Reflecting the Lives of Aboriginal Women in Canadian Public Library Collection Development

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Abstract

Public libraries can, and should, challenge and aid their users in being more informed about the world and their place in it. This process is supported by collections that not only introduce new knowledge and ideas but also reflect back to the user their life in a realistic and affirming way. This paper will outline some of the arguments for developing a core collection of work for, and about, Aboriginal women in Canada that explores and celebrates the diversity and complexity of Aboriginal women’s lives. In addition, this paper will suggest some criteria and selection sources critical to ensuring that this collection reflects the well established strength of the scholarship and creativity in this area, while highlighting the emerging trends in research, publishing, film and music. In an attempt to keep the paper focused and succinct, international material (except from the United States) that would be of significance and interest to Canadian Aboriginal women has been excluded. For this paper, Aboriginal women in Canada includes any woman who self identifies or has been identified as First Nation, Inuit Metis, Native or Indian.

A National Mandate

In 1998 the Status of Women in Canada published the report Aboriginal Women in Canada: Strategic Research Directions for Policy Development by Madeleine Dion Stout and Gregory D. Kipling. Stout and Kipling noted in their literature review that while the amount of literature regarding Aboriginal women in Canada has been increasing, it had the following problem:

Singular, negative orientation: With surprisingly few exceptions, work dealing with Aboriginal women has tended to be highly problem-focused, and it has pathologized these women’s agency and realities. This in turn has allowed little room for an understanding of the real complexities at work, and has provided little insight into the strategies that work. (7)

Over a decade later, public libraries in Canada would be remiss in their collection development responsibilities where they to have that same comment made regarding their holdings of the literature, or other cultural materials, regarding Aboriginal women. Library customers who are seeking a better understanding of the lives of Aboriginal women in Canada, or Aboriginal women who are seeking
materials that reflect the strengths, challenges, reality, and dreams of their lives, should be able to expect a core collection in the public libraries in the communities in which they live.

The Customers and the Library

According to the Statistics Canada publication Aboriginal Statistics at a Glance, demographic profiles and trends point towards the Aboriginal population in Canada being on a steady increase. Between 1996 and 2006, the Aboriginal population increased at a rate of 45%, which is, according to Statistics Canada "nearly six times faster than the 8% rate of increase for the non-Aboriginal population" (Statistics Canada 2010). In the age group of 20 to 69 year olds there are slightly more women than men in the Aboriginal population throughout Canada (Statistics Canada, 2001).

Population trends are highly relevant when reviewing the collection development goals of Canadian public libraries. Public library collection development goals commonly include such phrases as "support lifelong learning", "reflecting the diversity of our community", "recognizing the unique reading, viewing and listening interests of our users" or "to enrich the life of every person in our community". Furthermore, it is not unusual for the stated selection criteria to be explicit about collecting material that reflects the interests of the community's cultural composition. Given the emphasis of these statements and the fact that Aboriginal women are an identifiable segment of the Canadian population, there is a need for some public libraries to develop a core collection of materials for, by, and about Aboriginal women, which accurately reflects and affirms their lived experiences.

There is more to understanding the reasoning behind collection development for Aboriginal women than population statistics and well intentioned library policies. The writer, Jeannette Armstrong, stated "The suicide rates and problems our people are having are a result of being told you're stupid, ignorant, a drunk, you'll never amount to anything -- just because you're Indian. To me, that's the biggest lie of all that needs to be dispelled.” A public library can be part of dispelling that lie by facilitating access to stories and information that represent the many facets of the lives of Aboriginal women. While titles addressing the barriers and challenges these women face are important, librarian Elizabeth Peterson has implored her colleagues to also collect materials in subject areas such as sports and movies. It is also important that libraries revise the language that has been used in catalogue records. Canadian librarians Gene Joseph and Kim Lawson have noted that the description of Aboriginal material in libraries is out of date and can act as a barrier to accessing information. The Xwi7xwa Library at the University of British Columbia uses the Brian Deer (Aboriginal) classification system and associated Aboriginal subject headings which could inform revisions to cataloguing records in public libraries.
Another barrier to access is that libraries are often perceived as representations of an authoritative settler society and this must be challenged to make them more welcoming to Aboriginal women. This includes such areas as, membership policies, the role of security guards, the attitudes of staff, and developing a representational work force. In "Band and Tribal libraries: What Mainstream Public Libraries can Learn from Them" Reegan Brue wrote that "Aboriginal people perceive that 'Anglo' community libraries are not for them, that these facilities will not contain materials relevant to their lives, their history or their contemporary concerns and, furthermore, that the library neither seeks nor welcomes their presence." The only way that we as librarians can address that perception is to commit ourselves and our institutions to more relevant collection development and more respectful and welcoming library environments.

