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LIBRARY SERVICES FOR SASKATCHEWAN ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

**“BEST PRACTICES IN LIBRARY SERVICES FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLES IN SASKATCHEWAN”**

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And

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**Abstract:**

*This paper combines the accomplishments of library staff across Saskatchewan providing quality library services and collections to Aboriginal peoples, not only in public and academic library settings but also in the virtual realm. Highlights include examples of institutional and governmental support, meaningful services, integration of cultural knowledge, values and events into the world of libraries, literacy initiatives, varying aspects of collection development policies (including respectful access to collections), Aboriginal storytelling, and partnerships (such as those involving digitization projects).*

**INTRODUCTION:**

It is an honor for me to acknowledge the traditional Indigenous people of this land, the Huron people, for their roles and contributions to the history of Quebec City and this part of the world. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of Phyllis Lerat and Suzy Bear, both of whom are librarians at the First Nations University of Canada, in writing this paper. In addition, I would also like to honor the commitment of LSSAP members to their library users and for their contributions to the global group of Indigenous librarians via the International

Indigenous Librarians Forum which takes place every two years, one of which was hosted by the LSSAP group in Regina in 2005.

There are two sections to this paper. The first will outline best practices in public library services for Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan. This section is contributed by Deirdre Crichton, Parkland Regional Library System, and provides background information on the Aboriginal demographics of Saskatchewan and on the Library Services for Saskatchewan Aboriginal Peoples Committee. Discussion then moves to the Report of the Minister's Advisory Committee on Library Services for Aboriginal People of Saskatchewan, Aboriginal storytelling, literacy initiatives, highlights from other public library systems in Saskatchewan and Provincial Library initiatives relating to library services for Aboriginal peoples.

The second section will focus on best practices in academic library services for Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan. This will include sharing some information about the services and collections provided at two main academic institution libraries. These are the three campus libraries of the First Nations University of Canada (main campus in the South, in Regina, Saskatoon campus in central Saskatchewan, and Northern Campus located in Prince Albert) and services and collections provided at the University of Saskatchewan (U of S) by way of the Indigenous Studies Portal. The iPortal is an online research tool (located at <http://iportal.usask.ca>) which comprises over 8000 full-text resources, including articles, book reviews, theses, e-books, and links to websites, etc. The iPortal is also in the process of adding a few thousand archival records (including photos, diaries, correspondence, maps and audio/visual files) to its content as a result of a partnership with the U of S Archives and a substantial and recent digitization project.

## **SECTION I: Best Practices in Public Library Services for Saskatchewan Aboriginal Peoples**

### **Background Information**

Saskatchewan has seventy First Nation bands and sixty two are affiliated with one of eight Tribal Councils. There are six geographic Treaty areas, and ten public library regions. Public library regions sometimes have more than one Tribal council within their parameters. The majority of these bands are Plains Cree; however, there are also bands of Saulteaux and Dakota origins. Further North in the PNLS Library System region there are bands of Swampy Cree and D ene. The Provincial Metis Council divides the province into twelve regions and within the twelve regions exist roughly 130 M etis locals.

There are ten public library systems in the province of Saskatchewan including: seven regional libraries in Lakeland Library Region (North Battleford area), Wapiti Regional Library (Prince Albert area), Wheatland Regional Library (Saskatoon area), Parkland Regional Library (Yorkton area), Chinook Regional

Library (Swift Current area), Palliser Regional Library (Moose Jaw area), and Southeast Regional Library (Weyburn area); two city library systems with multiple branches in Regina and Saskatoon; a northern library system, Pahkisimon Nuye?áh Library System, is a federation of 11 northern community public libraries and has the legislated mandate to act as the central library for northern Saskatchewan. It acts as the coordinating agency for all school, regional college, public and special libraries.

The Library Services for Saskatchewan Aboriginal Peoples' committee (LSSAP) was established in 1991. It was organized for information sharing on issues relating to library services for First Nations and Métis peoples, based on identified needs by library and information personnel from First Nations band school libraries, public libraries, post-secondary institutions, and Aboriginal-based organizations. For more information on the LSSAP committee please see this link: <http://www.lib.sk.ca/staff/lssap/index.html>

In 2001 the Final Report of the Minister's Advisory Committee on Library Services for Aboriginal People was published. The mandate of the committee was to: "identify ways to foster First Nations and Métis participation in, and commitment to, the development and maintenance of public library services designated to meet the library and information needs of all First Nations and Métis people in Saskatchewan." The report included 46 recommendations. Recommendation 43 stated that "an official Storytelling Week occur in February of each year, throughout the province to promote First Nations and Métis oral traditions and the use of public libraries." This report is available at: <http://www.lib.sk.ca/staff/minaboriginal/ablib/ablibfinal.html#intro>

