

Abstract we sent:

This panel will showcase the experiences of the three recipients of the University of Alberta Libraries' Indigenous Internship: Lorisia MacLeod, Kayla Lar-Son, and Tanya Ball. These students have received hands-on training which has enhanced their learning experience in different ways. This presentation will not only highlight the importance of embedded learning, but also emphasize the importance of cultural diversity within professional development.

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Good afternoon everyone and thank you for attending our panel discussion. My name is Kayla Lar-Son. My name is Tanya Ball. My name is Lorisia MacLeod. We will be introducing ourselves in more detail later but for right now- let's just jump right in.

Before we start, we would like to extend a trigger warning as our presentation will involve sensitive subjects.

We would like to begin with a common practice from our home institution which is an acknowledgement of the indigenous groups' traditional territory on which we are gathered today. We respectfully acknowledge that we are located in the traditional territory and gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including Wampanoag, Mohegan, and Mohican tribes as well as a historical place for people from diverse backgrounds and homelands whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence the vibrant community.

We would really like to encourage you all to ask questions and we are hoping to have plenty of time for questions at the end. If you would prefer to ask anything in a less public forum, we will have some contact information for us up on the screen at the end or you can ask us in person during the rest of the conference. We will also be attending the DERAILED Unwind at the Landsdowne Pub and happy to chat then. You can ask any of us anything- unless it's about hockey, we know pretty much nothing about hockey.

We are here from the University of Alberta in Edmonton. You can see on the map, we marked Boston and Edmonton just to give you an idea of where we are from. Yes, we are use to snow and lots of it.

To give you context of how our Indigenous Internship came about we are going to give you a quick overview of the historical background that led to this program beginning with

the residential schools and leading to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's report and Calls to action. We definitely won't be able to give you all a full view of the history- we could probably spend the whole time just on that- but we want to give you an idea of the cultural and historical context that led to our particular program. We have included some additional information on the slides which will be made available.

### **Residential Schools**

While this is not the beginning of negative relations between indigenous and non-indigenous Canadians, residential schools are a harsh example of exactly how negative these relationships began. Residential schools were effectively boarding schools that popped up around Canada beginning in the 1870s. These were designed to perpetrate a cultural genocide of the Indigenous people by fracturing families, identities and removing ancestral languages and cultural practices. While individuals' experiences varied, many survivors of these schools have told about the physical, sexual, mental, and/or emotional abuse that they suffered at these institutions. Some records exist showing that school children were used to test food additives to see if they would be poisonous. It is jarring to see the stat that adults signing up to fight in a war would have a better chance to survive than these children- many of whom had been forcibly removed from their families. It is important to note, the last residential school closed in 1996 so this history is more recent than many might think given the types of mistreatment- it's hard to imagine that occurring in polite modern society.

### **Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

This dark part of Canada's history took front stage when the Truth and Reconciliation Commission began gathering stories from survivors in 2005. Part of this report, was acknowledging the role that this historical trauma had in creating a negative legacy for Indigenous people in Canada. The trauma has played a role in the over representation of Indigenous people in the prison population as Indigenous people make up 4% of Canada's population but 23.2% of prison populations. Intergenerational trauma is still very much present in many Indigenous families in Canada. A major part of this report was also the Calls to Action which were directed at various industries and institutions to break the negative cycle and improve relations between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous communities. It was from this environment of working towards a more positive future that the University of Alberta began and reaffirmed multiple initiatives to meet and exceed these Calls to Action. Libraries were not explicitly mentioned in any Call to Action but the U of A libraries still felt there were areas that they could rise to the occasion. One of these ways was the Indigenous Internship.

### **About the Indigenous Internship Program**

What is the Indigenous Internship Program:

This Internship is based on a similar program from the University of Saskatchewan. Indigenous Students can apply after being accepted into the School of Library and Information Studies aka SLIS. This does mean that all Indigenous interns meet the same entrance requirements into SLIS as all other students

For the two years that it takes to get your degree, your tuition is covered by the university thus removing that financial barrier.

This internship gives hands on experience and allows us to have a paying job during our degree. We often work alongside current professionals depending on what areas we are working in.

We are sometimes asked to attend meetings usually to give voice to potential concerns that Indigenous communities or students may have. Sometimes we are also asked about the student experience from our personal perspectives.

