

Between duty to remember and imperatives of reconciliation: Procedures for Writing Culturally Sensitive Titles for Descriptions of Indigenous Materials at Library and Archives Canada

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Library and Archives Canada



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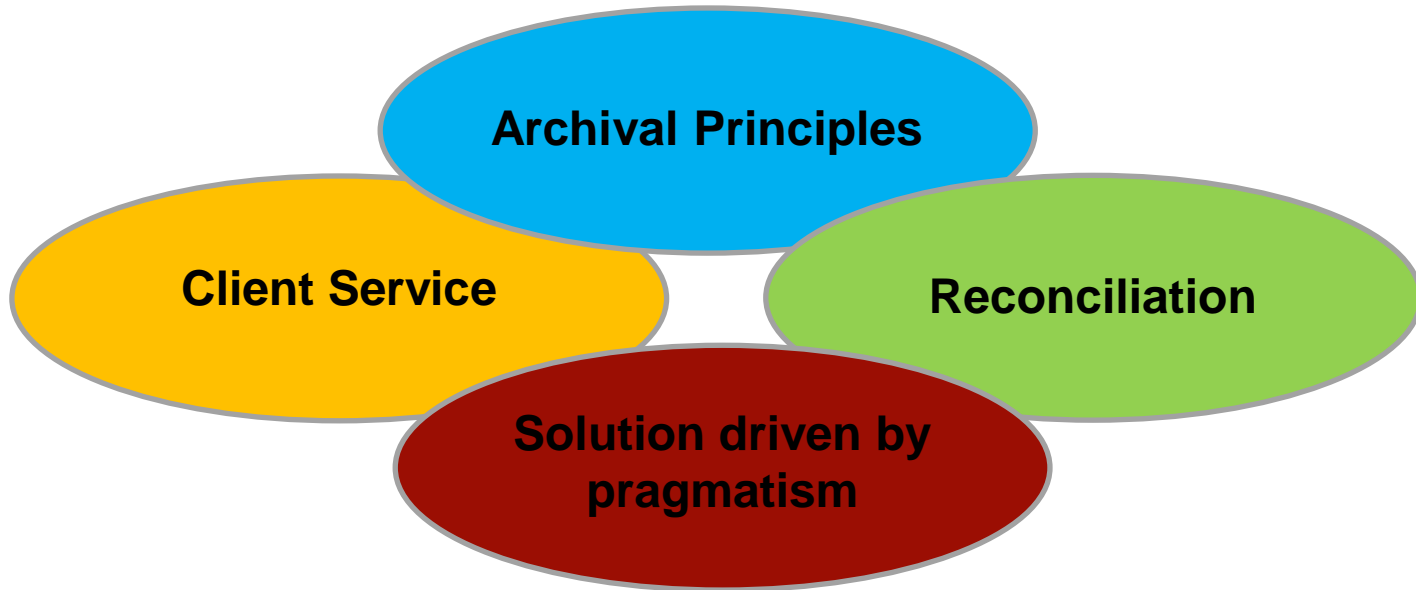
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Context

- On-going discussions in documentary heritage institutions on how to deal with inappropriate or offensive descriptions
- Above and beyond, recognition and affirmation of basic human rights for Indigenous peoples guaranteed by article 35 of the 1982 Constitution Act
- In Canada, renewed interest in the subject regarding Indigenous peoples following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action, that explicitly include a role for archives in the reconciliation process
- Specific context at LAC: pressing need for the *We Are Here, Sharing Stories* project
- Need for a solution that is adapted to LAC's situation as a national institution that has a leadership role in the Canadian documentary heritage community, and that has a specific responsibility in the reconciliation process as per the TRC Calls to Action.


Key Factors




A Solution in Two Parts

- Notice in LAC's Collection Search Tool
- Procedures for Writing Culturally Sensitive Titles for Descriptions of Indigenous Materials

Notice

 Cultural Sensitivity Warning: for more information [click here](#).

