

Building Reconciliation at the U of S

University Library

Making the Library the Best Place It Can Be for Indigenous Students

DESCRIPTION

3 Initiatives in 2016-2017:

Animated Stories with Undergraduate Students: Navigating University, the Inner City and Home Worlds : Short Video Screening and Presentation by Students



(image permission: L. Erickson, Community Engagement Office, S20W)

Library Research Assistance Offered at Station 20 West



(image permission: L. Erickson, Community Engagement Office, S20W)

ReconciliAction in the Library: It's Time to Learn, Think and Do Reconciliation

Participant Ratings of the 1st Two Sessions



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PURPOSE

Each of these three initiatives has its own purpose as follows:

Animated Stories Screenings: To provide space for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students who are single parents and living in Saskatoon core neighborhoods to tell their stories to Library faculty and staff and to deepen empathy and understanding when serving this clientele.

Research Assistance at S20W: To bring services of the University Library to Saskatoon core neighborhoods and to demonstrate the Library's commitment to going beyond the campus walls to provide research assistance to students living and working in the inner city.

ReconciliAction in the Library: To provide Library employees with an opportunity to learn about Indigenous culture, history and world view in Canada in a supportive environment and to encourage reflections and actions that will help build reconciliation both through their Library work and through their interactions in society as a whole.

SUCSESSES AND CHALLENGES

Successes: For the **Animated Stories** video screenings and discussion, the Library faculty and staff were thrilled to hear the stories of students—a rare opportunity to hear from them. One **challenge** was negotiating staff understanding of student experiences while simultaneously

recognizing their own privilege. For the **Library Research Assistance** sessions offered at S20W, Library faculty **enjoyed collaborating with the U of S Community Engagement Office;** however, few students took advantage of the sessions, possibly due to the **challenge of coordinating librarians' time with**

students' busy schedules. For the **ReconciliAction in the Library** employee development program, participants thought the 8th screenings and discussion with Indigenous faculty was also informative and helped to **understand misconceptions about Indigenous people.** However, we are early into the

delivering of this program; further insights are forthcoming. **Another success is gaining financial support from Library administration.** **Challenges** of this program are primarily logistical, i.e. trying to coordinate busy faculty schedules and the availability of meeting space in the Library.

HOW IT BUILDS RECONCILIATION

The primary value of the Animating Stories and ReconciliAction initiatives is the **opportunity to generate discussion and deepen understanding** of how Indigenous and non-Indigenous people are in the situation we are in and opening employees eyes to their own privilege. Participant feedback and response **helped provide a "baseline" of where**

employees are at in their understanding of the impacts of colonization. From this starting point, we are attempting to repairing some of the misunderstandings people have about Indigenous people. As a result, the working group was better positioned to plan further educational activities for staff could go.

We understand we can't provide an answer as to how to reconcile the injustices of the past, that this is the responsibility of individuals. But we hope that with further exposure to the complex factors that have undermined the full participation of Indigenous people in contributing to society, each participant will be inspired to find their own way of building

reconciliation, one that "feels right" to them. As for the Research Assistance sessions, even spending time in the core neighborhoods of Saskatoon, is an eye opener for Library faculty, and helpful in understanding some of the challenges and supports needed for students (and others) living in the inner city.