

Let Me Draw You a Map: Knowledge Management from “Two Completely Different Streams of Thought”

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ABSTRACT

This paper represents the results of a conversation between Adrienne Heavy Head, the creator and manager of the Blackfoot Digital Library (BDL), at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta, Canada, and Mary Greenshields, a new librarian in Alberta. The aim of the conversation was for Mary, a settler living in traditional Blackfoot Territory, to learn about the creation and maintenance of the BDL and to gain insight into the organization, access, and classification of information within the library as a real-life example of some of the Protocols suggested by the Canadian Federation of Library Associations. Adrienne and Mary hope that this conversation will help librarians to better understand knowledge management from a Blackfoot perspective and might inspire librarians to start and continue such conversations with the Indigenous peoples upon whose lands their libraries rest.

Keywords: *Blackfoot Digital Library · Blackfoot knowledge · digital libraries · Indigenous libraries · Indigenous knowledges · knowledge management · knowledge organization*

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article représente les résultats d'une conversation entre Adrienne Heavy Head, créatrice et gestionnaire de la Blackfoot Digital Library (BDL), à l'Université de Lethbridge en Alberta au Canada, et Mary Greenshields, une nouvelle bibliothécaire en Alberta. Le but de la conversation était de permettre à Mary, une pionnière vivant dans le territoire traditionnel des Pieds-Noirs, de se renseigner sur la création et le maintien de la BDL et de mieux comprendre l'organisation, l'accès et la classification de l'information à la bibliothèque comme exemple concret de certains des protocoles proposés par la Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques. Adrienne et Mary espèrent que cette conversation aidera les bibliothécaires à mieux comprendre la gestion des connaissances



du point de vue des Pieds-Noirs et pourrait inspirer les bibliothécaires à entamer et à poursuivre de telles discussions avec les peuples autochtones sur les territoires où se trouvent leurs bibliothèques.

Mots-clés : *Blackfoot Digital Library · bibliothèques autochtones · bibliothèques numériques · connaissances des Pieds-Noirs · gestion du savoir · organisation du savoir · savoirs autochtones*

THE Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA), in its 2017 report, “Truth and Reconciliation Report and Recommendations” (Callison), calls for the decolonization of classification and access, the introduction of Indigenous Knowledge Protection Protocols, and the creation of a nationwide database of “living documents” in an effort to reimagine libraries as inclusive spaces (7). Institutionalization and formalization of such initiatives are an increasingly common part of Canada’s efforts at reconciliation with First Peoples and aim to respectfully centre Indigenous peoples in the conversation in libraries, archives, and cultural memory institutions where they have previously been ignored, discounted, and marginalized. Unquestionably, Indigenous Ways of Knowing are at odds with the Western Eurocentric approach to information and its management; the primacy of orality, and the variety of forms that Indigenous texts take, mean that knowledge gathering and sharing is performed differently, and this results in different approaches to the preservation of such knowledge, which includes but is not limited to “oral traditions, songs, dance, storytelling, anecdotes, place names, and hereditary names” (Callison 2017, 34). Further, authority is established through proper transmission rather than the legal copyright that non-Indigenous knowledge prefers. This paper represents the results of a conversation with Adrienne Heavy Head, a Blackfoot woman and the creator and manager of the Blackfoot Digital Library (BDL) at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta, in what is now known as Canada. The aim of the conversation was for Mary Greenshields, a settler living in traditional Blackfoot Territory, to learn about the creation and maintenance of the BDL and to gain insight into the organization, access, and classification of information within the library as a real-life example of some of the Protocols suggested by the CFLA. Adrienne and Mary hope that this conversation will help librarians to better understand knowledge management from a Blackfoot perspective and might inspire librarians to start and continue such conversations with the Indigenous peoples upon whose lands their libraries rest.

The Blackfoot Digital Library is unique as the only online library documenting and preserving Blackfoot Ways of Knowing. Traditional Blackfoot Niitsitapi Territory, which became the subject of Treaty 7, extends north to the North Saskatchewan River, south to the southern reaches of what is now considered Montana, west to the Rocky

Mountains, and east to the confluence of the North and South Saskatchewan rivers. Adrienne further explains that although there are other peoples who consider the area home,

these lands were assigned to the other tribes by the Blackfoot. The other tribes came to the Blackfoot as refugees running from the British and the American militaries. There were many treaties made between the Blackfoot people and the other tribes; that is why Peace Hills are named that: they were named by the Blackfoot people to commemorate our treaties with the Cree. (personal communication, November 19, 2018)

As a settler born into Treaty 6 Territory, in Saskatoon, the traditional land of the nêhiyawak (Cree), Saulteaux, and Nakota (Assiniboine), Mary has also availed herself of the iPortal (IPORTAL.USASK.CA), an Indigenous Studies research portal created by the amazing and tireless Deborah Lee at the University of Saskatchewan, and sees some similarities in the organizational structure and approaches to knowledge. However, Adrienne's deeply personal relationship with the BDL, something she calls her "life's work," and her strong connection, as a Blackfoot woman and Beaver Bundle Caretaker, to the information stored within it, tender an emotional quality to the commentary that may not be present in the custodianship of broader databases and collections. The overarching theme of Adrienne's discussion is the significance of place and connection to the land, something that is central to the BDL and to her life. As such, this notion of locality informs the brief literature review herein, providing only a slightly broader context to support the granularity of the discussion about the BDL. Certainly, Mary would be remiss here if she did not thank Adrienne for her time and for allowing her such an intimate view into the workings of the Blackfoot Digital Library.

Literature Review

The published literature on Blackfoot knowledges and their management is sparse, and what is widely available is often not from a lived perspective. Betty Bastien, an associate professor at the University of Calgary and member of the Piikani First Nation, has written one of the more recent and personal explorations of her culture: *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing: The Worldview of the Siksikaitstapi* (2004). In this engaging scholarly text, language is explained as the precursor to any attempt to understand Ways of Knowing. After establishing the importance of language, Bastien describes the ways in which knowledge and practices are transmitted. She asserts that "Niitsitapi¹ epistemologies are founded upon generating and creating knowledge premised on the goal of existing in harmony with the natural world" (39). Further, the notion that the cosmic order is reciprocal and informs the importance of

1. Mistaken Chief, who provides a Blackfoot lexicon in Bastien's (2004) book, translates this from the Blackfoot as "real people or all Indian, Aboriginal, or Indigenous peoples" (212).

reciprocity, of sharing and giving within Blackfoot society, provides insight into the importance of relationships and their inseparability from knowledge and tradition in the community. This notion is contrasted with the idea that “White people’s laws are different” and their lives are premised on self-betterment and getting ahead (75). *Kakyosin*, or Traditional Knowledge, hinges on kinship and is transmitted through stories and ceremony. One primary source of knowledge and stories is dreams; other tools include the teachings of relatives, Bundle Transfers, and connections to the land, animals, and spirits. Experiential Sacredness is the foundation of “what it means to be human” and is grounded in ceremony (84). Overall, terms such as *interconnected* and *web* are used to describe Blackfoot Ways of Knowing in contrast to European, linear knowledge creation and dissemination.

Bastien’s (2004) discussion does not specify the land in the way that it does other aspects of Blackfoot culture²; however, its importance and presence may be understood in the sustained idea she conveys that the reciprocal relationship with the natural world, and thus the land, is integral to Blackfoot life. Leroy Little Bear (2009), a venerated Blackfoot scholar, describes the complex and fundamental relationship to the land as being like the relationship typically understood between a child and her mother,³ further stating that people “suffer” when they are away from the land just as they do when they are away from loved ones (21). For settlers like Mary who have long travelled away from their ancestral homes and cultures, such highly emotional ideas in relation to the natural environment may be difficult to understand. This fundamental philosophical separation and mystification may also hint at why the notions surrounding Blackfoot knowledges, and their management and dissemination, are so difficult to comprehend for Western Eurocentric researchers.

