Serving Indigenous Communities: Social and Technical Perspectives

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How can I help indigenous communities as a systems librarian?

- What is my role? What kind of projects can I take on?

- Where can I find out about where there are service shortfalls for indigenous populations?

- Will my projects actually help my local indigenous communities?

I knew very little…

- I had next to no education on indigenous communities in school
- This trend is changing as schools embrace indigenous views of education
- Example: Terrace Ridge's outdoor classroom
- I'm glad that there is more awareness now, but how can librarians begin to educate themselves on this topic?

Questions I needed to ask myself to serve my indigenous communities:

1. What do I need to understand about indigenous people, which would help me to serve them better?

2. Am I ready to accept full responsibility to remove their barriers to library services?

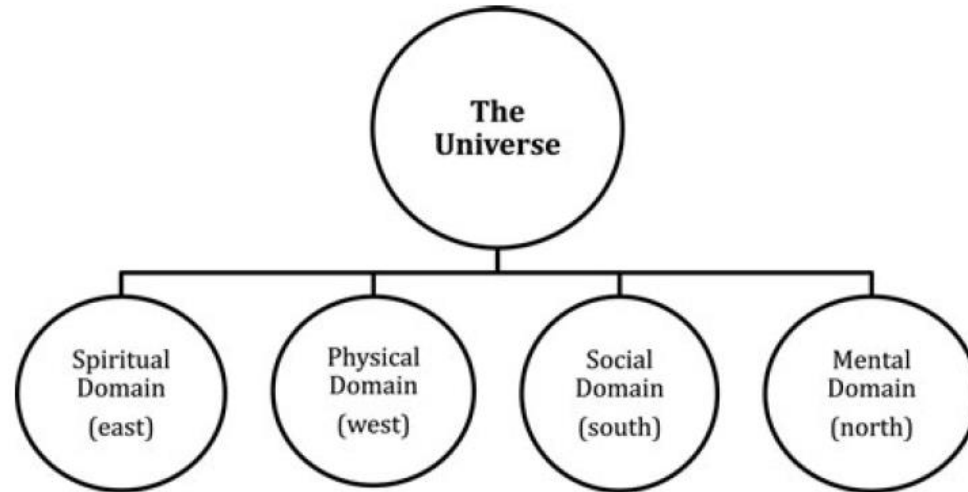# The Four Domains of the Universe

S. Littletree and C. A. Metoyer

FIGURE 1 The Four Domains of the Mashantucket Pequot Thesaurus of American Indian Terminology.

The Treaties of the Anishinaabe

- Humans, animals, and plants fell out of balance and there was a great flood
- The Anishinaabe want to share their concerns for to protect animals and the land
- When they Anishinaabe hunt, they use all parts of the animal they have hunted to show their gratitude

The Treaties of the Anishinaabe

▶ The Canadian and American versions of treaties state where the Anishinaabe can hunt, for example

▶ If they misinterpret the treaties and hunt in the wrong place, they are breaking the law

▶ However, when the governments do temporarily allow hunting in all areas, they do a poor job of monitoring it

The Issue of Language

▶ Language can be a barrier to sovereignty

▶ If language was an issue for interpreting treaties, could it be an information accessibility issue for libraries?

▶ The Library of Congress classification system and subject headings for indigenous collections are problematic at best

Indigenous Language Revitalization

- "We're Taking the Genius of Sequoyah into This Century" - Ellen Cushman

- What term do indigenous people prefer to be called?

- Unflattering subject heading terms such as 'alcohol-abuse' are too specific and don't describe a broader way of life for indigenous people

Researching Technology Solutions

- Northern Lights Library System has funded vans with Wi-Fi built into them for indigenous communities

- Central Australia has mobile phone hotspots in rural areas to serve their indigenous communities

- In developing countries, online payment services have taken off where there is a lack of banking infrastructure

Life Lessons: Admitting to Mistakes

- Explore the research for technological solutions in a variety of contexts, and ask for feedback

- It's likely your indigenous community will have feedback but it's not an excuse not to prepare

