



**VANCOUVER ISLAND
UNIVERSITY**
LIBRARY

Situating Representations of Indigenous Knowledge in Place & Context:

Recommendations for Vendors

With Vancouver Island University (VIU) campuses located in the traditional and unceded lands of the Snuneymuxw, Quw'utsun, Tla'amin, Snaw-naw-as, and Qualicum First Nations, working at VIU takes on a different meaning for everyone depending on the campus location, residence, and from whence one derives gratitude in relationship to the Indigenous communities in whose territories we live, learn, teach, and work. The relationships that the people who work at VIU Library have with Indigenous communities extend into communities within VIU's catchment region. From that awareness, we recognize that our work and how we strive to work with Indigenous communities is deeply personal in relationship to local Indigenous peoples and land.

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Why These Recommendations?

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VIU librarians are engaged in efforts to decolonize VIU Library services, guided by our [strategic plan](#), our [pledge](#) to our user communities, the [United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples \(UNDRIP\)](#), the Canadian Federation of Library Association's [Truth and Reconciliation Report and Recommendations and Position Statement on Indigenous Knowledge in Canada's Copyright Act](#), and the [Ownership, Control, Access & Possession \(OCAP®\) Principles](#). In reviewing product information provided by vendors and publishers, significant concerns have arisen for us over the past several years about vendors' accountabilities in relationship to Indigenous peoples and ethics of care in respect for Indigenous communities' cultural property, in addition to representations of Indigenous peoples and context within metadata and content. Specifically, we have noted that many of the commercial content products marketed to the Library are out of step with local decolonizing efforts, and hence unacceptable for acquisition by VIU Library. As we undertake the ongoing learning necessary to realize our decolonization commitments, we respectfully offer these recommendations as a resource for vendors to consider and apply to their practice. The recommendations are intended to evolve and be adapted over time; we look forward to further conversations through which we will continue to learn together.





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Relationships & Accountabilities



1. Respect OCAP® Principles in the content of information products, and clearly acknowledge, describe and reflect relationships with and accountability to communities. Do not reproduce and profit from Indigenous content, including public domain materials, without having such accountabilities and relationships in place
2. Consider what commitments will align your offerings with UNDRIP articles; for example, consider incorporating Traditional Knowledge Notices within Indigenous content metadata to signal to users that the content carries certain place-based cultural rights, protocols and responsibilities, and indicating willingness to work with communities regarding Traditional Knowledge Labels.
3. Observe Protocols for Native American Archival Materials, as articulated by the First Archivist Circle, when considering materials for inclusion in information products. This recommendation also applies to contributing libraries and other memory institutions.
4. Ensure that the composition of advisory boards and academic consultants reflects relationality and accountability to Indigenous communities.
5. Seek to understand local community contexts with libraries and librarians, and reflect those contexts in products, marketing materials and sales presentations.

Ethics & Care

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1. Demonstrate evidence of care in how information products are assembled and organized. Provide clear and detailed information about how Indigenous content is selected and curated for information products, and how these processes have observed transparency, responsibility, ethics and respect.
2. Reflect Indigenous place names, cultural groups and languages accurately and respectfully in metadata. Include context notices for content containing outdated, offensive and racist terminology.
3. Update inaccurate and disrespectful terminology used in information products and related marketing materials, and provide appropriate contextualization, in consultation with the represented Indigenous peoples. Care must be given to reconciling the historical representation of Indigenous peoples with contemporary values.
4. Review information products and marketing materials for colonial-bias language that makes assumptions and perpetuates dominant settler narratives. Instead use language that reflects truth and meaning beyond the colonial frame. For example, the use of the word “frontier” to denote the concept of a border between civilization and wilderness/lawlessness frames the history of Indigenous peoples within a colonial worldview.
5. Exercise discernment in meanings attached to language and terminology in different countries, including international contexts. For example, “colonial” may have different connotations in the UK than it has in former colonies.
6. Develop awareness of tone and bias in products and marketing materials. Biases or tones that perpetuate “othering” of Indigenous peoples within a product or marketing material render that product unacceptable for acquisition by VIU Library.





Younging's Principles

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- Collaborate with Indigenous communities to ensure truthful, accurate and respectful representation of Indigenous Knowledges and cultural property.
- Compensate Indigenous creators and contributors fairly.
- Exceed the requirements of non-Indigenous laws by respecting traditional protocols related to cultural property.
- Consider that copyright law and public domain may adversely impact Indigenous Knowledges and cultural property where publication has occurred without community consent.
- Collaborate with Indigenous communities to ensure truthful, accurate and respectful representation of Indigenous Knowledges and cultural property.
- Capitalize the term “Indigenous”.
- Avoid possessive, paternalistic and pessimistic language that negates the agency, rights and resilience of Indigenous peoples.
- Avoid stereotypes and generalizations about Indigenous peoples. Where possible, be specific when referencing cultural groups, practices, names and histories.
- Do not use the past tense to describe Indigenous peoples.
- Do no more harm: adopt a trauma-informed lens when preparing and reviewing content, metadata and marketing materials.

Resources

Canadian Federation of Library Associations. (2018). [CFLA Position Statement on IK in Canada's Copyright Act.](#)

Canadian Federation of Library Associations. (2017). [Truth and Reconciliation Report and Recommendations.](#)

First Archivist Circle. (2007). [Protocols for Native American Archival Materials.](#)

First Nations Information Governance Centre. (2014). Ownership, Control, Access, Possession (OCAP): [The Path to First Nations Information Governance.](#)

Local Contexts. [TK Notices.](#)

Local Contexts. [TK Labels.](#)

United Nations. (2008). [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.](#)

Vancouver Island University Library. (2020). [A Pledge to our User Communities.](#)

Vancouver Island University Library. (2018). [VIU Library Administration Strategic Plan 2018.](#)

Younging, Gregory. (2018). *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples.* Edmonton: Brush Education.

