

Indigenous Heritage Action Plan

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1. Purpose and Principles

Library and Archives Canada (LAC) is committed to playing a significant role in reconciliation between the Government of Canada and First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation based on a renewed nation-to-nation or government-to-government relationship, particularly with regard to human rights.

These rights include international Indigenous rights, as defined by the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP), a Declaration to which the Government of Canada is fully committed. LAC has an important role to play in ensuring Indigenous rights to culture and language preservation, and in managing information relating to Indigenous peoples.

International rights extend to include victims and survivors of human rights violations, as set out by the *United Nations Joint-Orontlicher Principles* (UNJOP). Through the preservation of information documenting human rights abuses, such as those that took place within the Indian residential school system, LAC supports Indigenous peoples' inalienable right to know the truth about what happened and why.

From a national perspective, the Aboriginal¹ and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation are enshrined in section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982* and in other federal legislation, agreements and settlements. As the institution responsible for preserving the memory of the Government of Canada, LAC holds an incredible wealth of information that will help define and protect these legal rights.

LAC is guided by the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). It has an important role in reconciliation, particularly with regards to residential schools.

This plan sets out 28 concrete actions that LAC will undertake over the next five years to demonstrate recognition of these rights in a way that is meaningful, respectful and transparent and that aligns with the Government of Canada's 10 Principles respecting its relationship with Indigenous peoples:²

The Government of Canada recognizes that:

1. All relations with Indigenous peoples need to be based on the recognition and implementation of their right to self-determination, including the inherent right of self-government.
2. Reconciliation is a fundamental purpose of section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.
3. The honour of the Crown guides the conduct of the Crown in all of its dealings with Indigenous peoples.
4. Indigenous self-government is part of Canada's evolving system of cooperative federalism and distinct orders of government.
5. Treaties, agreements, and other constructive arrangements between Indigenous peoples and the Crown have been and are intended to be acts of reconciliation based on mutual recognition and respect.
6. Meaningful engagement with Indigenous peoples aims to secure their free, prior, and informed consent when Canada proposes to take actions that impact them and their rights, including their lands, territories and resources.
7. Respecting and implementing rights is essential and that any infringement of section 35 rights must by law meet a high threshold of justification which includes Indigenous perspectives and satisfies the Crown's fiduciary obligations.
8. Reconciliation and self-government require a renewed fiscal relationship, developed in collaboration with Indigenous nations, that promotes a mutually supportive climate for economic partnership and resource development.
9. Reconciliation is an ongoing process that occurs in the context of evolving Indigenous-Crown relationships.

¹ While this document uses the term "Indigenous peoples" to refer specifically to First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation, it also uses the term

"Aboriginal" in reference to section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

² See <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/principles-principes.html>

10. A distinctions-based approach is needed to ensure that the unique rights, interests and circumstances of the First Nations, the Métis

Nation and Inuit are acknowledged, affirmed, and implemented.

2. LAC Holdings Related to First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation Histories

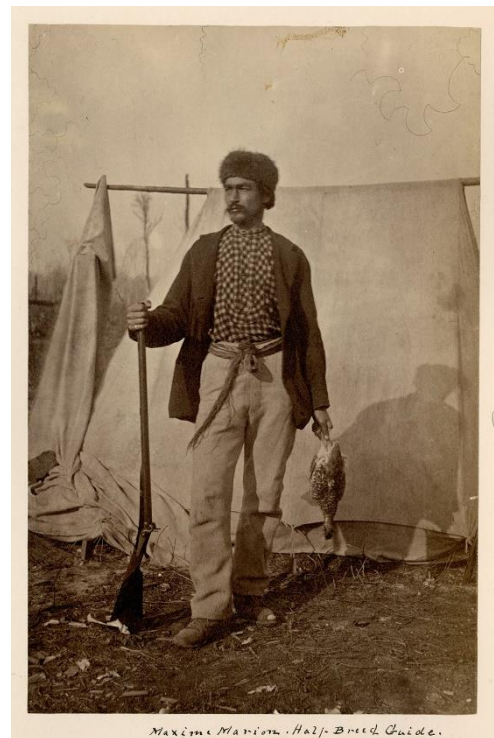
LAC acquires, preserves, and provides access to historical material that documents the Canadian experience. This documentary heritage collection includes government records, private archives and published materials related to the experience of Indigenous peoples in Canada spanning more than 400 years.