A significant challenge that many libraries will face in developing a core selection of materials for Aboriginal women is the library's budget. While financial restraints affect all areas of collection development, it is often believed that collecting from small publishing houses is more expensive than from larger ones. To collect material that is considered out of the mainstream, such as poetry by Aboriginal women, often means purchasing from small publishers. Interestingly, Kimberly Kowal and Deborah Ullan, in "BiblioFemina: A panel discussion on women in publishing, bookselling, and libraries" argued that particularly in the area of collecting women's titles, librarians need to be aware of how their purchases from small publishers and booksellers directly affect the creation and availability of more non-mainstream materials for, about and by women. They state that "approval plans and blanket orders often exclude work from radical or smaller presses…lending the pool of information even less to collecting". In this way the library is not only the provider of reading material for Aboriginal women, but also represents this group of community users as a sort of proxy purchaser and supporter of the material being created. To develop a strong collection of materials for and about Aboriginal women, it is important for the collection development librarian to purchase outside of approval plans and large publishing houses. This not only ensures that s/he is finding an appropriate amount and breadth of materials, but is also a way of supporting the continued development of a pool of work to select from by financially supporting small publishers and emerging creators. Many of the authors represented in this paper's tables have published with small feminist houses such as Press Gang in Vancouver, British Columbia, or Aboriginal owned publishers such as Theytus in Penticton, British Columbia.

Selecting Materials

Librarians need to seek out publishers, reviewers, and cultural news sources that are Aboriginal in their perspective in order to collect titles that reflect the diversities of Aboriginal women's lives. As well, consulting colleagues with experience in this area of collection development, or browsing their library catalogues and websites, can give direction to a librarian who does not know
where to start. Table 1 contains the sources consulted in developing the selection suggestions for this paper. As there is still only a small amount of material published for and by Aboriginal women, it is necessary for collection development librarians to scan widely to find the gems needed for the collection. In addition, it is advisable to include Native American sources and selections from the United States in order to create a foundation for a strong collection. In using Native American materials, it helps to remember that the border between the United States and Canada is the border of colonial governments, not indigenous nations, and is therefore much more fluid than is generally considered.

Table 1: Recommended Collection Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Role of Aboriginal Women in Canada: Bibliography.</strong> Faye Blaney. (2005) <strong><a href="http://www.library.ubc.ca/xwi7xwa/wbib.htm">http://www.library.ubc.ca/xwi7xwa/wbib.htm</a></strong></td>
<td>While this bibliography has not been updated to include anything published after 2000, it is exhaustive in its treatment of non-fiction work pertaining to the lives of Aboriginal women in Canada. The writings are organized by the following subject headings: Indian-White Relations; Aboriginal Education; Residential Schools; Amendment to the Indian Act; Sexuality; Violence Against Women; The Justice System; Bill C-31; Literature; Health; Politics; and Non-Aboriginal Allies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A Celebration of First Nation Women Writers.</strong> <strong><a href="http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/_generate/FIRST%20NATIONS.html">http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/_generate/FIRST%20NATIONS.html</a></strong></td>
<td>Links to author websites, reviews and bibliographies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Finding out about Native Canadian Women Writers Published in English.</strong> (2004). Library Archives Canada <strong><a href="http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/nlc-bnc/finding_native_cdn_women-e/s3-201-e.html">http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/nlc-bnc/finding_native_cdn_women-e/s3-201-e.html</a></strong></td>
<td>Includes citations to bibliographies and anthologies and a small selection of publishers, Native and non-Native, who have published works by First Nation women writers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public library catalogues and websites such as Edmonton Public Library <strong><a href="http://www/epl.ca/">http://www/epl.ca/</a></strong> Vancouver Public Library <strong><a href="http://www.vpl.ca">www.vpl.ca</a></strong> and Toronto Public Library</td>
<td>These catalogues are useful for scanning. Libraries in particular regions such as northern Ontario may want to scan each others' catalogues for more local publications.</td>
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</table>
http://www.tpl.toronto.on.ca/