### **Personal Experiences**

One of the great things about a program with multiple individuals is the variety of ideas and background that can be represented. While we are all Indigenous Interns, our family history and experiences have shaped our experiences in the internship. As such, we would like to share with you some information about each of us followed with our experiences within the internship

### **6.5 minutes point**

#### **Tanya Ball - Personal Experience**

*Tanya Ball: Manitoba Metis*

My name is Tanya Ball and (as you know) I am a graduate student in the School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS) at the University of Alberta. Previously, I received a Bachelor of Arts with a double major in History and Romance Languages (focusing on French and Spanish). In the history department, I largely focused on Pre-Columbian and Post-Colonial Mexican history. You know, I've always loved Mexican history, especially working with Codices and researching Aztec culture. I eventually transferred this passion into a Master's degree where I specialized in Spanish and Latin American Studies. For my Master's project, I looked at contemporary representations of Aztec culture, specifically how Mexico was represented in Epcot's World Showcase at Walt Disney World. It was the world's best field research (in case you were wondering).

After graduating, I decided to start working at the Edmonton Public Library. It was (and still is) a fantastic place to work. It was this job that inspired me to go back to

school for the Master of Library and Information Studies (MLIS). Upon admission, I started receiving a million emails. I'm sure the rest of you are familiar with this. In this pile of emails was the advertisement for the Indigenous Internship at the University of Alberta. At this point, I thought to myself. I don't think I'll have time to do an internship and do school. Luckily, our now supervisor contacted me to explain the program a bit further. This was where I started my journey as the one of the first Indigenous Interns at the University of Alberta.

### *Saint Ambroise, Manitoba*

Now that you know a little bit about me, I thought I would delve further into my own family history. My family name is Lepine. Our ancestor's name was Ambroise Lepine who was Louis Riel's cousin and right hand man. For those of you who are unfamiliar with Canadian history, Louis Riel played a vital role as the leader of the Métis people. He fought for Métis rights in two resistance movements: the Red River Rebellion and the North-West Rebellion. This resistance movement resulted in the formation of modern-day Manitoba.

Since then, my family settled in a village called Saint Ambroise, Manitoba. It's located here on this map along the southern tip of Lake Manitoba.

### *Lepine Family History*

To offer you a bit more insight into our culture, I've included some family photos. We were hunters and trappers primarily, often relying upon the furs of animals to make a living. In the top right, is a photo of beaver furs that were stretched out to dry. Pictured here is a cousin that married into the family. He's an American. Oftentimes, American tourists would come up during hunting season and hire one of my family members to take them out on hunting tours. The photo underneath depicts my Uncle Norm after a duck hunt. He was my Grandma's brother. They came from a family of 5 children: one boy and 4 girls.

The photo in the centre is really special. As mentioned earlier, trapping was one of the staples for my mom's family. In some instances, they would trap because they were too poor to buy food. Oftentimes, they found themselves eating rabbit because it's what they caught that day. Aside from food, they earned a living selling the furs that they would get from their traps. My Great Grandpa sold muskrat, silver fox, fox, and beaver pelts. In fact, he owned a trapline that was on one of the first trails forged by the voyageurs. Today, it's located in the area of Assiniboine Trail, Manitoba. Because of the location, Manitoba Hydro is trying to buy it out.

Thinking about the fur from my childhood, I remember my mom always having a red fox fur in her bedroom. It's a very special item in the household because it was from my Great Grandpa's last run along the trapline. While all of the kids in the family were

trained how to trap, it was my mom who went out with Great Grandpa to check the traps. She also helped him stretch the fur. Whenever she talks about their relationship, it was something very special, so the fur is a symbol both of their relationship and our family's history.

The last photo is of my Aunt Dee as a young child. I believe this photo was taken before she received any schooling in St. Ambroise. Of the 5 children in my Grandma's immediate family 4 were sent to a school named Bernier School. It was originally run by The Sisters of St. Joseph from St. Hyacinth Quebec from 1948 to 1959. In 1969, it was petitioned by the people of the area to be taken over by the White Horse Plain Division. While the school itself is was not recognized as a residential school, the children there suffered at the hands of the Sisters. This is why the photo of my Aunt is important. She was beaten within an inch of her life by these nuns and was never the same again. The same could be said about my other family members attending the school. My Uncle Norm, for example, he was attacked by the school principal for not attending school regularly. This was a common theme back then. The children could not afford to go to school because they were living in poverty, and they were afraid to go because of the hardships they experienced there.

### *Transgenerational Trauma*

Pictured here is Bernier School.

So, why did I tell you all of that? For me, something that is often overlooked when discussing the TRC are the effects of trauma across the generations. Both of my grandparents suffered as a result of these schools and this suffering was transferred over to their children: my mom's generation. My Mom has 2 siblings: an older brother and a younger sister. You can see them here in these photos. My grandparents were not the best parents. They were poor, but rich enough to own a floor. My mom always jokes about her cousins having a dirt floor and creating dust storms while they were jigging at family get togethers.