The records and publications at LAC that are relevant to First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation document all aspects of government administration from before Confederation to the modern era, including the federal management of lands, resources and social services.

LAC also holds a vast collection of private archival and published materials, in a variety of formats, related to Indigenous heritage and histories.

LAC's collections can:

- support education, build awareness and create dialogue
- enable research for genealogical information or personal history
- aid communities in the rediscovery of their cultures and languages
- inform legal cases, claims, settlements, inquiries and commissions.



Maxime Marion, a Métis guide at Lake of the Woods, Ontario, October 1872.

National Photography Collection, 1975-122 NPC, Mikan 3248464.

3. Existing Programs and Services



Left to right: Rami Tsal, Moses Coyen, Simon Modeste, Victor Simon, Willie Simon and Amos Niditchie from Gwichya Gwich'in First Nation, Tsiigehtchic (Tsiigehtshik, formerly Arctic Red River), Northwest Territories, ca. 1945. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development fonds, R216-2812-5-E.

The people in this photograph were identified via the *Project Naming* Facebook page.

Over the years, LAC has launched several programs and initiatives to improve access to heritage for First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation peoples in order to better serve clients and build closer relationships with communities. Building on this foundation, LAC is intensifying its efforts to create a more coherent action plan to raise awareness and make its Indigenous collections accessible.

Facilitating access

LAC facilitates access to historical information for Canadians, legal and academic researchers, family historians, and government commissions and inquiries in a fair and transparent manner.

To make Indigenous-related records discoverable, online research and resource guides for Government of Canada records related to First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation are available on LAC's website and are updated as new material is added to LAC's collection.

LAC has also launched the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission Web Archive](#), which was curated in collaboration with the University of Winnipeg Library and the University of Manitoba Libraries. The collection consists of Web resources that document, on a national scale, the Web footprint of the TRC.

LAC supports processes for the negotiation and implementation of modern treaties, providing information and access to its collection as part of the Government of Canada's obligations.

Developing culturally appropriate descriptions

LAC's early crowdsourcing initiative, [Project Naming](#), was launched in 2002. Through Project Naming, members of the public identify the people and places in LAC photograph collections related to Indigenous peoples. This adds a more personal layer to the descriptions and the appropriate identification of people who were originally labelled in general, harmful and prejudicial terms.

In 2018, LAC also launched [Co-Lab](#), a crowdsourcing tool that allows members of the public to transcribe, translate, describe, tag and add other information related to all of LAC's digital collections. Several of Co-Lab's initial crowdsourcing "challenges" issued to the public featured collections related to First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation.

Building awareness

LAC produces and co-produces exhibitions of archival and published material that build awareness about the histories and heritage of First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation in Canada. Two exhibitions, [Where are the Children?](#) and [They Were So Far Away](#), produced in partnership with the Legacy of Hope Foundation, explored the history of Indian residential schools. More recently, LAC produced the travelling exhibition [Hiding in Plain Sight](#), which features archival records related to the history of the Métis Nation. In addition, LAC hosts Indigenous Writers Gatherings as part of the [#IndigenousReads](#) campaign that promotes Indigenous literature in Canada.

4. Truth and Reconciliation and the Calls to Action

LAC was involved in the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) in several ways. Most significantly, LAC provided the TRC access to Government of Canada records in its collection that contained information related to Indian residential schools. The copies of records from LAC's collection and elsewhere informed the TRC's work, conclusions and Calls to Action. The body of information gathered in support of the TRC now forms a distinct archive that is preserved at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) at the University of Manitoba.

LAC also participated in six of the seven TRC National Events. The objective of the National Events was to promote healing and reconciliation for former Indian residential school students, and to educate the Canadian public. LAC employees who participated in the events were able to engage with survivors, their families and communities; answer questions about LAC collections and services; and share photographs of residential schools and students.

