

# Collaboration In Preserving First Nations Archives in Northern BC Communities

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Thank you to Don Manson & Dr. Greg Halseth of the Community Development Institute for sponsoring this talk as part of the Community Development Institute's Speakers Series.

I was asked to speak about projects that the Archives has conducted recently with FN communities that allow them to support and develop their own archives. One of the intents is that it may assist other communities trying to preserve their own records and provide some insight into this process.

The following provides an overview of projects that we've collaborated on to preserve community-based archival materials owned by FN communities; these are records that are not part of the NBCA permanent holdings.

I will explore briefly the development of FN created archives in BC; little has been written about FN run archives in the academic stream.

I conclude with references to educational resources available that may assist communities in setting up archive programmes

Definitions: I use the term 'archives' interchangeably to refer to a physical building that houses records and to the materials themselves.

Archival records: are unique one-of-a-kind unpublished materials on which information is stored or recorded (formats: textual; maps/plans; sound or moving images; electronic records).

## UNBC – Unique Connection to the Regions that it Serves

Vision  
Mission  
Motto  
Values  
Priority  
Areas



Source: <http://www.unbc.ca/plan/>

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Background to how the Archives at UNBC became involved in this project is that it stems from its very connectedness to communities in Northern BC.

UNBC's history is very much rooted in this community, from its grass-roots beginnings with the creation of the Interior University Society that lobbied for a university. That close connection to community needs has extended through out its development & continues to manifest itself in the University's overall vision and plan. See UNBC Plan website: <http://www.unbc.ca/plan/>

UNBC vision: [...] uniquely Northern and personal in character; [and] *responsive to the region it serves*".

Mission: [...]To improve the quality of life in its region, [and ] the province [...]

Motto: En cha huná, from the Dakelh/Carrier languages translates as 'respecting all forms of life ' a willingness to recognize different perspectives of our diverse communities.

Values: its values serve as the foundation in UNBC's its teaching, research and service which includes [Commitment to the North and Northern Communities](#).

Its distinctive strengths in teaching, research and service as priority areas include [First Nations, Aboriginal and Indigenous Studies](#)

## UNBC – Regional Campuses

Cariboo Regional Campus



Prince George Campus



Peace River/Liard Campus Fort St. John



Northwest Region - Terrace Campus



That commitment to the North and the regions it serves is evident in the development and physical presence of UNBC regional campuses throughout Central & Northern BC.

Geographically UNBC campuses exist in:

North Cariboo (North Cariboo – Quesnel) &

Prince George Main Campus;

In the Peace River/Liard Campus in Fort St. John;

and Northwest Region (Terrace Campus & presence in Prince Rupert)

## UNBC is host to diverse First Nations Communities from BC



UNBC is on Lheithi T'ene Territory and has regional campuses on the Territory of many Tribal Councils, Bands & First Nations



UNBC was founded with First Nations Studies as part of its Mandate

First Nations Studies at UNBC



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UNBC is host to diverse FN communities across BC.

The UNBC regional campuses includes territories of 16 Tribal Councils and 77 bands, four Metis organizations, and 10 Friendship Centres.

As well, UNBC hosts students from many diverse First Nations communities across BC – and indeed across Canada and internationally.

The total student population (2009 figures) is about 4300 with 10% of the student population reporting as Aboriginal – in fact there are more aboriginal students at UNBC than any other university within the province.

## UNBC Education Programs In First Nations Communities



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UNBC has developed educational agreements with regional FN communities

The Cariboo Chilcotin Weekend University Program brings university degree opportunities to the working members of the fifteen First Nations Bands in the Williams Lake area.

Also a federated agreement with the Nisga'a FN (Wilp Wilxo'oskwhl) allows students in the Nass Valley to complete a Bachelor of Arts in First Nations Studies.

