

Notes/Minutes

First Nations Interest Group Open Meeting

May 30, 2012

Mount Pleasant Branch, Vancouver Public Library

Present:

Gene Joseph, Nancy Hannum, Alissa Cherry, Kim Lawson, Ann Doyle (partial), Sarah Dupont (partial), Jan Lashbook Green, Ada Con, Beth Davies, Dana Ionson, Jessie Loyer, Jane Frankish, Helen Halbert, Lisa Nathan, Barbara Kelly, Shawna Kristin, Rachel Yaroshuk, Ashley van Dijk, Kirsty Dixon, Joele Sanson, Gordon Yusko, Linda Epps, Kristen Rumohr, Monica Finn

1. Acknowledgement and Introductions

Kim Lawson began by acknowledging that the meeting was taking place on unceded and unsurrendered Coast Salish land.

Meeting participants introduced themselves.

2. Panel Discussion:

Values and Vision of the FNIG

Gene Joseph, Wet'suwet'en/Dakehl

At the time of the initial FNIG meeting in 1991, Gene was the only First Nations librarian in BC, and the first First Nations graduate of SLAIS. The interest in the FNIG was mostly from public librarians, who were mostly looking for recommended reading lists.

Gene believed passionately that the group needed to look at what First Nations people needed from libraries, not what librarians needed to know about First Nations.

Gene had attended BCLA and CLA conferences and was horrified to find that library service to First Nations people was either not happening or barely happening. She was firmly convinced that not serving a segment of the population was morally wrong, and against library principles of access for all.

Not serving a population is not a jurisdictional problem (the argument that, since First Nations people on reserve do not pay taxes, they do not pay for library services), since taxes are levied from unceded and unsurrendered land in BC. The BC Library Act says that local First Nations can negotiate for library services, but what is there to negotiate? First Nations, if they want to, should be negotiating for something big like land claims treaties, not for something as small as libraries. Gene

thinks that we should ignore that part of the Library Act and rely instead on the principles of public libraries serving all.

Gene thought (and still thinks) that:

- librarians and library workers should work with First Nations people to address their social and economic concerns in areas like literacy and education
- there should be more First Nations librarians. Librarians can be a great and liberal group, but we're also a pretty homogenous (white) group. The library profession should reflect the community. We need to do work on recruitment
- We also need to do work on training First Nations people who are currently working in libraries, or in library-like settings, or who are doing library or archival work

FNIG History

Nancy Hannum, FNIG Chair

1991 Initial Meeting and Organizational development

- Challenge of starting FNIG when no FN (Gene away, Rene Richards, Chief's Mask Bookstore, Maria Campbell, Viola Thomas LSS Native Fieldworker, Guy Thomas Native Education Centre, Marianne Plypcek, archivist
- Ongoing "creative tension" with BCLA – benefits (support including some financial support, conferences, communications with libraries/library staff
- Vs. differences in views on briefs to govt, discomfort with FNIG resolution and issue of membership in BCLA
- Terms of Reference (handed out during meeting)

Two Streams of work

I Library and information skills training for First Nations (Terms of Reference 1)

1993 Penticton BCLA Pre- Conference – 1 day workshop for First Nations
PLSB provided small grant for travel costs of delegates – Attendees from 13 FN libraries (max), included: running a small library, cataloguing, classification, preservation.

1994 Vancouver CLA Pre-Conference – 2 day workshop: *Resources and Skills for First Nations Libraries.*

1995 First Nations 3 day Workshop: *Records Preserve the Memory*

1996 *Records Preserve the Memory II plus 2 day Archives workshop*

From these workshops:

1998 Gene Joseph Scholarship for Aboriginal students at SLAIS – first scholarship to Kim Lawson. (13 scholarships, fund high was

- \$36,000. Post 2008 downturn, down to \$30,000. Scholarship high was \$1900, now down to \$450. On-going fund raising for the scholarship including book bags, t-shirts.
- 2000 Back to the Future Forum – First Nations Record Keepers and Library educators
- 2001 First Nations Information Workers' Summer Institute hosted by House of Learning (collaboration included working group from FNIG, UBC House of Learning, SLAIS, Langara Lib Tech Program, UFV Library Tech program, UNBC and Archives Assoc. of BC.
- 2002 Plans for a diploma program for First Nations Information Keepers at University College of Fraser Valley. (Note that this program was planned by this same collaborative group, with the lead taken by UCFV; the program was developed and advertized but failed because students could not afford to pay the up-front costs.)
- 2005 Consultation at Lillooet Friendship Centre on Library Services for the Northern St'at'imc Nation.