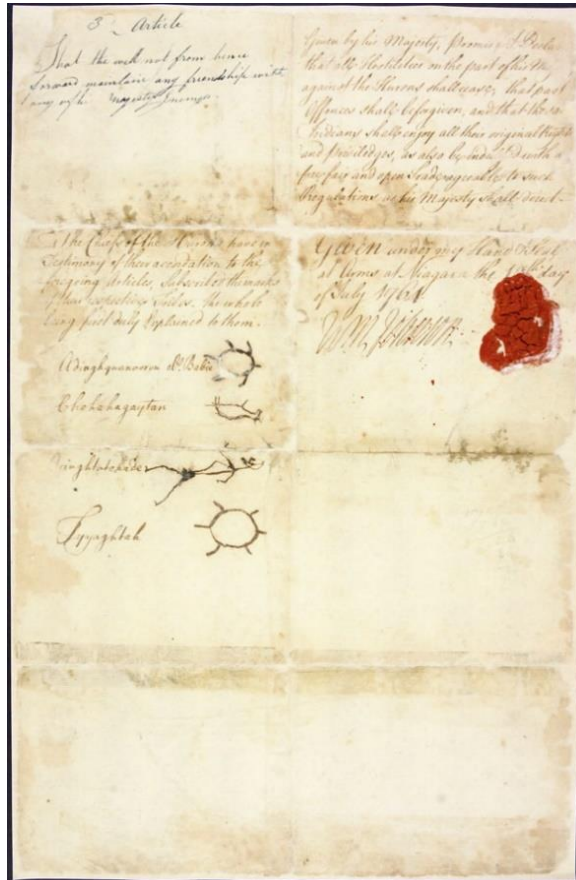
In 2015, the TRC released its 94 Calls to Action. Several of these are relevant to LAC, including No. 57, which calls on the federal public service to provide employees with training and tools to raise awareness about Aboriginal culture and history. LAC was also specifically named in Call to Action No. 69:

"We call upon Library and Archives Canada to:

- i. Fully adopt and implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the *United Nations Joint-Orentlicher Principles*, as related to Aboriginal peoples' inalienable right to know the truth about what happened and why, with regard to human rights violations committed against them in the residential schools.
- ii. Ensure that its record holdings related to residential schools are accessible to the public.
- iii. Commit more resources to its public education materials and programming on residential schools."

LAC has been, and will continue to be, guided by these and other calls to action as set forth by the TRC. These calls have spurred new initiatives and challenged LAC to rethink its main activities.

In June 2016, LAC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the NCTR to ensure that the legacy of the TRC is not only preserved but continues to inform and advance reconciliation in Canada. On the road forward, LAC has a critical responsibility to provide survivors, their families, their communities, learners, educators, and all Canadians with the information that can contribute to a national dialogue.



Page from the Treaty of peace and friendship between Sir William Johnson and the Hurons of the Detroit, 1764. R7968-0-X-E.

5. Action Plan

5.1 Institutional Change

LAC's workforce has a wide range of skills, experiences and knowledge. While some employees work closely with records related to First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation and are exposed to the issues that touch these communities, others have limited exposure to this documentary heritage and its legal, cultural and historical contexts. In order to pave the way for important changes within the institution, LAC is committed to playing an active role so that all employees have a better understanding of Indigenous peoples and participate in the reconciliation process.



Women and children, possibly Métis, at Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, ca. 1930s. Natural Resources Canada fonds, 1965-040 NPC, Mikan 4613675.

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- 1 In line with the TRC Call to Action No. 57, we will facilitate distinction-based awareness and learning activities for LAC staff on the subjects of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation histories, intercultural relations, reconciliation, and Indigenous rights.

 - 2 Senior management will lead by example, demonstrating a long-term commitment to reconciliation and the advancement of the Government of Canada's renewed approach to nation-to-nation relationships. LAC management will support its employees in their efforts to implement related initiatives and programs.

