

Slide: One - Title

Good afternoon. My name is Ashley Van Dijk and as Morgan mentioned, I was the assistant librarian at the Stó:lō Library for three years. Prior to my job with the library I had little to no knowledge of Stó:lō history and culture. Despite growing up in Chillwack, I was not aware of how alive traditions are. To say that I learned a lot during my time with the library would be an understatement.

Something that I learned to be important is knowing how you are, and your family history. As such, I'd like to begin by telling you a little about myself. My heritage comes from diverse places. On my father's side I'm First Nations, Makah in Washington State, and Dutch. On my mother's side I'm Scottish. I knew growing up about my First Nation's heritage, but I didn't always understand what it meant or anything about Makah history. Working at Sto:lo has helped me realize how important this part of my identity is, and opened a desire to learn more.

It is my hope that over the course of my brief talk today, I can illustrate how vibrant Stó:lō culture and traditions are, and showcase some of the ways the library keeps the two alive.

To start, I'd like to set the stage of the Stó:lō Library and Archives.

Stó:lō Library: Transitioning from the Past into the Future

Slide: Two - Library

Sunlight streams through the windows, highlighting the woven shawl that is hanging, framed, on the wall. Someone sits typing at a desk, pausing often to answer questions or ask whether the researcher who sits at the table in the centre of the room needs anything. Surrounding the researcher are piles of books, and boxes full of archival material. Their laptop is open, and at ready reach are a notebook and pencil. The two engage in discussion, raising their voices to punctuate their topic. When another person enters the room, the two engage them in their discussion - what is your opinion? Have you heard -- ?

The sound of drumming enters the room soon followed by a voice signing. Talking is impossible over the sound, and they all stop and listen.

Often the idea of doing research in small archives and libraries evokes images of dimly lit, silent and dusty rooms where you can hear every pencil stroke made. The atmosphere at the Stó:lō Library and Archives is vastly different.

Slide: Three - SRC

The Stó:lō Library and Archives are housed in the Stó:lō Resource Centre, a building that opened in October 2010 on the Coqualeetza grounds in Chilliwack, BC. The site

was formally a residential school, a tuberculosis hospital and military base. For the past several decades, it has been home to the Stó:lō Nation.

Above the library entrance is the word “sqwélqwel”. In halq'eméylem - the language of the Chilliwack area - it means “true news, facts” and is a fitting description of the library and its collection. Throughout the building visitors will notice select rooms having a halq'eméylem name, which is one way the SRC is working on incorporating the language into all aspects of the building. Most notably is a banner hanging vertically in the foyer of the building that says xyólhmet te mekw'stám it kwelát which means “this is our land, we can take care of everything that belongs to us” a core value of Stó:lō culture.

The Stó:lō Resource Centre is also home the Longhouse Extension Program, a collaboration with the Chilliwack School District that sees each grade four class come to the Centre for a visit. A storyteller engages the students by welcoming them traditionally with a drum and song. It is this combination of drumming and singing that permeates the library.

History of the Library

Slide: Four - Landscape

First Nations materials within a library are classified in the “history” section - both in the Library of Congress and the Dewey Decimal System, the primary library organizational systems. What this does is give the false idea that First Nations culture, traditions, and people are things of the past. Within British Columbia, thousands of First Nation people continue to practice their traditions. The classification systems are biased to the American, male settler perspective of life, leaving no room for any other world views. First Nations culture has overlaps of tradition, language and teachings, which don't necessarily lend themselves to be easily slotted into a classification scheme.

The Stó:lō Library is in the heart of Stó:lō territory - S'ólh Téméxw. The membership of the library includes both First Nation community members and their non-First Nation neighbors, building relationships between the two, and the sharing knowledge.

The Stó:lō Archives began as a resource centre to assist with the treaty process in the early nineties. As such, the Archives was managed as part of the Treaty department, with a mandate to facilitate and support research related to Stó:lō.

Over the years the Archives expanded into a Library as well, and today they are managed as a single entity, as another department with the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre at Stó:lō Nation. The collection has expanded from research done by the department to a powerful collection of works dedicated to Stó:lō and their neighbouring communities.