Xwi7xwa Library catalogue
http://www.library.ubc.ca/xwi7xwa/

This is an academic research library (a branch of the University of British Columbia Library system) that specifically collects material that represents an Aboriginal perspective and information need -- subject coverage includes reference, children, non-fiction, and fiction materials as well as an extensive list of annotated websites.

Globe and Mail, Book Review section

Has, at times, reviews by, and of, Aboriginal writers.

Quill and Quire

As the monthly magazine of the Canadian book trade, it does on occasion review books relevant to this area of collection development.

iPortal: Indigenous Studies Portal
(University of Saskatchewan)
http://iportal.usask.ca/

Includes book reviews and bibliographies of information resources and reference materials.

Theytus
http://www.theytusbooks.ca/

First Nation owned and run publishing house for over 25 years.

Pemmican Publishers
http://www.pemmican.mb.ca/

Metis cultural and educational publishing house.

Kegedonce
http://www.kegedonce.com/

Aboriginal owned and operated since 1993 in Ontario for the publishing and promotion of Aboriginal writers and artists.

Oyate
http://www.oyate.org/

Native American publishing house. The website has a discussion on the importance of criteria to choose books that represent lives honestly.

Goodminds
http://www.goodminds.com/homepage.htm

Distributor of music, videos and books with Aboriginal content and/or perspective.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native Web <a href="http://www.nativeweb.org/">http://www.nativeweb.org/</a></td>
<td>Works in collaboration with Amazon books (Native web receives a small fee from Amazon for linking through to books bought) and includes some Canadian content. Includes music and audio recordings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American Authors: Internet Public Library <a href="http://www.ipl.org/div/natam">http://www.ipl.org/div/natam</a></td>
<td>Includes links to biographies and bibliographies. Search by author, title, or nation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal Peoples Television Network <a href="http://www.aptn.ca/">http://www.aptn.ca/</a></td>
<td>Listings that can be useful for film collections as well as having a regular entertainment-news programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit Magazine</td>
<td>Was Canada’s only national First Nations arts and culture magazine. Is not publishing a print magazine at this time.</td>
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</table>
Recommended Lists

The following resources are intended as a selective set of resources and are not presented as an exhaustive list. New authors and works are continually becoming available and will, over time, replace some of the selected resources presented here.

Major Authors

Bibliographies, library catalogues, and book reviews were consulted to determine the key authors of literature and information for and about Aboriginal women. Criteria included the amount of work published, positive reviews, appearance in other catalogues and bibliographies consulted, and that these authors have all demonstrated a commitment to reflecting the complexities of the lives of Aboriginal women. Author contributions to edited compilations of essays and anthologies were also taken into consideration. Oral storytelling, blogs, websites, and appearances in mainstream and Aboriginal media were also considered as part of their work portfolio in the assessment of a creator's value to the information and entertainment needs of Aboriginal women.

Table 2. Major Authors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Titles</th>
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</table>
Press Gang.


Campbell, Maria


LaRocque, Emma


Continuous publishing in journals and anthologies such as "When the 'Wild West' is Me: Re-viewing Cowboys and Indians." Challenging Frontiers: The Canadian West. B. Rasporich and L. Felske, eds. University of Calgary Press, 2004.


Erdrich, Louise

Novels:


The Crown of Columbus [with Michael


Other


"The Reptile Garden" (January, 2008) _The New Yorker._

"The Fat Man's Race" (November, 2008) _The New Yorker._

Collins, New York.