 - 3 We will devote specific human resources and install visual markers of Indigenous peoples at our institutions and dedicate training resources in order to raise employees' awareness of topics specific to First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation, including an understanding of distinction-based protocols and land acknowledgements.

 - 4 We will ensure that those working with materials related to Indigenous experiences have community engagement as a formal work objective and we will add community engagement to our workflows and processes where appropriate.

 - 5 We will hire First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation employees for major initiatives and projects related to Indigenous heritages, connecting LAC to Indigenous perspectives and communities. Where possible, Indigenous people will be included in hiring boards and selection processes.
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6	We will work toward building a representative workforce where Indigenous people account for a proportional number of employees and executives.
7	We will seek the counsel of an Elder-in-Residence to help guide LAC in all of its work relating to Indigenous peoples.
8	We will work with universities for the development of co-op/internship programs for Indigenous youth interested in pursuing careers in archives, libraries, museums, history, archaeology, information management or the public service.
9	We will consult with local Indigenous communities as we design our new service facility with the Ottawa Public Library in order to create a space where Indigenous clients feel included and comfortable. The functionality of the service spaces will be designed on the principles of decolonization.

5.2 Engagement and Collaboration



Pitseolak and an unidentified man having a tea break in the vicinity of Kinngait, Nunavut (formerly Cape Dorset, Northwest Territories), 1964.

e010952975. See the Charles Gimpel work order, barcode number 2001102291.

LAC will engage with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation communities in good faith and at all stages of its related initiatives. It is only through meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities and organizations that LAC can understand, preserve and present their heritage in a manner that is historically accurate and culturally appropriate.

10

We will research and develop distinction-based engagement guidelines so that LAC understands and follows cultural protocols and shows respect for the beliefs and practices of First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation with whom it engages, and from whom it seeks guidance and support.

11

We will devote specific human resources to coordinate LAC's engagement and outreach efforts with First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation.

12

We will work with Indigenous-led institutions across Canada to enable greater access to the documentary heritage material that matters to them. This includes new partnerships and collaborations with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation communities, archives, libraries, museums, as well as agreements with universities and other educational institutions. We will also loan valued documents to Indigenous communities and organizations for exhibitions and related events.

13

We will use enhanced crowdsourcing tools and platforms to enable Indigenous peoples to contribute their knowledge directly to the enhancement and contextualization of digital collections. This includes description, transcription, factual corrections and translation.

14

We will create forums for engagement with specialized users including educators, land claims and legal researchers, cultural centres and associations and others to ensure that the collections they need are available and easily accessible.

5.3 Managing Records in the LAC Collection Related to First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation



LAC acquires, preserves and provides access to government records, private archives and published materials that document First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation experiences in Canada so that information is available now and for future generations.³ Going forward, LAC will manage these collections in a way that is collaborative, participatory and respectful of Indigenous institutions and knowledge.

Mathilda Jack-Frazer and her daughter, Barb Frazer, North Battleford, Saskatchewan, 1969. Department of Health fonds, R227-318-4-E.

They were identified by Barb Frazer on the Project Naming Facebook page.

15

We will apply the *Access to Information Act* and the *Privacy Act* in a way that maximizes access while protecting sensitive and personal information. Further, we will continue to improve and simplify the request for access to information process to add transparency, decrease delays and reduce the administrative burden for clients.

16

In collaboration with the NCTR, we will provide access to all known residential school information held in the LAC collection while protecting personal information. Furthermore, we will improve the ability to discover and access residential school information.

17

We will adapt the words we use to describe LAC collections related to First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation to enhance access and to ensure a culturally appropriate and respectful approach.⁴

³ LAC has specifically targeted the acquisition and preservation of material related to Indigenous peoples in its [2016–2019 Acquisition Strategy](#) (Section 3.2.1).

See Article 8.1 of the UNDRIP: “Indigenous peoples and individuals have the right not to be subjected to forced assimilation or destruction of their culture.”

