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Seeking relations and kin: pursuing the information seeking practices and experiences of Indigenous students

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Abstract

Introduction. This study reports the findings of our study on the information needs of Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Toronto. Indigenous students are the fastest growing demographic in Canadian higher education, yet little attention in the literature has been paid to the unique needs, responsibilities, and cultural obligations of these students. We seek to share our findings, though Indigenous Knowledges and experiences are land and culturally contextual, as a contribution and call to attend to Indigenous students' information seeking needs and behaviours.

Method. Focus groups and visual methods were conducted with groups of undergraduate and graduate Indigenous students. Participants were invited to comment on photographed spaces in Robarts Library. This was necessary due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus groups were conducted and recorded on Zoom. Transcripts were created from the recordings, sent to participants for their approval, and then formed the basis of the analysis.

Analysis. Transcripts were coded using thematic coding and analysis. As this study had multiple research team members, coding was carried out on a secure OneDrive shared document.

Results. Participants shared the need for the library to attend to greater burdens on Indigenous students in the areas of cultural safety, inherent violence in library systems, anxiety on approaching systems and materials, and the added responsibility to find culturally appropriate and accurate sources. Notably, they shared that the library had failed them in these areas and shared resources and strategies despite this failure.

Conclusion. Indigenous students do not have a relationship of trust with the academic library. They often feel anxious or angry at the perceived lack of action and systems that would prevent violent encounters and safeguard their cultural responsibilities. Libraries should attend to better understanding and transforming systems to incorporate Indigenous students' information needs.

Introduction

The informational experiences of Indigenous people have long been absent from the literature of information research. In this paper, we seek to broaden our understanding of information seeking behaviours, and indeed barriers amongst Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students in an academic library context. Universities and, in turn, the academic libraries that serve them, are a complex network of nationhoods, Knowledges and experiences, as higher education brings together Indigenous people from disparate Nations and communities. Thus, to map the contours of Indigenous experiences would be deeply contextual. Our participants brought together their own experiences shaped through their lenses as Indigenous people from different backgrounds, cultural, and social contexts. Despite these differences, there were emergent themes that were shared experiences across many students. We found that the obligations, motivations, and commitments of our participants were also relatively consistent, including that of cultural safety, building and uplifting community, and contributing back to their own Knowledge systems. The central question of this study was “what is the relationship between Indigenous students and the University of Toronto Libraries?” In turn, some of the sub-questions include what are student perceptions of the library and how do Indigenous students experience the library?

In this paper, we will first discuss the methods and theoretical frameworks that informed our methodologies. We were intentional in our methods to ensure that Indigenous students had the opportunity to safely discuss their experiences, while being mindful of the traditionally extractive relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Academy (Tuck, 2009; Smith, 2021). Next, we present our literature review, which informs the theoretical basis of our study, and describes the context and contributions of this work in addressing the gaps in the literature about Indigenous student information seeking behaviours. We then detail the findings that were shared with us, as well as the implications of these findings in our discussion. While the information needs of the participants are rooted in the Lands and Waters that constitute our institution and city, there are implications for libraries and other information institutions serving Indigenous peoples.

Methods and methodologies

In this project, we employed a combination of qualitative methods to determine Indigenous students' information needs. In order to understand, more broadly, Indigenous students' relationship to the academic library, we used focus groups and visual methods to elicit perspectives on information behaviours. Our work was guided by Indigenous critical feminist ethics of care, which informed our accountabilities and relationships with students. This ethic made us aware of the power imbalance and dynamic between both research team and participants and reminded us to be mindful of the centuries-old, extractive model of research between the Academy and Indigenous peoples (Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2021). As an intervention to this extractive model and to refocus ourselves on the relational and reciprocal possibilities of research, we invoked Sto:lo scholar Jo-Ann Archibald's work (2008) in Indigenous Storywork, which influenced both our methods and methodologies. Storywork challenged us to weave its seven principles, namely respect, responsibility, reverence, reciprocity, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy, into all aspects of our work and to consider the stories shared by participants as a gift and to be honoured as such (Archibald, 2008).