As Adrienne explains in her discussion of Bundle Transfers,⁴ every nation has particular ways of doing things, and this needs to be considered in a discussion of Indigenous knowledge management, as there is no pan-Indigenous authority. When positing that the government needs to work with Nations on an individual level, she says, “They can’t be applying something that they learned from the Crees⁵ and trying to apply it to us, ’cause that doesn’t make sense.”⁶ For this reason, the CFLA report (Callison 2017) mandates that all work be done in consultation with local peoples,

2. This is something that Adrienne explains as being missed by settler researchers but not being mentioned by Indigenous researchers because it is assumed to be understood.

3. Adrienne clarifies that, in *Niitsitapi* religion, the Mother is the Moon and the Father is the Sun: “They are the creators of all life. There is no ‘Mother Earth’; that came from the hippies back in the ’60s and ’70s” (personal communication, November 19, 2018).

4. Sacred Bundles are an essential and historical part of Blackfoot ceremonial life. They contain important objects wrapped in animal hides or fabrics.

5. *nêhiyawak*.

6. Unless otherwise stated, Adrienne’s words are taken from the interview transcript that begins on page 11.

and that guidance informs this paper's focus on Blackfoot discussions of knowledge. However, in terms of libraries, there is nothing readily apparent that deals specifically with Blackfoot Ways of Knowing beyond Mary Weasel Fat's (2014) highly personal and fascinating account of her experience of being the librarian at Red Crow Community College.

As Aboriginal Engagement Librarian at the University of Saskatchewan, Lee has written several essential papers on the subject of Indigenous knowledge and libraries in Canada. Her (2008 and 2011) research on Indigenous knowledge in postsecondary libraries suggests that a thorough understanding of local Protocol and culture is necessary to truly serve Indigenous students in a holistic manner, and she points to the lack of Indigenous librarians as being a main reason that there is little stewardship of knowledge. Lee (2008 and 2011) further advocates that spiritual support or "nourishment" be found in the library and suggests that the hierarchical nature of the organization be flattened to create a more reflective system. She also mentions the Library and Archives Canada's (LAC) Canadian Subject Headings as being more attuned to Indigenous organizational structures than Library of Congress Subject Headings, something that may also be said for the Brian Deer Classification System (BDCS), which he created for the National Indian Brotherhood in the 1970s. Deer's system is locally responsive and is designed to create organization based on place. As such, it has been adapted to suit a variety of Nations in Canada: Swanson (2015) tells of using BDCS in Quebec at the Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute, Cherry and Mukunda (2015) provide another excellent case study in their discussion of the BDCS adoption by the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs Resource Centre library, and the Xwi7xwa Library at the University of British Columbia (XWI7XWA.LIBRARY.UBC.CA) also has a version in use that honours the local Coast Salish people.

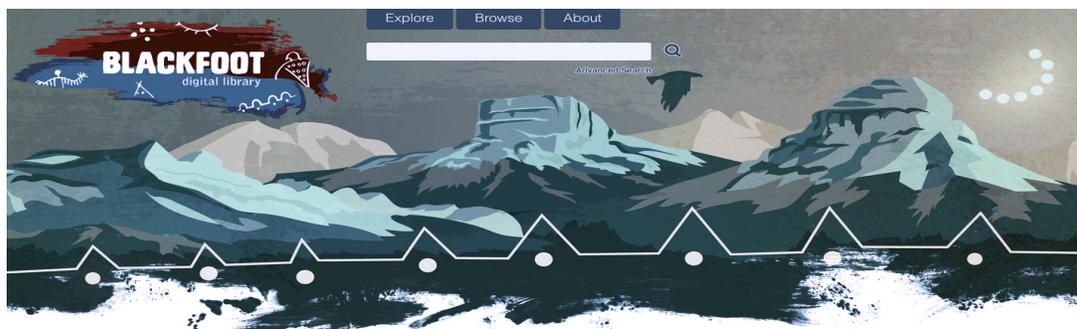


FIGURE 1
Screenshot of the header on the BDL website, depicting, among other symbols, Chief and Crowsnest Mountains.

Similarly, Blake (2014) discusses her work in cataloguing for LAC, remarking that, “It was clear to me that it was very important for an Aboriginal person to be cataloguing Aboriginal materials” (120). She explains that correctly assigning subject headings requires deep knowledge of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Her assertion of Indigenous control of Indigenous information is echoed by Callison (2014), who states that “First Nations must play a central role in all areas that control the preservation, access to, and interpretation of their history, culture, language, and fine arts” (135).

The Blackfoot Digital Library (BLACKFOOTDIGITALLIBRARY.COM) began as part of a repatriation project with which Adrienne’s father, Martin Heavy Head, and a group of Elders were involved, and had its earliest beginnings in the Blackfoot Repatriation Database that his soon-to-be son-in-law, Ryan Heavy Head, created in the 1990s.⁷ Initially, Adrienne’s role was to read through documentation her father had collected and summarize it to assist in repatriation requests. She soon began to work with Ryan on the database to keep track of all the possible repatriation that was occurring as they collected information in the United States, because they envisioned the project going beyond the United States and Canada (though it has not yet).⁸

Through the Social Science and Humanities Research Council’s Community University Research Alliance grant program, the University of Lethbridge eventually hired Adrienne to digitize the Blackfoot materials that she and Ryan held. When the University of Lethbridge Library obtained funding through the Lois Hole family, the university librarian at the time, Marinus Swanepoel, asked Adrienne to move to the library where they could provide better technology to get the collection online. With the information that Ryan, Adrienne, and the Elders collected, the repatriation database became the Blackfoot Digital Library. What the university has done, by providing fiscal and technical support in the form of hosting the BDL, is a working example of the way institutions can support Indigenous peoples and advance reconciliation, all while staying out of the way. The BDL does not belong to the University of Lethbridge, as the memorandum it has signed with Red Crow Community College clearly states. Red Crow provides content, which belongs to the Blackfoot people and is hosted by the university:

The Blackfoot Digital Library is meant to honor *akaitapii*, the ancestors, and their desire to speak through a variety of recording media to the grandchildren they never had a chance to meet, thereby ensuring that their knowledge is carried through to future generations.
(BDL n.d.)

⁷ All information in the discussion of the Blackfoot Digital Library comes from the interview.

⁸ Frank Weasel Head gives a detailed account of these and other repatriation efforts in his chapter entitled “Repatriation Experiences of the Kainai,” in G. T. Conaty, *We Are Coming Home: Repatriation and the Restoration of Blackfoot Cultural Confidence* (Edmonton, AB: Athabasca University Press, 2014).

Contents of the BDL

The Blackfoot Digital Library houses a variety of audio and visual assets in its collection of over 1 600 discrete items. Adrienne says that it comprises “pretty much anything Blackfoot.” This includes stories, videos, and photographs from Blackfoot peoples, and information from museum collections in the United States and Europe. Adrienne explains that she and her husband have travelled to museums to get high-quality video and photographs of artifacts and that they also have copies of archival materials held elsewhere. She believes that they have documented everything contained in the British Isles outside Ireland,⁹ but that there are several important collections elsewhere on the continent that have not been assessed. The BDL is limited by time and funding in its ability to travel to European museums to assess holdings, and this has limited its ability to access some foreign-held collections.

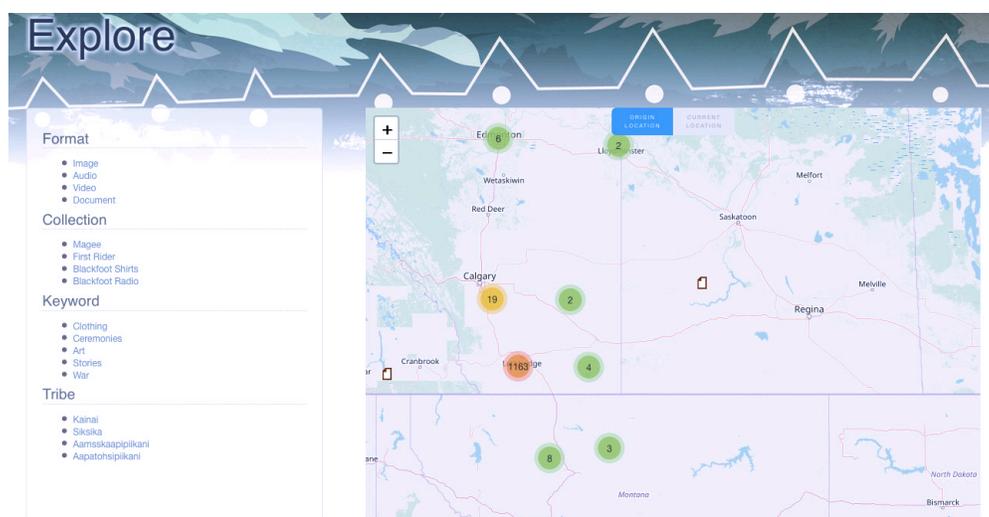


FIGURE 2
Screenshot of the Explore tab of the BDL showing some significant locations.