**Maracle, Lee**


Maracle, Lee & Leanne Flett Kruger.

Mosionier, Beatrice Culleton


Robinson, Eden


Slipperjack, Ruby


Essential Non- Fiction Titles

Titles deemed "essential" were chosen based upon their standard inclusion in library collections, and book reviews in credible sources, such as the review journals and other publications mentioned in the "Sources" section of this paper. Recommendations on websites maintained by independent Aboriginal reviewers, cultural organizations, and booksellers were also considered. An effort was made to be as general as possible when choosing titles for this section, but it does need to be recognized that consideration should be given to building a core collection of titles that reflects the diversity of the needs of Aboriginal women visiting your specific library. These titles would be in a variety of areas, such as health care and services, employment opportunities, treaty negotiations, law (Bill C-31 in particular), cultural traditions, language learning, and literacy. While this type of multi-disciplinary, retroactive collection building may seem daunting, it is necessary if Aboriginal women are to be included in the core library programs and services rather than being neglected on the margins.
Table 3. Essential Non-Fiction Titles


A deconstruction of the stereotypical images of Indigenous women in popular literature


While addressing the barriers of gender and race in the lives of First Nation women, this collection of writing also celebrates their diversity, struggles, and possibilities, by giving voice to their lives.


A scholarly examination of Pauline Johnson as a writer, a performer, an independent woman, and an advocate for First Nations. Also includes a full chronology of Johnson's published writing.


Contributors share their struggles and successes writing in the colonizer's language.


Accessible book that attempts to unite scholarship and activism, and colonialism and feminism.


As a legal scholar from Six Nations she writes on crucial issues such as education, law, mainstream feminism, and child care in a highly accessible manner while consistently keeping her thoughts within the framework of Mohawk traditions and knowledge.
Poelzer, Dolores. *In our own words: Northern Saskatchewan Metis women speak out*. Saskatoon: Lindenblatt & Hamonic, 1986. While this text is geo-specific, it is an important work in understanding the culture and gender roles of Metis women, as different from that of other Aboriginal women.


Sterling, Shirley. *My Name is Seepeetza*. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1992. While written as juvenile fiction (Egoff Children’s Book Prize and was short-listed for the Governor General’s Award for Children’s Literature) this autobiographical novel, often studied in post-secondary classes due to its honest, and at times brutal, revelations of life for a young girl in a residential school has found an audience in adult readers.

Van Kirk, Sylvia. *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670 to 1870*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1983. This work is included for the recognition it gives to Aboriginal women and their economic and social roles in the Canadian fur trade.

**Recent Titles**

These titles, and or authors, have not yet had sufficient exposure to be considered essentials for a collection, but they reflect current topics of interest and scholarship, such as leadership and sexuality. Titles were chosen from favourable reviews in reputable sources, including popular media, review journals and publisher’s websites.

Table 4. Recent Titles


An exploration of the effect of the residential school experience.

A collection of essays on Native women's activism and leadership in urban North America since World War II.

Complete collection of LaDuke's political speeches, essays, and fictional writing.
Covers such topics as environmentalism and women's issues.

Collection of poetry, short stories and visual art from nearly 40 artists throughout the Americas, celebrating and respecting Indigenous women.

A collection of essays on such diverse topics as the role of tradition, sexuality, the environment and activism.

An exploration of the work and life of a significant leader in the development of Native filmmaking in a historical, political and film theory context.

Four essays on Native American women and their role in cultural empowerment.

An anthology exploring the intersection of the English language and oral storytelling for writers. Features many significant women writers such as Armstrong and Maracle.

An exploration of the relationship between Native American women activists and the Christian right through the politics of gender, class, and sexuality.
A biography that intends to give context to Buffy Sainte-Maire's work as an artist, songwriter, activist, and children's educator.