The data from this study primarily came out of the focus groups, wherein we asked students to respond to images of the main campus library at the University of Toronto. We conducted three focus groups, with seven Indigenous participants. We had 2 undergraduate participants and 5 graduate participants. Recruitment was difficult because of the time in which our study was conducted, and there were less Indigenous students who were willing to engage with our library study as a result. Due to the timing of the focus groups and lockdowns during the COVID-19 pandemic, we opted for images of the library rather than a physical tour, which we conducted over Zoom. This was the visual methods component, as part of our focus groups. We asked participants

to view and then comment on various spaces in the library and how, within these spaces, they find information, their relationship to information services, and their information networks outside of libraries. We recorded these focus groups using Zoom's recording features and used Zoom's audio captioning tools to form the basis of our transcriptions. We then reviewed and corrected the transcriptions to ensure accuracy and sent them to our participants for their review. Upon their acceptance of the transcript, we began to code the data.

We used thematic coding, which allowed us to capture the broader themes and in turn, the meaning of our transcribed text in the meaning-making process (Saldaña, 2021; Braun & Clarke, 2022). By looking for themes via our coding, we were able to identify emergent and relevant issues that were brought up across various conversations in focus groups. By grouping, evaluating, and defining the significance of these themes, we were able to derive important findings from our focus groups (Braun & Clarke, 2022). The findings within this paper are a selection of the themes that were related to information seeking behaviours, of which the themes of cultural and physical safety were emergent from participants' stories. In total, there were 11 thematic codes that we used to make meaning from the transcription data, and 4 that had relevance to information seeking behaviours and needs. Holding Storywork as an ethic and methodology, we sought to understand the stories shared by our participants in ways that honoured their experiences and kept them as whole units rather than discrete excerpts (Archibald, 2008). We were and are mindful of the extractive relationship that research has with Indigenous communities and our methods reflect the care and intention that we set forth in order to subvert those power dynamics in our research paradigm.

Literature review

As a subject of study, information seeking behaviours have long been a pursuit of information science. Within the field, prominent and foundational theorists such as Thomas Wilson, James Krikelas, Carol Kuhlthau and Brenda Dervin developed models within Euro-Western Frameworks without taking into account the role of culture and context in information seeking behaviours (Lilley, 2012). According to Lilley (2012), scholars such as Reijo Savolainen, Elfreda Chatman, and Karen Pettigrew have resisted the proposed universality and outlined frameworks of contextual and culturally informed research in information seeking behaviours. However, their scholarship still does not look to Indigenous peoples. There is a general lack of research into Indigenous library needs and information-seeking behaviours in part due to Indigenous library professionals being a small and slowly growing group of experts and, in turn, lagging advocacy for the needs of Indigenous users (Lilley, 2012; Lee, 2008; Padilla et al., 2020; Bucy, 2022; Littletree et al., 2023).

Indigenous student library experiences differ from those of their peers, especially in the extreme violence perpetrated on those same students in academic and library settings. Currie et al. (2012) found that 41% of their Indigenous university student participants experienced racism at the University of Alberta in the form of racial slurs and the targeted interrogation of their academic legitimacy. Students reported feeling shocked, frustrated, helpless, and hopeless in the face of these racist interactions. The university classroom can be a site of ongoing colonization that requires many Indigenous students to challenge authority, resources, and even assignments (Loyer, 2018). The provision of cultural safety and its associated challenges are reasons why Indigenous students may demonstrate differing information-seeking behaviours. Gibson et al. (2023) studied a cohort of BIPOC teenagers and adolescents. They found that in addition to considering the accuracy and relevance of information sources, BIPOC teens engaged in a cost-benefit analysis and a risk assessment when seeking information (Gibson et al., 2023). Some of these concerns included damage to their social standing, economic well-being, access to educational resources, and personal safety (Gibson et al., 2023). Research and Knowledge are relational phenomena in Indigenous communities (Wilson, 2008). Information is passed down intergenerationally and Indigenous communities seek out opportunities to intervene based on a

deep knowledge of a community member's life circumstances and experiences (Waterman, 2012). When relationships are a key part of information seeking as they inherently are with Indigenous research, we can expect that within library spaces 'coercive and normative power negatively impact their information seeking, stymie the development of healthy relationships' (Gibson et al., 2023, p. 1525). Chatman's theory of information poverty begins with the supposition that the information poor perceive that they are without aid from trustworthy sources and is exacerbated by self-protective behaviours which limit and constrain attempts to seek information (Chatman, 1996). Information poverty will be actualized when perceived consequences of information seeking outweigh the benefits (Chatman, 1961, as cited in Gibson et al., 2023).