## **Aboriginal Storytelling**

Saskatchewan Aboriginal Storytelling month is held throughout Saskatchewan in February of each year to promote First Nations and Métis oral traditions and public libraries. The winter timing for the Storytelling Week observes the First Nations traditional time for storytelling. The intent is to increase province-wide cultural activities of Aboriginal peoples; have Elders and Aboriginal storytellers to demonstrate the cultural and historical value of storytelling; and foster storytelling partnerships through joint planning with outside agencies and resources. The project involves schools, community libraries and local organizations.

Parkland Regional Library staff reviewed the recommendations from the Final Report of the Minister's Advisory Committee on Library Services for Aboriginal People and determined which areas the library would focus on and storytelling was one of the areas. Grants were applied for and in 2004 a \$15,000 Community Initiatives Fund grant was awarded to establish Saskatchewan Aboriginal Storytelling Week. Deirdre Crichton approached the LSSAP committee to see if they were interested in participating in a province-wide

initiative; they were and Deirdre joined the committee. Deirdre wrote the grant proposals and coordinated the events for the province for the first four years. 2008 marked its 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Parkland Regional Library contacted Ontario Library Services North (in Northern Ontario, Canada) about their Aboriginal Public Libraries Week including their promotional material. At that time it was determined that we could and would host Aboriginal Storytelling Week events. The posters have been printed by OLS-N for the past five years. Saskatchewan also joined OLS-N in their First Nations Community Reads initiative, which promoted the reading of picture books by Aboriginal authors.

Saskatchewan Aboriginal Storytelling Week started in February 2004 and has evolved in 2006 to Saskatchewan Aboriginal Storytelling Month to accommodate the demand for programs throughout the province. The first year saw 2,813 people attend 21 events; however, it has grown substantially since then. In 2008 over 7,950 people participated in 78 storytelling events.

### **Integrated Literacy Services**

Parkland Regional Library is involved in an integrated literacy project in the Kamsack and surrounding area which includes: Cote, Key and Keeseekoose First Nations. Integrated Literacy Services is a co-operative project to address literacy needs in Kamsack and surrounding area. The partners in the project include Ventures Community Futures Development Corporation, Parkland Regional Library, Parkland Regional College and Good Spirit School Division, collectively known as the SaskSmart Community Association. Integrated Literacy Services initiative includes early childhood, parent and adult education programs that will enable children and parents to spend time together in literacy activities and enhance literacy and essential skills of adults for life or workplace opportunities. Parkland Regional Library coordinates family literacy activities, Parkland Regional College is responsible for the Adult, ESL literacy component and Ventures Community Futures Development Corporation is responsible for workplace literacy services. The fourth partner is Good Spirit School Division. Funding has enabled staff to coordinate programs and look for and apply for alternate sources of funding to deliver services. The initial grant enabled the committee to build a strong Kamsack library literacy collection including; storystacks, literacy knapsacks, reading rods and online resources that all organizations have access to.

Come Read With Me is a family literacy program that is based on the premise that parents and children learn together and enhance each other's lives. The program uses children's books as a starting point for development of literacy skills and discussion of a wide range of parenting issues. Two eight session Come Read With Me Programs have run successfully. The program is facilitated

by Delores Badger who was trained to run the program, works for the college and comes from Cote First Nation.

SaskSmart Community Association celebrated Saskatchewan Aboriginal Storytelling month by hosting an event on Friday, February 29, 2008 in Kamsack. The event was sponsored by Painted Hand Community Development Corporation with over 140 students and adults in attendance. The presence of Elders, showcasing of Aboriginal material and creativity through crafts were a means of empowering our target group to better understand how literacy exists within the Aboriginal culture. Darwin Keshane presented Aboriginal Artwork and Elder Mary Pelletier presented on Dream Catchers.

### **Books for Babies Plus Kits**

Parkland Regional Library provides annually to Headstart, Kids First, FAST (Families and Schools Together) and pre-kindergarten participants in the Parkland Regional Library Region with a free book, book bag, Saskatchewan Literacy Network for the Love of Reading pamphlet, ALA Books for Babies flyer, Library registration form and Every Child Ready to Read @ Your Library information.

