

# Dreaming Together: Creating an Indigenous Library Space and Reading Collection

Jennifer Thiessen, Lindsay Bontje, Martin Chandler

# Who are we?



<http://bit.ly/BrockOLA>

# With thanks...

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

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

David Sharron, Archivist, Brock University Library

Jay Ismailovic, Custodial & Facilities

<http://bit.ly/BrockOLA>

# About Brock





# Learning Outcomes

Review local and global background

Recall our collaborative journey

Outline strategies for increasing awareness and promoting understanding at your institution



# The global context

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

Canada's slow move to become a signatory to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples



Truth and  
Reconciliation  
Commission of Canada

<http://bit.ly/BrockOLA>

# The global context

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

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

# The local context

## Brock University Strategic Plan

- Guiding value: Reconciliation and decolonization

## Library Strategic Plan

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

## Retention Grants



# Dreaming...

Originally home to a  
service desk

Desk was removed

Glass doors added  
to create display  
space



# Collaborative journey

Two Row Council

Aboriginal Education Council

VP, Indigenous Engagement

Librarians at other institutions

# Collaborative Journey

Reached out to Aboriginal Student Services

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

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



<http://bit.ly/BrockOLA>

# Goals of the Project

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

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

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

# Outreach

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

Created an online questionnaire (received 7 responses)

Spoke with students during the lunchtime events at Aboriginal Student Services



# (Some) Student Suggestions

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

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

Include texts by local Indigenous authors, including students

<http://bit.ly/BrockOLA>

# (Some) Student Suggestions

“Definitely plants too”

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

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

“This is an awesome idea.”

# Thinking about the collection

Researching other  
collection guidelines

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



# Making our selections



<http://bit.ly/BrockOLA>



# Archives and Special Collections





# Inuit dolls



# Anna Attagootsiak of Pond Inlet

Photo credit Ernie Bies



# Taking shape



<http://bit.ly/BrockOLA>





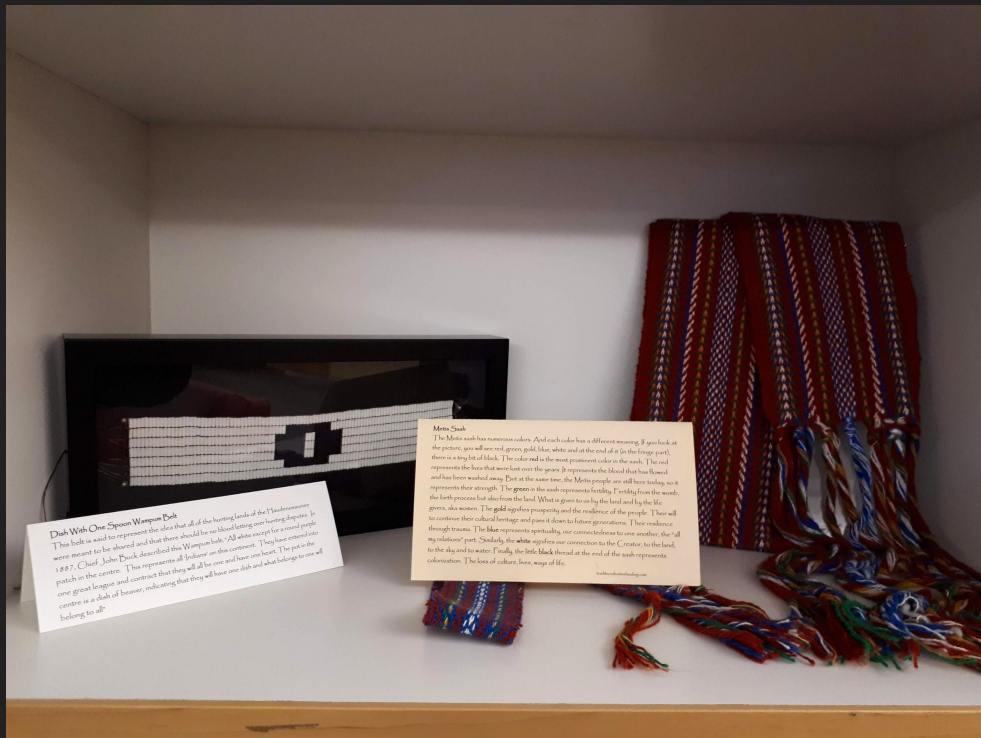
**Friendship Wampan Dab**  
The Friendship dab, also known as the Silver Covenant Chain records treaties made with the Dutch, French and English. The treaties were covenant made between the native people and the white men pledging their friendship of peace forevermore. From time to time they should recall these covenant friendships.