Culture also plays a key role in information seeking behaviours. The primacy of the written word in academia has resulted in a lack of access to legitimate sources or sources from Indigenous perspectives (Neurohr & Bailey, 2016; Aase, 2017; Farnel et al., 2018; Kostelecky et al., 2017; Littletree et al., 2023). Littletree et al. (2023) state that:

Indigenous knowledge systems engage with many formats generally ignored in academic IL spaces. While academic librarians frequently teach using scholarly articles, encyclopedia entries, monographs, and other textual sources, Indigenous librarians are often engaging with additional formats, in two broad categories: non-tangible expressions of culture, which can include oral histories, songs, dances, etc.; and material culture, which can include beadwork, drums, wampum belts, winter counts, etc. (p. 12)

While working with Maōri people, Spencer Lilley (2012) found that Maōri students primarily seek information from other people. While doing so, they employ a social and moral framework grounded in Maōri culture. This commitment to relationality can be seen as a through line in other Indigenous cultures as Littletree et al. (2023) state 'relationality does not exist solely through human relationships, but extends out to build a web of responsibility and relational accountability to land, water, plants, animals, languages, and ceremonies' (p.6).

Findings

Finding 'good' source

Several study participants referred to the need to find 'good' sources. To clarify, 'good' sources are ethically researched and or conducted by Indigenous scholars or in community with Indigenous people in a way that is both relational and responsible. Identifying a 'good' source can be challenging amidst a sea of colonial materials and non-Indigenous authors. Tangling with the wrong resource has great potential for harm. There is no shortage of scholars in academic institutions who have falsely claimed Indigenous identity. These individuals, who are colloquially referred to as 'pretendians', hold positions of power, misappropriate resources, and undermine authentic Indigenous scholarship. According to Amy Shawanda and Gabriel Maracle in their 2025 Yellowhead Institute Special Report, *Pretendians and Publications: The Problem and Solutions to*

Redface Research, undergraduate and master's students may not have the ability or tools to critically evaluate 'the authenticity of author credentials and claimed identities, the legitimacy of research participant selection, the credibility of participating organizations, methodological integrity, and the superficial inclusion of Indigenous scholars to legitimize potentially problematic research'(pp.10-11).

Authenticating author identity was top of mind for some participants, with one noting, 'I think it would be really cool if the author's identity could be stated, because sometimes you don't know, and it's important for Indigenous studies to identify the positionality of the author so you know that this is a Haudenosaunee author. This could be important to frame Indigenous perspectives'. To help with the verification of author identity, some participants relied on observing if other

known Indigenous scholars also used the same source. To do this, they found Google Scholar especially useful, because as the participant stated 'it's easy for us to see who other Indigenous people have engaged with that article who has cited, how has it coded, where else has it been seen? Who else is published?'. Another stated 'I usually use Google Scholar and I think that's helpful because you can see how many people are citing it and where it's cited as well'.

One barrier to finding good sources is the breadth of historical, colonial, and racist narratives present in the E76-99 (Indians of North America) section of every academic library using the Library of Congress Classification System. One participant stated that seeking specific resources when they are in physical proximity to racist materials compromises their perception of the legitimacy of the source, in their perspective that source is now less reliable. Further, the act of serendipitous discovery of information sources is inhibited by the unpleasant and sometimes violent experience of shelf browsing as an Indigenous scholar. One participant stated 'It's definitely been my experience trying to find books, and it's like kind of like finding the couple books that you want to find in a sea of landmines of older, questionable texts'. Another participant deemed the risk of information seeking too high: 'I'm not going to like spend time like on the shelf like trying to find, like the most modern sources, or like the more like ethical authors when it's like a range of I don't know more like negative ones also there'. They know the source is 'probably there' but it is hard to find the usable resources amongst the harmful ones. To bridge the difficulty of finding and evaluating good sources, many Indigenous students turned to relationships of trust.

Relationships of trust

'To research as an Indigenous scholar is to confront horrific stories, many of them are directly tied to my own experiences or the experiences of people I love' (Loyer, 2018, p. 147). Indigenous research is difficult, not just due to the lack of discoverability of resources and the difficulty of verifying sources, but also due to the emotional toll that it takes on Indigenous students and scholars. For many, there is a nearness to trauma that renders the information seeker vulnerable. Study participants overwhelmingly revealed that they would seek help when relationships of trust were established:

I have asked for specific help. It is because I know the person, like it isn't a random name I'm given that is like 'this person will help me.' I know who is our librarian and I know that I can ask. [...] part of it is that I trust that librarian, and because we have real relationships. I trust not just their capacity and their knowledge about the material, but also the judgement on what is it I'm looking for that guides the specific ethics of the material that I'm looking for.

