

Laughter Filled the Space: Challenging Euro-Centric Archival Spaces

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Abstract

This article offers a view of decolonialized approaches to archival spaces and insight into community centered constructions of space. By addressing perceptions of space and the physicality of where archives are accessed, this piece focuses on the emotional, physical, and intellectual barriers that are associated with archival information. The authors address the numerous facets of physical archival spaces, including but not limited to physical seating, wall colours, and sounds within a space. The authors highlight the differences between Euro-centric settler archives and Indigenous community archival spaces as a way to provide models for decolonialized approaches to creating archival space.

Keywords: community archives; Indigenous archives; Residential Schools

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Introduction

Historian Mary Jane Logan McCallum (2018) has openly discussed the challenges Indigenous scholars face in conducting research in archival spaces. Reflecting on her experience at Library and Archives Canada (LAC) she notes, “[a]t the archives, researchers are confronted by the state—literally at the door. Registration is necessary, and federally employed, mostly older ex-military security officers guard the building, the boxes of records, the talking, and, when possible, the cameras researchers now use to photograph records.” What is made clear through Logan McCallum’s essay is that a research trip to an archive is never a neutral experience. Archival spaces come in all shapes and sizes, though many follow similar access protocols and reading rooms tend to have a similar look and feel. Archives, particularly those that are extensions of government or other public and private institutions, can be physically stressful, hostile, and unwelcoming to Indigenous researchers. Archival visits often involve travel, navigating state structures, government bureaucracy, archival protocols, and unwelcoming spaces. While this is true for many would-be visitors to archives, these challenges are especially difficult for Indigenous individuals who are faced with additional barriers to access, not the least of which is the reminder of the connection between archives and the colonial systems that have contributed to the cultural genocide of Indigenous communities in North America and around the world.

In this article, we look at the ways in which archives’ physical spaces not only fail to meet the need of Indigenous visitors and researchers, but also embody many of the violent colonial practices that have marginalized Indigenous communities. We refer to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the Calls to Action published in its final report. We also

draw from the *Protocols for Native American Archival Material* (First Archivists Circle, 2007), which describes best practices for culturally responsive care and use of American Indian archival materials held by non-tribal organizations. We also build on the work of the Response to the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Taskforce of the Steering Committee on Canada's Archives (TRC-TF). In particular, we look at the TRC-TF recommendations provided in its draft report, *A Reconciliation for Canadian Archives* (2020), which identifies a number of recommendations concerning the physical spaces of archives that the authors support.

This article also highlights the differences between Euro-centric settler archives, Indigenous centered archival spaces, and grassroots community heritage spaces. By showcasing community approaches to archival spaces, we suggest decolonialized approaches to archival stewardship that have the potential to shift archival practices in meaningful ways. To accomplish this, we have deeply rooted our discussions in our sense of place, positionality, and community. We draw from our own experiences working with the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre (SRSC), where the space is often filled with laughter, and where people speak their Indigenous languages, tell jokes, and feel at ease in an archival space. This laughter and level of comfort is what inspires us and informs our advocacy work directed at helping archives become more culturally appropriate in ways that welcome Indigenous peoples and their ways of being. Krista McCracken is a settler who lives and works with the SRSC at Algoma University in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada. Krista is grateful for the opportunities they have had to work alongside Residential School Survivors and Indigenous communities, and continues to learn by listening to Elders and Survivors. Skylee-Storm Hogan is a mixed Urban Indigenous person from Kahnawà:ke who was raised in the Greater Toronto Area. Skylee-Storm has held a variety of positions with the SRSC and this experience continues to shape their current scholarship and work advising public history projects.

Barriers in Archival Spaces

Most archives have protocols for access and use of their spaces and services. Specific policies vary, but some of the more common protocols include: requiring the visitor to register as a researcher, which often involves providing government-issued identification; requiring visitors to leave belongings in a separate area or locker to prevent theft or damage to records; and limiting access to specific hours and/or verified scholars. Entering an archive for the first time, and not knowing about these procedures or how they work, can produce anxiety and fear. Adding to this discomfort, the physical spaces of archives, including most reading rooms where collections are accessed, are generally constructed to serve a particular type of researcher—the historical, the legal researcher, or the genealogist—who are already familiar with institutional processes. Taken together, the institutional protocols and spaces are not designed to meet the needs of non-typical users; for members of Indigenous communities, such institutional barriers mean that access is both passively and actively discouraged.