### **Highlights from other Saskatchewan Public Library systems include:**

1. Pahkisimon Nuye?ah Library System (PNLS) – “Exploration of Saskatchewan Aboriginal Life” project involves gathering information in audio and print format about the lives and customs of people in Northern Saskatchewan. A stand-alone website will also be designed to include the content from this project.
2. Pahkisimon Nuye?ah Library System (PNLS) – Library staff education project. Since 2007 PNLS has offered online courses to staff. Courses offered to date include: Internet; Introduction to Libraries and Children and Young Adult Literature.
3. Southeast Regional Library, and Estevan Branch, are working with Ocean Man First Nation to establish a library and to improve literacy through Estevan Area Literacy Group Inc., a partnership of businesses, educational institutions, Ocean Man, the library, early childhood agencies, literacy tutors and SaskSmart funding.
4. Building Relationships in 4 Directions a joint conference with Prince Albert Grand Council, NorthWest Nations Educational Council, Northlands College and John M. Cuelenaere Public Library. PNLS staff also attended the conference.
5. White Buffalo Youth Lodge and Saskatoon Public Library hosted a Round Dance on March 14, 2008.

6. Saskatoon Public Library hosted Beginner's Cree Conversation weekly program for 2 months
7. Saskatoon Public Library ran an Aboriginal Student Page Summer Internship program – four students were hired for six weeks to work in several areas of the library.
8. Swift Current hosted a variety of events including: Communicating with First Nations seminars; Aboriginal Awareness and Acceptance series; the Justice System and a Healing Journey; Prayer and Storytelling.
9. Meadow Lake branch librarian Tara Million spoke at a staff workshop about how staff can make libraries a welcoming place for First Nations patrons.
10. "Don Freed: Singing About the Metis" event at Moose Jaw Public Library.
11. Regina Public Library - Collaborative Community Art Project, Albert Branch (Regina Public Library) Artist Daniel Fisher worked in collaboration with North Central residents and community agencies to design and create an external mural to showcase the community's perception of the library. The project goal was to enhance the external appearance of the facility and make it more inviting for everyone.
12. Wheatland Regional Library – Aboriginal story time was offered in five communities. The program consisted of Aboriginal storytelling, a puppet show, a drumming demonstration and a sampling of traditional foods.
13. Wapiti Regional Library - Developed a long term action plan and objectives:
  - a) Remove barriers to Aboriginal peoples' use of library service – posters, networking, cultural awareness and protocol presentations
  - b) Programming to educate and inform – authors, storytellers, musicians, speakers
  - c) Human resource expansion
  - d) Increase Aboriginal representation as both Board and staff members

### **Saskatchewan Provincial Library Initiatives for Aboriginal Peoples**

In 2005 the Provincial Library of Saskatchewan hired Kathy Tenold as an Aboriginal Library Coordinator and in November 2006 Nina Wilson took over the position.

Responsibilities of the Aboriginal Library Coordinator are to:

1. Work with public libraries serving First Nations and Métis communities.
2. Promote the importance of public libraries for First Nations and Métis people.
3. Develop a list of quality Aboriginal library materials.
4. Develop an Aboriginal component to the Saskatchewan Libraries web site.
5. Develop training for First Nations and Métis library staff.

The Committee on Aboriginal Library Services (CALs), a Provincial Library group, was formed in 2006. CALs was formed to bring the 10 public library systems together to work on enhancing services for First Nation and Métis peoples within their regions. CALs focus is on public libraries and bringing meaningful services to Aboriginal people both urban and on-reserve.

Wendy Sinclair (Head of Albert Library, in Regina, and Chair of LSSAP), Nina Wilson and Deirdre Crichton sit on both the CALs and LSSAP committees. The LSSAP and CALs's mandates are to work with libraries and the Aboriginal community to improve library services for Saskatchewan's Aboriginal population. A joint meeting was held March 14, 2008 to look at initiatives that both committees could work on together. At the beginning of the meeting, both groups were separated to discuss:

- Who are we?
- What services do we provide?
- What initiatives do we propose?
- What resources are warranted?
- Identify potential partnerships.

By the end of the meeting, various goals, subcommittees, and timelines had been established. The goals are:

1. To develop a five-year communication strategy that includes: a website; role model posters, library endorsements; wiki; newsletter; e-conferencing.
2. To establish a Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Award / Fundraiser by April 2009
3. To host a national conference in 2011
4. To develop partnerships and run cultural activities – i.e. Round Dance
5. To hold a joint meeting to review the "Information is for Everyone" Report

Ekosi maka / that is all (on the public library component of this paper).