Because they had little money, the kids were forced to wake early to do chores and make fishing nets to get extra cash. What's more, my grandparents were both physically and verbally abusive to the children. I've heard some horror stories from my mom and other family members about what happened back then, but I never truly understood why this happened.

While my grandma did not possess many traditional maternal qualities, she did understand survival. My Mom says that my Grandma "didn't want her children to grow up and marry a Ducharme", so she packed up the kids and moved to the nearest city: Winnipeg. That way, the children would be given their best chance of survival and happiness.

Winnipeg is where I was born and I lived there until I was about 4 years old. I remember little things about my native heritage. I remember going out on the ATV. I remember my Grandma and my Mom in the basement making fishing nets by hand. For

the most part though, it's something that was purposefully forgotten and left behind. That gap was enlarged when we moved to Alberta. It was further strained by my Mom and her Mom's relationship. When I was around 13 years old, they had a huge falling out and we didn't talk to her for a very long time. Years. It wasn't until my Grandma was diagnosed with Alzheimer's that she started wanting to talk with my Mom again. Strangely enough, this disease made her forget a lot of things -- even us at times. She actually reverts back to childhood at times, asking questions about when she was a child. It seems like a sad end to her story, but (at least according to my Mom), my grandma has always been sad. This is the happiest that she's ever been, as if she's been freed of her past and able to move on.

Right now, I see myself as a link in this chain. My mom raised us with the motto of "what would my mother do" and do the exact opposite. She created a warm, loving atmosphere for my sister and I. I have nothing but good memories of my childhood. What was missing was a connection to our heritage. My mom suffered a great deal from her parents, from people inside the community, and from people outside of the community. That's the thing about being Métis - we are a mix of Indigenous and European. For us, we are Saulteaux and French. As a result, we often find ourselves lumped into one category or the other (usually from other people), so we're in a sort-of limbo land. Because of this, our culture was hidden from us as a survival tactic -- to protect us from harm. Unfortunately, that left me without any knowledge of who I truly am.

### *Current Projects*

Returning to the Internship and my general library experience, I have been awarded the opportunity to explore Indigenous cultures through various projects.

- University of Alberta Press
  - The Writing Stick Conference
- School of Library and Information Studies (SLIS)
  - Digital Library North Project
- Edmonton Public Library
  - Digital Initiatives
  - Indigenous relations

### *What the internship means to me*

The previously mentioned projects are extremely diverse and have given me incredible opportunities. I'm eternally grateful for that initial message from my now supervisor encouraging me to pursue the Internship program.

For one, the three of us have bonded together and created our own mentorship program. This has been really fun for me because I've always been a little self

conscious and worried about my experience as an Indigenous woman. In talking to these ladies and countless others, I've realized that we're all in the same boat. We're all trying to tackle with our past and move on into the future. Having these two as confidants has been extremely uplifting.

I have also bonded with our supervisor. There's been a couple of times when I've sent her random messages asking her for advice. Actually, just the other day I was in her office in a panic about my upcoming graduation. Having an ally like her, who can understand and relate to what it is you're going through on a professional and personal level has been extremely valuable.

Last, but certainly not least, I see this Internship and these opportunities as the start of a larger conversation -- not a conversation with you or the University, but a conversation with my family members. You don't know this, in fact, not many people do, but this has been the first time that I have publically identified myself as an Indigenous woman. Taking this step and immersing myself into my own culture has allowed me to talk more freely to my mom and to my other family members about our past. Since starting I've learned about our history, about our nuances, our dances, our language. I've heard family stories that have been passed down from generation to generation. In this sense then, the Internship has put me in a powerful position where I can understand myself and share my experiences with others with the hopes that they can connect to themselves as well.

## **16 minute point**

### **Kayla Lar-Son - Personal Experience**

tansi, twansi, Bonjour, edlánat'e, aba washded (hello in Cree, Michif, French, Dene and Nakoda) my name is Kayla, I was born in Rocky Mountain House, Alberta. When I was a child I spent the first few months of my life in the care of child protective services, but eventually I was adopted and moved to the farming communities of Ryley, AB and then Tofield, AB., where I would spend most of my childhood. I am a Michif (Metis) and Ukrainian woman and a proud member of the Metis Nation region 4, which is located in Edmonton. Growing up in a small farming community most of the individual who lived there were of settler origins, there were only one or two other Indigenous family who's lived there. Being Indigenous was not something that was openly talked about, and in my own family the mention of our heritage was a taboo topic. I've always been a bit of a wanderer, when i was 15 my father passed away and I decided to move to Vancouver, only to return when my mother died, and to everyone's shock I returned with a husband.