## UNBC Research Protocols & Agreements

### SENATE COMMITTEE ON FIRST NATIONS & ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

- To encourage appropriate research initiatives related to & with First Nations & Aboriginal Peoples through the establishment of research protocols in collaboration with the University Research Ethics Board.
- To assist the University in establishing & maintaining good relations with First Nations & Aboriginal communities.
- To encourage appropriate representation of First Nations & Aboriginal Peoples at all levels of the University.
- To review existing & proposed protocol & affiliation agreements between UNBC & First Nations & Aboriginal communities & educational institutions & to recommend guidelines to Senate for future protocol & affiliation agreements.
- To encourage & facilitate First Nations programs throughout UNBC & to create a university environment that honors the validity of First Nations expertise.

[http://www.unbc.ca/assets/governance/senate/senate\\_committees/12\\_scfnap\\_senate\\_committee\\_on\\_first\\_nations\\_and\\_aboriginal\\_peoples.pdf](http://www.unbc.ca/assets/governance/senate/senate_committees/12_scfnap_senate_committee_on_first_nations_and_aboriginal_peoples.pdf)

To meet the needs of First Nations communities that collaborate with UNBC in programming, research, education initiatives, mechanisms are in place to ensure that appropriate protocols are followed.

The Senate Committee on First Nations & Aboriginal Peoples Terms of Reference includes provisions to review and recommend guidelines for protocol & affiliation agreements. Membership on the Senate Committee includes Representatives of First Nations/Aboriginal Peoples from Protocol groups; affiliated First Nations Institutions; See protocols:

[http://www.unbc.ca/assets/governance/senate/senate\\_committees/12\\_scfnap\\_senate\\_committee\\_on\\_first\\_nations\\_and\\_aboriginal\\_peoples.pdf](http://www.unbc.ca/assets/governance/senate/senate_committees/12_scfnap_senate_committee_on_first_nations_and_aboriginal_peoples.pdf)

## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

### Northern BC Archives – Geoffrey R. Weller Library, UNBC



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**UNBC**   
Northern BC Archives

<http://nbca.unbc.ca>

The Northern BC Archives, as part of UNBC, is also committed to being responsive to community needs across the North.

As both a university and public archives, its mandate is to “acquire, preserve and provide access to materials of permanent value related to the institutional history and development of UNBC and its institutes and to acquire, preserve and provide access to archival materials of value related to the history and culture of Northern British Columbia”. *Approved by the Senate Committee on the Library, February 2002*

Much of our activity involves working with people in communities to provide consultation on preserving and providing access to records of significance. This collaboration is beneficial to UNBC in its teaching and research functions and to the wider community as a whole.



## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC



On occasion, The Archives has collaborated with UNBC faculty members working with communities on research projects and that connection has led to some of the FN archival collaborations that we have established to date.

One project that I participated in was an training workshop via the Community University Research Alliance project with the Tl'azt'en First Nation back in 2005-6.

This project explored and developed educational programming that integrated scientific and traditional ecological knowledge with the objective to assist the Tl'azt'en Nation's capacity for resource management. One of the goals of the project was to support the transfer of traditional ecological knowledge and improve educational outcomes from Tl'azt'en youth.

See <http://cura.unbc.ca/>

As part of that initiative I provided a workshop at the Tachie Reserve on how to conduct oral histories that would be produced by the group and these photos show part of that activity.



## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

### Archival Protocols

- Consultation with Communities
- Awareness of Cultural Sensitive Materials
- Re-thinking Access Issues
- Recognizing Community-based Protocols
- Reciprocal Education
- Raising Awareness in Archival Profession

<http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/protocols.html>

### Archival Formats:

Textual, Photographic, Cartographic, Sound & Moving Image Materials,  
Electronic Records & Computer Records



In the conducting of all such projects, the Archives operates within the agreements & protocols established through the UNBC.

We strive to work within 'the spirit' of other established archival agreements including Protocols for Native American Archival Materials See: <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/protocols.html>

Clauses for 'best practices' include:

- recognizing the importance of consultation with communities;
- special treatment for culturally sensitive materials;
- rethinking public accessibility on some materials; that rights of the community take precedence;
- recognizing community-based research protocols & contracts;
- reciprocal education & training;
- the need to raise awareness of these factors within the archival profession.

## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

- Archival Agreements Developed
- Preservation Programmes Initiated
- Collaborative Programmes Undertaken
- First Nations Archives – Observations



So I would now like to turn the focus to the main activities that we've been working with First Nations communities on over the last three years

Specifically with the following organizations & communities in Northern BC:

The Carrier Sekani Tribal Council,  
Takla Lake First Nations  
Lake Babine First Nation.

## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC



What are archival records?

What records should we keep?

How do you store records?

Should we make copies? Digital copies?

Where can we find storage space?

Why do we need an Archivist?

Essentially how each project began was often through a casual conversation or a phone call with a community representative and often started with a series of questions such as the ones outlined in the slide.

What I often explain is that It's not enough just to keep the records though that's a first step!. It's also important to develop standardized record keeping systems so that records that are being selected will be preserved and retrievable in the future.

So think about the following:

That not all records are significant -

You need to assess their significance and determine if they are of long-term value – what we call 'enduring value.' (does it provide legal, administrative, historical, documentary evidence?)

Think about how to preserve the records, what your budget is, and whether you plan on providing access to the records

All this can be challenging!

A good source on many of these topics is from the Archives Association of BC – the Archivist's Toolkit –

<http://aabc.ca/toolkit.html>

## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

### Carrier Sekani Tribal Council Genealogy Records

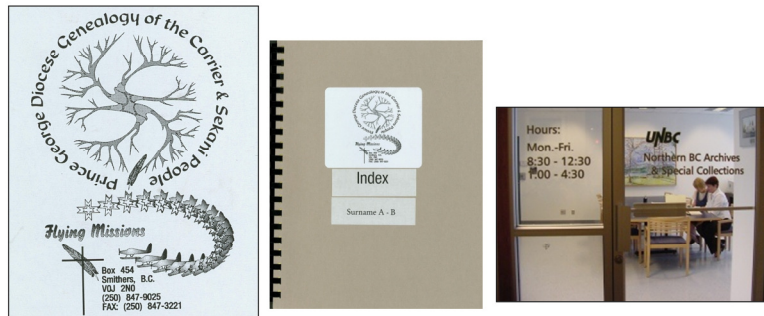


It was with the concern for preservation and access of its historical records that the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council on behalf of its member First Nations undertook a project to archive computerized genealogy records compiled by the Prince George Catholic Diocese. The project was a collaborative one between the CSTC and the Catholic Diocese of PG with the First Nations Studies Program at UNBC. The original genealogy research had been conducted between 1986-97 by Father Brian Ballard, of the Oblate Missionaries, who as a parish priest served in the “Flying Missions” into remote Carrier & Sekani communities across Northern BC; hence ‘Flying Mission’ Genealogy Records is sometimes used to refer to the records.

Using baptism, marriage & burial records created by the Diocese, Ballard compiled one of the 1<sup>st</sup> written records of Aboriginal residency patterns for the area. The genealogy is contained in 240 books outlining genealogy and descendancy of 19,000+ First Nations Peoples in Northern BC with records that date c.1800 to 1950s.

## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

### CSTC Genealogy Records – Storage & Access Process & Future Considerations



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The agreement signed in 1998 between the CSTC & UNBC provides preventive conservation storage and access to the genealogy records by First Nations representatives. At the time the records were transferred CSTC assigned a FN community member to facilitate reference requests. The process has evolved and now the Archives provides access once permission has been approved by the CSTC.

The Archives continues to work with the CSTC to ensure that research access is facilitated particularly for researchers travelling from communities to review the records. The genealogy records have been utilized by FN researchers or researchers working on FN behalf, in a variety of research projects – family histories, status searches by individuals or research by Band or Treaty Offices.

Future considerations would be to consider reformatting these computer generated electronic files to a more current electronic format.

## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

### Takla Lake First Nation Archival Records

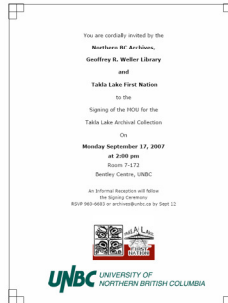


The second collaboration began in 2004 with the Takla Lake First Nation, a community of about 680 residents located approximately 400km north of Prince George at the north end of Takla Lake.

In 2004 the Takla Lake Treaty Research Office approached the Archives to discuss storage needs for its audio & video recordings. An agreement was drafted to ensure storage and access for TLFN community members of its holdings. The archives provided assistance in the creation of an inventory of the recordings and encouraged the community to consider a record keeping system that would be most effective in ensuring retrieval for its needs.

## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

### Archival Agreement: Takla Lake First Nation & UNBC Signing



In 2007 a Memorandum of Understanding was created which allows the Takla Lake community to control and manage the records.

Access to Takla Lake's recordings is accessible to Takla Lake First Nation community members only for its research needs.

The collection consist of +/-100 audio recordings with Takla Lake community members over a 30 year period and include information on family genealogies, land use and occupancy history.

A storage & access agreement was signed also with the William George family to preserve 50+ video recordings conducted by Takla Lake Elder William George in 1991.



## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

### 'In-Trust' Holding Agreements

THIS STORAGE and ACCESS AGREEMENT is made on \_\_\_\_\_  
BETWEEN  
**THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN BRITISH COLUMBIA** (a public body)  
OF THE FIRST PART  
and  
\_\_\_\_\_  
A First Nation which is a part of or affiliated with UNBC  
OF THE SECOND PART

WHEREAS  
\_\_\_\_\_  
FIRST NATION wishes to transfer a collection of records of knowledge for the University to the  
Northern BC Archives at the University. Its storage and custodial and the University's obligation to store the  
Records.

NOW THEREFORE THIS AGREEMENT WITNESSES THE FOLLOWING:

1. The University will have these Records in the Archives Collection through an agreed upon to the parties.
2. The University will have access to these Records for all purposes of viewing, and safeguarding them and for providing secure access to those approved by the \_\_\_\_\_ FIRST NATION.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ FIRST NATION will be responsible for authorizing access to the Records and will be responsible for the maintenance of the Records and the protection of the Records against the misfeasance of use of these individuals designated.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ FIRST NATION agrees that the University will not be liable for any damage that may occur regarding access to the Records or the loss or destruction of the Records while stored in the Archives and if the \_\_\_\_\_ FIRST NATION hereby advises the University from any and all damage.
5. The \_\_\_\_\_ FIRST NATION will indemnify the University from and against any and all claims which may be brought against the University that may arise in connection with access to the Records or as a result of any fire, theft, loss or destruction of the records while stored in the Archives.
6. The \_\_\_\_\_ FIRST NATION will be responsible for arranging its own appropriate insurance coverage for the Records while they are stored in the Archives.
7. This Agreement will be conducted in accordance with the laws of the Province of British Columbia.
8. This Agreement will remain in the benefit of and be binding upon the parties hereto and their respective heirs, executors, administrators, successors and assigns.



The Archival Storage & Access agreement has formed the basis of all subsequent archival agreements between First Nations organizations or First Nations communities and UNBC.

Essentially these are 'in-trust' holding agreement that allow the community to manage their own records. Permission to gain access is reviewed by the designated organization or community and researchers apply for research access. Each community designates an individual(s) who are responsible for authorizing access to the Records.

Records are kept at the Archives for storage and safekeeping and the Archives facilitates access to researchers that have been approved by the organization or community.

The agreement allows for a period of review to evaluate whether to continue an agreement, or whether the materials can be returned to that community. For example if a facility was to be built in a community to house such records would such an agreement still be required.

## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

### Archival Agreement - Benefits

- Agreements facilitate the preservation of significant community records. The records include documentary evidence relating to historical, cultural and linguistic issues of significance for First Nations communities in Northern BC
- Agreements provide a means of research access for First Nations community members to materials without the need to create a separate archives facility



The benefit to the organization or community is that they can be assured that records of significance are being preserved and they do not have to build a facility with a controlled environment to preserve the records. This is a real concern for many small communities as they don't have the capacity (infrastructure, finances, staff) to do this.

The agreement provides an alternative means for communities wishing to preserve their historical records in the absence of an archive in their community.

While it is the hope of some communities to eventually build such a facility to house their records this arrangement provides a viable alternative.

## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

Signing Ceremony Sept 17, 2007



The Agreement with the Takla Lake First Nation was signed in 2007 at a ceremony at UNBC.

It truly was a day of celebration! And it included traditional dancing, drumming, song and wearing of traditional regalia.

The event was attended by 100+ guests including Elders, children and many Takla Lake Nation residents who travelled from their homes in Takla to commemorate the signing ceremony.

## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

### Preserving Diverse Archival Formats – Challenges



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A challenging task has been preserving the materials. Much of the materials being stored is audio & video recordings and these formats bring often greater challenges than preserving archival materials on paper.

Audio & video recordings include magnetic recordings stored in different formats and different mediums. The longevity of magnetic recordings is relatively short; conservation laboratory tests shows that a best case life span for magnetic tape (analog) is 10 to 30 years.

Archivists spend much time working against the clock to ensure that older recording formats can be made accessible for the future. Much of our work involves ensuring that antiquated formats are playable so that they can be analyzed for condition, content, significance and transferability.

It's often difficult to find playback equipment that can play analog (reel-to-reel or cassette) recordings. Note slide shows reformatting project – 5" reel being played on audio equipment that we purchased on-line as it wasn't available locally.

When recording, make sure you make copies right away. Also copy older recordings as soon as possible to a current playback format. Keep the original as the preservation item & create a second copy that will be the 'access' copy.

Duplicating & re-formatting recordings to digital formats is expensive & labour intensive but necessary if materials are to be accessible for the long-term.

## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

Reformatting of Original Archival Materials - Standards & Formats



<http://www.cci-icc.gc.ca/crc/articles/elecmediacare/step2-erape2-eng.aspx#Magnetic>

[http://www.iasa-web.org/IASA\\_TC03/TC03\\_English.pdf](http://www.iasa-web.org/IASA_TC03/TC03_English.pdf)



Another challenge that archivists face is to ensure that when materials are transferred to a digital format that they will be stable, retrievable, and readable for the future.

This is challenging because we know the technology is constantly changing. We recommend that when saving digital files save them in a preservation format (i.e. for audio create WAV files) and keep them on a server or RAID system to create redundancy.

For more information see the Canadian Conservation Institute on the care and storage of personal electronic media collections. See:

<http://www.cci-icc.gc.ca/crc/articles/elecmediacare/index-eng.aspx>

For a detailed report on technical standards for sound and audio-visual recordings by the International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives see

[http://www.iasa-web.org/IASA\\_TC03/TC03\\_English.pdf](http://www.iasa-web.org/IASA_TC03/TC03_English.pdf)

## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

### Collaborative Archival Programming Projects



So beyond ensuring that the archival holdings of these community's are preserved and protocols are established via storage/access agreements, I would now like to talk about subsequent collaborative programmes that we have undertaken.

These have been with the Takla Lake First Nation and this past summer we also began a project with Lake Babine First Nation

Projects such as these could be adapted in other communities as well.



Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC –  
Tribal Archives, Libraries & Museums Conference, Oregon 2009



Building on the momentum of the partnerships created, we decided to inform other communities know about our joint work to preserve FN community records.

In 2009 the Economic Development Advisor for Takla Lake First Nation and I presented a talk at a conference in Oregon organized by the U.S. Tribal Archives, Libraries & Museums. The Conference included over 500 participants representing tribal archives, museums, libraries from throughout U.S., Canada, Australia, & New Zealand.