See also the UN Commission on Human Rights 2005 *Report of the independent expert to update the Set of Principles to combat impunity* (by Diane Orentlicher) - *Updated Set of Principles for the protection and promotion of human rights through action to combat impunity* (UNJOP) Principle 3 – The Duty to Preserve Memory: “A people’s knowledge of the history of its oppression is part of its heritage and, as such, must be ensured by appropriate measures in fulfilment of the State’s duty to preserve archives and other evidence concerning violations of human rights and humanitarian law and to facilitate knowledge of those violations. Such measures shall be aimed at preserving the collective memory from extinction and, in particular, at guarding against the development of revisionist and negationist arguments.”

⁴ See Article 15.1 of the UNDRIP: “Indigenous peoples have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information.”

18	We will continue to facilitate access to documentary evidence for legal processes (e.g., land claims) and quasi-legal processes (e.g., commissions, inquiries) in a way that is balanced and responsive. ⁵
19	We will establish a plan and implement changes to our reference services and service spaces to be more responsive to the needs individually and collectively expressed by First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation. We will do so in consultation with the Indigenous Advisory Circle and Indigenous researchers at LAC.
20	We will share LAC archival records and research results with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation communities and organizations. We will also examine Indigenous-led access management of some LAC collections that relate to specific peoples or communities, and of records created from Indigenous knowledge.
21	As part of LAC's new We are here, Sharing stories initiative, we will digitize collections related to Indigenous cultures and languages, create user-friendly finding aids, and develop online content in order to highlight these documents and enhance access to them. ⁶
22	LAC will assist in building archival and library capacity in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation communities and will also provide preservation storage to communities who do not yet have such capacity, without transferring ownership to LAC. We will also collaborate with First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation to ensure that non-governmental archival records from their communities are preserved according to their preferences, whether at LAC or locally.
23	LAC will prioritize the preferences of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation communities when handling and caring for sensitive material created by or about their respective communities.

⁵ See UNJOP Principle 15 – Measures for Facilitating Access to Archives: “Access to archives shall be facilitated in order to enable victims and their relatives to claim their rights. Access shall be facilitated, as necessary, for persons implicated, who request it for their defence. Access to archives should also be facilitated in the interest of historical research, subject to reasonable restrictions aimed at safeguarding the privacy and security of victims and other individuals. Formal requirements governing access may not be used for purposes of censorship.”

⁶ See Article 11 of the UNDRIP: “Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs.” See also Article 13: “Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures,....”

5.4 Promotion and Support

LAC has a role, through the provision and promotion of information, to support the increased awareness of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation histories in Canada. Whether through in-house initiatives, such as the development and curation of online content, or through direct support to Indigenous memory institutions, LAC will ensure that Indigenous documentary heritage is accessible, where appropriate, through multiple channels, and in various locations.

Unidentified women and children, Arviat, Nunavut (formerly Eskimo Point, Northwest Territories), 1948.

Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development fonds, R216-3711-4-E.



24

We will promote Indigenous heritage collections through online content and social media, with a special focus on First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation audiences.

25

We will provide financial support to Indigenous-led organizations for potential archival and library projects related to Indigenous heritage and histories.

26

We will partner with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation communities and organizations to support their efforts to preserve and digitize their culture and language recordings, as part of LAC's new Listen, Hear Our Voices initiative.

27

We will facilitate events developed with Indigenous perspectives to promote knowledge and understanding of the histories of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation communities, as well as of the role of archives and libraries in reconciliation.

28

We will create and co-create exhibitions dedicated to First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation histories, to be hosted at LAC or at partner institutions.

6. Acknowledgement

This Action Plan was developed in consultation with the [Library and Archives Canada Indigenous Advisory Circle](#). The members of the Advisory Circle come from national, regional and community-based organizations. They provide advice to LAC on the cultural perspectives of First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation in Canada.



A Gitksan First Nation girl fishing in the Skeena River at Kitwanga (Gitwangak/Gitwangax), British Columbia, with a dugout cedar canoe in the foreground and two more in the background.

Topley Studio fonds, R639-161-7-E.