**Journals and Magazines**

Ideally the collection of journals and magazines should be based not only on having Aboriginal content, but also a regular publication schedule. Unfortunately, like other periodical publications, journals and magazines with content relevant to Aboriginal women contend with the financial reality of start-up costs, and business plans that struggle with increasing print and mailing costs. One example of this struggle is the *Indigenous Woman Magazine*, an international English language publication of the Indigenous Women's Network. The organization and its magazine have existed since 1985 to support and promote leadership among Indigenous women. The goal of the magazine is "To reinforce and elevate Indigenous women's voices and to mobilize Indigenous women and our allies to act on issues of concern to our communities." Despite the difficulties this publication has encountered it would be worthwhile for libraries to regularly check the status of the magazine ([http://www.indigenouswomen.org/program1.htm](http://www.indigenouswomen.org/program1.htm)).

**Table 5. Journals and Magazines**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Publication dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Canadian Journal of Native Studies</em></td>
<td>This is an original research peer-reviewed publication for the anthropological, historical, sociological, political, legal, educational, and cultural issues affecting Aboriginal People and Aboriginal affairs in Canada, the USA, and other countries of the world. The journal has recently partnered with the Indigenous Studies Portal at the University of Saskatchewan</td>
<td>Publishes biannually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.brandonu.ca/Library/cjns/">http://www.brandonu.ca/Library/cjns/</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Libraries to make content from volume 17-volume 25 available. These issues can be accessed at <a href="http://iportal.usask.ca/">http://iportal.usask.ca/</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Survival</td>
<td>For three decades this journal has covered global Indigenous issues and news, including comprehensive articles by and about Canadian Aboriginal women. Back issues are browsable on-line or can be searched.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Redwire: Native Youth Media</td>
<td>The expressed mandate is to provide youth with an uncensored forum for creative expression. Past issues have included articles on motherhood, sexual health, and political action. Began in 1997 and continuously published 4 times a year until funding cuts in 2008. The publishing collective continues to exist for special projects and access to archived issues. They may resume regular publications in the future.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Say Magazine</td>
<td>This publication has Canadian and American editions as well as micro regional (for example Central Ontario) content. This magazine has an emphasis on youth and lifestyle with articles on Aboriginal practices. Began in 2003 and publishes 4 lifestyle issues a year with special editions published on other topics such as &quot;Best Practices in Aboriginal&quot;</td>
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music, film, and fashion. It is a less explicitly political magazine than *Redwire* and takes a less critical stance on events such as Miss Indian World.

**Windspeaker**
http://www.ammsa.com/

While this is very popular (monthly circulation of 25,000 readers) and national in scope, it does not always have women-specific content, but Aboriginal clients should expect to see it in the library.

Includes special inserts such as Guide to Indian Country (June), Guide to Scholarships (May), Business Quarterly (January, April, July, October) and Aboriginal History Calendar (December).

Has had continuous existence for 18 years and is published monthly by the Aboriginal Multi-Media Society. As well there are provincial publications such as *Birchbark* in Ontario and *Sage* in Saskatchewan.

Local Aboriginal publications such as the *Anishinabek News* in Ontario
http://www.anishinabek.ca/

Local print and online resources can be erratic in their publication schedules but it is important for a collections librarian to keep current with what is available and update staff with what may be of local interest for clients. For example the Anishinabek Nation was running a women’s self-esteem campaign in the fall of 2008 into
the spring of 2009 from their website.

Indexes and Databases

The following indexes and databases were chosen for their Aboriginal content and their accessibility through most public libraries in Canada.