In terms of repatriating items, Adrienne explains that not all items should be repatriated, citing scalp shirts as one example: “It’s not something that would ever be in our best interest to renew, because, you know, you have to murder people!” Further, items that are repatriated would need to be used in ceremony and would require individuals interested in using them for such purposes. Adrienne explains that Bundles that are in use are often transferred between groups, and this lessens the interest in repatriating Bundles that have gone out of use and are housed elsewhere. For her part, she did repatriate a Beaver Bundle because she knew that there were Bundles sitting in museums not being used. However, wanting a Bundle is not enough to warrant one, and Protocol must be followed to obtain and care for a Bundle. Bundle

⁹. The collection in Ireland is not catalogued to reflect where items are from, and Adrienne believes it is mostly smaller, less important items such as arrowheads.

Caretakers must perform a public and private ceremony, and “you take care of your Bundle like you would a child.”

Other assets mentioned that are of particular importance to the BDL are copies of priests’ journals that Adrienne managed to obtain from the Vatican before they stopped agreeing to work with Indigenous North Americans. She explains that these journals are important because she no longer has access to the originals and that it is taking her a long time to document them all. She also keeps many hard and digital copies of the journals because she is afraid of losing them. Indeed, being tasked with the preservation and conservation of her culture is a weighty duty, and Adrienne, being aware of the cultural knowledge she maintains, keeps many copies of materials in many locations to prevent accidental loss or destruction.

Organization and Access to Information

In the initial version of the website, Adrienne explains that she was trying use a “Blackfoot view” but that she did not realize “that the end user¹⁰ [wasn’t] going to understand things.” Initially, information on the BDL was accessed through a visual representation of the land and significant places (see figure 2 for the current version of this “map” tool). When asked about the updated version of the website, which still has a geographical and land-based approach but also combines cartographic¹¹ and subject, format, and title approaches to information organization that may be more familiar to certain users, Adrienne signals the importance of the artwork on the site, which contains landscape and animal representations of significance to the Blackfoot peoples. This relationality is essential, encompassing all existence, and is depicted several different ways within the BDL (see figures 1 and 3). However, the greatest tenet of organization in the BDL is connection to the land: “We felt like this is something that needs to be pointed out, because we are coming from two completely different streams of thought.”

Adrienne explains the individual, personal connection to the land that is integral to her life as a Blackfoot person:

Where I’m sitting right now, I know that my ancestors sat here. I know that they walked here, and at the same time I know that, if I’m walking down at the river bottom, that . . . that’s where the dead would have been put. . . . So having that kind of a thing, and knowing that I’m going to spend my entire life here, my parents have spent their entire life here,

¹⁰. In this case, the “end user” who does not understand the organizational structure is non-Blackfoot people.

¹¹. It must be noted that cartography is a colonial tool with which boundaries are drawn and demarcated to reinforce ownership or belonging, often dividing groups of people arbitrarily. The Canadian-American boundary, for example, separates the Blackfoot peoples, with the southern Amskapi Piikani residing in what is now called Montana.

their parents have spent their entire life here. And we're not leaving, you know, because there's nowhere else for us to go, because this is our land.

With such significance, it is understandable that the BDL would want to make explicit this connection to place.

The relationship to the land is also a key aspect of the Blackfoot Sacred Stories that the BDL hosts, and these pose unique challenges. Adrienne explains that

Elders that really know the stories well, and places, they would say that every square mile of Blackfoot Territory has had a significant event happen there that could be connected to a story.

Because the stories are lengthy, often taking several days to tell, she explains that modern people do not have time to hear them. Further, Adrienne illustrates how far-ranging stories may be by discussing the geographical breadth of the Scarface story,¹² a well-known Blackfoot story, which spans from Alberta to Colorado and across to the Pacific Northwest.¹³ As such, locating stories on the map proves a challenging but essential part of her work.

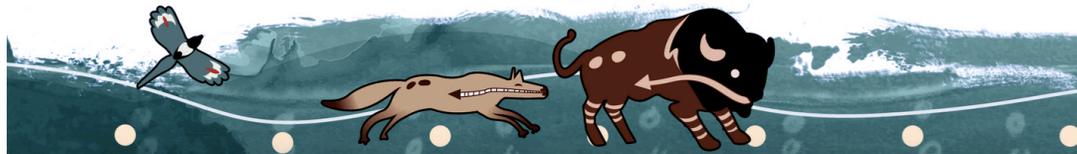


FIGURE 3
Screenshot of the footer on the BDL website depicting animals.

Following location, Adrienne attempts to discern which society the artifacts belong to, because this determines access. She explains that although the library will take “anything Blackfoot,” she will not include all assets on the BDL. Because Adrienne is a Beaver Bundle Caretaker,¹⁴ she has the right to look at assets that individuals in other societies may not have, and that is why the Elders selected her to manage the library. She also has a group of Elders whom she can consult with regarding information to be added to the library, including her parents, Beverly

¹². The BDL contains a video telling of a version of the *Pawakssi* (Scarface) Story by *Kiitokiiapii* from the Kanai Nation. *Kiitokiiapii (Marvin Calf Robe) Tells Story of Pawakssi*, recorded January 4, 2011. Retrieved from [BLACKFOOTDIGITALLIBRARY.COM/DIGITAL/COLLECTION/BDL/ID/I374/REC/2](https://blackfootdigitallibrary.com/digital/collection/BDL/ID/I374/REC/2)

¹³. Another version of this story that shows Scarface's, *kiiyii* or *Piahkspii*'s, importance in Blackfoot cosmology and religion may be found in an interview with Allan Pard, Piikani Elder, in Angela Grier, “Aistimatoom: The Embodiment of Blackfoot Prayer as Wellness.” Master's thesis, University of Lethbridge, 2014, 254-83. Retrieved from [HDL.HANDLE.NET/10133/3463](https://hdl.handle.net/10133/3463).

¹⁴. Adrienne explains that the Beaver Bundle is “the most powerful because it's the first. . . . It's the way that things get legitimized in Blackfoot culture.”

Little Bear (her aunt), and Jerry Potts. Items that are sensitive have restricted access, with some requiring log-in. There are also linguistic controls in place that limit access in the BDL: many items are available in Blackfoot only, automatically excluding researchers who do not speak Blackfoot. Adrienne explains that “It should be common knowledge to most Blackfoot people, but I won’t translate it.” Further, some of the material is in an older dialect of Blackfoot that only the very elderly understand, and this limits access because translation is difficult due to the age of the potential translators. She also mentions that some interviewees will answer in Blackfoot with the caveat that the interview not be translated. Maintaining language is important for language revitalization, reinforcing that some knowledge must be earned. Language and knowledge are interconnected; Piikani scholar Betty Bastien (2004), discussing a gathering of Blackfoot grandparents and ceremonialists, explains that language and prayer are the way to understand life. Without language, many teachings and much knowledge is lost.

Cultural appropriation, which Adrienne refers to as a “buzzword,” has begun to raise issues for the BDL because some individuals who are not familiar with knowledge Protocols wish to be consulted on every decision made about assets. This frustration highlights the importance of understanding the relationships within the community and the essential of “proving” oneself, ideas that Adrienne feels may be lost on younger generations who have not learned the ways of their people. Certainly, as she suggests, this problem of sensitivity is not solely the arena of Indigenous peoples or Blackfoot peoples. In her discussion of epistemology, Bastien (2004) posits that “intelligence means participating within the world from which one has acquired the wisdom of nature and the knowledge of experience. This understanding invokes a number of relationships that contrast with the Eurocentred concept of intellect” (100). Adrienne also expresses that sometimes older people suggest that they are Elders simply because of their age, but this is not accurate:

If we were following the Blackfoot way of things, there’s a lot of young people that are considered Elders because they’ve already been through a society or a few societies. So, they’re basically Elders for those societies.

