



**Aboriginal Heritage Archives:
Resource and Research
Opportunities**

By Benjamin N. Thomas

Archives are nothing new to any researcher or academic librarian; they form the basis of qualitative research in many fields and are indispensable resources. In the sphere of public libraries however, archives are a far less commonly utilized resource and are certainly less known to young adults who have yet to attend any college courses. Library and Archives Canada (LAC) is Canada's preeminent archive, and held within its collections is a very unique resource that can be applied to help bring awareness of the history surrounding the First Nations and Aboriginal Peoples of Canada— The Aboriginal Heritage Archive.

Held within the collections of LAC's Aboriginal Heritage Archive is a true wealth of cultural and historical resources which are available to any who wish to access them. LAC compiled the archive to demonstrate the tremendous contributions of the First Nations and Aboriginal people's to the country's history, economic, social, and cultural growth and development throughout the nation's years of existence. LAC makes available a plethora of formats, in online databases, virtual exhibits, digitized photographs, and digital documents.

It's very true and a well-known principle that we as humans are able to connect more easily to and sympathize with history or other cultures through the viewing of photographs and exploring primary documents that detail those cultures and time periods. For a young adult librarian, particularly those working in a school library, this archive presents an excellent chance for exposing young adults to images and resources they might not experience otherwise, and begin to help them get ready to experience the use of archives for their college career should they decide to go the path of research.

More importantly though, the Aboriginal Heritage Archive puts forth a wealth of cultural memories that can help to bring life to the imagination of young viewers and readers who see them. What better way to help celebrate such cultural heritage is there than highlighting history as it happened? The way a YA school librarian might do this could be to design small research activities centered around the archives and the resources they offer, for LAC, while they designed the archives to be used by higher level scholarly researchers, they have also made them imminently accessible to all users who access them, regardless of age level, provide they have basic reading and comprehension skills.

Other ways to highlight these resources for young adults could be to choose select images and personal stories out of the archives and create displays based off of them to be viewed in the library or in classrooms to encourage the exploration of such resources and help students to empathize with the past through visuals. LAC includes a number of directed resource archives within their primary collection, such as “Heroes of Yore and Lore”, an archival website designed to

help highlight Canadian Heroes both in fact and fiction, which includes such names as Kivioq, Sasquatch, Alexis-le-trotteur, Sam Slick, and Grey Owl, among many others. Library and Archives Canada has designed for the public with the Aboriginal Heritage Archive an indispensable resource for connecting with the history and heritage of the First Nations and Aboriginal peoples of Canada.