Part of the intent of the gathering , *held every 3 years, which is sponsored by the U.S. Institute of Museum & Library Services is “to develop continuing education opportunities that are modeled on, and incorporate, Native experience for both indigenous & non-indigenous staff members in these institutions”.*

*The conference provides opportunities “for indigenous staff to increase their knowledge of library, archival & museum operations & gain inspiration from their peers; & for non-indigenous participants to gain a greater understanding of ways to meet the needs of indigenous research patrons and identify model programs and promote those identified.”* [http://www.tribalconference.org/2009\\_conf\\_evaluation.pdf](http://www.tribalconference.org/2009_conf_evaluation.pdf)

The conference program included over 50 sessions on diverse topics confronting Aboriginal archives/libraries/museums throughout the U.S., Canada and abroad. Topics included: preserving oral testimony, access issues, repatriation issues, collections management, fund-raising, record-keeping, new technologies, all as they relate to and impact FN cultural & educational institutions

For more information on the conference and their upcoming conferences see:

<http://www.tribalconference.org/>



Tribal Archives, Libraries & Museums Conference,  
Oregon October 2009



At that 2009 conference Kathaleigh George and I gave a presentation about the First Nations archival storage agreements created in Northern BC.

Kathaleigh also showed a brief video excerpt of her father's extensive video recordings done in 1991 at Takla Lake community.

The feedback for the presentation was very positive and included both verbal and written comments posted on the conference website. One participant remarked that the collaboration for storage agreements was unheard of but of great interest. Others noted particularly that the video-recordings by Elder William George of Takla Lake were "priceless" and "worthy of its own program."

A future goal we have is to work with the William George family to assist in the creation of an educational resource using excerpts of this extensive video collection

Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC  
First Nations Studies Internship - Lake Babine First Nation Archiving Project



Another successful project that we conducted was Summer 2010 with the Lake Babine First Nation to conduct an assessment of what historical materials will be transferred to the Archives as part of a planned storage & access agreement.

Through an accredited internship arranged by the UNBC First Nations Studies Dept this provided an opportunity to encourage place-based community archiving and conduct archival assessment work.

The project was supervised by me and conducted by a FN student completing graduate work in First Nations Studies. The project was to create an inventory of LBFN audio-recordings, identify their research significance and recommend a preservation strategy for their long-term care..

This type of internship is one that the Archives has conducted for the last 10 years with undergraduate students and they have been very successful. It provides practical hands-on archival work experience to a student, who gain course credit through the practicum - and it allows them to integrate theory learned in the classroom with a hands-on experiential learning opportunity.

Internship opportunities may be of interest for other communities particularly those communities trying to assess what their archival needs are and establish a strategy for prioritizing preservation of holdings.

## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

### Observations:

First Nations Communities in Northern BC are actively documenting Community Memory & are taking an Active Role in its Preservation

First Nations Archives - Community-Based & Community-Defined & Developing their own Models for Protecting Knowledge, Culture & History

The Archival Agreements facilitated allow First Nations Communities to preserve & manage access to their own records

First Nations Communities in Northern BC recognize that the continued management & longevity of their Community records will require educational training in information management including Digital Technologies Management

Some general observations of the projects we have created: see slide observations noted above:

These observations are not grounded in statistical evidence; but it may help to place these observations within the context of recent graduate work on the topic of First Nations archives, as conducted by Rita Sophia Mogyorosi of the University of Manitoba.

In her thesis Mogyorosi explores the development of Aboriginal archives in Canada including those of First Nations archives in BC.

I am indebted to her for providing me with a copy of her graduate thesis in 2008 before it was made readily available.

As few published sources exist on the current status of Indigenous archives in Canada her work is a major resource on the topic.

## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

### First Nations Archives – Historical Perspectives

*Coming Full Circle?: Aboriginal Archives in British Columbia in Canadian and International Perspective*, Rita-Sophia Mogyrosi, MA thesis, University of Manitoba, 2008.