Table 6. Indexes and Databases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indexes and Databases</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Search Premier</strong></td>
<td>This subscription index is of greater help to the clients when it includes an annotation, such as the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Provides full text for 3,430 journals, with indexing and abstracting for more than 4,425 journals. Includes coverage of 3,280 peer-reviewed journals for a broad range of disciplines. Sample controlled vocabulary: aboriginal Australians, Eskimos, Indians of north America, indigenous peoples, inuit, metis, and names of specific nations.&quot; (From Xwi7xwa Library: <a href="http://www.library.ubc.ca/xwi7xwa/">http://www.library.ubc.ca/xwi7xwa/</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CPI.Q (Canadian Periodical Index)</strong></td>
<td>A subscription index of more than 400 periodical titles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is helpful to include an annotation, such as the following, to direct clients on the usefulness of this tool:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Some First Nations coverage: Windspeaker, Inuktitut, First Perspective, Native North American Almanac; also journals such as Canadian Journal of Native Studies, Journal of Indigenous Studies, Acadiensis. Controlled vocabulary: aboriginal Australians, Canadian native peoples, metis (persons) and native Americans.&quot; (From Xwi7xwa Library <a href="http://www.library.ubc.ca/xwi7xwa/">http://www.library.ubc.ca/xwi7xwa/</a>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DOAJ: Directory of Open Access Journals  
http://www.doaj.org

Indexes free, full-text, scholarly and scientific journals. Over 4,000 journals are searchable by title, keyword, author and other access points.

First Nations Periodical Index  
http://www.lights.ca/sifc/INTRO.HTM

This is an open access searchable index of 20 Aboriginal newspapers, magazines and periodicals. This site was last updated in August of 2004.

Reference Books

Reference books are part of the traditional holdings of a library. Despite the availability of current and authoritative material online, there are still a few information gaps that can currently only be filled by print titles.

Table 7. Reference Books

Many indigenous languages do not have an authoritative online presence. When it is possible, print language dictionaries should be purchased, such as the following title for the Ojibway language.


Encyclopaedias and Almanacs that are specific to Aboriginal people such as:


Includes a chapter on women and gender relations.


Library Journal recommends this one volume encyclopedia for its "who's who of scholars in the field [that] have compressed traditional and new research into 400 authoritative articles accessible to lay readers."


American Indian from a Native American perspective, including an exploration of gender roles.

A collection of more than 100 entries of Native American women from the 1500s to the time of publication. Includes biographical sketches, photographs, and further suggested readings.

Anthologies are a common format in which to find the voices of Aboriginal women. The following anthology should be considered for a reference text as it is unique in its gathering of historical writing from Native American women.


**Websites**

Providing useful links from the library's website is an affordable and effective way to augment the collection. Tools such as blogs and wikis are designed for quick updates and even community input so that a page of links can be kept current and useful. A simple navigation structure and brief notations can enhance the library's role in connecting Aboriginal women to the online information they are seeking. Table 8 highlights some of the websites that have national significance. It is also important for a library to include links to local services and events such as community feasts, friendship centres, and any other events and organizations that are relevant in regards to health, employment, laws, entertainment, and education.

Table 8. Websites

Aboriginal Canada Portal: Women
Provides links to other sites regarding policy research, organizations, professional development, employment, language, heritage, and culture.

Includes sections on language, education, family structure, and employment.

Assembly of First Nations Women's Council
Represents the needs of First Nation women to the national council which in turn advocates to the federal government as a united voice for First Nations in Canada.

Indigenous Women’s Network
This organization has existed since 1985 to foster and promote leadership among Indigenous women
[http://indigenouswomen.org/](http://indigenouswomen.org/)
The Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women
Provides advocacy, personal development workshops and support for research projects.
http://www.iaaw.ca

iPortal News: Indigenous Studies Portal Blog
A searchable blog from the University of Saskatchewan with regular updates on news, book reviews, research, and library resources.
http://blogs.usask.ca/iportal/

Journey to Success - Aboriginal Women's Business Planning Guide (INAC)

The Justice System and Aboriginal People: The Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission, Chapter 13, Aboriginal Women.
Includes reports on women in traditional society, community healing, spousal abuse, and the sentencing of Aboriginal women.
http://www.ajic.mb.ca/volumel/chapter13.html

The Metis National Council of Women
As of August 27, 2010, this site had not been updated since 2007.
http://www.metiswomen.ca/

The Metis National Council: Metis Women
http://www.metisnation.ca/women/
As of August 27, 2010, this site had not been updated since 2007, but had posted the message "Temporarily off-line for updating".

