

New Indigenous resource space at KPU Surrey library hosts contemporary apparel display

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A new Indigenous collection and resource space at Kwantlen Polytechnic University's Surrey campus library is hosting its first public exhibition, a display of contemporary Indigenous apparel.

Called $\chi^w\text{ə}\chi^w\text{é}\gamma\text{əm}$ – oral storytelling in the $\text{hə}\text{h}\text{é}\text{q}\text{ə}\text{m}\text{i}\text{n}\text{ə}\text{h}$ language – the resource space is framed by circular shelving and brings together Indigenous books, art, fabric and displays.

To coincide with National Indigenous History Month, the first specialist exhibition, Present Traditions, has gone on display in $\chi^w\text{ə}\chi^w\text{é}\gamma\text{əm}$ until June 30. This Indigenous apparel collection features clothing and accessories primarily from B.C., including ribbon skirts, earrings, shirts and footwear.

"Present Traditions honours the relationships First Nations, Inuit, and Métis artists and entrepreneurs have with their traditional cultures, and exemplifies how these traditional techniques, gifted from their ancestors, are being adapted and modified in the present day," says Rachel Chong, Indigenous engagement and subject liaison librarian, and a member of Métis Nation.

"This display hopes to counter narratives that seek to keep Indigenous peoples' preserved in the past. The items on display emphasize Indigenous peoples historic and contemporary relationships with culture, land, and identity."

The collection and resource space was developed by Chong as a place for making Indigenous history and culture more accessible. The name $\chi^w\text{ə}\chi^w\text{é}\gamma\text{əm}$ was gifted by Sesmélot (Fern Gabriel), a respected language teacher of Kwantlen First Nation.

The library plans to use the space for oral events and to make oral storytelling recordings available through QR codes on the shelves. A selection of [recordings in \$\text{hə}\text{h}\text{é}\text{q}\text{ə}\text{m}\text{i}\text{n}\text{ə}\text{h}\$ is already available on the KPU website](#), including the pronunciation of $\chi^w\text{ə}\chi^w\text{é}\gamma\text{əm}$.

Circular shelves emphasize the importance of circle learning and sharing. On those shelves are books by Indigenous authors classified in a localized version of the Brian Deer classification system. Deer was a Kahnawake Mohawk librarian who developed an Indigenous library classification system in the 1970s that focuses on Indigenous ways of knowing and relating to the world, one which centres on relationship and land. The KPU library is using a version updated by Métis librarian Ashley Edwards from Simon Fraser University's Indigenous Curriculum Resource Centre.

Jennifer Lamont, of Métis Nation, designed the upholstery used on the seating in the space in her final year as a student in the Wilson School of Design.

"I wanted to combine my love of the Métis flower design and the elegance of a young powwow dancer," says Lamont. "I also wanted to have this design feel authentic and hand drawn."

The space also features four display boxes that regularly house $\chi\text{p}\text{é}\text{ə}\text{t}\text{p}$ (cedar) weavings. Pole wraps in the library and the sign for $\chi^w\text{ə}\chi^w\text{é}\gamma\text{əm}$ feature an eagle design by Roxanne Charles of Semiahmoo First Nation.

Katzie First Nation's Len Pierre, who is special advisor, Indigenous leadership, innovation and partnerships at KPU, says $\chi^w\text{ə}\chi^w\text{é}\gamma\text{əm}$ directly meets KPU's goal for increasing cross-cultural sharing. The intent being to engender greater knowledge, understanding and respect of different ways of being, knowing and doing.

"It will have a real effect across the institution," he says. " $\chi^w\text{ə}\chi^w\text{é}\gamma\text{əm}$ is paving the way for further work to happen, which is so inspirational, particularly during National Indigenous History Month. $\chi^w\text{ə}\chi^w\text{é}\gamma\text{əm}$ has the chance to introduce these stories into the KPU community and beyond."

KPU offers community borrower cards, with applications open to community member aged 14 plus who have an email address and government issued ID that includes mailing address and birth date. Community borrower cards allow access to select materials at KPU campus libraries, including books in the $\chi^w\text{ə}\chi^w\text{é}\gamma\text{əm}$ collection.

Present Traditions in $\chi^w\text{ə}\chi^w\text{é}\gamma\text{əm}$, KPU Surrey library, 12666 72 Ave, is free to view during [library opening hours](#) until the end of June 2022.