Notes: In addition, during this period SLAIS also development the First Nations Concentration and in 1999/2000 brought in Dr. Lotsee Patterson as visiting Professor to hold a course on library services to Aboriginal people. Dr. Patterson was also an active participation in the Back to the Future Forum.

II Information for BC Libraries and library staff (Terms of Reference 2 – 5)

- 1992 Telephone survey of BC Public Libraries – *Do Native People use Public Libraries? (funded by LSB).*
- 1993 Brief on Library Legislation. Note that this brief was not sent as it was not consistent with the BCLA brief. Note also that the Library Act underwent a major amendment and included new wording (Section 48)which provides for public library boards to enter agreements with aboriginal governments and to allow the appointment of board members from an aboriginal government.
- 1995 BCLA Reporter Feature: *Libraries for First Nations*
- 1992 – 2012 BCLA Conference workshops on issues related to library services to Aboriginal people.(list could be compiled) Periodic involvement with CLA Interest Group and CLA workshop presentations.
- 2005 Preparation of course on Aboriginal Information and Reference Sources for PLSB Community Library Training Program.

2007 – 2012 Tutoring of Aboriginal Information and Reference Sources course in CLTP. Note that in 2011/2012 FNIG paid the tutors. Note also that this course was also shared with the Langara Library Technology Program and was adapted to their curriculum.

Note: In addition there have been numerous responses to requests for information; initial dialogue with PLSB and BCLA re presentations to PLSB review of Library Act. Meetings with SLAIS about the first Nations concentration. presentations by FNIG members to SLAIS classes and always the fundraising.

Note on Public Library initiatives during this period

We have noted the growing numbers of libraries - small, regional and large urban libraries that have developed programs, services, special collection and awareness training related to library services for Aboriginal people. Examples include the Fraser Valley 3 year strategic planning process, the Lillooet programs for babies and children and their(sometimes) book bus, Prince Rupert's library card featuring a local First Nations artist. School and College libraries have also undertaken major initiatives and collection development; these include an Aboriginal audit by Camosen college, the resource centre of NorthWest College and the whole of Nicola Valley Institute of Technology.

During this time the PLSB/Libraries and Literacy has also worked closely with the FNIG on several initiatives including First Nations Read initiatives between PLSB and public libraries, public library consultations and the CLTP course. In addition Books for Babies featured First Nations writer Richard Van Camp.

Challenges to the Interest Group

To continue the 'creative tension' with BCLA

To improve our ability to be a provincial organization

To keep a clear focus based on current realities (Libraries are more active, people are more informed... yet the needs of First Nations are similar, public libraries still face challenges in service delivery,over to you!

Current Issues in Indigenous Librarianship

Alissa Cherry, Resource Centre Director, Union of BC Indian Chiefs

Funding

- Has always been a challenge
 - Excessively reliant on feds
- LAC cuts
- Difficult to gain ongoing, stable support for libraries and wages for library workers
 - Give personal example of UBCIC – low pay, no PD \$ (BCLA)

- Unreasonable expectations of what can be accomplished with limited resources
- Grants – double edged sword – much needed \$\$, but lots more work/deliverables and can increase ongoing costs (making digitized resources available).
- FNIG – ‘volunteer’ effort – I can easily justify such work as training and mentoring people in the area of Indigenous librarianship is actually part of my job, but many others can’t. Even leaving work early for this meeting was difficult for some people. Need to convince supervisors/intuitions as to the value of such activities.