Limit to

Found in:
[Archives \(1\)](#) 
[Collections and Fonds \(1\)](#)

Date:
[1920-1929 \(>1\)](#)
[1920 \(>1\)](#)
[1926 \(>1\)](#)

Type of material:
[Photographs \(1\)](#)

Hierarchical level:
[Item \(1\)](#)


Online:
[Yes \(1\)](#)

Source:
[Government \(1\)](#)


All Archives Genealogy Library Co-Lab content

Showing 1 - 1 of 1 filtered results Sort by

1 [Eskimo type, child, half breed type, and old man, Hebron, Labrador](#)



Preview 1 image(s) of 1

Date: September, 1926
Reference: R216-1623-8-E. Volume/box number: 14945.
Photographs. [Conditions of access Open]. Government. Item.
This album page depicts six photographs of five Inuit and one NunatuKavummiut. Credit : LT Burwash / Department of Indian ...
Found in: Archives / Collections and Fonds
[Context of this record](#) 

Procedures on Culturally Sensitive Titles: Challenges

- *Procedures for Writing Culturally Sensitive Titles for Descriptions of Indigenous Materials*
- Agreement on the problematic nature of some descriptions, on the will to contribute to reconciliation, and on the necessity of keeping the original information in archival records
- Main challenges
 - Theoretical: how can we reconcile requirements of reconciliation with archival principles?
 - Practical: where does this fit into the institution's priorities regarding description?

Procedures on Culturally Sensitive Titles: Basic Principles

- Titles should facilitate records' discoverability by users and by the documents' creators (individuals, moral entities, donor organizations);
- Titles should reflect the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and of the Joinet-Orentlicher Principles;
- When possible and reasonable, titles should reflect the record's context of creation;
- Titles should reflect the contents of documents;
- Titles should be written in accordance with the *Rules for Archival Description* and benefit from the flexibility they offer;
- All useful information that sound archival practices require to be included in a title should be included in Mikan's title field.
- This procedure will not be applied systematically to existing descriptions, unless specific components are identified in the context of Indigenous initiatives.

Procedures on Culturally Sensitive Titles: Proposed Supplied Title Proper Structure

- If the official title proper is appropriate, no action is required;
- In the absence of an official title proper, the archivist will create a supplied title proper in accordance with the basic principles outlined in the preceding slide;
- If the official title proper is inappropriate or offensive, the archivist will create a supplied title proper in accordance with the basic principles outlined in the precedent slide. This supplied title will include the official title proper and be structured as follows:
 - **The new appropriate title, between brackets [], FOLLOWED by the official title proper.**

Procedures on Culturally Sensitive Titles: Examples

- **Mikan 5034383 (Photo – Government Records)**
[Inuit girl Pitula sitting on blankets indoors. Picture taken at Lake Harbour, N.W.T. Summer 1939].
Original title: 'Pitula' a supposedly beautiful Eskimo girl, taken at Lake Harbour, N.W.T. Summer 1939
- **Mikan 825376 (Textual record – Government Records)**
[Athabaska Forest Reserve, Alberta - Attempted Removal of Evan Moberly and Family and other Métis Families at Grande Cache, Alberta]. Original title: Athabaska Forest Reserve, Alberta - Trespass by and Removal of Evan Moberly and Family and other Half-Breeds at Grande Cache, Alberta
- **Mikan 99467 (Textual record – Private Archives)**
[Lexique de mots et d'expressions français-cris]. Titre original: Langue sauvages pour nommer les articles selon [sic] la coutume des traiteurs
- **Mikan 2963391 (Art – Private Archives)**
[Dene Dance at Old Fort Providence]. Original title: Slave Dance at Fort Providence
- **Mikan 4137275 (Cartographic record – Government Records)**
[Plan of Anishnaabe and Métis Reserves on Rainy Lake, Nth. W. Territory]. Original title: Plan of Indian and Halfbreed Reserves on Rainy Lake, Nth. W. Territory

Implementation

- Tools have been created to help staff identify instances when they should consider modifying a title;
- The procedure won't apply to official names of organizations, titles of publications and legislation, as well as official designations included in the Indian Act;
- Staff have to use their discretion and good judgement when applying this procedure;
- This procedure could be extended to similar cases where we would want to modify titles that would be considered offensive or discriminatory. For the moment, however, it only applies to Indigenous-related documents.



Questions?

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