One set of barriers facing Indigenous people is the ways in which archives mirror, and in some cases reinforce, systems of colonial oppression through policing and surveillance. Canada has a legacy of racism against Indigenous peoples, particularly within the justice system. As Mi'kmaw lawyer Pamela Palmater (2016) has reported, Indigenous people have a much higher rate of interactions with police than non-Indigenous people, resulting in higher rates of incarceration. Such over-policing is tied up with the legacy of the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) and the contemporary Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP or "Mounties"), which were both established to protect the interest of settlers by enforcing colonial law, order, and administration

(Nettelbeck & Smandych, 2010). This history manifests as a barrier to archives in three interconnected ways. First, by requiring visitors to engage with security guards or walk through metal scanners prior to entering reading rooms. Second, archives often uphold colonial values through their use of language. The code of ethics for LAC, for example, states, “we respect the rule of law and carry out our duties in accordance with legislation” (Library and Archives Canada, 2019a). Some laws to which this code refers, such as the Indian Act of 1985 and its subsequent regulations, are part of a long history of assimilationist policy in Canada and have been used to control Indigenous land, resources, and people for generations. Third, the physical layout of reading rooms are designed for solitary research under the supervision of staff, mimicking the solitary confinement and surveillance of prisons. As Eric Ketelaar (2002) notes, this panopticon construction is purposeful; in some archives, even the furniture and positioning of staff are designed to increase surveillance of researchers.

While the need to secure collections from damage and theft is understandable, the security protocols in place are barriers for some visitors. We question the necessity of such policing and surveillance. As Ross Griffiths and Andrew Krol (2009) point out, the amount of effort taken by archives to ensure the safety of their collections from researchers may also be misguided. Many thefts and damages, they find, are the result of insider intervention, which places further doubt on the need for such drastic security measures. Archives can explore policies that protect their physical records while still working toward creating welcoming spaces. We recommend, for example, archives holding specific days or hours for Indigenous researchers, looking at the possibility of taking reproduction archival records into Indigenous communities, using open concept reading rooms which privilege connection instead of isolated researchers, and talking with Indigenous communities to see what type of access would meet their needs best. This could be furthered by the formation of councils or working groups with local nations who have considerable collections housed within an archives. When working with Indigenous communities there should be a partnership-based approach, rather than a gate-keeping relationship based on colonial power structures.

In addition to physical security measures, many archives also require visitors to either show identification prior to accessing the reading room or insist that they register as a researcher, which requires government-issued identification. At LAC, for example, visitors subject themselves to a number of administrative requirements. They must read and accept the User Agreement Terms and Conditions established by LAC, fill out an electronic form, present themselves to a staff member at the Registration Desk, show a government-issued photo identification, and sign a user card (2019b). It is not as simple as showing up and asking to see records. There are processes upon processes that need to be followed in order to access material at LAC, even if the records in question are documenting your own personal history. LAC is not alone in its entry requirements. For example, the Archives of Manitoba (2020) requires that visitors check-in at a security desk, show identification, complete a registration form, and obtain a registration card. These are only two examples, but there are similar registration protocols in place at many archives. For Indigenous people, producing acceptable identification itself may be a barrier. Individuals living in remote or Northern-Canadian communities are more likely to lack government issued personal identification, such as birth certificates, than those living closer to urban centres. As Chris Sanders and Kristin Burnett (2019) show, lack of personal identification is often an intergenerational issue, stemming from colonial practices that removed Indigenous children from their home communities through Residential Schooling or adoption into white families, resulting in distrust of government. Underfunding of Indigenous health care and poor services on reserve has also produced a situation in which multiple generations of families have

not acquired government-issued personal identification. By insisting on the presentation of identification to enter archives, many Indigenous people are already actively prevented from accessing the collections these institutions hold. We therefore recommend that archives consider alternative options for registration by either ending this practice altogether or allowing for alternative forms of identification, such as a letter from a band or tribal office or another Indigenous organization to introduce the visitor, or by engaging in a series of conversations with the visitor to build rapport and trust rather than lengthy paperwork.