Blackfoot Elders have specialized knowledge that may not always be correlated with advanced age and may come from learning in one or more societies.

Information in the BDL is stored on local servers maintained by the University of Lethbridge Library and also in the cloud. Additionally, Adrienne keeps hard copies and has her own external drives. She mentions that she has been asked not to keep multiple copies but illustrates why she does by discussing the most recent demise of the Red Crow College’s Resource Centre library. In 2014, Mary Weasel Fat, the college’s library coordinator, explained the struggles she has had, stating that the

library had to be moved five times after a fire destroyed the entire library in the chapel of St. Mary's Residential School, in 2001: "I almost felt like quitting and finding other employment. I had a heart-to-heart talk with my mother, and she encouraged me to rebuild the library" (40). The library was rebuilt within the school in another location, but Weasel Fat mentions that the area was too small and the library needed a new location. In 2015, following that essay, the entire college, including the library, was destroyed in a fire. Adrienne, explaining her reasons for keeping multiple copies of assets, highlights the following devastating example:

When Leroy Little Bear retired, he gave them everything! . . . The only backups that they had was the couple of things that he gave me. . . . So everything was lost. . . . So that's pretty critical that his lifetime of work is gone.

What follows is the transcript of Adrienne and Mary's conversation, in its original state, as it occurred in 2018.

Interview with Adrienne Heavy Head, Blackfoot Digital Library

MG: The first thing I was going to ask you was how the idea came about and how you started with the library.

AHH: Well, in the late 90s when the US had their NAGPRA laws come into effect, which is Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act,¹⁵ my dad, who was in the Horn Society and on council for the Blood Tribe at the time, was with a group of Elders that were going around the US and were, you know, just basically seeing what the US had. And my partner, Ryan, was a student at the University of Massachusetts, and he was kind of put in charge of the Elders by a woman named Joyce Spoonhunter who is from Browning, [Montana]. And she was supposed to be the repatriation contact for Browning. She isn't anymore. I don't know who is. But anyways, she asked Ryan to be their contact since he was already living on the East Coast. So Ryan travelled around with them and brought them to all these different museums, and at the same time they were collecting a lot of archival materials. So Ryan decided that he was going to make himself a database of just everything in the world that was Blackfoot. You know, so he had this idea. Back then, the internet wasn't, you know, um, [Laughs]. . . .

MG: Yeah. [Laughs.]

AHH: Very informative. So he had to sit there in the Library of Congress, you know, for days, and just copy down the addresses of museums that said they had Native American collections. And so with that, that was basically how it started. And so then my dad, who was also getting a lot of that archival stuff, he was just asking me to read

¹⁵. Adrienne later confirmed that the date of the act is 1995.

through it and just give him a summary of what was happening with it, 'cause I was just in high school at the time and I didn't have any . . . I didn't even finish high school yet or anything. So, not really being busy, just being a high school student. 'Cause my sister, my older sister, had already graduated high school, and she had a job and was going to school at the same time. And my siblings were too young. So, I was just kind of at that right age. [Laughs.]

MG: Lucky you!

AHH: So, I was just kind of helping, 'cause my dad just asked me to do that. And then I started working with Ryan, 'cause my dad asked me to do stuff with him, and we started working together. And then, probably about a year after we got married, then I said, "Well, you know, we're doing all this repatriation stuff,"—'cause we thought it was going to expand outside of the US, which it didn't, but we thought it would—so we thought it would be good to have this repatriation database. So I told him, "Well, you know, let's do that." So we would have this database and put in everything that we had, you know, about whatever objects were in the collection, so that we could build repatriation requests based on that. It would make it easier, 'cause at the time it really wasn't easy because we had a lot of documents that we had to read through, a lot of history, all kinds of stuff, to write every repatriation request. So, we were, like, "We'll just do this and see what happens."

So we were doing that, and we did that for quite a while. We did that from '97 to 2002, and we were just doing that on our own. We didn't have any outside funding. We were working two to three jobs at a time, you know, to pay for it and stuff. And it was a really basic, simple database; at the time, the technology we needed just wasn't there, and the money, and that kind of thing.

Then, in 2003, the NAS department [Department of Native American Studies at the University of Lethbridge] got a CURA grant from SSHRC [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council], which was a Community University Research Alliance grant. So with that they were supposed to give monies to communities to do research projects, but at the same time they wanted to build the BDL [Blackfoot Digital Library]. But they didn't know how to build it, they didn't know what to do; they basically just at the time were, like, "We want to build a website that has Blackfoot stuff on it." That is what they were saying. So when I came along, they offered me that they would pay me to digitize all the records that Ryan and I had. So, I was, like, OK, 'cause I was still working two jobs to try and pay for that and I was also going to school at the same time. So I was, like, OK, I can quit my jobs and focus on school. So I started doing that. But when they started, what they had, basically, was just a webpage with a list of links to other websites. They didn't really have anything at all. So it was just links to, you know, the Smithsonian.

MG: And that was on their home page, right?

AHH: Yeah.

MG: I kind of remember it.

AHH: But that's basically all it was—just this list of links. Yeah. So it was kind of like a web circle like they used to have back in the day. They had that going. And they were asking me to digitize everything. They would pay me to digitize everything. So I did that, and then they were asking me to start putting stuff online, and their technology just wasn't there so I really wasn't ready to do it. The library got the Lois Hole fund, which I don't remember the whole name of it, and Marinus [Swanepoel] was the head librarian at the time. So, he wanted to move the BDL to here, and he said, "I want Adrienne to come with it, because she's the one who has the knowledge." They were, like, OK, and so they made that happen. So I got, at that point, that was when my database that I had been working on became the BDL.

So from there we started working on a website, and I continued digitizing the stuff that we had, 'cause we had boxes and boxes and boxes of things. At the same time, Ryan was the director of the Kainai Studies Department [at Red Crow Community College], and he was creating new assets. And so we had all of that going, and so we got our first website up in 2008. So it was quite a long time before we actually got the first website up.

The first website was made in-house by Jake [Cameron], but because we didn't have a professional team building it, we didn't really understand. We were, like, trying to do this through a Blackfoot view.

MG: Right!

AHH: We probably kind of messed up a lot of stuff. We didn't realize, you know, that the end user isn't going to understand things. Because all the searches took you directly to a map. And the map, you could click on whatever.

MG: Right, I remember it looking like that, too.

AHH: Yeah, so, I guess it was really confusing for a lot of people. So we had to really work on that. And then eventually we got our new website. But you know, yeah, that was basically just the beginning of getting it to where it is now.

MG: In terms of organization of information, you say that you approached it from a Blackfoot view originally, but then you had to change it. Obviously, non-Indigenous people probably found it confusing, but do you think, are there still ways that you are organizing it from a Blackfoot perspective?

AHH: We put a lot of symbolism into the artwork that is on it. That was a big deal. And then, we still tried to connect everything to the land. One thing we found in all our years of research was that every outside researcher that came into our community always missed the connection to the land, and they could never identify it—they knew it was something, but they didn't know what that was. So they were always looking for that connection, but they didn't know what it was. Then, Blackfoot researchers, they would always skip that too, because they just, it seemed like they just assumed that people knew. And so, it was something that was always left out of all the research. We felt like this is something that needs to be pointed out, because we are coming from two completely different streams of thought. Right?

MG: Right!

AHH: You know, one is this westernized thinking where they're not realizing, because Western culture has moved all over the globe. Right? So they've never had that concrete connection to a specific place, and it's really different when you come from an Indigenous community.

Another thing that a lot of people miss is that they don't realize that we've been here, we can say we've been here for thousands of years and whatever, but they don't understand how that is on an individual level. Because, on an individual level, you know, where I'm sitting right now, I know that my ancestors sat here. I know that they walked here, and at the same time I know that, if I'm walking down at the river bottom, that (I don't want to say "buried," 'cause they wouldn't have been buried) that's where the dead would have been put, and sometimes there's . . .

