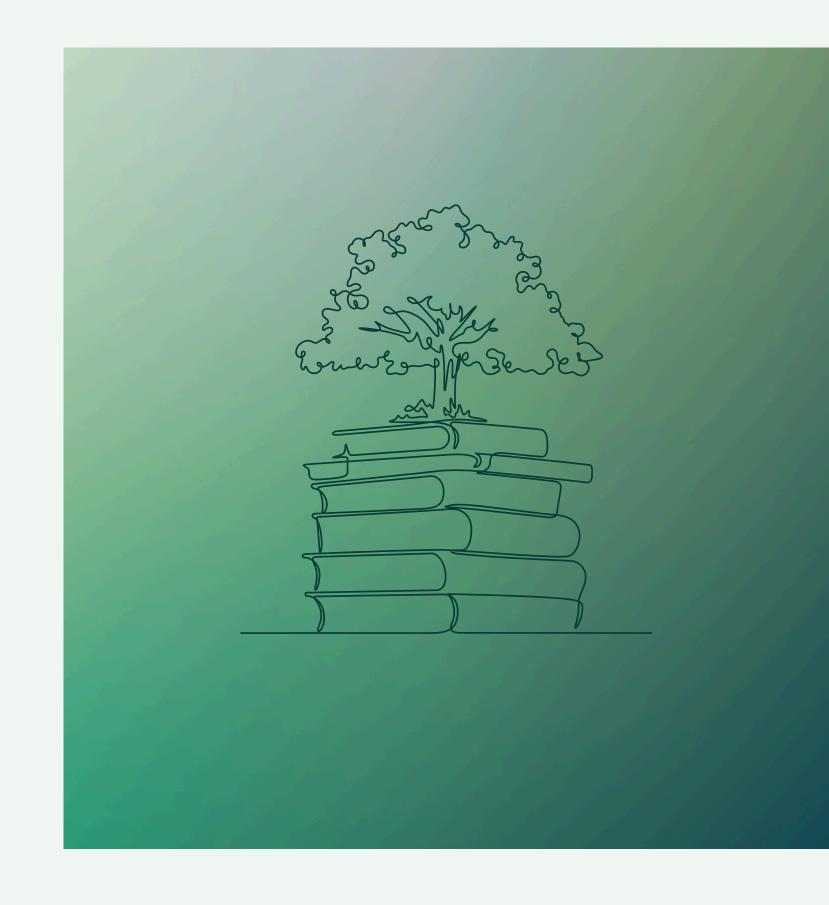# HERE IN PERPETUITY: UPLIFTING TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Devon Coultas and Caitlin McCabe in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Library and Information Science

University of Washington

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THE TEAM

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Project Sponsor

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ABOUT US

Devon Coultas: Devon is a settler student in the online MLIS program who identifies as a white, cisgender, bisexual, neurodivergent woman. She has a BA in English Literature from the University of Washington, and a work history primarily in customer service. She currently resides in what is now known as University Place, Washington, on the traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples, particularly the puyaləpabš (Puyallup) Tribe and the č'tilqwəbš (Steilacoom) Tribe.

Caitlin McCabe: Caitlin is an MLIS graduate student and information professional at a public library. She identifies as a white, cisgender, bisexual, neurodivergent woman currently residing in Eugene, Oregon, on the unceded lands of the Kalapuya nations*.
*The Kalapuyans comprised multiple autonomous subdivisions speaking three closely related languages: Northern Kalapuya (or Tualatin-Yamhill), Central Kalapuya (or Santiam-Marys River - Chenapinefu), and Southern Kalapuya (or Yoncalla).

Sandy Littletree: Sandy (she/her) is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation (Diné) from her father's side, and is Eastern Shoshone from her mother's side. As an Assistant Professor at the UW iSchool, her work focuses on the intersections of Indigenous systems of knowledge and the LIS field.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

This project was inspired by requests from public library staff to host a workshop or seminar on the topics of Indigenous Librarianship and Indigenous Systems of Knowledge received by our sponsor, Dr. Sandy Littletree, in the wake of her work on the Centering Washington Tribal Libraries: Building Relationships and Understanding Libraries From the Stories of Their Communities project. The goals of the CWATL were "to explore the past, present, and future of tribal librarianship in Washington state…[through] a series of face-to-face visits across Washington and a convening of Washington tribal librarians." Devon Coultas was present for several of these face-to-face visits and the convening of Washington State tribal librarians in March 2023.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

An Obligation

Public librarians in Washington State have a legal and ethical obligation to provide culturally responsive library services to Indigenous patrons and communities.

The requests received by our sponsor to host workshops on Indigenous Systems of Knowledge demonstrate a professional interest in fulfilling this obligation

Lack of Support

These requests also demonstrate the lack of corresponding professional support to aid public librarians in meeting this obligation.

Existing resources are scattered, underutilized in MLIS programs, and largely not specific to Washington State.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Create Learning Modules: Developing research-based educational modules tailored for public librarians, deeply rooted in Indigenous epistemologies. These modules are crafted to embody principles such as relationality, reciprocity, responsibility, and respect, fostering a comprehensive comprehension of culturally responsive library services. Encompassing topics such as Tribal Sovereignty, Indigenous Librarianship, Tribal Libraries, and Indigenous Knowledge Organization, these resources aim to equip librarians with the necessary tools to navigate diverse cultural landscapes.