Like the public archives described above, many religious archives contain materials that document the lives and experiences of Indigenous peoples and communities. Although religious archives are rarely subject to the same level of bureaucratic security protocols as government archives, they often put up similar barriers to access. The archives of the Jesuits in English Canada, for example, has a number of guidelines for visitors, including sign-in procedures and access protocols. The general regulations not only stipulate that staff “reserves the right to assign a specific place for the Researcher, depending on the amount, size and type of documents to be consulted,” but that research must not begin before visitors sign a research agreement (Jesuits of English Canada, 2020). These regulations pose several barriers worth noting. The act of assigning a place to sit within the archives removes agency from visitors and, for some Indigenous visitors, this could be reminiscent of the structure of Residential Schools or other colonial institutions. This is important to keep in mind because Indigenous people may seek access to records held by a religious order because they document interactions between the church and Indigenous communities, often in relation to missionary work or Residential Schooling. Regulations like the ones imposed by the Jesuits also assume that visitors will conduct their research independently, which can be a hurdle for anyone wishing to consult archives with family or a support person. For Indigenous people, moving through an archive alone can be frightening. This fear may be amplified if the archives are housed in a church, former jail, former Residential School, or another colonial institutional setting.

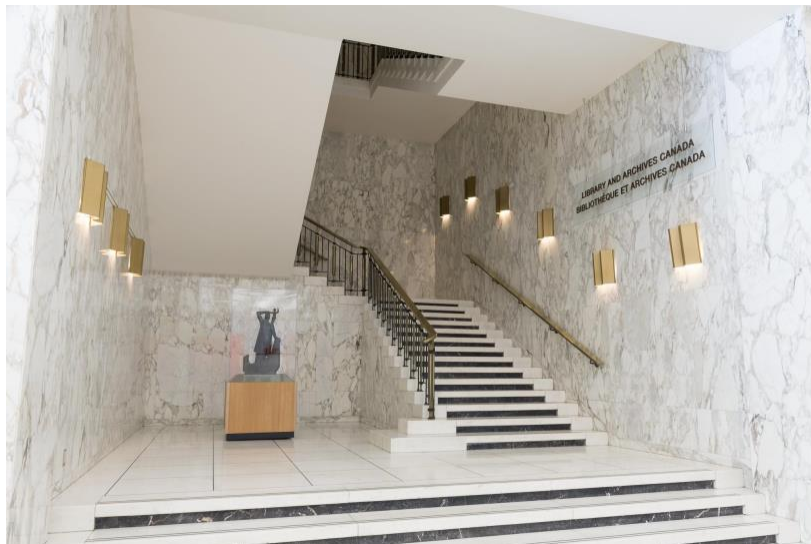


Figure 1: Central marble and brass staircase at Library and Archives Canada’s downtown Ottawa location. From BiblioArchives / LibraryArchives, by Tom Thompson, February, 2018. <https://flic.kr/p/25Zxv8w> Library and Archives Canada, IMG_5054. CC-BY-NC-ND.

Once a visitor has navigated the security protocols and passed through the physical and administrative barriers, they may face additional challenges in the reading room or consultation area. As noted above, reading rooms are designed for particular kinds of researchers; they are serious, quiet, and sterile in aesthetic. There is no space for consulting with family or community members and very few archives allow Indigenous cultural practices such as smudging to take place. LAC, for example, has limited discussion space and few soft surfaces for visitors to sit or rest on. The concrete exterior and the interior white marble of LAC feels cold, hard, and formal. The ceilings are high, entry spaces are grand, and brass accents such as those seen in Figure 1 make the visitor aware that this is a space steeped in history, formality, and part of the government power structure. Furthermore, there is no space in reading rooms for processing trauma. Archives are places where Indigenous peoples are discovering their ancestors' stories and processing loss. The very nature of what was collected by the government as archival data documents the colonization, dispossession, subjugation, and forced assimilation of Indigenous communities. As Jesse Thistle (2015) notes, archives can be traumatic, and reading about the treatment of Indigenous communities through the lens of colonial bodies can be particularly exhausting for Indigenous researchers. Jarett M. Drake (2016) goes so far to argue that archival reading rooms can be oppressive places. He writes, "[archivists] expect users to consult documentary records that chronicle the peaks and valleys of humanity - love, hate, war, abuse, joy, humor - and display no auditory or affective response." When archives are designed in ways that discourage emotional interaction with records, they are not only intimidating, but they can actually further harm Indigenous people when they access records that document trauma and are expected not to show an emotional response. And if a researcher is triggered while visiting the archives, there is no one available to respond in support of mental health and the social standards of "library quietness" mean Indigenous people may feel pressured to leave the space in order to process their grief.