Indigenous professors and peers were also frequently relied upon for recommendations. One participant stated they got recommendations from 'like a supervisor, or like other classmates, or like peers, and other Indigenous professors too is like really helpful because you can kind of like see like if something's gonna be fitting as opposed to something that's like "Oh, that's like a weird take and that's like kind of like harmful.'" Multiple participants also mentioned seeking resources from trusted communities such as the Indigenous Education Network and First Nations House. They stated that their comfort level was greater there than at the libraries: 'at First Nations House, where you can get like books and like different movies and stuff like that. And so I find, like I just kind of tend to lean towards, like those services, first as opposed to going to the library, and then even IEN has offered like different writing workshops ... So I just kind of feel more comfortable going there'.

Establishing relationships of trust takes intentional time, effort, and cultural humility. Even amongst Indigenous peoples, the diversity of cultures and the multifaceted nature of identities can add complexity to the role of a trusted advisor. Participants revealed the consequences of not establishing relationships of trust. Some participants stated that there was an opacity to how

librarians were assigned to their roles, which could lead to questioning of their expertise. Others stated, like above, that they only ask for help from people they know, also indicated that if they did not have access to requesting help from someone they knew they prefer the anonymity of a virtual request for assistance; 'When I know people and I feel familiar in a space, it makes it a lot easier for me to ask for help. So that's something where I will ask for help online, like in the chats, or send an email to a library staff member more readily than I will ask for help in person'. Still others indicated that they preferred to seek help elsewhere, 'I'm, I guess more likely to like seek support from like my supervisor, like IEN space'. Here, a participant also offers a way forward, suggesting more time is needed to build relationships, 'I would like the frequency [of workshops] to increase. I think I would benefit a lot more if I had to, you know, more interaction with libraries as opposed to the aisles of the library. I'd look forward to that'. We can look to the findings of David A. Hurley, Sarah R. Kostecky, and Lori Townsend and their 2019 study *Cultural Humility in Libraries* to begin to establish relationships of trust: 'We can recognize cultural and power issues that are introduced by the library context itself and commit to addressing structural issues which interfere in the interaction or with our service outcomes' (p. 20).

Environmental storytelling

Indigenous students noted the importance of the library environment on their research processes. As described by one participant, environmental storytelling is a reflection of your relationship with the space in which you are seeking information: 'think of environmental storytelling like what stories is this library telling you? Maybe I don't know if I necessarily want to be lost in the stacks. Maybe you do'. Environmental storytelling goes beyond the physical experience of the library stacks, the interior design, and its architecture as it includes a reflection upon the history of library spaces and notions of belonging.

Our participants reflected heavily on the history of Indigenous belonging, and unbelonging, in the library environment as their navigation of the library was mediated through concerns of cultural safety. Shelf browsing is one example of an unsafe activity as 'good' sources are outnumbered by harmful books in the library stacks. Consequently, one participant indicated that they 'don't engage with the library system as much other than to probably look for a specific book'. Another participant echoed this sentiment as their instinctive response to seeing old books in Indigenous Studies collection was to brush it off as 'old racist books'. In this environment, one participant noted that they were 'not going to spend time on the shelf searching' searching for ethical authors when that process would cause them harm. As the information seeking behaviours of Indigenous students are mediated through a long history of exclusion, some Indigenous students simply do not engage and they will seek information from alternative sources.

Ethics play a significant role in the information seeking behaviour of Indigenous students. This limits the value of the library stacks as academic library collections are often old, which further fuels concerns about safety, accuracy, and the utility of information that is located on the library shelf. Participants consistently noted that the library is an inefficient location for information seeking. In response, they seek information from alternative processes such as word of mouth or Google Scholar. The library still serves a key function as it provides access to many (though not all) of the resources needed by Indigenous students. The value of the library is best seen through its provision of services, rather than simply a location for information seeking.

The decentralized library and limits of disciplinarity

Indigenous Studies is an inherently interdisciplinary field. Indigenous Knowledges are not bound by the boundaries of academic subject domains (Smith, 2021). Thus, the particular epistemological domain mapping was a challenge that was somewhat alien to the Indigenous students to whom we spoke. Participants found that going to subject specific databases were insufficient for finding the materials that they sought. Instead, interdisciplinary databases, with larger corpuses were the preferred method for finding materials. One participant shared that 'All of my stuff is so like spread

out that if I go to a specific database. I'll get like one hit and it's useless'. It is notable that they used the term spread out, reminding librarianship that Indigenous scholars are often still in the periphery of our academic work and must be gathered together strategically. Information seeking is significantly more challenging for Indigenous students and researchers seeking to do good, relational work.