Training/Education

- Scholarships – SLAIS & Library tech programs in future
- MLIS Programs
 - UBC-FNCC
 - forming an advisory board
 - requiring professional experience now
 - Knowledge River – U of Arizona
 - SJSU Circle of Learning
 - UW – Cheryl Metoyer
- Internships, practicums, etc.
- Workshops
 - UBCIC Research Workshops (claims, genealogy)
 - include minimal organization/archiving/document preservation
- FNIG Online Reference Course for people already working in libraries

Cultural Considerations

Collections/Content

- Indigenous knowledge
 - sensitive materials
 - access restrictions (greatly limits available grant \$\$)
 - ownership/copyright/intellectual property
 - New technology both making this a more complex issue & offering solutions
 - RRN & Mukurtu

Serving communities (challenges)

- Demonstrate relevance – can be hard to get people in the doors
- Equitable access/ digital divide
- Often need instruction on doing research/accessing collections
 - Information literacy initiatives

Organization of information

- Classification (Deer)
- Subject headings
 - Xwi7xwa -First Nations House of Learning Indigenous Thesaurus.
 - ALIA

Moving forward – New developments

- IFLA – International collaboration
- ATALM
- FNIG

3. Discussion

Most of the discussion took place in small groups, with these groups then reporting back on their thoughts and priorities to the main group.

We need to always keep in mind the #1 Term of Reference (To encourage the development of library and information skills training for First Nations) and be aware of 'silent voices' and 'the empty chairs in the room' i.e. start with the library needs of First Nations and be aware of the systemic challenges.

The meeting has been important for us to talk to each other.

Suggested Action: To hold a half or full day session, perhaps at the BC Library Conference, to reflect on our work and planning.

Challenges:

- Libraries in the community often work with divergent Nations, not just one Nation.
- What kind of community and/or library space works for Aboriginal language and learning? (physical or virtual?)
- Long term recruiting needs for Aboriginal libraries.

Suggested Action: To proceed with the proposed Library Technician scholarship fund.

In focusing on the Term of Reference #1 we need to ask what the communities need from libraries. How do we get community perspectives in a respectful way - the needs, perspectives and stories? We need to work in the context of the larger issues such as treaty negotiations, social development, language programs and the variety of needs both individual and community.

We need to figure out how to describe our work in a way that can be relevant at the deeper level and in a respectful way to the issues communities are struggling with.

For example, building a library may not be a top priority. Think long term.

Suggested Action:

- To develop a good research way of finding what people want and how we can be useful.
- One solid thing we could do is help communities if figure out grant writing, perhaps a workshop on grant writing. Sharing funding opportunities.

[recommendation to check out firstvoices.ca and the Indigitization project at UBC]

Suggested Actions:

- We should continue with the plans to hold appropriate local consultations as we did in Lillooet.
- We should also continue with the plans to fund a scholarship for Library Tech students.
- We could develop an Education liaison to work with educators at all levels to incorporate First Nations content in curriculums.
- We could set up a Professional Development scholarship for library workers in First Nations libraries to attend library workshops both BC and international, in particular conferences and workshops on Indigenous librarianship for example the IFLA workshop on Indigenous knowledge and the conference in Oklahoma (Alissa has the name). Note a suggestion for “spontaneous sponsorships” which means that individual librarians could contribute to workshop/conference costs for Aboriginal students to attend.
- Hold a workshop session on library classification issues related to Aboriginal descriptions, thesaurus etc.
- Hold some meetings outside metro Vancouver –“the other side of the river.”, Fraser Valley
- We need to look at recruitment of Aboriginal students –in keeping with the initiatives to ‘indigenize the universities.
- Grant writing – information about sources of funding, and about writing grants
- The beginning of networking for the people at this meeting is important

Regarding Communications – we need to solve the mechanisms for keeping in touch with each other. Note that BCLA has a conference call system we can use, but have to book 2/3 weeks in advance through the BCLA office. The three people who called in to this meeting said they could hear and they appreciate the opportunity to attend without having to travel. Perhaps we could use Face book or another form of online communication. Also a good idea to use the BCLA FNIG web site as a communication tool – need a volunteer to take this on.

4. Elections

Following nominations and volunteering, and many words of praise for the skills and qualities of Sarah Dupont, the following were acclaimed:

Chair: Sarah Dupont, Aboriginal Engagement Librarian, Xwi7xwa Library, First Nations House of Learning

Secretary/Treasurer: Rachel Yaroshuk, Student, SLAIS, UBC

Educational liaison: Jan Lashbook Green, Program Head, Library and Information technology, University of the Fraser Valley

BCLA liaison: Beth Davies, Project Manager, Vancouver Public Library

Communications/web site: vacant