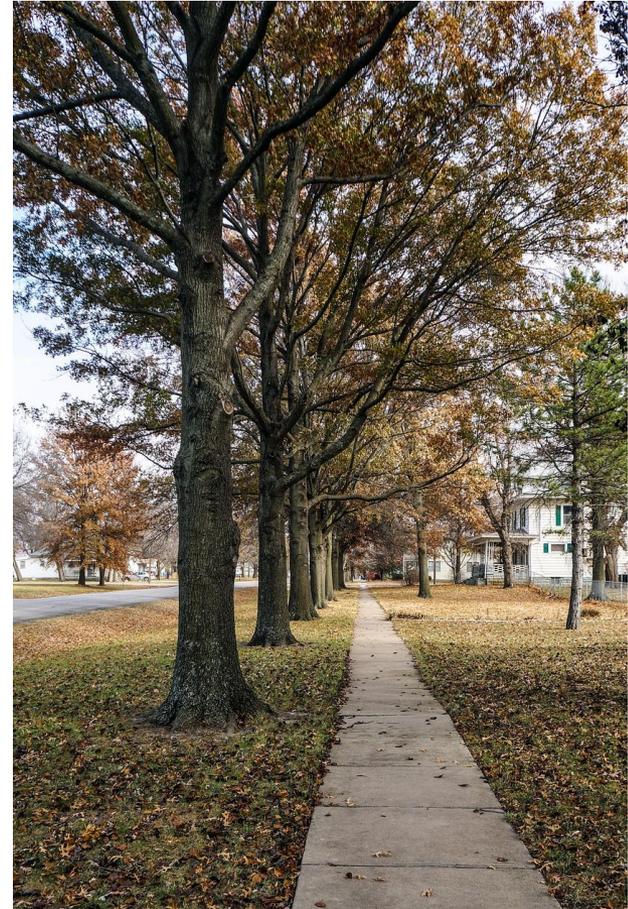


Image: Pixabay (<https://pixabay.com/photo-1795374/>), CC0

- **staff training**
- **automated system updates and infrastructure**
- **multiple repositories and user communities**
- **creator contributed metadata**
- **developing shareable workflows and tools**

# Opportunities

- **reconciliation with Indigenous user communities**
- **more inclusive repository content and services**
- **cooperation with like minded institutions to create effective approaches**
- **developing shareable workflows and tools**
- **being part of a community making positive change**



# Parting Thoughts

if you want to  
see different results,  
do things differently.

The Alison Show: <https://goo.gl/images/wiQDRs>

# Thank You!

## Questions/Comments?

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