MG: On platforms, is that what . . . ?

AHH: Yeah, well, they would have been put in the tree branches. The whole platform thing didn't come in until way later. So having that kind of a thing, and knowing that I'm going to spend my entire life here, my parents have spent their entire life here, their parents have spent their entire life here. And we're not leaving, you know, because there's nowhere else for us to go, because this is our land. So it was something that we realized a lot of people were missing, and they weren't pointing out. So we felt it was really important to connect that, and to make that really obvious to people that this is what they're missing whenever they're doing research. So that was why we connected everything to place, so that people would at least kind of understand it a little bit.

MG: So, you were talking about the connection to place, and how important it is and how it is overlooked or skipped over depending on who's doing the work.

AHH: Yeah, I found that especially Native researchers, not academics, because there are a lot of researchers that are not academics, just Native researchers, they seem to

skip that, because I think that in their mind, because the people that they work with just know it. Then they expect other people to just know it, and they don't think, OK, well, this is something that is not common to Westerners. So they do that, and then Westerners, because they don't connect that themselves, they end up missing it as well. So that's always an issue.

One of the really important things, too, is that all of our stories—within Blackfoot Territory, if you were to draw a map just based on stories, you know, you could map out the entire Blackfoot Territory—because what they say, like, Elders that really know the stories well, and places, they would say that every square mile of Blackfoot Territory has had a significant event happen there that could be connected to a story.

So part of our challenge, you know, 'cause a lot of those people have already passed on, is trying to figure [out] where those stories that we collect, what part of the land they are connected to, as well. So that's always an ongoing challenge, and trying to figure out exactly where things happened and that.

And, of course, there's a lot of things that happened outside of Blackfoot Territory. So, the Scarface story, which is one of our more famous stories that a lot of people know, it happens in several different places. The first place it happens, it starts out in Blackfoot Territory, at Chief Mountain is his first stop. Then, his second stop is another mountain that's in the Kootenay Territory in BC [British Columbia]. I don't know the mountain. But then the next mountain is down south around Colorado or something, and then the next mountain is Mount Rainier—

MG: Oh, wow!

AHH: And the last stop he makes is at the ocean, around Oregon, Washington, somewhere around there. So that would be his last stop. Those specific places are things that could be mapped out within that story and also a few other places that he stops. But because I'm not a storyteller, I don't know the stories, because a lot of those stories, they take several days to tell, when it comes to those kinds of things it's a little bit more difficult because there are so many maps you could make based on one story. Because it takes so long to tell those stories, it's not something that a lot of modern-day people have time to sit and listen to, which, of course, is an issue as well. So we are doing our best to connect those, . . . make it cohesive, so that it's obvious to anyone that's using the BDL that those things are important.

MG: Right. OK. So in terms of what information and materials you have catalogued, what do they encompass? Like, you've got stories you're talking about . . .

AHH: Well, I would say it's pretty much anything Blackfoot. So we've have photographs, that come from collections all over the place, and we also have museum collections. We try to go to as many museums as we can, to get video and also to

get any archival material that those museums may have, and really good detailed photographs of artifacts that they have, as well. So in the 90s, we pretty much took care of all of that in the US. So we have all of that, all those photographs and all that archival material from within the US. There was a small group of Elders that kind of went to all the museums in Canada and they brought us back stuff but, for the most part, we haven't really gotten everything catalogued within Canada just because I haven't been able to travel to those places to record those things.

With Europe, most of our collections are in Germany. There's a really huge collection in Germany called the Maximilian Collection. There are some in Poland and Switzerland, things like that, that we haven't been able to get to yet. That's just a matter of time and getting the funding to be able to go to those places. We were able to go to the British Museum, which has a huge Blackfoot collection, and able to video all of that and take really good, high-quality photographs of everything. So that was really good for us to be able to do. Then we did Oxford and Aberdeen and Glasgow as well. Within the British Isles, I don't think that there's really any more Blackfoot, other than Ireland has stuff but they don't know where it's from. So they don't know if it's Blackfoot; they don't know what tribe it's from. All they know is that it's Native American. So that would be a completely different project that we would have to do with them, because we would actually have to go through and catalogue for them what is Blackfoot, and that can take a really long time! [Laughs.] And you know, really not something that we are interested to do because, I think, most of what they have is arrowheads and stuff like that, not really something that is worthwhile for the BDL.

MG: Right. I mean, obviously, ideally, the best thing is for those artifacts to come home. But there are laws.

AHH: Well, I wouldn't say that it's best for everything to come home.

MG: OK, interesting.

AHH: Because we need a place for those things to go. So for us, everything that comes has gone into use, it's been transferred to somebody. So somebody uses it in ceremony. There are some things that we can't really put back into use, like scalp shirts, because we can't go and scalp people anymore, right?

MG: No! Of course not.

AHH: That's the whole thing for having a scalp shirt is that you go and you kill somebody. [Laughs.] That kind of thing is probably better where it is, because we can't . . . it's not something that would ever be in our best interest to renew, because, you know, you have to murder people! [Laughter.] So for things like that, I think those kinds of things should stay in the museum. It's like a precaution.

At the same time, too, there is Bundles out there that could come home, but nobody's in a position or has come forward to say, "Yeah, I want to take on the Bundle" or whatever.

MG: Take it, OK. So, you need people who are willing to receive or to have it transferred to them, I guess?

AHH: Yeah, and you know, it's not something, like, we can't go and tell someone, "OK, you're going to do this now." And the other thing is that a lot of people will come to someone who already has a Bundle and will say, "Can I get yours?" instead of going to repatriate one, which I could have done, but because I knew that were Bundles out there that were just sitting in museums, when I chose to go after one, I decided to repatriate because it was going to come home and be in use again!

MG: So, how, what are, . . . I know you can't tell me everything [due to Bundle Protocol, etc.], but what are the requirements? Can anyone just be, like, "I want a Bundle, so I'm going to go after a Bundle?" Or, how does it . . . ?

AHH: You have to follow certain Protocol, and my tribe Protocol is a little bit different. So, like, in Piikani, because my Elder's from Piikani, I went directly to him, and I brought him a pipe and I said, "This is what I want to do." We had a sweat; we did a ceremony, and he did all of that for us. Then we wrote a request and we went after it! But in Kainai, it's a little different.

In Kainai, you would go to an Elder and say, "Could you approach this person and tell them that you want a Bundle?" So, you know, they would have an intermediary that would go and negotiate with the person that has the Bundle. That kind of thing just varies by tribe, and that's just like a local kind of thing for tribes. So, in Piikani, it would be different where you would go yourself, and Kainai you have the intermediary, and, in Siksika, some of them will have intermediaries and some of them will go themselves. So it just depends a lot on what the local thing to do there is.

Then, you have to follow Protocol properly. So there is certain Protocol and certain steps you have to take before you can really do *anything* with the Bundle. Then you have to get your payment together and, you know, payments vary. Some people will pay cash, other people will pay goods; other people will pay animals, things like horses and things like that. So it varies. Then the person that is caring for the Bundle at that point will have to go and approve the payment or say no to the payment. So if they don't think that that person has paid enough, then they can decline their payment. That usually doesn't happen, but it can. I've personally never seen it happen, but it can happen where somebody will come out and they'll see it and they'll be, like, "No, I don't think this is enough." Then the Transfer will stop. Otherwise, if they

accept the payment, then the person is paid, and then the Transfer Ceremony will happen and the person that has paid will get the Bundle.

It's not just one person that gets a Bundle. It's supposed to be always three people. So you have the husband and wife, supposed to always be a married couple, and then a third person who is like a partner. It would usually be a young single male, 'cause that would kind of be his role, kind of like a coming-of-age kind of thing, but that doesn't always happen. Sometimes the third person is married or whatever, but usually it's a man. But the main holders always have to be a married couple. It just depends on whoever they choose to be their partner. Somebody can come to them and say, you know, "I heard that you're thinking about this. So, I'd like to join you and be your partner," or you can go and approach somebody and say, "Would you like to be my partner with this?"

MG: OK. And then once you've got that Bundle, what is your obligation to, I guess, the Bundle or to the community, once you're the Owner or you're the Keeper, I guess?