In their information seeking behaviours, Indigenous students seek safety (Loyer, 2018). Our participants shared that the majority of the methods used to ensure their safety are through online methods. However, Indigenous students also find it easier to navigate their readings and research needs online. Participants cited the decentralized nature of the library catalogue, through multidisciplinary and disciplinary databases, as being difficult and that they did not have the adequate knowledge to filter through them or know when to use which tool. Instead, our participants expressed a familiarity, sometimes bred out of necessity, with multidisciplinary tools as they have familiar functionality and the breadth that is required for effective research and information needs. Here, we see a need for relational interventions that would precipitate their needs and anxieties through proactive information literacy and relationship building. Library staff should be a place for students to access assistance, but only a few of our participants considered asking the library for help.

Anxiety in navigating resources

A common theme amongst participants was library anxiety in almost all aspects of their relationship with the library. Indigenous students' relationship with the library has long been associated with fear and discomfort, though this is not different from the general landscape of students in higher education experiencing library anxiety (Lee, 2008; McPherson, 2015). Participants told us that they develop strategies or workarounds to deal with the library, such as using Google as an intermediary between library resources. Another aspect that was stressful for Indigenous students was the punitive nature of return dates and fines, with one participant stressing that this was a main reason that they did not do any library searching or use any physical materials. While some participants acknowledged the importance of serendipity and the benefits of subject ranges, they also noted that there were cultural safety considerations as well, sharing:

If I'm in a section of the library for like a really specific book, it'll be like surrounded by similar topics, but it's like less reliable like it'll be surrounded by like a range of like some really racist, like takes on the topic, and like maybe some good ones. But I'm not going to like spend time like on the shelf like trying to find, the most modern sources, or the more ethical authors when it's a range [and] I don't know more negative ones also there.

Many Indigenous students approach their work with a higher sense of ethical engagement, especially around Indigenous issues. The library is not seen as a reliable partner in the scholarly community for Indigenous students, who feel the responsibility of doing this work themselves. Participants were particularly insistent that they had more success with searching for a particular title online, in which they could do background research about the ethics, affiliations and heritage of the author, and take that specific book. At this juncture, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge that Indigenous students must also navigate an increasingly long list of authors who have fraudulently claimed Indigenous heritage, to the detriment of Indigenous scholarship everywhere.

Gaps in available resources

Locating Indigenous resources is a more complicated task than many other topics of library research. This difficulty can be caused by the marginalization of Indigenous information that is inherent in the Library of Congress classification system, outdated or incorrect subject headings, or a real lack of current and diverse resources. Several participants spoke to the need for increased

library instruction, and one noted the significant benefit of having supportive library staff on hand once she had begun her master's degree. The participants described facing a preponderance of historical texts and deficit narratives:

I think that it also sucks when you go into someplace, and, like all they have, is about Residential Schools, or, like all they have, is about like Trauma, that Indigenous people have faced and not necessarily like the resiliency side or like how they're alive and well, and like what's currently happening type of thing.

Participants also identified a lack of non-textual resources:

I feel like it is not a place for me, and I think that there is like a disconnect between, like the way Indigenous people learn, and then like things that are coming out of books. Like if there was a person that I could talk to, I think that I would rather talk to that person. Like us having a lot of like oral traditions and stuff like that's not necessarily something that I feel like is captured in aisles and aisles of books.

There are steps forward that libraries can take to increase access to resources and support Indigenous students. Taking a tenacious stance on acquiring new Indigenous content by Indigenous authors will help to bring balance to a collection that is dominated by colonial perspectives. Increased outreach to Indigenous students across disciplines may also help to provide supplementary instruction to those who feel that they could benefit from further contact with librarians. The lack of access to resources of tangible and intangible material culture is not always easily addressed. Acquiring and stewarding such items may be better accomplished by specific museums or archives; however, there may be room here for libraries to partner with communities and facilitate access to these knowledges.