After I moved from Tofield to Edmonton, I went to trades school and later applied to University. While at the University of Alberta I entered into the Faculty of Native Studies where I completed an Honours Degree, with a minor in Anthropology. While in the Faculty of Natives Studies I had the opportunity to meet other Aboriginal students and share my experiences with them. I was accepted by the community for who I am, and I will forever be grateful to them .

In my second year of Native Studies I took a research methods class where I would meet my academic mentor, Dr. Frank Tough. Dr. Tough offered me a position doing archival research with his project The Metis Archival Project. I worked for the project for 4 years doing community based research and rights based litigation research. I worked as a T.A. for Dr. Tough and began to mentor students within respects to their own library or archival research projects. It was Dr. Tough who encouraged my to pursue a degree in LIS education and I entered into my MLIS degree in fall of 2016, which corresponded with the Indigenous Internship.

### **Main Points of Internship**

1. Facilitate relationships with Indigenous students on campus - Native Studies and beyond.
2. Work one-on-one with LIS professionals.
3. Provide a diverse voice to my unit.
4. Advocate on behalf of Indigenous patrons.
5. Work with different Indigenous communities to better serve their needs.
6. Work with other Indigenous LIS students, build relationships with them, and support them through their educational journeys.
7. De-colonize the academy.

### **25.5 minute point**

#### **Lorisia-Personal Experience**

Hello everyone, I'm Lorisia MacLeod and yes I tried to find the most Canadian picture of me to share with you all so there I am on a glacier with the Canadian flag. I am a member of the James Smith Cree Nation located in Saskatchewan though I was born and raised in Edmonton, Alberta. I am also a Diversity Scholar with the Association of Research Libraries. My education background is a Bachelors of Arts with a double major in Anthropology and French Language and Literature from the University of Alberta. I also included an image of me after my Bachelor's convocation with the eagle feather I earned. The eagle feather represents wisdom, courage and honesty and in the case of convocation also marks personal achievement. So far, this is the greatest honour I have received from an Elder and is a personal point of pride. After my degree, I

spent nearly two years working in the government before I realized that I wanted to return to school for a degree that would help me develop my leadership skills and give me an understanding of best practices on information both electronic and physical. I also felt that there was no better way to help with decolonization than to add my Indigenous voice to those who are the keepers of the stories and Information for future generations. Interestingly, both my Dad and grandmother work in libraries so I guess you could argue that librarianship runs through my blood and it was destiny.

I decided to apply to SLIS at the University of Alberta and then the Indigenous Internship. I began working the past July as an Indigenous Intern in two main areas, The University of Alberta Press and Rutherford Library. At the University of Alberta Press I learned about the publishing process and the various steps that a manuscript goes through before being sent off to the printers. During my time there, I also got to try my hand at some records management- both physical and electronic documents. It was a unique experience for me too because I had never thought about the role of a Press in the books that I see on the library shelf.

The second area I worked during the summer and continue to do so is at Rutherford library. Rutherford library is the Humanities and Social Sciences library at the University of Alberta. This means that I get to work with a team of subject librarians with pretty varied backgrounds- from government documents to romantic language literature, Most of my time there is spent working next to library employees working at the information desk in the library or doing chat reference online. One neat thing about Rutherford is that we recently switched to a side-by-side reference desk set up meaning that patrons are invited to stand alongside us while we answer their question rather than working across a desk. This can be very helpful when teaching someone the search process or where to find links on webpages.

This experience has also given me a unique perspective when it came to my coursework in the Reference class. The hands-on experience allowed me to really conceptualize the theories that we were discussing in class. Sometimes, I have even learned things beyond the scope of what my program could teach me. For example, one day I had a coworker ask if I wanted to learn how to sew musical scores into protective covers. Basically, it is using simple binding techniques to give soft cover, vulnerable musical scores a protective layer. This is not something that I would have learnt in my classes but because I was there, I was given the opportunity to learn this process. This is also an example of informal mentorship that can be a by-product of a program like our internship.

The staff at Rutherford has also done a great job making sure that we feel welcome at any staff meeting we have time to take part in. They don't limit our voices to when they

are seeking cultural consultation rather they seek to include us as full staff members. I've found this to be extremely empowering because it is an acceptance of my entire identity- as a student, as a staff member, as a indigenous woman. I believe this open and active engagement helps to prevent the feeling of tokenism that can be common flaw in diversity programs.

