

## COLUMN / CHRONIQUE

# As Canadian Health Librarians We Must Now Move Ahead on the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) Calls to Action

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For many years, the most-pressing information issues associated with the delivery of Aboriginal, Inuit and Metis health care in Canada have occupied CHLA/ABSC at our conferences and in our research. However, the publication of JCHLA/JABSC's Aboriginal health information issue in 2014 was an important turning point [1]. In the past three years, we have worked to understand Aboriginal health information by developing collection tools and frameworks [2], subject guides [3-5], and Aboriginal search filters [6]. Behind the scenes, health librarians have worked with clinicians to address the challenge of improving Aboriginal health across the country.

More recently, in 2017, a harsh spotlight was placed on local, provincial and federal governments and how each has responded (or not) to the needs of Aboriginal peoples; many got failing grades [7]. The Canadian government's redress of the painful residential schools legacy has gained national attention and so has the all-important 2015 *Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action* [8]. The progress made or not around the ninety-four (94) calls to action is a wake-up call for all Canadians; but health, hospital and medical librarians have a key role to play in ensuring the implementation of the calls within their own spheres of influence. Too little progress has been made in too few areas represented by the Calls to Action – and we, as Canadian health librarians and as an Association, can do more.

It was within this context that two SLAIS students from UBC, Lara Maestro and Daniel Chadwick, approached me in 2017 during a health libraries course I teach [9]. Their final project was to evaluate the responses of medical faculties to the TRC's 94 Calls to Action by examining how they are documenting their progress via their websites. Their paper, which has since been expanded, is entitled *Canadian Health*

*Libraries' Responses to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action: A Literature Review and Content Analysis*. As the winner of the 2017 CHLA/ABSC Annual Student Paper Prize, I believe theirs is the first study in the literature to examine libraries' response to the Calls to Action. Let it serve as an important touchstone in our understanding, and a way to further deepen dialogue.

In their paper, Maestro and Chadwick point out that the TRC lists a mere seven (7) health-related calls to action but all 94 items should occupy our thinking. Further, *how can we, as CHLA ABSC members and health librarians, engage fully with Indigenous peoples and what can we do as health librarians to answer the calls to action in a meaningful way, and move reconciliation forward?* This is the real question arising from the reading of their paper.

One of the original shortcomings of the Maestro-Chadwick paper is that most organizations cannot fully respond to the TRC's Call to Action via their websites. Organizations are not always forthcoming about progress on such important matters via their public websites. Still, two years after the TRC calls to action were released much progress should have been made. If no progress has been made, key issues should be flagged by organizations for discussion in annual reviews and strategic planning, and a timeline for progress outlined.

My involvement in Aboriginal health-related issues goes back a decade to when I created wiki pages [10] and began to help users perform Aboriginal health database and grey literature searching. One of the problems in Aboriginal health is how widely-disseminated the literature is but search filters can help [11]. In 2016, my interest in international issues led me to attend my first IFLA Conference in Columbus Ohio where I met librarians from around the world

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concerned about *Indigenous Matters* in their own countries, and upholding the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [12]. Since then, Camille Callison, an Indigenous academic librarian at the University of Manitoba, has chaired an important committee on Indigenous matters for the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA-FCAB). In 2017, her committee outlined a positive path forward for respecting Indigenous cultures and increasing access to traditional Indigenous knowledge in Canada (including health). The resulting report [13] makes ten recommendations to enhance opportunities for Indigenous researchers through the process of decolonization of libraries and our information practices.

My colleague Martin Morris, health librarian at McGill University, and I have been invited to sit on a new iteration of Callison's committee. This invitation coincides with the CHLA/ABSC Board's unanimous approval at their fall board meeting to participate as full members of the CFLA-FCAB, which formalizes our Association's relationship to the larger federation of library associations and the *Indigenous Matters* committee. Our appreciation goes to Elena Springall, President, for moving this issue forward. Martin and I will be sure to report back to members about our work and invite anyone interested to engage us in conversation about what we can do to strategize around the issues mentioned in Maestro and Chadwick's paper and this editorial.

### Statement of Competing Interests

No competing interests declared.

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