Like most libraries, the Stó:lō Library is full of books and other monographs. Unlike many libraries, the collection is also home to many one of kind works such as unpublished papers, researcher field notes and hundreds of hours of oral history tapes.

Field Schools

Slide: Five - FS, Lady Franklin Rock

The Stó:lō Library hosts a biannual ethnohistory field school, in collaboration with the University of Victoria and the University of Saskatchewan. The field school has been happening since the early 1990s, and typically 8 - 12 students participate.

The students are first placed with Stó:lō families. These host placements are the beginnings of a relationship between the Stó:lō community and the students, who are introduced to many people throughout their stay. The families host the students for a week, after which the students move into the Longhouse on the Stó:lō Nations grounds.

The Field School works with both Stó:lō Nation and Stó:lō Tribal Council to produce a list of research topics for the students to work on. The students are taught cultural protocols and interview skills, and then they dive into their projects. Students meet with elders, chiefs, and other respected community members who all share pieces of their culture, history, language, and traditions with them.

During the short time they are in Chilliwack, the students are immersed in Stó:lō history and culture - learning not only their research topic but also something about Stó:lō history as a whole. They go on tours of the Fraser Valley and Fraser Canyon to learn about the land and Xexáls - the creator who "put the world right".

The reports that grow out of the field schools hold immense value for all involved. The results are often in depth snap shots with a particular focus - a community, an event, an organization, or even a person or family. Each student conducts interviews, often recorded, in support of their topic. These interviews are kept in the Stó:lō Archives, while the reports are in the library, and made available to community members and future researchers.

The spirit of the FS is learning, sharing of knowledge, and collaboration. The relationships forged between the students and the community members do not end when the FS is over, people stay in touch and continue their friendships. The same can be said of the students; they become friends over the course of their time together, as the nature of the field school has them working closely together for long hours.

RRN

Slide: Six - RRN

The Reciprocal Research Network, or RRN, is a collaborative project between museums worldwide to assist and facilitate research into Northwest Coast First Nations. Stó:lō Nation and Stó:lō Tribal Council are two of the founding members of the network, contributing thousands of records.

The RRN is an interactive website, allowing people to view and comment on records. They can also add their knowledge of an item or place to the record, and save items to a project. This last aspect is especially useful if someone is doing more work on an item, such as canoes, or an activity like fishing.

Slide: Seven - Close up of a record

The item records contain as much data about the object that is known by the contributing organization. What is great about this is that anyone with more information can comment on the item and have their information added. As you can see on these close ups of a record, there is the ability to add translations to the data - this one has the translation of Chilliwack in Halq'emeylem.

Along with being able to add items into a project folder, which is denoted by a bent wood box, there is also the ability to create discussion threads. These can be either open to the public or closed to group members, and allows for people from different organizations to work on a project or contribute to someone else's.

Slide: Eight - Photographs

Not only are there artifact records on the website, there is a growing collection of photographs. The collection of photographs that the Stó:lō Library has contributed includes both archival and contemporary images.

The contemporary images are largely from one collection in the late 1990s showcasing the landscape of S'ólh Téméxw, as well as cultural traditions such as cedar bark pulling and fishing along the Fraser. Festivals and canoe races are also documented within this collection.

It's collections like these that show to people how alive and vibrant culture and traditions are within Stó:lō communities. Traditional pastimes and practices are still a part of the community and being passed down to new generations. The landscape is well known, as are the stories that go with the physical features.

Slide: Nine - Mt. Cheam

Often there is the misconception that First Nations culture has been lost. Unfortunately, libraries contribute to this by having First Nations material catalogued within the history sections of both the major classification systems. While it is generally agreed that this is incorrect and inadequate, currently there is not a lot of option. There is a First Nations classification system called the Brian Deer classification, which is used in both the

Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the Xwi7xwa Library at the University of BC. This classification scheme is not widely known, nor is it taught in library programs making switching from either the Dewey Decimal or Library of Congress classification systems a difficult task.

I hope that this talk and slide show have shown how one First Nations community library is working on changing this idea.

Thank you.