

Designing Archival Services to Support Digitization of Indigenous Language Documentary Heritage

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Library and Archives Canada



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Historical Context

- Historical and Modern Treaties
- Residential Schools System
- Pass System
- Indian Act
- State Response to the Métis Nation
- 60s Scoop
- Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Calls to Action
- Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

Sir John A. Macdonald

First Prime Minister of Canada

“When the school is on the reserve, the child lives with its parents, who are savages, and though he may learn to read and write, his habits and training mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly impressed upon myself, as head of the Department, that Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men; so that, after keeping them a number of years away from parental influence until their education is finished, they will be able to go back to their band with the habits of mind, the education, and the industry which they have learned at these schools.”

Canada. Parliament. House of Commons. *Debates*, 5th Parliament, 1st session, 1883, vol. 14, May 9, 1883, p. 1107-1108. Ottawa: MacLean, Roger & Co., 1883.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin

"The objective – I quote from Sir John A. Macdonald, our revered forefather – was to 'take the Indian out of the child,' and thus solve what was referred to as the Indian problem. 'Indianness' was not to be tolerated; rather it must be eliminated. In the buzz-word of the day, assimilation; in the language of the 21st century, cultural genocide."

Quoted in Sean Fine, "Chief Justice says Canada attempted 'cultural genocide' on aboriginals", Globe and Mail (online), 15 May 2018 (updated) and 28 May 2015.

Indigenous Documentary Heritage Initiatives

Budget 2017: Funding for two initiatives:

- ***We Are Here, Sharing Stories:*** Digitization of LAC collections relevant to First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation of Canada + enhanced digital access.
- ***Listen, Hear Our Voices:*** Support to First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation for digitization and preservation of Indigenous culture and language recordings.



First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation

- 634 First Nations communities, situated across Canada
- 51 Inuit communities, located in four Inuit regions in Canada, together forming Inuit Nunangat
- The Métis Nation traces its origins back to the 18th Century Fur Trade

Indigenous Perspectives Key to Service Design

Indigenous
Advisory
Circle

Indigenous
Engagement
Officers
(internal and
external) and
Indigenous
Comms
Advisor

Archivists
from First
Nations, Inuit
Communities,
and Métis
Nation

Indigenous
External
Review
Committee

Listen, Hear Our Voices (LHOV)



Objective: To offer support to Indigenous communities to digitize and preserve First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation culture and language recordings

- Customized and collaborative approach
- All services optional
- Ownership of recordings, and associated rights, to remain with the communities at all times
- Seven archivists working within their communities

This is not an acquisition project.

LHOV Services

Funding
Catalogue/Resource Guide
Digitization of Recordings
Storage
Support to Communities



A group of Innu making their canoes at the North West River in Labrador / Des Innu fabriquant des canots sur le bord de la rivière North West (Labrador), vers 1920

Mikan: 3224649

Indigenous Advisory Circle (IAC)

- Established at outset of initiatives to provide advice and guidance; early engagement has been key to success
- First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation representation
- Members from national, regional and community-based organizations
- Local Elders provide guidance during meetings
- Five meetings held so far, with another scheduled for the end of October 2019

How IAC Is Supporting LHOV

- Named the initiative Listen, Hear Our Voices
- Guiding service design:
 - No longer developing separate website
 - Investing more resources in digitization
 - Developing high-level, rather than detailed, catalogue/resource guide of existing Indigenous-language recordings in Canada
 - Offering a contributions program to provide funds directly to organizations
- Providing ongoing advice on community engagement and digitization priorities

LHOV Archivists

- Seven archivists hired across Canada
- Working from within traditional territories
- Focus on local community but also responsible for regional outreach



Working in a New Way

- Recruitment of seven archivists, with links to community, in seven different regions of Canada
- Lead archivist provides ongoing support, advice and training
- In-person training for archivists at very beginning of project and again within first six months
- Ongoing support and training weekly, at a distance

LHOV Archivists' Activities

- Research into LAC collections to find information of local and regional interest
- Research into collections of other memory institutions in Canada to identify culture and language recordings for inclusion in catalogue
- Support to local and regional Indigenous organizations on funding call preparation
- Coordination of digitization services for Indigenous individuals or organizations
- Advice or training on digitization and preservation
- Conference presentations and blogs



[Group of Indigenous People (the Gros-Louis family on the Huron-Wendat Reserve of Wendake) ca. 1880. Original title: Group of Amerindians (the Gros-Louis family on the Huron Reserve of Lorette) ca. 1880]. Mikan: 3198792.