Whether physical, administrative, or emotional, the barriers that Indigenous people experience in accessing government and institutional archives can be eased or mitigated. In this next section, we introduce the Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre (SRSC) and describe how this archives, and other Indigenous-centred community archives, have developed practices that reduce barriers for visitors and encourage participation from Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous-Centred Archival Spaces

Before we discuss the work of the SRSC, it is important to situate our work in a growing literature on the need to rethink archival practices to meet the needs of those historically marginalized by these kinds of institutions. Rachel Buchanan (2007) reminds us that archives are a product of when and where they are created and they can be transformed and reimagined by community involvement. We have the power, therefore, to remake them. Crystal Fraser and Zoe Todd (2016) argue that, "to reclaim, reshape, and transform the archives to meet the needs of Indigenous peoples requires an honest and blunt engagement with the bureaucratic and arcane structures that govern and shape research today." Archivists can transform their institutions to be more accessible to Indigenous peoples and archives can be spaces of care, community, and reparative processing. This demand dovetails with the work of Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor (2016), who argue that approaching archival practice with a feminist and community oriented ethic of care "would transform the reading room space from a cold, elitist, institutional environment to an affective, user-oriented, community-centred service space." Building empathy and community centered care into archival services and spaces can improve user experiences at archives, particularly the experiences of users from marginalized communities. Archives are not

without a template for the physical transformation of space; many community archives and cultural centres provide examples of spaces that are welcoming and culturally sensitive to the needs of Indigenous users. Michelle Caswell et al. (2018) have also noted that, many individuals view “community archives metaphorically as home...home is a space where their experiences and those of their ancestors are validated. For others, still it is a space where intergenerational dialog—sometimes difficult and unsettling—occurs.” Community archives can have a profound impact on personal, family, and community history. Many community archives have been created with the needs of a particular community in mind and have adapted their spaces to serve communities.

The Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre (SRSC), a grassroots community archive founded by Residential School Survivors in 1981, provides one example of an archive that has worked to eliminate barriers to access and create a space which is non-threatening. The SRSC preserves and shares materials connected to the legacy of Residential Schools in Canada and more broadly about sharing, healing, and learning related to Indigenous communities and reconciliation. The SRSC archival collection initially focused on the materials connected to the Shingwauk Residential School but since the 1980s has expanded to collect records from Residential Schools across Canada. Today, the SRSC is jointly managed through a partnership between Algoma University and the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association—a group of former Shingwauk Indian Residential School students and their descendants. The Centre is housed at Algoma University, on the former Shingwauk site and operated with the community guidance of Survivors and local Indigenous partners.

Canadian Indian Residential schools forcibly took First Nations, Inuit, and Metis children away from their families and placed them in government run, church-administered schools designed to take away their culture, family connections, and identity. Many of the materials which document Residential Schools also document colonialism, assimilationist policies, and the mental and physical harms done to students while away from their homes. Given the traumatic nature of the archival material held by the SRSC, the staff have carefully considered ways that archival staff can better support Residential School Survivors and intergenerational Survivors when they access archival material. The SRSC does not have a formal sign-in procedure for access to its visitor space, nor are individuals required to show identification, and visitors are welcome to just sit in the Centre’s space. Similarly, the SRSC is happy to host community groups and families; visitors are encouraged to come into the space with friends, family, or anyone else that they wish to bring. Individuals or groups can use the comfortable seating, pictured in Figure 2, to sit and flip through reproduction photo albums or to just talk and visit with family or staff. Staff provide boxes of tissues and tobacco ties for anyone wishing to leave an offering on the Shingwauk site. Tobacco is a spirit medicine for many of the Indigenous cultures who have Survivors from the Shingwauk Residential School. Additionally, visitors are welcome to move the chairs around to suit their comfort and accessibility needs. The flexible and adaptable nature of the space allows the SRSC to accommodate individual researchers, intimate groups, and larger groups of visitors.