AHH: Yeah, people say "Owner" now.

MG: But it's not really Owner, is it?

AHH: No, because you're really just a Caretaker. So your responsibility is to make sure, you know, you take care of your Bundle like you would a child. You always make sure your Bundle's clean and fed, which for different Bundles means different things. I can't really say for other societies, because I've only ever really taken care of my Bundle. So for myself, you know, there's certain ceremonies that I do several times a year. Then we have one (well, two,) but one big ceremony that's a public ceremony, and anyone can come and participate. Our ceremony is very different from everybody else's. I've been to other public ceremonies, and they're different than ours. Ours, I don't know, they're just different! [Laughs.]

The Horns [Horn Society], they have their public ceremony at our Sundance [Okan¹⁶], which is in the summer time. The Ninnamskaa [Thunder Pipe or Medicine Bundle], they have their public ceremonies right after the first thunder. Everybody else only does one public ceremony a year, and we do two. So we do ours at spring and at the winter. So it's like opening and closing for us, and we're the only ones that do that. Everybody else just does one ceremony.

MG: And it's Beaver Bundle, is that right?

¹⁶. Blackfoot terms and spelling in this interview were provided by Adrienne Heavy Head. She further explains, "'Okan' refers to the Sundance Woman's ceremony; she is called the 'Okaawa.' The camp is called 'Akóka'tssin' [which means] 'berry picking camp.' We collectively call it 'the Sundance,' but really that's a mistranslation of what is going on at the camp. The Okan does not happen every year" (personal communication, November 19, 2018).

AHH: Mmmhmm [affirmative]. And we do ours, and we just do our thing. We have our one ceremony, and then we have a bunch of private ceremonies that we'll do throughout the year. So with that, it's keeping things in good repair, and making sure that we do our smudges every day, kind of thing, and doing our private ceremonies throughout the year and stuff like that. So for other Bundles, I don't know if they do private ceremonies throughout the year, 'cause I've never had any other Bundle. A lot of that stuff . . . I couldn't say for sure what they do.

MG: So, in terms of the library [BDL] itself, are there limits to what you would take? You said, "pretty much anything that's Blackfoot," right?

AHH: Well, there are limits to what I'll put up. So there are things, like, an Elder just gave me several DVDs and asked me to make copies of them, and I keep copies within the BDL archives, which is basically my office. [Laughs.] But with that, only one of them is allowed to be up on the site. So for those, I'll put up something like, "Those are available, but you have to request them," and it can only be people from these certain societies that can request this. It just depends on what the person says that's giving it to me.

We have other stuff, too, that's completely in Blackfoot, and it should be common knowledge to most Blackfoot people, but I won't translate it. You would have to know Blackfoot in order to be able to understand what's happening. A lot of it too, though, is really difficult to translate, in some cases because they speak an older dialect of Blackfoot that is no longer spoken. The people that still understand it, they're generally really old and have a hard time hearing, and things like. So for them to even translate that would be quite difficult work for them. It's really hard to find fluent Blackfoot speakers now that can understand what's being said. So for stuff like that, you know, it's kind of hidden with the language anyway. You would have to know the older Blackfoot in order to be able to even understand the tapes.

Also, some people will do interviews with us, and they'll do their entire interview in Blackfoot, because they know it's going to go up on the site, and they're, like, "But I don't want it translated." So, only Blackfoot people can . . .

MG: Can understand it?

AHH: Yeah.

MG: All right. How do you store everything? On a server here?

AHH: They [the University of Lethbridge] have dedicated servers that are just for the BDL, and then we've also got some kind of cloud drive as well. That was built by the university. So it's a university cloud drive. Then I've also got hard copies of everything. I've been asked to not have hard copies of everything. [Laughs.] I also

have, I don't know, at least a dozen external hard drives that have stuff on it, but I do keep hard copies. So whenever I get a DVD or a CD or something, I make a disc of it, 'cause I'm kind of old-school like that. [Laughs.] I have probably 20 redundant copies of everything.

MG: That's good, because you have backup.

AHH: Yeah, I'm always worried. Well, what if something happens to one of them, and I don't have another backup? [Laughs.] It sounds ridiculous, but at the same time it's my own thing where I have to have it, so . . . [Laughs.]

MG: Well, it is really important information, because some of the things you have, nobody else has. Right?

AHH: Yeah, exactly! Exactly.

One of the things I've been working on for a long time is I have these journals that came from priests and we got them from the Vatican. I have diaries and stuff from priests that came from the Vatican. I'm, like, OK, well, these are really precious. Yeah, they're photocopies, and, yeah, the Vatican has the originals and whatever, but nobody else has these. [Laughs.] So, stuff like that, I try to have as many copies as I can.

MG: Right, of course, yeah.

AHH: So, you know, it seems a little crazy, but at the same time I feel like I need to. Because you look at what happened with Red Crow [Community College], and they never had any backups of nothing, and then their school burnt down and everything is gone.

When Leroy Little Bear retired, he gave them everything!

MG: Oh, no! I didn't know that!

AHH: So, there was no backups. The only backups that they had was the couple of things that he gave me. After the fire, then Amethyst, his wife, came to me and she was, like, "What do you have of Leroy's?" And I was, like, "The five or ten things that you guys gave me." [Laughs.] I was, like, "That's all I have!" So I made her copies of those, and I was, like, "That's all you guys gave me, so that's all I ever had." So everything was lost. So you know, that's somebody's lifetime of work, right? So that's pretty critical that his lifetime of work is gone.

MG: That's so discouraging.

AHH: Also, I worry because, you know, I have a house, and some of the stuff was at my house. What if there was a flood in my basement or something? So I had to get

that stuff out of there. For that kind of stuff, too, I'm still backlogged with a lot of that. I don't even have all of that stuff backed up yet.

I figure this is probably the safest place to keep it. This building is concrete. It's really not likely to burn down. [Laughs.]

MG: Well, and you're off the ground, so. . .

AHH: I'm off the ground, so I'm not in a place where I've got to worry about being flooded or whatever. So I feel like this is probably the safest place for those things. Those kind of things, I've been slowly moving them over here, and I'm trying to make my backups and stuff. Being the only person doing it, I haven't even, . . . I've been here how many years, and I get new stuff all the time, and I haven't even fully finished two boxes. My boxes are like those [indicating file boxes], and I haven't even finished two of those yet since I've had my office here. So I've had my office here since 2010; so, eight years, that's a long time. And I'm getting new stuff all the time and trying to get that stuff up, and . . . [Laughs.]

MG: Yeah, it's never-ending, hey? You need an assistant!

AHH: That would be nice! [Laughs.] It would be nice to have an assistant. Just somebody who could scan that stuff or something. But you know, it's difficult.

MG: Funding too, right?

AHH: Yeah, funding, and also finding . . .

MG: Finding the right person.

AHH: Yeah, finding the right person, because, that's another thing, too. Because some of these things, part of the reason that I was given more responsibility by the Elders I was working with was because of the position I held already within the community. And so they kind of pushed it on me more once I got my Bundle, because they were, like, "Well, now you have the right to look at these things." Because not everybody has those rights. If somebody's in the Horn Society, they can't be looking at things that are from Ninnamskaa. That kind of thing. So, because I have a Beaver Bundle, which is basically the source of all Blackfoot culture, then I have the right to look at whatever.

MG: So, it's considered the most powerful?

AHH: Yeah, it would be the most powerful, because it's the first. So it's the way that things get legitimized in Blackfoot culture. Things can't be created unless they've gone through the Beaver Bundle, and the Beaver Bundle has given them something. That's how things are legitimized. The Beaver Bundle is the only Bundle that has the right to open any Bundle, to run any ceremony, that kind of thing.

I wouldn't do that myself, just because I haven't been part of any other society, but generally that was what they were expected to do. Also, it's very rare for someone of my age to have a Beaver Bundle.

MG: Yeah, you're young, right?

AHH: Yeah, it was normally for old people. So, somebody that had already been through lots of different societies and things like that, and they'd be the ones that would have the Beaver Bundles. I had a special circumstance, and so it came to me. They say that they go to who they are supposed to go to. You can't just get one because you want one.