Digitization Services

- Free digitization services offered to individuals and organizations at Library and Archives Canada's facilities; all originals and copies returned to clients
- Services not linked to requiring open access; communities maintain all rights
- Free storage service offered for preservation copies (optional); ownership and all associated rights remain with clients
- First client was the Labrador Institute at Memorial University
 - Inuktitut-language recordings from the Carol Brice-Bennett collection include oral histories about life stories, place names, and the Hebron relocation
 - Anthropologist and researcher Carol Brice-Bennett's work supported the establishment of Nunavut and Nunatsiavut, two of four regions making up Inuit Nunangat
- Ongoing discussions with 15 other individuals and organizations

Funding Services



Group of Métis children and two women sitting on a large rock, Fort Chipewyan, Alberta

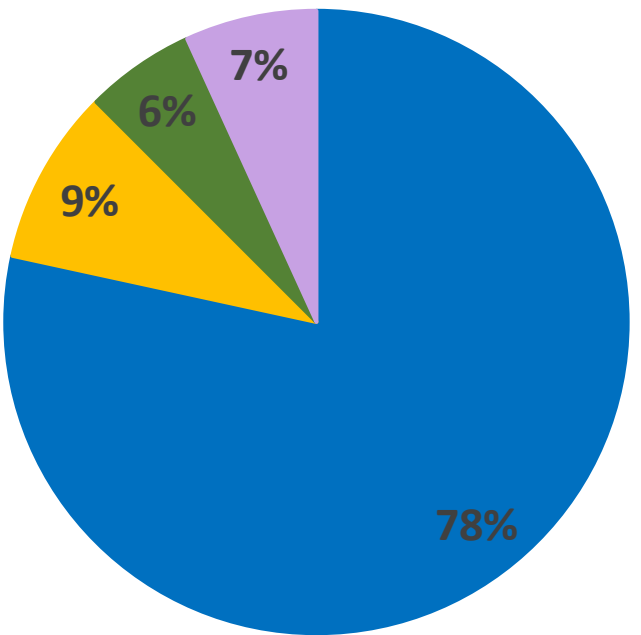
Mikan: 3379589

- LAC is providing funding to:
 - Digitize existing Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation) culture and language recordings
 - Build the skills, knowledge and resources necessary to digitize and preserve Indigenous culture and language recordings

Calls for Applications

- First funding call launched in April 2019
 - Application period closed in July 2019
 - 88 applications for a total ask of 6.5 million dollars
 - LAC will award eligible projects up to \$100,000 for a duration of up to one year
- Second funding call planned for January 2020
 - Will be adjusted based on feedback from the IAC, regional archivists, review committee, stakeholders and applicants, and lessons learned during the first funding call

Distribution of Applications Received in First Funding Call



- First Nations
- Inuit
- Métis Nation
- Multiple or unspecified



Funding Review Committee

- An external Indigenous review committee composed of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Nation representatives from across Canada review applications and make recommendations for funding
- The review committee base funding recommendations on:
 - Project feasibility and approach
 - Cultural importance of the collection
 - Urgency of the work due to the condition of the collection
 - Benefits of the project for the applicant organization, partner organization, communities, researchers, and/or Canadians

Catalogue/Resource Guide

- Being researched and written by the seven archivists
- Focus on identifying culture and language recordings in provincial/territorial and smaller archives in Canada in order to facilitate access for First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation who otherwise may not know about the material
- Searches sometimes challenging (language not available as a search field; migrations to new systems; descriptions not precise enough)
- Guidance will be sought from the Indigenous Advisory Circle

Example Entries

- Cree oral history interviews from Ma-Mow-We-Tak Friendship Centre's "Northern Manitoba Native Elders Research Project" from the Provincial Archives of Manitoba
- Inuktitut oral history interviews from the Igloolik Oral History Project fonds from the Nunavut Archives
- Oral history recordings from the "Towards a New Past Oral History Project – The Métis" from the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan

Jennie Blackbird

“Our Elders taught us that language is the soul of the nation, and the sound of our language is its cement. Anishinaabemowin gives the ability to see into our future.... Anishinaabemowin gives us the ability to listen ... to what is going on around us and the ability to listen to what is happening inside of us. Through seeing and listening, we can harvest what we need to sustain ourselves, and to secure the properties that will heal us. Ever since I can remember as a child, speaking my language, it helped me to restore my inner harmony by maintaining my mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being.”

Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015, p. 225

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