The SRSC is focused on the experiences of its visitors. For example, the lack of formal archival sign-in procedures at the SRSC is intentional. The SRSC does not want Survivors to feel as though they have to jump through hoops in order to gain access to Residential School records that are about them. The lack of visitor forms is an active attempt to avoid creating strict institutional policies that might be a reminder of the regimented nature of Residential Schools or other government institutions. When a Survivor, a Survivor’s descendant—also called an

intergenerational Survivor—or a community member enters the space, SRSC staff stop whatever work they are doing and turn their attention to that person. This act of acknowledging visitors and actively offering assistance is part of creating a welcoming space. Additionally, all SRSC staff have engaged in basic training around trauma and how to support someone who is experiencing emotional distress. Part of this training emphasizes how archival staff can interact with and support Survivors, intergenerational Survivors, and families who are looking at archival material relating to their personal, family, or community history. This means understanding that working with archival records can be deeply personal and that research can “be the key to their identity, prompt re-connection with lost family members, confirm doubted memories of the past, or provide the sought-after evidence required to seek justice” (Jones, 2014). For many individuals entering the SRSC it may be the first time they are interacting with photographs of relatives, making their archival experience deeply personal and at times emotional. Some people come to the archives looking for confirmation that a relative attended a Residential School or looking for an answer to a question about their family. These searches can produce a range of emotions, depending on the individual. Providing quiet and private spaces, tissues, water, and access to space where individuals can smudge are part of the SRSC’s efforts to support individuals who may experience trauma in the archives.



Figure 2: Visitor seating area in the SRSC. Photograph by Krista McCracken on behalf of the SRSC, 2015.

Given the potentially triggering nature of the records held by the SRSC, the Centre also works closely with the Ontario Indian Residential Schools Support Services to facilitate access to trained mental health and cultural support workers to visitors of the archives. In virtual spaces, the SRSC also provides warnings about the potential triggering nature of Residential School archival material and provides links to a 24-hour mental health support hotline for Survivors and their families. The SRSC’s effort to support those engaged in research with Residential School records is not perfect and staff are currently looking at ways to improve on-site resources. In 2019, staff participated in basic first aid and CPR training, mental health first aid training, and suicide safe talk training. This ongoing professional development is part of a commitment to providing support to those looking at records of trauma. Future plans for the support of this work also include the

development of an Elder in-residence program which would allow for an Elder, a traditional healer, or traditional knowledge keeper to be available to visitors during SRSC opening hours. Future plans also include the creation of a wider range of physical spaces where individuals or groups can look at records and have increased access to local traditional healing programs.

The Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre (IRSHDC), located at the University of British Columbia (UBC), is another example of an archive housed within a university setting, but informed by the needs of Residential School Survivors. Opened in 2018, the IRSHDC describes its work to “privilege and honour the experiences of Survivors, to create a Survivor-centred, trauma-informed space for dialogue...[and] to amplify conversations around the legacies of the Indian Residential School System and the on-going impacts of colonialism in Canada” (University of British Columbia, 2020). Like the SRSC, the emphasis on visitor experiences is evident in the IRSHDC’s physical space. Although primarily a digital repository with few physical records, the design of the IRSHDC creates a welcoming space for visitors who come to examine digital records on-site. This begins the building that houses the archives. Designed by Alfred Waugh, the first Indigenous graduate of UBC’s architecture program, the building includes architectural features and design elements that reflect Indigenous culture and identity. The roof is made of copper, acknowledging the significance of copper in many Indigenous cultures, and the siding is charred cedar plank, representing the scarring and resilience of Residential School Survivors. A glass waterfall signifies the tears of Survivors. The woven cedar wall pictured in Figure 3 was intentionally included to represent Indigenous practices of basket weaving and mat weaving.

Similar to the SRSC, the IRSHDC is designed to be welcoming and a place where Residential School Survivors and their families can research and engage with the history of Residential Schools. It offers comfortable chairs, space for reflection, an Elders room, and spaces for community and family groups to view Residential School records. The IRSHDC also includes a children’s area with toys, books, and activities. The inclusions of a children’s area acknowledges the ways in which many Survivors and communities engage with history. Research is not always done silently or by an individual. Often, people come to the SRSC and IRSHDC as a family or with friends, a practice that government or institutional archives do not accommodate, as children are not generally welcome in archival reading rooms. Both the SRSC and IRSHDC have made conscious efforts to create space for families and children, while also explicitly welcoming dialogue and discussion in their spaces.