**Dab With One Sparrow Wampan Dab**  
This dab is used to represent the idea that all of the hunting lands of the Nadenawam were meant to be shared and that there should be no bloodletting over hunting disputes. In 1687, Chief John Dab described this Wampan dab. "All white except for a small patch in the center. This represents all Indians on this continent. I say two small dots one green tongue and contrast that they all be one and have one heart. The put in the center is a dab of beaver, indicating that they all have one dab and what belongs to one all belong to all".

**Mete-Sash**  
The Mete sash has numerous colors. And each color has a different meaning. If you look at the picture you will see red, green, gold, blue, white and at the end of it (in the fringe part), there is a strip that is black. The color red is the most prominent color in the sash. The red represents the lives that were lost over the years. It represents the blood that has flowed and has been washed away. But at the same time, the Mete people are still here today, so it represents their strength. The green is the earth represents fertility. Growing from the seeds, the first process but also from the land. What is given to us by the land and by the life. The green also means. The gold signifies prosperity and the resilience of the people. Their resilience through trauma. The blue represents spirituality, our connectedness to one another, the "all my relations" part. Spiritually the white signifies our connection to the Creator, to the land, to the sky and to water. Finally, the little black thread at the end of the sash represents colonization. The loss of culture, lives, ways of life.

© National Museum of the American Indian





# The journey continues

Launch event

A name

Lighting

More books and artwork

Speaker events

<http://bit.ly/BrockOLA>

# Questions? Comments?

Jennifer Thiessen

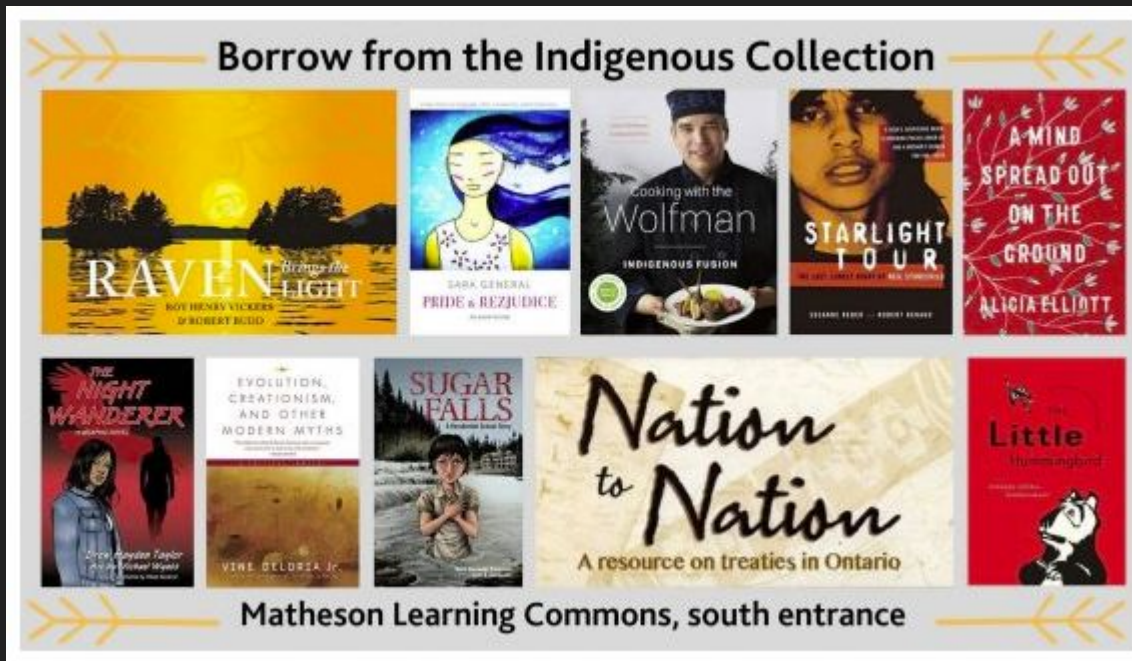
[jthiessen@brocku.ca](mailto:jthiessen@brocku.ca)

Lindsay Bontje

[lindsay.bontje@humber.ca](mailto:lindsay.bontje@humber.ca)

Martin Chandler

[martin.chandler@mcgill.ca](mailto:martin.chandler@mcgill.ca)



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

<http://bit.ly/BrockOLA>