The Native Women's Association of Canada.
This organization has been operating for nearly 30 years to improve the social and economic lives of First Nation and Metis women in Canada.
http://www.nwac-hq.org/

Pauktuutit: The National Voice of Inuit Women
http://www.pauktuutit.ca/

The Xwi7xwa Branch of The University of British Columbia Library
Has an extensive and current online resource library including links specifically relevant to the lives of Aboriginal women.
http://www.library.ubc.ca/xwi7xwa/welcome.html
Film

Film reviews can be found in many places such as local newspapers, *CPI.Q, Canadian Newsstand* (limit search to film reviews), news entertainment programs on *Aboriginal Peoples Television Network*, and community radio programs such as *Aboriginal Voices Radio* in Toronto or *Kla Now Yah FM* and *ThinkNDN* in Vancouver.

Websites with devoted content to Aboriginal film, such as *First Nations Films* ([http://www.firstnationsfilms.com/catalogue.htm](http://www.firstnationsfilms.com/catalogue.htm)) *Native Networks* ([http://www.redesindigenas.si.edu/nn.html](http://www.redesindigenas.si.edu/nn.html)), the Dream Speakers Film Festival ([http://www.dreamspeakers.org/](http://www.dreamspeakers.org/)), and the Cowichan International Aboriginal Festival of Film and Art ([http://aff.cowichan.net/](http://aff.cowichan.net/)) will often not only provide reviews, but may also be a source for purchasing certain films.

Events such as the IMAGeNation Aboriginal Film and Video Festival and the recent Winnipeg Film Group Cinematheque "Keepers of the Earth: First Nations Women Directors" (August 2010) highlight upcoming production companies, directors, and emerging trends and technologies influencing this media. The film titles selected in Table 9. were found using the above resources and were considered noteworthy either for their choice of topics, film styles, or popularity at showings.

Table 9. Films

*Bearwalker*
Directed and produced by Shirley Cheecheoo
Girls from the Backroads Productions, 2000
Combining suspense, humour, and the reality of women’s lives on reserve in the 1970s this film has won awards including Best Director, Best Film, and Best Actress at the Reel World Film Festival, the Reel Island Film Festival and the San Francisco Film Festival. In 2002 Cheecheoo was named Independent Filmmaker of the Year at the Arizona International Film Festival. Other notable films by Cheecheoo include *Silent Tears* (1998) and *Shadow in Deep Water* (2004).

*Before Tomorrow*
Arnait Video Productions, 2007
A story of a woman and her grandson surviving after the death of their community in 1840.
This women`s film collective has been together since 1991 expressing Inuit traditional and contemporary styles of expression. Their other projects include

*Unakuluk* (2005) a film about adoption and *Nunatinnit* an interactive online project with a hunting camp on Baffin Island.
*Club Native*
Directed by Tracey Deer
National Film Board of Canada, 2008
A candid portrayal of four Mohawk women and the issues surrounding blood quantum such as having children with a non-native. Her film Mohawk Girls won the 2005 Alanis Obomsawin Best Documentary Award and she has recently established her own film company Mohawk Princess Pictures.

*Honey Moccasin*
Directed by Shelly Niro, 1998
This film has been noted as part of the new wave of Indigenous film making in the 1990s that included the popular hit Smoke Signals. This comedy/thriller explores the conventions of ethnic and sexual identity with the story of the rivalry between two bars on a reserve.

*Moccasin Flats: Redemption*
Directed by Rob King
Screenplay by Laura J. Milliken and Rob King
Produced by Big Soul Productions Inc.
A revisit to the popular Gemini Award nominated series that ran on the Aboriginal People’s Network in 2003, 2004, and 2006.

*My Name is Kahentiiosta.*
Directed and produced by Alanis Obomsawin.
Montreal National Film Board of Canada, 1995.
Profiles a young Kahnawake Mohawk woman and the sacrifices she was willing to make at the 1990 Oka crisis.
Obomsawin has produced/directed over 30 films, and in 2008 received the Governor General's Performing Arts Award for Lifetime Artistic Achievement.