In addition to Indigenous-centred archives situated in academic institutions, many Indigenous communities also support archives and cultural heritage spaces. One of these, the Anischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute (ACCI), was developed in collaboration with all nine communities in Eeyou Istchee, a territory represented by the Grand Council of the Crees. Located in Oujé-Bougoumou, Quebec, the ACCI (2020) was founded with the understanding that “Cree culture must be captured, maintained, shared, celebrated, and practiced,” and that there is a “need for a central place for the protection of ‘the ways’, and have developed a vision for Anischaaukamikw over several decades.” The ACCI facility was built by Indigenous architect Douglas Cardinal and includes an archives, exhibition space, and community space. The design of the building creates a space that is rooted in Cree history and is based on the Cree *sabtu*, a building style in Cree culture that is used for gathering, shelter, and residence. The building and associated cultural collections have impacted Cree communities positively in creating a culturally informed space for research, education, and community events. ACCI has continuously adapted to community needs and is a place where visitors can look at Cree history in a more relaxed and relatable space. Additionally, ACCI has worked to physically and digitally repatriate material

culture and archival collections connected to the Eeyou Istchee community, so community members do not need to travel to LAC or other government institutions to research their own history. Annie Bosum and Ashley Dunne (2017) have reflected on ACCI as “the gateway where traditional knowledge and culture are documented and shared with our communities and the world. Old and new ways of Cree life are showcased for all who visit, celebrating the uniqueness, elegance, and diversity of our culture” (p. 282). ACCI (2019) is an example of complete Indigenous ownership and management of regional cultural heritage and activities. It is a space that reflects Indigenous sovereignty, ownership, intellectual property, and governance while caring for both historical and contemporary traditions and teachings.

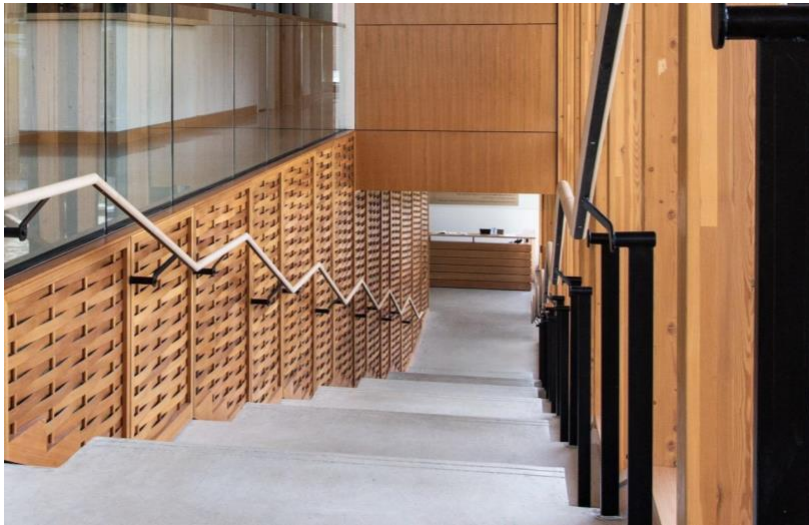


Figure 3: The Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre, woven cedar wall on left of stairs (author's own photo).

Similar to ACCI, the Woodland Cultural Centre (WCC) is managed by the Indigenous community that it serves. Of note, the WCC (2020) is situated on the site of the Mohawk Institute, a Residential School in Brantford, Ontario which began operating in 1828. When the school closed in 1972, the WCC was established under the direction of the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians as a cultural space serving the diverse Indigenous communities of Six Nations on the Grand River. Visitors can conduct research in the archives, which houses over 35 thousand artefacts, one of the largest collections held by a First Nations in Canada, or spend time in the library, where staff make available traditional medicines and water. The WCC also houses a museum dedicated to Indigenous stories and the history of the Mohawk Nation. Figure 4 shows an example of WCC's approach to displaying material culture and associated text that emphasize Mohawk experiences and contextualize images of Indigenous peoples that have appeared in the media. Public events can take place in the WCC's theatre or gallery space, including the recent Ancestors in the Archives program, which brings together photographs from the collection with Residential School Survivors who speak about their experiences (Gallant, 2017). The integration of Mohawk language is another factor that makes these spaces easier to navigate and more welcoming to Indigenous peoples. Thus despite, or perhaps because of, the location of the WCC in a former Residential School, visitors are encouraged to connect personally with material culture and share their own stories in a space with warm feelings.