## **SECTION II: Best Practices in Academic Library Services for Saskatchewan Aboriginal Peoples**

### **Best Practices in library services at First Nations University of Canada (FNUC)**

The First Nations University of Canada was established more than thirty years ago (1976) as the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) through a federated partnership with the University of Regina; however, the new structure and the name change in 2005 to FNUC indicates its current more independent nature. FNUC is the only First Nations-controlled university in Canada. Academic programs offered include undergraduate and diploma programs in Arts, Sciences, Education, Social Work, Health Sciences, Fine Arts, Commerce and Communication Arts as well as several Master's degree programs.

The mission of First Nations University of Canada is to “enhance the quality of life and to pursue, protect and interpret the history, language, culture and artistic heritage of First Nations”. The institution acquires and expands its base of knowledge and understanding in the best interests of First Nations and for the benefit of society by providing opportunities for quality bi-lingual and bi-cultural education. The students are from a provincial, national and international base.

Since the University is a First Nations controlled university, it offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in a culturally supportive First Nations' environment. For example, the University merges academe with traditional ways, through ceremonies, in order to enhance the lives of the students, faculty and staff by employing traditional and spiritual Elders at each campus to advise and counsel the FNUC community. The Elders arrange ceremonies throughout the academic year to support their academic community in their endeavors.

Within each campus are libraries that provide resource materials required to support the University's programs and courses. The University's main library is located in the Regina Campus at the University of Regina. The University's collections, which focus on materials written by, for and about First Nations, Inuit, Metis and Indigenous Peoples of North, South and Central America (as well as Australia and New Zealand), emulate the University's Mission Statement. The librarians select, evaluate and acquire resources for the libraries according to the Mission Statement. For instance, approximately one third of these resources relate to traditional knowledge and ceremonies in some manner, simultaneously supporting the various Indigenous Studies classes offered on and off campus. To date the three campus libraries of First Nations University of Canada collection has over 100,000 items in various formats to support the courses offered.



In other words, a large number of FNUC library resources reflect the beliefs and various philosophies relating to the different tribes of North, South and Central America, and other places around the world as these resources capture the students' interests on their road to self-discovery. The collection contains numerous monographs on traditional knowledge, and occasionally sacred knowledge, which must be protected by First Nations peoples as it is a gift given by our ancestors. Sacred knowledge includes sacred materials and objects as these materials and objects define who we are as First Nations peoples. Sacred items, such as sacred pipes and sacred bundles, are the cultural property of First Nations peoples. They are living, breathing, animate objects and are an important element of First Nations peoples' ceremonies.

Certain information on traditional knowledge and various ceremonies should not be in print but it is, for example, information on ceremonies such as vision questing and sun dancing. Rather than suppress these resources, one librarian has taken the position that without these resources, where would some of the students begin to learn about traditional knowledge and ceremonies if they did not find this information in print? It's a starting point for them (due to the loss of culture experienced by generations of First Nations peoples as a result of the residential school system imposed on them and other assimilation practices). And sometimes a very good starting point, as the students can reflect upon what they have read and will develop questions that require answers. It is at this point the serious ones will seek the advice and counsel of our traditional and spiritual Elders.

In addition to providing relevant collections at the 3 on-campus libraries, the library staff also provide culturally relevant bibliographic instruction. The libraries offer a multifaceted instructional program to provide the university students and other library users with lifelong learning and informational skills with competencies to assist them to meet their educational objectives for both the learning as well as campus communities. This is accomplished by providing a pleasant, user-oriented learning environment for on- and off-site users, with the technical infrastructure for on-line searching capabilities, resources and services. In addition, library staff have the responsibility to recommend to students, faculty and staff the various catalogues and online databases that will provide them with the best information possible. Research topics vary but include topics such as Indian self-government, traditional knowledge as it relates to First Nations ceremonies and Indian spirituality, treaty land entitlement, health issues and more.

The University's off-campus students are also provided with bibliographic instruction every semester to ensure they have equitable access to the same resources as their on-campus peers. This is accomplished by in-person visits. For instance, librarians visit the off-campus sites at every opportunity and provide and coordinate library services to these sites ensuring that off-campus users have quick access to the catalogues and online databases available from the

University of Regina's and the University of Saskatchewan's libraries. In closing, the library staff provide collections and services that ensure the University's students, faculty and staff are made aware of their rich heritage as First Nations peoples.