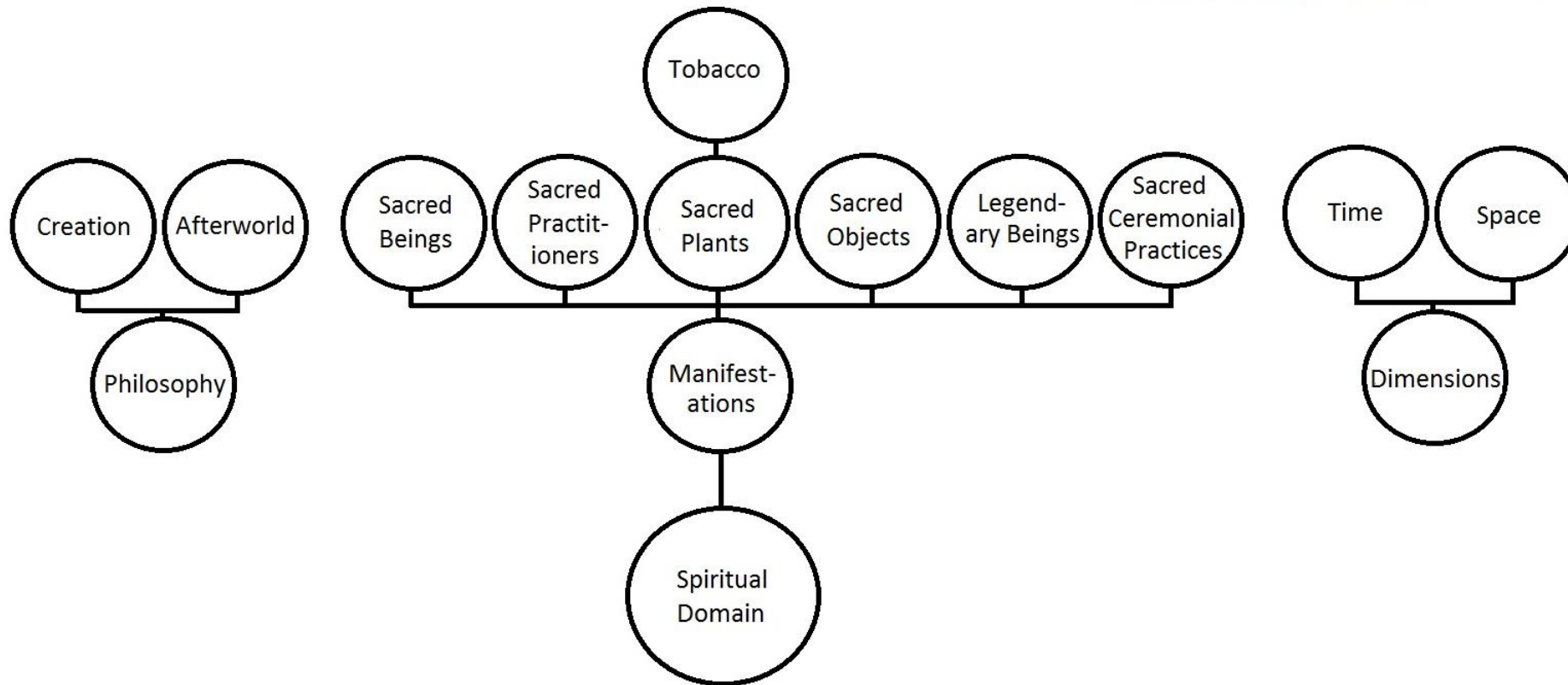- New information will likely arise out of the conversation, and that's okay

Resolving Conflicts: Tips and Tricks

- Take a course like the free MOOC Reconciliation through Indigenous Education at UBC

- If a conflict occurs, adopt one of the three strategies to address the issue: accommodation, compromise, and collaboration

- The relationship with the indigenous community takes priority over any suggestion or service idea offered by the library

The Subject Heading Project

- Do indigenous communities care about how physical collections are organized?

- Or are indigenous communities more concerned about electronic resources?

- Changing the newer materials that indigenous communities are interested in a more urgent priority than the older books

Knowledge Ontologies designed for Indigenous Communities

Knowledge Organization from an Indigenous Perspective   645

The Brian Deer Classification Scheme

Old Class Description	Old BDC	New BDC	New Class Description
A's – Reference. More alliterative. Court Cases & Statutes now in L-Law or M-Rights & Title			
Bibliographies	Ad	AB	Bibliographies
Statutes	Ap	L	Statutes
B's – History & Culture – BC. More detailed and geographical. Non-Indigenous in BW			
History - Indigenous People - BC	Ba	B	History & Culture - Indigenous People - BC
Natural History - British Columbia	Bb	NBCH, NGB	NBCH=Natural History, NGB=Geography - BC
C's – History & Culture – North America. Much more detailed and geographical. Non-Indigenous in CW			
History - Indigenous People - US	Cn	CU	History - Indigenous People - United States
History - Indigenous People - N. America	Cu	C	Indigenous History & Culture - North America
D's – History & Culture – International. Much more detailed. General Archaeology (DR), Anthropology/Sociology (DS)			
Inuit	Da	CI	Inuit & Arctic People (in Canada)
Indigenous People - Norway	Dp	DA	Indigenous People - Arctic - (not in Canada)
E's – Education. Minor changes. Non-Indigenous Education in EW			
Indigenous Studies	Ew	ESA	Indigenous Curriculum Materials
F's – Economies & Financial Systems. If not economic, natural resources moved to N's, Non-Indigenous Economies in FW			
Economic Development	F	F	Indigenous Economies
G's – Governance. Former G's (Community Development) moved to P's (Communities & Information)			
Community Development	G	PD	Community Development

Indigenous: the politically correct collective term

- The top two politically correct terms were first nations and indigenous peoples

- Neither of these terms are universally well-liked

- Address your local community by their name, whenever possible

- "Indigenous" is considered the most politically correct term, according to the Indigenous Corporate Training guide.

Alberta's Indigenous Subject Headings? Not yet released…

- Parkland has not changed all of the old "Indians of North America" subject headings

- Subject headings ideally need to have consistency across library systems

- Parkland has an interim system using "indigenous peoples" as a subject heading until the provincial standard comes out

Conclusion

- I learned a lot about indigenous communities and I hope more librarians learn about them too

- I'm not a reference librarian but I can change the outdated terminology in the catalogue

- I hope that more technical services for indigenous communities will come about through the conversation

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