One of the most important benefits that I have gained from this Internship has been with regards to my identity. My grandfather is a residential school survivor and an outcome of that has been a cultural disconnect in my family. I have always lived off of my reservation and due to my physical appearance, I have struggled with my identity. Unfortunately, this is probably a struggle that some of you can understand all too well with your own identity. When I was younger and up until University, I had people tell me I was too white when I tried to identify as an Indigenous individual. During my Bachelor's I did partially reclaim my identity but there was still a fracture. When I attended my lectures I was a scholar, when I attended a round dance I was Indigenous. It wasn't until I became an Indigenous Intern that I found a way to bring both of these elements of my identity together. With the Internship, I was given a voice- not just as an Indigenous individual or as a Scholar but as both. I felt like I was being accepted and valued for multiple aspects of my identity. Additionally, because of the financial value placed on this program I feel that the Institution values my opinion, my knowledge, and that My voice that will be listened to- after all they are literally paying for us to be involved. This has been extremely empowering- looking forward, I can now see how I can be Indigenous and a scholar without being limited to only studying Indigenous material. My hope is that in the future, this will better prepare me to be a positive role model as a professional because I will be able to be an LIS professional and an Indigenous individual at the same time.

Where do I want to take this experience personally? I'm very interested in working my way up into a position of leadership within an academic library or government records where I can continue to be an active role model. This way I would be on the decision-making side of programs like this so I could continue to improve the diversity of voices thus changing the power structure from within. Of course, I also envision my future including a fair bit of active mentoring.

So as you have seen, we have all come to this Internship from various backgrounds and our post-internship plans are equally varied. Graduates of this internship will be represented across the field adding to the diversity of voices in many areas of librarianship.

## **35 minute point**

### **What does this mean for you?**

Now we come to the big question, why did we want to share this with you?

To empower you. Our program was grown from an official federal level Commission's report and our country's history but now that programs like our Indigenous Internship exists and are successful, you are able to point to them as examples of how embedded students can improve an organization. Of how inclusionary programs can empower students and help individuals overcome barriers. To highlight the importance of having more diverse voices at the table. While our particular program focuses on Indigenous students, we believe that a similar framework could be applied to any underrepresented group. There are three major benefits of a program like ours that helps raise future professionals from underrepresented groups:

First of all, There is removal of the financial barrier which I probably don't have to explain to you all. Education is expensive- that is just a fact but a program that removes that barrier allows an unprecedented level of access to the opportunity.

The second is that this is a boots on the ground approach. Changing processes and the underlying beliefs behind them can take time but an internship can immediately inject underrepresented individuals into the field. While you can't change a history of oppression overnight, you can have an internship immediately bringing those traditionally unheard voices to the table. This can be where the long term changes start. Adding those diverse voices and individuals can highlight processes or inherent beliefs or institutional racism that commonly impacting hiring. In this way, the short term outcome can help the institution and the individuals to identify points of cultural friction that might otherwise be misidentified as people not being a good fit. It can also help a current LIS professional who hadn't realized there was a lack of diversity, to become aware and potentially become a supporter for inclusion. In the long run, programs like this can help alter those stereotypes or preconceived notions by offering a model of success beyond the mainstream culture. By giving staff and students a chance to engage regularly with underrepresented groups as co-workers and professionals, the diversity of staff voices can be improved and students are introduced to how they could create a space for themselves within the institution without compromising their culture and values.

The third benefit is that a program like this helps support us after the degree by giving us work experience and professional references. This sets us up to be more successful

as we enter the LIS field. The hope is this will assist in a higher rate of employment post-degree.

### **What can you do as a Student or an LIS professional?**

If your home institution has a strategic plan with inclusion or diversity as a priority then maybe they could implement a similar program tailored to your institution's focus areas. If diversity and inclusion are mentioned but there is not concrete ways that they are planning to implement it- that might be because they aren't sure how and go ahead, use us as an example of something they can do. That's part of why we want to be here and sharing it- plant the seed to try something new. Or if there is an inclusion program- is it working for the group it is suppose to be supporting?

If your institution isn't able currently to run a program of this scope, there is still something you can do- be a mentor. We can not highlight enough the power in mentoring. It opens you up to different worldviews and backgrounds. By surrounding yourself with a broader set of voices, you are more able to hear voices that are missing when you get a seat at the decision making table.

This means students, try mentoring a first year student. Help them avoid pitfalls that you may have seen. Help them feel included and build that relationship. Listen to their voice and needs and add that to your awareness for when you are in a position of authority to make sure that voice is being heard.

If we have any professionals in the room or watching online, we would like to challenge you to try mentoring a student. It's a win-win, students get experiential knowledge that they can't get in class and you as a professional might learn something new or learn how to mentor effectively. It also means you get to have a direct impact on raising the next generation of future professionals.

Thank you for your attention. We would like to open the floor to questions now.

### **41.5 minute point**