### **Best Practices via the Indigenous Studies Portal, University of Saskatchewan Library**

First, the Indigenous Studies Portal (or iPortal) is an online research tool that is similar to a database that includes a wide variety of full-text resource types (such as articles, book reviews, theses, electronic books, government reports and links to websites), all related to Indigenous Studies. What is significant about the iPortal is that it is the only research tool of its kind, that is, it provides one-stop access to an aggregated collection of over 8000 full-text resources related to Indigenous Studies. These resources come from not only a wide array of databases subscribed to by the U of S, but also Open Access materials that have been made available through digitization projects as well as those resources that have been "born digital".

The history of the iPortal goes back to about 2001, when some talented librarians at the U of S working in various areas thought about how they could respond to the U of S community of library users that were requesting an easier way to find research materials related to Indigenous Studies. These library users' greatest concern was that the collections of these materials were scattered in various locations across campus and therefore difficult to become aware of and difficult to access. With the assistance of a librarian working at the Native Law Centre, a systems librarian, programmers, a group of cataloguing technicians and consultations with the potential user community, the iPortal project was born. Since 2005, the iPortal has had a full complement of six staff and part-time assistance of other Library staff (including programmers) that have built the iPortal into a permanent U of S Library initiative from its humble beginnings as a short-term project.

Of course, the iPortal also had to have backing from the U of S Library Administration. As a result, the iPortal is the deliberate and creative response by the University of Saskatchewan Library to meet several of the U of S Strategic Planning priorities, such as to enhance Aboriginal research and scholarship, as well as to enhance student and distance education learning, given that access to the iPortal resources is available 24/7, especially to those users associated with the U of S. For external users, the Open Access materials will be accessible on a 24/7 basis; however, for the subscription-based resources, external users have a few options for access. For some users, access may be available at or through their local library or through interlibrary loan. In this case, the iPortal serves as an index of bibliographic records for resources, for which external users can seek out access in various ways.

This university has made a commitment to supporting the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal students and faculty (with at least 20 current Indigenous faculty members thereby creating a critical mass), largely because it has the largest number and percentage of Aboriginal students of any doctoral university in Canada. The last few years have seen a stable number, that of approx. 1800 Aboriginal students each year, which is about 10 percent of the total student population at the U of S. Another demographic is that in the province of Saskatchewan, the Aboriginal population comprises 14% of the total population and is growing fast, with projections that the Aboriginal population in SK will reach 25% of the total population in 12 to 15 years. When one considers that in the northern half of the province, Aboriginal people comprise approx. 75% of the population, it follows that the U of S is ideally situated and equipped to either recruit this segment of the population to physically attend U of S academic programs or to offer distance education programs to those in more remote regions of the province and who are reluctant to leave their communities.

### **iPortal Partnerships**

One partnership that the iPortal was engaged in before I arrived at the U of S was a digitization project that involved the U of S Archives and ten other archival institutions in Saskatoon and one in Northern Saskatchewan. The Head of the project, Chery Avery in the U of S Archives, was fortunate enough to have obtained three grants simultaneously. These grants provided enough funding to digitize nearly 50,000 archival images pertaining to Aboriginal peoples, cultures and experiences from these 12 institutions and to create a website and database that would host the nearly 4000 archival descriptions related to the 50,000 images. While the project was able to hire six term Library Assistants to digitize the archival records (including photos, postcards, diaries, correspondence, minutes of meetings, government reports, maps, copyright-expired books from U of S Special Collections, and some audio-visual materials), several iPortal Content Assistants were also scanning materials as part of our contribution to the partnership. The iPortal's contribution of programmer time was also instrumental in the creation of a highly searchable database and website for this archival project. As a result, a great many of these materials will also be migrated to or harvested as iPortal content, thereby increasing our record count substantially. The URL for this database is not yet active but it will be in the near future by searching Google, "Our Legacy" Aboriginal Archives.

Another example is that we have partnered with Brandon University to digitize Phase Two content of their online Canadian Journal of Native Studies. For instance, nine volumes, from 1997 to 2005, have been digitized by the iPortal team; we have provided the corresponding files to Brandon University; and they have up-loaded the files to their website. The benefit to the iPortal is not only in increased online access to more CJNS content, but Brandon U is acknowledging the work of the iPortal team on this project. In this way, the project has added

more than 150 scholarly and peer-reviewed articles and book reviews sanctioned by the Canadian Indigenous / Native Studies Association in open access format to the iPortal.