Figure 4: Display of archival and museum material at WCC, 2018 (author's own photo).

Recommendations for Improving Access for Indigenous Visitors

What can government and institutional archives learn from the archives that centre Indigenous people and worldviews? Michelle Caswell et al. (2018) have shown that archives have the power to be transformative spaces, which assist in building community. They write that, “marginalized communities imagine community archives spaces to be symbols of survival, homes and extensions of homes, and politically generative spaces” (Caswell et al., 2018, p. 90). While this may reflect the work of the SRSC, IRSHDC, and others profiled in the above section, it does not describe the public or institutional archives we have visited. Is there a fundamental disconnect between the purpose and intent of Western archives and those that centre Indigenous people? Perhaps. But we believe that all archives have the potential to be welcoming spaces that encourage an exploration and understanding of the past, even if this past is difficult to process. In this final section, we offer some recommendations for creating this kind of encouraging space. We draw from the work of Indigenous-centred archives to inform the set of recommendations we provide below.

Our recommendations have also been informed by the Response to the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Taskforce (TRC-TF), *A Reconciliation Framework for Canadian Archives* (2020). This framework is the result of a four-year collaborative project to respond to

the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #70, which calls on the Canadian archival community to work, in collaboration with Indigenous people, to undertake a review of archival policies and best practices (2015). The TRC-TF proposes a vision, six principles, seven objectives, and 33 strategies that provide a practical framework for supporting the Canadian archival community as it begins reconciliation work and to redress its colonial legacy. The TRC-TF's Framework involved a robust literature review, conversations with Indigenous knowledge keepers, and surveys of archival practitioners in Canada. The proposed document has been created as a living document that can evolve as relationships with Indigenous communities deepen and change. Their focus on reconciliation comes from meaningful collaboration that addresses the needs of Indigenous peoples. This includes a recommendation that archives should, "[r]econsider opening hours, staffing flexibility, programming capacity, identification requirements, and other operational procedures to meet the needs of Indigenous researchers and community members." This recommendation mirrors one issued in 2007 as part of the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials (PNAAM), which called on archives to "Involve communities in creating welcoming and comfortable spaces for Native American visitors and rethink the need for 'credentials' from patrons" (First Archivists Circle, p. 10). We agree with both the TRC-TF and the PNAAM statements, and add the following recommendations for archives to address the physical and administrative barriers:

- Re-evaluate security protocols to determine whether security guards are necessary.
- Create a space for group consultation of archival materials. These spaces should include comfortable seating, ample table space, and be open to family members of all ages.
- Provide space where visitors can smudge and use traditional medicines.
- Have health support resources available. This might include distributing phone numbers of helplines, having staff training in mental health first aid, or having a health support person available on an on-call basis.
- Eliminate all user fees for Indigenous researchers, including reproduction fees.
- Evaluate existing user registration policies with attention to requirements that negatively impact individuals from marginalized communities, such as the need to produce government-issued photo identification.
- Evaluate the archives' potential for community partnership and collaboration with local Indigenous communities.
- Consider the visible diversity of employed individuals in the space and be open to changing hiring practices.
- Listen to Indigenous communities and Indigenous visitors when they express their needs or concerns. If possible, this should include developing culturally appropriate ways to collect feedback from Indigenous communities.

We recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to this work and that each Indigenous visitor will have different needs; however, changing the physical space of the archives is essential to making archives more accessible, especially when engagement can produce trauma for

Indigenous visitors. We also recognize that archives embedded in colonial institutions are inherently unwelcoming to Indigenous peoples and that many archives may not have much control over the size and shape of their facilities. Nevertheless, archivists can work with Indigenous partners to reimagine the spaces they do have, to rearrange furniture, set up group space, and remove obvious security barriers to ensure a more welcoming experience. Staff can also gain cultural knowledge and become more trauma-informed to provide necessary services to those visitors who may need additional, culturally-sensitive support. Of course, implementing these recommendations is just the beginning of real change. We strongly suggest that archivists seek to build meaningful and ongoing relationships with Indigenous communities. It is only through these relationships that archivists can begin to understand how to build safer, more accessible archives that welcome and support Indigenous visitors, even to the spaces that have and continue to be extensions of the colonial institutions that marginalize Indigenous peoples.

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