Dreaming Together: Creating an Indigenous Library Space and Reading Collection

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Who are we?
With thanks...

Sandra Wong, Cindy Biancianiello and staff in Aboriginal Student Services, Brock University

Laura Birkett, Evelyn Smith, Indigenous Space and Collection Working Group members

David Sharron, Archivist, Brock University Library

Jay Ismailovic, Custodial & Facilities

About Brock
Learning Outcomes

Review local and global background

Recall our collaborative journey

Outline strategies for increasing awareness and promoting understanding at your institution

https://brocku.ca/brock-news/2018/06/education-students-explore-indigenous-culture-and-history-through-art/
The global context

The 2015 publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Final Report, particularly the Calls to Action regarding education (eg 62[ii]) and 69[i-iii])

Canada’s slow move to become a signatory to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
The global context

Academic libraries are all meeting the 94 Calls to Actions in different ways, and our group sought to bring together some of these ideas and principles.

At the same time, we put forward a reading group for Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future, the Summary Report from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The local context

Brock University Strategic Plan

○ Guiding value: Reconciliation and decolonization

Library Strategic Plan

○ Foster engagement with Indigenous communities and participate in reconciliation efforts on campus and within library communities

Retention Grants

Dreaming...

Originally home to a service desk
Desk was removed
Glass doors added to create display space
Collaborative journey

Two Row Council
Aboriginal Education Council
VP, Indigenous Engagement
Librarians at other institutions
Collaborative Journey

Reached out to Aboriginal Student Services

Required care to ensure respectful engagement without placing a burden, while supporting work

Attended lunches to get feedback from Coordinator and students on what they would want in a meaningful space

Goals of the Project

To create a clear, overt signal of the library as a welcoming space, and display some of the texts within the space.

To indicate the strategic directions of the library to students, staff, and faculty, both in and out of the library.

To begin the process of decolonizing the library, and start the discussion of what that means.
Outreach

We worked to engage with students, especially (in part because the funding was a “retention grant”)

Created an online questionnaire (received 7 responses)

Spoke with students during the lunchtime events at Aboriginal Student Services
(Some) Student Suggestions

Include artwork and symbols of many groups, including “Inuit, Métis, and First Nations: “...when things are done at a pan-Indigenous level it often encompasses more First Nation’s specific information”.

Include texts about the region, not just ones by or about Indigenous people (eg books about Niagara region flora)

Include texts by local Indigenous authors, including students

(Some) Student Suggestions

“Definitely plants too”

“This space stands for unity and integration of Indigenous Peoples in an academic setting.”

“Opportunities to hear from various Two-Spirit folks!”

“This is an awesome idea.”
Thinking about the collection

Researching other collection guidelines

- University of Manitoba
  Neil John Maclean
  Health Sciences Library
- Mi’kmaq Resource Centre at Cape Breton University

Making our selections
Inuit dolls
Anna Attagootsiak
of Pond Inlet

Photo credit Ernie Bies
Taking shape

The journey continues

Launch event

A name

Lighting

More books and artwork

Speaker events

Questions?
Comments?

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https://brocku.ca/library/learning-commons/#indigenous-collection