### **The iPortal and Meaningful Service for Aboriginal Researchers**

One area where the iPortal provides meaningful service is through our response to Reference questions – by an Aboriginal librarian who also has knowledge of the corporate culture and various people, strategic planning and activities of the U of S Library, including partnerships with the Archives, as well as with other institutions. This means that I can provide information on future projects that will assist the users asking the Reference questions in a way that is sensitive to the issues, not just from the organization’s perspective but also from that of the user’s perspective. One example of such a reference question was a request about when there would be more content in the iPortal that pertains to Northern Saskatchewan and I was able to respond with more relevant information due to my involvement with the Aboriginal Archives digitization project, “Our Legacy”.

Another example of the iPortal providing meaningful service involves teaching search functionality of the iPortal to Aboriginal students taking courses with Aboriginal-specific content and being taught by Aboriginal Faculty. It is meaningful because I can relate to the students and that puts them at ease. For instance, one student and I practice our Cree before the demonstration begins and helps to set the tone for some cultural familiarity. Another example is that in one demonstration in a fourth-year class in an Indigenous Teacher Education program, it became evident that some of the students were not aware of the ERIC database, so I demonstrated that as well. I think this was as a result that the students felt comfortable with me in acknowledging what they didn’t know.

### **The iPortal and Respectful Access to Collections**

Although the iPortal is still evolving as a virtual collection and we have not yet developed a formal collection policy, there are several ways that the iPortal has taken into account the need for respectful access to collections; I will discuss only a few here. For instance, for the archival digitization project, a decision was made to not include archival records that use offensive terminology in their titles, such as the word “squaw”. While usage of this terminology was deemed as evidence of the colonial mindset of mainstream society during a certain time period in Canadian history and therefore acceptable for the Archival database and its more advanced users, I made the call not to include these records in the iPortal because library users are generally less experienced researchers of unpublished documents. As a result, I am protecting first-year students searching the iPortal from encountering offensive terminology in the first search results they come across.

Also for the digitization project, some other considerations had to be made – such as to open up the opportunity to write the summaries / essays for the exhibits to Aboriginal people, and to do some translations of oral histories before digitizing them, as we will need to protect access to those accounts that include sacred knowledge. As well, we hired both Cree and Dene translators for the home page of the website as well as for the help screens.

### **Conclusion:**

This paper has covered many examples of leadership, initiative and effectiveness in regards to library services for Saskatchewan Aboriginal peoples, both in the realms of public libraries and academic libraries. It is impressive that there has been support from the top (so to speak) in both areas, from the Provincial government's Minister's Advisory Report relating to public library services to the missions and mandates at both the First Nations University of Canada (FNUC) and its libraries and the University of Saskatchewan and its Library. This guarantees funding for initiatives on a long-term basis which eliminates the need for constant grant proposal writing to support existing services, thereby allowing staff to work on realistic and evolving goals that meet the needs of the users. However, this is not to say that the funding provided is unlimited or that it does not need to be augmented, especially given that there is always so much work to be done (consider the family literacy initiatives that start with babies and continue into adulthood).

Another commonality that is evident in both public and academic library services for the Aboriginal people of Saskatchewan is the commitment of staff to provide the best of services possible to their user community. This commitment translates to practical, meaningful and respectful services that make a difference in the lives of the library users. Although I cannot refer to documented evidence of this claim in any formal research process, I do stand by these words because of the impact that anecdotal remarks by clients have on LSSAP members (including myself), feedback and stories that we are all familiar with and that keep us going in terms of job and career satisfaction. Kinanaskomitin / I am grateful to you.

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Deborah Lee is of Cree and Mohawk ancestry and has worked primarily as a Reference librarian since the spring of 2000 at various venues, including the National Library of Canada and Library and Archives Canada. She is now the Unit Head responsible for the Indigenous Studies Portal at the University of Saskatchewan Library and a member of the LSSAP committee. She has presented nationally and internationally at various library and education related conferences and has published in the *Journal of Library Administration*, the *3<sup>rd</sup> International Indigenous Librarians Forum Conference Proceedings : Closer to*

*the Fire: Ensuring Culturally Responsive Library Practices*, the *National Library Bulletin* and the Saskatchewan Library Association's *Forum*.

Deirdre Crichton has presented at a number of conferences on the topic of public library services and literacy services for Aboriginal People including: Canadian Library Association Conference as the LSSAP Library Services for Saskatchewan Aboriginal Peoples' representative; Fourth International Indigenous Librarians Forum; Treaty Four Education Conference; Saskatchewan Literacy Network Conference and the Pan Canadian Interactive Literacy Forum. Each of the venues provided an opportunity to make new contacts within the First Nations and Métis communities and to promote library resources and programs.