Discussion

This research began as a means to understand how Indigenous students experience and understand the library. The knowledge shared throughout the focus groups revealed how information seeking behaviours of the Indigenous students we spoke to is largely mediated through their response to violence that has been and is being enacted upon them through Western knowledge structures. Additional physical, intellectual, and emotional labour is required from Indigenous students to find and evaluate trustworthy and usable sources. Previous studies (such as Lilley, 2012; Lee, 2017; Padilla et al., 2020; Bucy, 2022; and Littletree et al., 2023) have reflected on the dearth of information about Indigenous student library experiences. Despite the lack of studies in this area, our findings do correspond of other studies in this area. Currie et al. (2012) and Loyer (2018) both wrote of the violence experienced by Indigenous students in academic settings and these findings were reiterated by our participants who spoke of their caution when searching for information as well as the negative consequences of encountering racist information. The emotional labour experienced by Indigenous students as they confront colonial untruths, challenge authority, and navigate harmful resources remains a major issue that Indigenous students are largely left to address on their own. More work is required to consider how libraries can ease the process of evaluating potentially harmful resources. Considering how we catalogue information that is falsely portrayed as Indigenous authorship may be a necessary step.

Additionally, Indigenous students recognized that Indigenous Knowledge remains peripheral when working within the limitations of settler colonial knowledge organization systems. The barriers for Indigenous students seeking information ranges from the harmful colonial texts that are often preserved on library shelves, to the lack of modalities of knowledge that are not recognized by libraries, to the uncertainty over what constitutes a reliable source. Overcoming these barriers led our participants to create pathways to information that emphasize relationality and human interaction, where information is partially evaluated based on which Indigenous scholars are

interacting with that source. Gibson et al. (2023) wrote of the cost-benefit analysis that many BIPOC students engage in when seeking information. While our participants did not describe identical behaviours and concerns particularly around a hesitancy to seek help, our participants did speak on relying on the expertise of librarians, scholars, peers, and professors. Recentring information seeking to human networks allows Indigenous students to create information networks using Google Scholar, interdisciplinary databases, and other Indigenous scholars.

That Indigenous students are able to adapt their information seeking behaviour in response to gaps in scholarly databases and library structures is not an indication that recent moves within librarianship towards 'reconciliation' are bearing fruit. Rather, the complexity of the information seeking needs of Indigenous students indicates the difficulty of forcing Indigenous Knowledge into a knowledge system that does not consistently recognize orality, materiality, and songs and dance as knowledge. These findings are in agreement with those of Lilley (2012) and Littletree et al. (2023) that the traditional focus of libraries on the written word does not facilitate access to the full array of information sources required by Indigenous students and scholars.

We would also like to emphasize that the experiences of our participants represent just that—they are not representative of their communities, Nations, or Indigenous students as a whole. How Indigenous students negotiate their Knowledge and ethics in a settler colonial space that preserves harmful knowledge is highly localized. We hope that our analysis and dissemination of the experiences shared with us by our participants will be useful for others. To that end, rather than treat our analysis as an essentializing discourse that emphasizes the dis-belonging of Indigenous Knowledge in Western institutions, we encourage readers to instead use our analysis as a starting point to observe the information needs of Indigenous students in their own institutional contexts.

Conclusion

This study offers unique insights into the information seeking behaviours of Indigenous students. Indigenous students' information seeking behaviours, especially in relation to their relationship to Western academic practices, is an understudied aspect of the field and has implications for the continued development of non-Eurowestern information systems as they interact with information and cultural heritage institutions. Due to the ongoing impacts of settler colonialism, some Indigenous students felt anxiety or trepidation when faced with the use of the library. This anxiety was related to both feeling a lack of belonging and an understanding that searching the stacks for physical resources would likely result in encountering harmful materials. Indigenous students also understood that the complexity of their information seeking needs was greater than that of other non-Indigenous students and researchers, both due to the interdisciplinary aspect and the difficulty with identifying good, trusted resources. For Indigenous students, there is an added responsibility to represent their communities and research needs in ways that are responsible to their accountabilities and obligations to their own communities. Due to these factors, students have developed a variety of techniques and strategies to complete their research. As a consequence, students have developed alternative practices and techniques to ensure safety. Some of these techniques include using alternative sources, such as preferring online research, using Google Scholar, and consulting trusted individuals, such as peers and professors. Throughout the study, the students also identified pathways forward to improve the library environment and services to help meet their needs. Some of these pathways included continuing to build relationships, increasing services through increasing offerings for workshops, as well as building relationships that can facilitate access to diverse resources. With the insights shared with us through their stories, library staff can work to make the experiences of Indigenous students safer, more comfortable, and more generative.

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