The Creation of the CFLA/FCAB Truth and Reconciliation Committee: The First Report

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Abstract

One of the top priorities of the newly formed Canadian Federation of Libraries Associations/Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques (CFLA/FCAB) was to create a Truth and Reconciliation Committee to promote initiatives in all types of libraries to advance reconciliation by supporting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Calls to Action, and to support collaboration in these issues across the Canadian library communities. Thus, this first committee was formed with representatives of the CFLA/FCAB Board and library association’s nominees from all across Canada. From the beginning, the Committee worked with Indigenous leaders and sought the guidance of Indigenous Elders. This paper presents a summary of this Committee creation, organization, and work, as well as the recommendations to the CFLA/FCAB Board.

Keywords

CFLA/FCAB, Canadian Federation of Libraries Associations, Truth and Reconciliation Committee

Background

In January 2015, the Canadian Library Association’s Executive Council initiated a dialogue with colleagues from provincial library associations to discuss the future of a unified national voice for Canadian libraries. The library association representatives agreed to work together to contemplate a new way forward for the Canadian library community. Thus the first working group was created.
At the Canadian Library Association members’ meeting on January 27, 2016, CLA members voted to dissolve the association. This decision was the result of a multi-year process that consulted with CLA members and the broader library community on a solution for an effective national voice for the Canadian library sector. The solution proposed was the creation of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations/Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques (CFLA/FCAB).

An interim board was formed with participants from the Future Federation Working Group. It consisted of representatives from provincial, territorial, and national associations, and the group worked mainly via teleconference to incorporate and create the new CFLA/FCAB.

The interim board recognized that in the first few years, as it is forming, the Federation may not be able to fulfill every single goal. There was a need to prioritize the deliverables within the context of available resources and grow its activities as its capacity grows. As one of CFLA/FCAB’s top priorities, the Truth and Reconciliation Committee was the first CFLA/FCAB committee formed. This committee included representatives from the board as well as representatives from all library sectors and from every province and territory across Canada, with nominees from member associations and the library community. The mandate read: “The 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.”

The Truth and Reconciliation CFLA/FCAB Committee was chaired by Camille L. Callison, from the Tsesk’iye (Crow) Clan from the Tahltan Nation, the Indigenous services librarian and liaison librarian for anthropology, native studies and social work, a member of the Indigenous Advisory Circle at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, and the Indigenous representative on the CFLA/FCAB Board of Directors.

The committee was organized by utilizing and adapting the medicine wheel framework under the guidance of Indigenous Elders, a framework through which the Indigenous worldview can be understood.
Figure 1. Medicine wheel framework

The Elder-in-Residence at the University of Manitoba, Elder Norman Meade, was given tobacco and consulted traditionally in regard to the process being undertaken. Elder Meade made a suggestion to organize the work around the Anishinaabe medicine wheel. This medicine wheel represents the alignment and continuous interaction of the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual realities. The circle shape represents the interconnectivity of all aspects of one’s being, including the connection with the natural world. White represents the mental realities; yellow represents the emotional realities; black is the physical realities; red is the spiritual reality (Joseph, 2013).

Following the medicine wheel framework, the committee was divided into four teams with the following responsibilities:

The Black Team compiled best practices already in existence in regard to Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) peoples of Canada.

The White Team provided a gap analysis on the TRC Calls to Action to better determine what has already been done to meet the calls, what needs to be done, and how we can best undertake the action needed to implement the calls to action.

The Yellow Team looked at existing relationships and developed a contact database. This team worked on creating relationships with existing committees and working groups and as a liaison with the proposed National Aboriginal Library Association (NALA), the Aboriginal Policy Initiative, and the National Reading Campaign. Feather Maracle (Mohawk, Ojibway, and Potawatomi) was the team lead.
Finally, the Red Team was about moving to the future and the decolonization of libraries and library practices. As such, the team researched access and classification, Indigenous knowledge protection, outreach, and service. (See the CFLA/FCAB Truth and Reconciliation Committee Report and Recommendations, p. 5 for more information about the participating members).

The committee met for the first time on September 30, 2016 and had a mandate until February 1, 2017, when a report was delivered to the incoming CFLA/FCAB Board, recommending further actions that the board should consider to support Indigenous peoples of Canada over the long term, and to form a Standing Committee on Indigenous Matters to further these recommendations.

**Recommendations**

After three months of intense work, the committee produced a report and recommendations outlining a path forward for respecting Indigenous culture and increasing access to traditional Indigenous knowledge. These recommendations are meant to be a foundation. Another constraint was the lack of time to consult with Indigenous communities, although Indigenous professionals were involved in the Committee. (To read the complete recommendations, please see page 6 of the CFLA/FCAB Truth and Reconciliation Committee Report and Recommendations.)

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations, acting on recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, decided in early June 2017 to establish a CFLA/FCAB Standing Committee on Indigenous Matters and to create a digital Indigenous Resources Hub to house and provide access to foundational documents compiled by the CFLA/FCAB Truth and Reconciliation Committee.

As of June 29, 2017, the CFLA/FCAB Truth and Reconciliation Committee Report and Recommendations has been endorsed by 23 libraries and associations across Canada.

**References**

Joseph, B. (2013, April 16). *What is an Aboriginal Medicine Wheel?* [Web log comment]