First Nations Archives – have ‘Come Full Circle’ –  
‘Traditional Archives’ - holistic ways of preserving knowledge  
‘Reactionary Archives’  
‘Aboriginal Archiving’ “returning to its holistic roots”

Mogyrosi notes that statistics for the number of Aboriginal-run archives in Canada are difficult to find as there is no central listing. She estimates there may be about 60 First Nations run archives in BC (Mogyrosi, thesis p.53). While she notes that Indian and Northern Affairs Canada identifies over 600 First Nations in Canada, Mogyrosi found listings for only about 50 First Nations run archives in all of Canada and only 8 identified as within BC. (Mogyrosi, thesis, p.54). That discrepancy may be partially due, she explains because most are not part of an archive association. In fact the rationale for their creation is different from public archives: many are not open to the public, there may be restrictions on access to records and often were set up (partially in BC) to conduct research towards land claims negotiations”. Mogyrosi, thesis, p.52-53 She contends that Aboriginal archives are evolving, and she notes that while historically Aboriginal Peoples preserved & communicated knowledge that was incorporated into everyday life - various “negative forces [...] disrupted how they preserved knowledge, memory & identity” such factors being colonization; residential schools; land claims & treaty negotiations. This saw the creation of what she calls ‘reactionary’ archives that were Western-based and not on Aboriginal Peoples “own cultural terms.” Mogyrosi, thesis, pp. 35; 52 She argues that “Aboriginal archiving’ is ‘coming ‘full circle’ returning to its holistic roots [and is] “challenging and contributing to a redefinition of traditional, Euro-Canadian notions of archiving and pushing the boundaries of archiving as we know it.” [Mogyrosi, thesis p.iv).

She refers to the use of new technologies by First Nations or the adaptation of traditional archiving systems to suit local needs as evidence of that evolution. Mogyrosi, thesis, p.5 She contends First nations “are now in a timely position to not only collect and interpret their own contemporary records; but also the records of their past, in whatever form they see as authentic and reliable in the context of their own cultures.” Mogyrosi, thesis p. 71.

## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

### Preservation of Recorded Information – Culturally Modified Trees



One example of 'aboriginal archiving' is the preservation of culturally modified trees. One of the traditional ways that First Nations documented information – was on parchment and bark. This Carrier "message tree" is inscribed with the symbols of the Carrier syllabic language and was located on the Cheslatta Trail, an ancient aboriginal trail route that connected the native villages of Nadleh and Stellaton on Fraser Lake. The message is written in pencil on a cambium-stripping scar that dates after 1885, after the development of the Carrier syllabic alphabet. Three elders who could read the syllabics, Nick Prince of Nak'azdli, Peter George of Nadleh and Edward Ketlo of Saik'uz and Nadleh, and Bill Poser, a linguist, deciphered the writing which (with slight variations) reads: Zi hooni Pierre Hadi ni Antoine Translated from Carrier to English it reads: "There is a body Pierre Hello, I am saying this Antoine"

It is not clear whether the message was referring to a human body or perhaps to the body of an animal that had been shot. The tree was recorded as part of an archaeological site in 1995. During the restoration of the Cheslatta trail in 1999 it was discovered that the tree had blown down and the trail crew transported the section of tree to Nadleh where it was temporarily stored.

The Nadleh Whut'en First Nation approached the Archives about preserving the CMT in its care until such time they can build their own cultural center for its display. In light of Mogyrosi's work CMT's can be recognized as a type of 'aboriginal archiving' as they record cultural information and language messages of significance to communities.



Most recently I have also discussed the concept of 'Aboriginal archiving' in the context of the storage agreements created at UNBC and the various collaborative projects we've undertaken with communities.

This slide shows a poster that I created for a session at the Association of Canadian archivists this year at their annual conference.



## Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

### Preserving Knowledge, Culture and History



So – in closing – This collaborative work has provided an opportunity for individual FN communities and UNBC to work together to ensure that their recorded historical materials found on whatever formats they choose – textual, photographic, audio or moving image formats - are preserved for future generations.

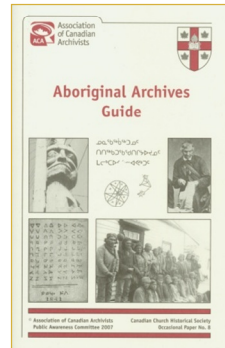
I'm very aware of the responsibility that has been placed on the Northern BC Archives to be entrusted with this role - - - and I hope that we can continue to earn and have that trust.

So in closing - I chose this slide to close the formal part of my talk – when the Takla Lake First Nation community celebrated the signing of the Archival Storage & Access agreement -

I think that this image conveys that a community's cultural knowledge and history doesn't reside just within archived walls (or archival boxes) - but that it is very much alive and well among us.



## First Nations Archives in Canada



Aboriginal Archives Guide –  
Association of Canadian Archivists  
Public Awareness Committee, 2007

[http://archivists.ca/sites/default/files/Attachments/Outreach\\_attachments/Aboriginal\\_Archives\\_English\\_WEB.pdf](http://archivists.ca/sites/default/files/Attachments/Outreach_attachments/Aboriginal_Archives_English_WEB.pdf)

<http://archivists.ca/content/special-interest-section-aboriginal-archives>

I've attached two links to selected educational resources available in Canada that may assist those who have been tasked with creating archives in your communities. The booklet entitled *Aboriginal Archives Guide* created by the Association of Canadian Archivists Public Awareness Committee in 2007 provides a brief overview of why it is important to create archives; establishing an archival programme; glossary of archival terms; sample archives mandate; contact info for archival advisors in Canada and contact info for archival associations. See:

[http://archivists.ca/sites/default/files/Attachments/Outreach\\_attachments/Aboriginal\\_Archives\\_English\\_WEB.pdf](http://archivists.ca/sites/default/files/Attachments/Outreach_attachments/Aboriginal_Archives_English_WEB.pdf)

The other link is from the ACA special interest group on aboriginal archives which provides members with a forum to discuss a wide range of archival issues relating to records created by or related to Aboriginal peoples. A goal of the group is to serve as a liaison between Canadian archivists & Aboriginal communities and organizations and form a base of expertise, advice, and support.

<http://archivists.ca/content/special-interest-section-aboriginal-archives>

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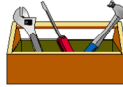
## Archives Educational Resources & Services in British Columbia

Archives Association of British Columbia

Website: [www.aabc.bc.ca](http://www.aabc.bc.ca)

Archivists Toolkit:

[www.aabc.bc.ca/toolkit.html](http://www.aabc.bc.ca/toolkit.html)



*Archives Advisors – AABC Education & Advisory Archivist*

<http://aabc.bc.ca/aabc/advisor.html>



Also please consult the Archives Association of BC website for a listing of its educational resources and a tool-kit on how to set up a small archives;

The AABC also offers educational training courses including distance education and web courses – so I encourage those interested to contact them for further information on their training program.

Their website is [www.aabc.bc.ca](http://www.aabc.bc.ca)

Archivist's Toolkit is [http://aabc.ca/TK\\_00\\_main\\_page.html](http://aabc.ca/TK_00_main_page.html)

You can also contact the AABC Education & Advisory Archivist for information on training at

<http://aabc.bc.ca/aabc/advisor.html>

Collaboration in Preserving First Nations Archives In Northern BC

**Ramona Rose, MA, MMst**

**Northern BC Archives**

**UNBC**

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**Url: <http://nbca.unbc.ca/default.asp>**



Or for further information on this presentation or other issues related to First nations archiving please contact the Northern BC Archives at [archives@unbc.ca](mailto:archives@unbc.ca)

Or by phone (250) 960-6603 or (250) 960-6602

Thank you