*North of Sixty*
CBC Television, 1992-1998
While this Gemini Award winning series was not strictly an Aboriginal production, it was a mainstream television production that showcased many Aboriginal actors and provided an insight into a northern Aboriginal community and strong roles (such as Tina Keeper’s portrayal of RCMP officer Michelle Kenidi) for Aboriginal women.

*Older Than America*
Directed by Georgina Lightning
Tribal Alliance Productions, 2008
One woman’s struggle to understand the secrets of her family and the legacy of the residential school system.
The Spirit of Annie Mae.
Directed by Catherine Anne Martin
National Film Board of Canada and Atlantic Centre, 2002.
A tribute, from an Indigenous perspective, to what happened at Pine Ridge and the women involved in Annie Mae Pictou Aquash's life.

Spirit of the Game
Directed and produced by Annie Frazier Henry.
National Film Board of Canada and Full Regalia Productions Inc., 2003.
Follows the training of athletes, such as Veronica Charter, a gold medalist for the Indigenous Games.
Henry received the honour of Aboriginal Producer, Writer and Director of the 21st Century at the 2006 Aboriginal Visions & Voices Symposium. Other notable films by this producer/director include Ladies of the Inlet (1995) and Singing our Stories (1999)

Music and Spoken Word
Aboriginal women use and participate in all forms of the recording arts from storytelling to slam poetry and from hip-hop to traditional Pow Wow drumming.
Table 10. contains a small and varied selection that would be a useful start for developing an audio collection. Two useful and comprehensive sites for recordings are Goodminds (http://www.goodminds.com) and Turtle Island Native Network: Culture (http://www.turtleisland.org/culture/culture-music.htm).
There are a few recording companies that showcase Aboriginal talent such as Arbor Records (http://www.arborrecords.com). As well, artists that have been featured on the Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards (http://www.canab.com/mainpages/events/musicawards.html) or the Native American Music Awards (http://.nativeamericanmusicawards.com/) should be considered for the collection.

Table 11. Music and Spoken Word

Aglukark, Susan. (any recording)

Asani, Rattle and Drum (2005)

Bone, Tracy. No Lies. 2009 Juno nominee and 2009 Aboriginal People's Choice Songwriter of the Year.

Donovan, Mishi. Storm Beauty (2007) and Journey Home (2001)

Harjo, Joy. (any recording)


Sainte Marie, Buffy. (any recording)


The World's Best Jingle Dress Songs (Sunshine Records, 2007)

The World's Best Women's Traditional Songs (Sunshine Records, 2007)

**Next Steps**

As with any attempt to better understand and improve public library service there are discussions and investigations that have been started, or perhaps only hinted at, but certainly not resolved in this paper. The investment put into this paper, by both the readers and the author, will gain returns if questions are raised and others respond by deepening and broadening this body of work. Recognized next steps from this paper include compiling a representation of resources and works being used and created by Inuit women; investigating the challenges and issues regarding the collection and preservation of artifacts and oral histories; a more in-depth review of demographics that would include the shifting social and economic status of women on and off reserve and in rural and urban settings; a collection assessment of key public libraries; ideas for creative collection development methods to meet the needs of Aboriginal women; and most importantly a better understanding of how libraries engage with Aboriginal
women so that any changes made truly reflect what they want and expect from their public libraries.

**Conclusion**

This paper suggests some, but not all, the core titles needed for developing a public library collection that would reflect the diversity and complexity of the lives of Aboriginal women in Canada. These titles reveal an emerging literature and cultural production for, by, and about Aboriginal women that does not pathologize their lives as discussed in the 1998 Status of Women in Canada report *Aboriginal Women in Canada: Strategic Research Directions for Policy Development*. While it will take some effort and financial commitment for a public library to develop such a collection, there are compelling reasons to do so. Demographics and library policy demand that Aboriginal women have their information and entertainment needs met by the library. As well, the public library is in a unique position to facilitate access to material that could dispel racist stereotypes. The library, through appropriate collection development has the potential of offering Aboriginal women a reflection of their lives that is dignified and powerful.
Works Cited