Prioritize Accessibility: Our commitment to accessibility drives the creation of open-access materials, ensuring widespread availability and equitable knowledge dissemination. Designed to be user-friendly and easily navigable, these modules cater to a broad audience of librarians seeking to enhance their cultural competence.

Develop Supplemental Material: Supplementing the educational modules, we curate Collections Recommendations and Continued Education documents. These resources serve to augment the learning journey, providing practical guidance and resources that honor the values and perspectives of Indigenous communities. Together, these endeavors propel the advancement of culturally responsive library services, promoting inclusivity, diversity, and respect within library spaces.

OUR APPROACH: AN OVERVIEW

Research-Centric: Our project adopts a research-centric approach, drawing on a wealth of literature and resources centered on Indigenous perspectives and authored by Indigenous scholars.

Integration of Indigenous Scholarship: By centering Indigenous scholarship in our research and development process, we aim to create culturally relevant and respectful educational materials.

Emphasis on Indigenous Perspectives: We prioritize the inclusion of Indigenous voices and viewpoints in all aspects of our project, ensuring that Indigenous knowledge systems inform our work.

Evaluation: Ongoing evaluation will assess task completion and overall quality. Test audiences will provide feedback, including iSchool PhD students, library staff, and other information professionals. Reviewers will evaluate outcomes and impact using predetermined goals and objectives.

OUR APPROACH: AN ITERATIVE PROCESS

Our capstone project operates on an iterative process, where Research, Development, and Evaluation are concurrent stages.

This **cyclical approach** ensures that insights gained from each stage inform and influence the others, leading to a **dynamic** and **responsive** project **framework**.

WHAT WE CREATED

Module 1: Tribal Sovereignty

Module 1 introduces the concept of Tribal sovereignty, explains why it matters in public libraries, and provides examples of how librarians can support Tribal sovereignty.

Module 2: Indigenous Librarianship

Module 2 introduces the field of Indigenous Librarianship, discusses key issues with dominant librarianship practices, and suggests actionable steps to support Indigenous Librarianship.

Module 3: Tribal Libraries

Module 3 explores Tribal Libraries, examining their distinct roles and operations compared to public libraries. This module is currently in development.

Continued Education and Collections Recommendations

The Continued Education document gathers open access resources, while the Collections Recommendations document assists with collections development. Both are still in development.

PROJECT BENEFITS

- **Enhanced Understanding:** Public librarians gain a deeper understanding of culturally responsive library services and Indigenous perspectives, enabling them to serve Indigenous communities better.
- **Improved Services:** By implementing the knowledge gained from the modules, public libraries can enhance their services to meet the needs of Indigenous patrons better, fostering a more inclusive environment.
- **Community Engagement:** The project facilitates greater engagement and collaboration between public libraries and Indigenous communities, strengthening relationships and partnerships.
- **Professional Development:** Public librarians have access to curated resources and continued education materials, supporting their ongoing professional development in culturally responsive practices.
- **Advancing Equity:** By centering Indigenous perspectives and knowledge, the project contributes to advancing equity and social justice within the library profession and beyond.
- **Long-term Impact:** The project's resources and insights have the potential for long-term impact, promoting lasting changes in library services and community engagement practices.

PROJECT REVELATIONS

Challenges in Translating Knowledge

We encountered difficulties in translating theoretical knowledge into practical, actionable content for the modules. This demonstrates the need to incorporate experiential learning into our educational systems.

Need for Language Revitalization

Ensuring language inclusion posed challenges, highlighting the importance of linguistic diversity in our educational materials.

Yá'át'ééh
"Hello" or rather "It is good" or just "good" greeting in Diné.

Qa'pai!
"Hello" in the Santiam dialect of the Kalapuyan language

OUR NEXT STEPS

Finalize Developed Modules

We will implement feedback given by our evaluators of Modules 1 and 2. We will also decide where to host our finalized content, as well as if/when it will be made publicly available

Fully Develop Additional Modules

We will continue to develop Module 3: Tribal Libraries, as well as our conceptualized Module 4: Indigenous Knowledge Organization. Indigenous Children's Librarianship has been identified as a potential fifth topic.

Fully Develop Continued Education Document

We will finalize the Continued Education Document by incorporating stakeholder feedback and conducting additional research for comprehensive content. We'll also determine hosting and dissemination plans.

Fully Develop Collections Recommendations Document

We'll complete the Collections Recommendations Document by integrating stakeholder feedback and conducting further research for enhanced recommendations. Additionally, we'll plan its dissemination and accessibility.

POTENTIAL RELATED WORK

Develop Textbook

Curate, condense, and summarize the resources consulted for this project, as well as additional resources assigned in our classes that have focused on Indigenous ways of knowing. To be published in a textbook format for use in MLIS programs.

Tribal Libraries Dataset

Curate dataset on existing Tribal Libraries. Potential features include location, size of service area, estimated service area population, primary funding source, classification/cataloging system(s) in use, and if those systems are satisfactory.

THANK YOU