MG: I guess that's what I was getting at before: it kind of chooses you, in a way?

AHH: They say that the Bundles, because the Bundles are seen as a person, they already know who their next Caretaker is going to be. So they choose who it's going to be. So it's not something that you may think, "Oh, that's what I want to do!" It may not be that you've been chosen for that. It's the Bundle that chooses you; you don't choose it. So I was just put in this really rare position to be the person that got this one. Because of that, the Elders that I was working with, then they felt like that was really an important thing, an important part of my work that I had to have. So now a lot more responsibility was put on me when it comes to deciding what goes up and what doesn't, and that kind of thing.

MG: Do you have someone you can consult with?

AHH: Oh, yeah. I've got a group of Elders that I work with. I used to work a lot with Narcisse Blood and Allan Pard, but now they've passed. Since then, I've found other people they were training that now I use as Elders. I have Jerry Potts, and then my parents, and my Auntie Beverly [Little Bear], of course, and several other people. If I'm not sure about something, then I'll talk to them, show it to them, and see what they have to say. Most of them, I would say, are Beaver People or Ninnamskaa People that I go to, because it was first the Beaver Bundle and then later it was the Ninnamskaa. So in order of succession, it would be the Beaver Bundle, then Ninnamskaa, then Sundance, and so on after that.

MG: You talk about place as being important; earlier you were talking about this. So when you're classifying information, what is the first way that you classify it when you put it up, or when you're going to put it up [on the website]?

AHH: First, I try to figure out what part of the land it should go on. That's one of the first things I do. The second thing that I do is I try to decide if it belongs with a society classification. So I decide if it belongs with the Thunder Pipes or the Beaver Bundles or the Horns or whatever. So I try to go through that secondly. Then after that it's just

little things like art, or history, you know, things like that. It's more generalized after that.

MG: We talked a bit about repatriation at the beginning, and there are certain things that you don't think need to be repatriated. Do you think that there needs to be better law in Canada around Traditional Knowledge or management of Traditional Knowledge?

AHH: I think the laws were fine but now things are getting muddled. A lot of that has to do with people's new buzzword of "cultural appropriation" and things like that. I think those things are really screwing up a lot of stuff, and people so easily getting offended and starting a ruckus over being offended. That kind of stuff really gets in the way.

The younger generation seem to have this idea that they're so special, that they need to be specially recognized, any time something happens that they should be notified, but with us, with the way that Blackfoot is supposed to be, it's like, well, if you haven't done anything, then no, I'm not going to recognize you, because you're still nobody! [Laughs.] They have this idea. I've had younger people come up and say, "Well, my grandpa's So-and-so, how come I wasn't notified or I wasn't asked about this?" I'm, like, "Well, that's your grandpa, not you." [Laughs.] Right? "Those are things that your grandfather did. That doesn't mean that you get the recognition, just 'cause you carry the same genes." But they expect that. They expect that they're going to get all this recognition and all this special stuff just because of whoever their grandparents or parents were, which to me is really ridiculous. [Laughs.] Because, yeah, my dad's done a whole lot of stuff, my mom's done a whole lot of stuff, but I wouldn't expect that I'm going to get the same kind of recognition that they get just because of what they did. It's like, well, I've got to prove myself first! And that's the way it's always been with Blackfoot people. Suddenly, these younger generations think that just because they're related to somebody they should get special treatment.

I find that happening not just with Native people. It seems to be happening everywhere. I think that's a huge problem.

MG: It is, yeah.

AHH: People are being way too overly sensitive, and I think that kind of screws up a lot of things. It causes a lot of problems that don't need to be there. People try to interfere with my work because, again, they're, like, "Why wasn't I notified? Why didn't somebody ask me?" I'm, like, "Because you're not an Elder!" or "You're nobody. You're nobody that has anything to do with this. Why would I consult you? I don't even know who you are!" In a lot of cases. [Laughs.] So that kind of stuff really causes a problem.

I was communicating with an academic at a museum, and somebody from one of the Blackfoot tribes (again, they were a kid, and they had nothing to do with any of the work that I do or anything, and they never had anything to do with repatriation or any of that stuff), they suddenly expected that they should be consulted when I contact museums. I'm, like, "Well, that's not your job, and my job isn't to contact you." But they threw a big fit when I told them that, and then they went to their parents and were telling their parents to get mad at me.

MG: Oh my god!

AHH: So that kind of thing is like a spoiled child syndrome. After that, then when their parents were, like, "No," then that person went and got mad at my dad and was, like, "Who does your daughter think she is? She's just doing this, and she didn't even ask me!" And my dad's, like, "Well, you're not in a position to say that. You're a kid." Basically, if you haven't done anything to accomplish anything in your life, then you're a kid, no matter how old you are.

MG: Of course, yeah.

AHH: My dad told this person, "You know, you've never accomplished anything in your life, you've never done anything to try and help our tribe. Why would anybody consult you about anything?" So, that kind of stuff goes on now, which it never used to, and it gets in the way and it's ridiculous.

Certain Elders think that they should always be asked, even when they don't know what they are talking about.

MG: Because they're an Elder?

AHH: Yeah, just because they're an Elder. Some people, especially with Catholics, they think, "Well, I'm old, so you should be asking me about anything when it comes to ceremony." But, I'm, like, "You've never been part of ceremony. You've shunned it. You're part of the Catholic Church."

MG: That's your ceremony.

AHH: Yeah: "That's your thing. So, you go do that." But then they think they can step in suddenly just because they're old. Being old doesn't make you an Elder. [Laughs.]

MG: It just makes you old!

AHH: Yeah, basically!

Really, if we were following the Blackfoot way of things, there's a lot of young people that are considered Elders because they've already been through a society or a few societies. So, they're basically Elders for those societies. Like Blaze [Russell]; Blaze has been through a few societies, and he's already transferred out of those, and he was

a Bundle holder. So for those societies, he is an Elder. But because of this new way of thinking, some people are, like, “Oh, well, he’s not old enough, he can’t be an Elder.”

MG: Oh, good god!

AHH: Well, no, age has nothing to do with it. That’s really hard for a lot of people to swallow.

MG: In the greater society, there’s so much shutting down of dialogue that I see because people use this “Oh! You’ve offended me!” or, “You’re not allowed to have that opinion or that idea.” Obviously, there are some things that shouldn’t be talked about sometimes, but there are a lot of things that I think we could have conversations about that we can’t anymore.

AHH: It’s, like, if it offends somebody, then you’re not allowed to say it, you’re not allowed to think it. Well, that’s not how a supposedly free society works, though.

MG: No, you have to have dialogue, right?

AHH: Yeah, we’re not living under Chairman Mao, so . . . [Laughs.]

MG: Yeah, it’s a very strange approach, because they’re so open, but it’s to the point where you can’t say anything against the openness.

AHH: Yeah. I don’t know, I don’t know. It’s like if you have an opinion that’s contrary to somebody else’s, then they have more of a right to freak out, which just makes no sense to me!

MG: I try to stay out of it, to be honest, ’cause I’m the same. I think, “Well, I’m still going to think what I think.” So . . .

AHH: Yeah, yeah. It just comes to this overly offended craziness!

MG: When you talked about this [the BDL] in the [library science] classes last semester, you said that this is your life’s work. Can you talk a little bit of this to you personally? What it means to you?

AHH: I kind of grew up between two, well, three worlds. My mom is Cree, my dad is Blackfoot, and I was never accepted in either community because the Cree always were, “I hate the Blackfoot,” and the Blackfoot were always, “I hate the Cree.” Neither of them knew why they were supposed to hate each other. Then, at the same time, I was sent to school in Lethbridge. All of my siblings were sent to school on the reserve. I was the only one that was sent to school in Lethbridge. I don’t know why I was separated like that.

MG: Which school did you go to?

AHH: I went to Nicholas Sheran [Elementary School], and then Hamilton [Junior High], and then I bounced around to a bunch of different schools, because I was having too many problems with them. I kept getting kicked out and stuff—it was terrible.

I'm not white. So, trying to find my place in those three societies was really difficult. Then, when I was probably around 17 or 18, I started trying to figure out who I am. I was going through that whole stage, and that was around that same time that my dad was doing the repatriations with the Elders. Then, I was 19. By that time, Ryan had been living with us for a while, because he kind of became my dad's assistant—he basically moved in with us. [Laughs.]

MG: Do you think your dad had in mind that you two would get married?

AHH: Oh, yeah, yeah. My dad kind of arranged it.

MG: I was wondering, when you were talking about it before! [Laughs.]

AHH: Yeah, my dad set it up. My dad set us up. I know now that he was hoping for that, because he didn't like my boyfriend and I didn't like him either. He just kind of at one point assigned Ryan to, I guess, take care of me, because, like, I've never driven. I've never been able to drive. So he assigned Ryan to drive me around and basically be my chauffeur. Then also, I was told, with the work that I was doing with my dad, I was supposed to work with Ryan with that, too. At that time, Ryan had been living in our house for, I don't know, a year and a half or something, and so my dad was, like, "This is what's going to happen." My dad scheduled it so that pretty much all my time outside of school was with Ryan for one reason or another. He was either driving me around, or we were working together. So it was just kind of inevitable, I guess.

With that, you know, working with Ryan, 'cause Ryan was also trying to figure out where he belonged in the world, because he had grown up in Oregon and he had just gotten out of the military. He was, like, super-American, G.I. Joe guy, and then he actually went to the military and was, like, "Holy shit! This is not what I thought it was, and I hate it." While he was growing up, his parents on his mom's side, twice her direct great-grandfathers had married Blackfoot women, one from Siksika and one from Browning.

MG: Wow! OK. Crazy!

AHH: So, because he had grown up with that knowledge, he was always told that "Oh, at some point we're going to move back to the reserve." You know, his dad was always teasing them. So Ryan decided he wanted to find out what being Blackfoot was, after he was done with the military. So that was what turned him in this direction and how

he got to meet with my dad and start working with repatriations and all that kind of stuff.

So we were kind of both pulled into repatriations, in the process of trying to figure out where we belonged in the world, and decided to live this life together, I guess. We just stayed together. We got married right away because my idea was either we're together or we're not. I'm not going to go through this getting together and breaking up.

MG: Yeah, it's overrated.

AHH: Yeah, and I was just going through that with the boyfriend that I had, and it was really sucking. So he was, like, "I feel the same way." So he was, like, "Why don't we just get married?" And I was, like, "OK!" [Laughs.] Three days later, we were married. [Laughs.] We had barely started going out when we just decided that dating was just not going to work for us and we were just going to get married. Either we stay together or we don't, kind of thing. So we just did that. I told him, too, if we get married, I'm never getting a divorce, because it's just not something that we do. So either we live this life as Blackfoot people and we stay married, or we just go our separate ways, kind of thing.

So he agreed, and so we got married. We've just worked together ever since. Basically, all of my working life has had something, like, he's always had a big part of it, because it is part of what he wanted to do as well. It was part of our identity and part of trying to figure out what it meant to be Blackfoot for both of us.

MG: That's nice.

What do you think about the government's involvement in Indigenous information? Should there be involvement? Should there not? Do you think management should be in the hands of the tribe?

AHH: The way that I understand it now is that they've just got this broad umbrella where all Native people are just kind of lumped under it, which doesn't make sense, because every tribe is different.

MG: I guess, from your perspective as a Blackfoot person, rather than for all Indigenous people?

AHH: From my perspective, I think, we do need to have people that work with us as an individual tribe, as an individual people, but at the same time they can't be applying something that they learned from the Crees and trying to apply it to us, 'cause that doesn't make sense. It just doesn't work. We're not Cree. The same, you know, we have Sioux that live in Canada; you can't apply what you learned from the Sioux to another tribe, or coastal people to the plains people.

MG: Right! Very different.

AHH: It's all very different.

I think, in order to work together—because I think that it's very important that we do work together with the government—we need to have our own representatives for our own peoples. Having just this one umbrella representative, you know, the AFN [Assembly of First Nations] chief guy? That guy's an East Coast Indian—he has nothing to do with us—his interests are going to be all for his tribe. So that doesn't make any sense to me, to have this one chief. He's the head of the umbrella. It doesn't make any sense to me, because each tribe should be able to speak for themselves and have their own . . .

MG: Representative?

AHH: Yeah, exactly. We do need to work with the government to help the government understand our point of view and for us to better understand their point of view. That kind of cooperation needs to happen, but I just think that that umbrella of the AFN is not working, and it's shown that it's not working, over and over again.

MG: And a lot of people are calling for it to be abandoned, from what I've seen on social media.

AHH: Yeah, it probably should be, because it doesn't work for everybody. You don't have one doctor that writes one prescription for a whole town and says, "This is what everybody in the town needs." Right?

MG: No, it doesn't make sense.

AHH: It's got to be a little more individualized by tribe, rather than by the AFN.

MG: On a micro level, any research I've done on libraries and classification, the recommendation is that the classification be done by the local people rather than this umbrella kind of thing that they do there, as well. So there's a guy, Brian Deer, who had created an alternate classification scheme, and they use it at UBC [University of British Columbia], at Xwi7xwa, but there, because I think it's mostly Coast Salish people, they classify based on that. That wouldn't work here; they would have to base it on Blackfoot classification for it to work.

AHH: That's the same thing I tell people: if we took our Blackfoot culture, it doesn't work in Florida. It's a completely different landscape, completely different animals. You have to work with what works with that land base.

Conclusion

The case of the Blackfoot Digital Library highlights many important aspects of Indigenous knowledge management from the perspective of a Blackfoot person managing Blackfoot artifacts. As has been stated several times in this discussion, culturally specific understanding of Protocols is necessary when managing Indigenous assets, whether it be cataloguing, archiving, or exhibiting; Adrienne warns against lumping all Indigenous peoples under one “umbrella,” explaining that Blackfoot culture would not work in Florida: “It’s a completely different landscape, completely different animals. You have to work with what works with that land base.” Therein lies the central warning about this discussion: as a non-Indigenous and non-Blackfoot researcher, Mary’s understanding and perspective is hampered by her Western Eurocentric mind. What can be said with certainty is that she has attempted to leave her own interpretation off Adrienne’s discussion of the BDL.

From her limited vista, Mary would like, however, to offer what she feels was most striking in Adrienne’s story. As librarians, we are charged with social responsibility; it is one of the core values proposed by the American Library Association and suggests that we must inform, educate, and ameliorate lives. For Adrienne, who views the Blackfoot Digital Library as her life’s work, the responsibility of her position within her community is her driving force, influencing and colouring everything she does. The story of the BDL is really the story of Adrienne Heavy Head, a woman who grew up in the midst of three worlds, with a Cree mother, a Blackfoot father, and an off-reserve education, and sought her way back to the heart of her Blackfoot community to assume her *Kiitomohpiipotokowa*¹⁷ and serve her people through the preservation of the artifacts of cultural memory. Along the way, she gained an understanding of herself, and a husband: “He’s always had a big part of [my working life] because it is part of what he wanted to do as well. It was part of our identity, and part of trying to figure out what it meant to be Blackfoot for both of us.” There is nothing more encompassing of social responsibility than to see our duties as a calling, as something that helps us understand ourselves and offers others the opportunity and the tools to do the same.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Adrienne Danielle Heavy Head is a member of Kainai, a Blackfoot tribe situated in between the Old Man River, Belly River, and Saint Mary’s River. Her father is Blackfoot and her mother is Cree from the Ermineskin tribe, which is part of the Maskwacis reserve. Adrienne and her partner started doing repatriations for the Blackfoot and other Native groups from 1995 to 2006. They also created the [BLACKFOOT DIGITAL LIBRARY](#), which she currently cares for at the University of Lethbridge Library.

Mary Greenshields is a Resident Librarian at Bibliothèque Saint-Jean at the University of Alberta. She holds an MLIS from the University of Alberta and an MA from the University of Lethbridge. Her

¹⁷. Mistaken Chief (in Bastien 2004, 227) explains this as responsibilities or role: “what you have been put here with.”

previous scholarly work as focused on identity, culture, gender, and feminism in literature and in academic libraries.

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