Integrating equity and reconciliation work into archival descriptive practice
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Danielle Robichaud
Digital Archivist
Special Collections & Archives
University of Waterloo Library
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I live and work on the Haldimand Tract, the land promised to the Six Nations in 1784 for allying with the British during the American Revolution. It includes six miles on each side of the Grand River. These lands continue to be deeply connected to Indigenous peoples who have historically lived, and continue to live, here. They include the Neutral, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples.

Map: Living on Stolen Land by Adam Lewis

The Haldimand Tract

Six Nations Reserve

#1492LandBackLane

Outline

- Department overview
- Equity and reconciliation within the Waterloo landscape
- Purpose of archival description according to the Rules for Archival Description (RAD)
- Reason for language in archival description changes
- Stated commitments in action
- Challenges and work ahead
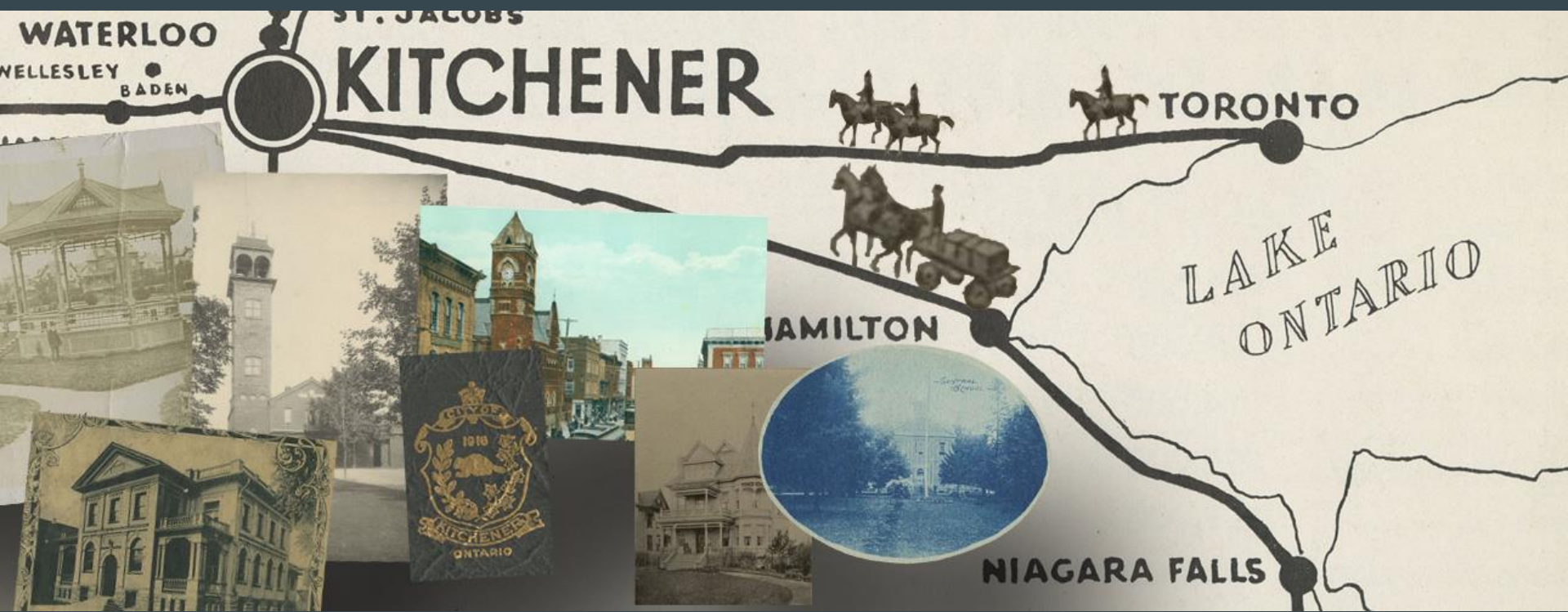
Local History banner by Waterloo co-op student Katie Turriff

Equity and reconciliation within Waterloo landscape

- Complete staff turnover as of mid-2010s.
- Launch of <u>Waterloo Digital Library</u> (Islandora) and migration to the <u>Archives Database</u> (AtoM)
- <u>UW vice-president of equity steps down</u>
- White regional settlement of land along Grand River within boundaries of the <u>Haldimand Tract</u>.

Purposes of archival description

1. To provide access to archival material through retrievable descriptions;
2. To promote understanding of archival material by documenting its content, context and structure; and
3. To establish grounds for presuming the authenticity of archival material by documenting its chain of custody, arrangement, and circumstances of creation and use.

Rules for archival description (xxii)

Reason for statement expansion

"While the language of the record creators has been maintained, Special Collections & Archives staff understand the impact language and images have both on researchers accessing our collections and on the perpetuation of systemic and cultural bias. As a result, staff are actively working to:

- replace inappropriate language introduced during legacy descriptive practices
- identify and name instances of racism, sexism, ableism and other forms of discrimination
- use current language that respects the people and events reflected in our collections during the (re)description of records"

Language in archival descriptions (SCA 2020)

Stated commitments in action

Waterloo High School Knitting Bee (65-1330)

Title and statement of responsibility area

Title proper	Waterloo Highschool Knitting Bee
General material designation	• Graphic material
Level of description	File
Repository	University of Waterloo. Special Collections & Archives
Reference code	SCA98-GA68-1965-65-1330

Notes area

Availability of other formats	Envelope scanned as TIF files 2019.
General note	Boys' Slave Day poster with racist depiction of a Black person visible on wall behind knitting bee participants.

"The views expressed in PIB publications reflect the era in which they were produced. They include family planning thinking rooted in eugenics, the belief that the genetic makeup of the human population can be improved by limiting the ability of people deemed inferior from reproducing. Demeaning language about lower class and disabled people appear throughout."

Parents' Information Bureau fonds

The Parents' Information Bureau (PIB) fonds consists of records from the clinic for family planning and birth control set up by A.R. (Alvin Ratz) Kaufman of the Kaufman Rubber Company in the 1930s. The main branch of the PIB was located at 410 King Street West in Kitchener, Ontario. Between the mid-1930s and the mid-1970s the PIB published a series of numbered reports, forms, and informational pamphlets regarding birth control and sterilization. The publication numbers were reused by the PIB for revised editions and for documents containing information about related topics that were likely circulated as part of an information packet.

Content note: The views expressed in PIB publications reflect the era in which they were produced. They include family planning thinking rooted in eugenics, the belief that the genetic makeup of the human population can be improved by limiting the ability of people deemed inferior from reproducing. Demeaning language about lower class and disabled people appear throughout. Information about the handling of this type of language in archival descriptions can be found on the Special Collections & Archives website.

Grid view   List view

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   next ›   last »
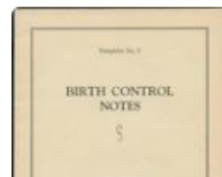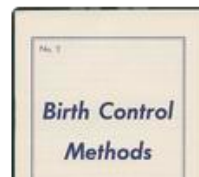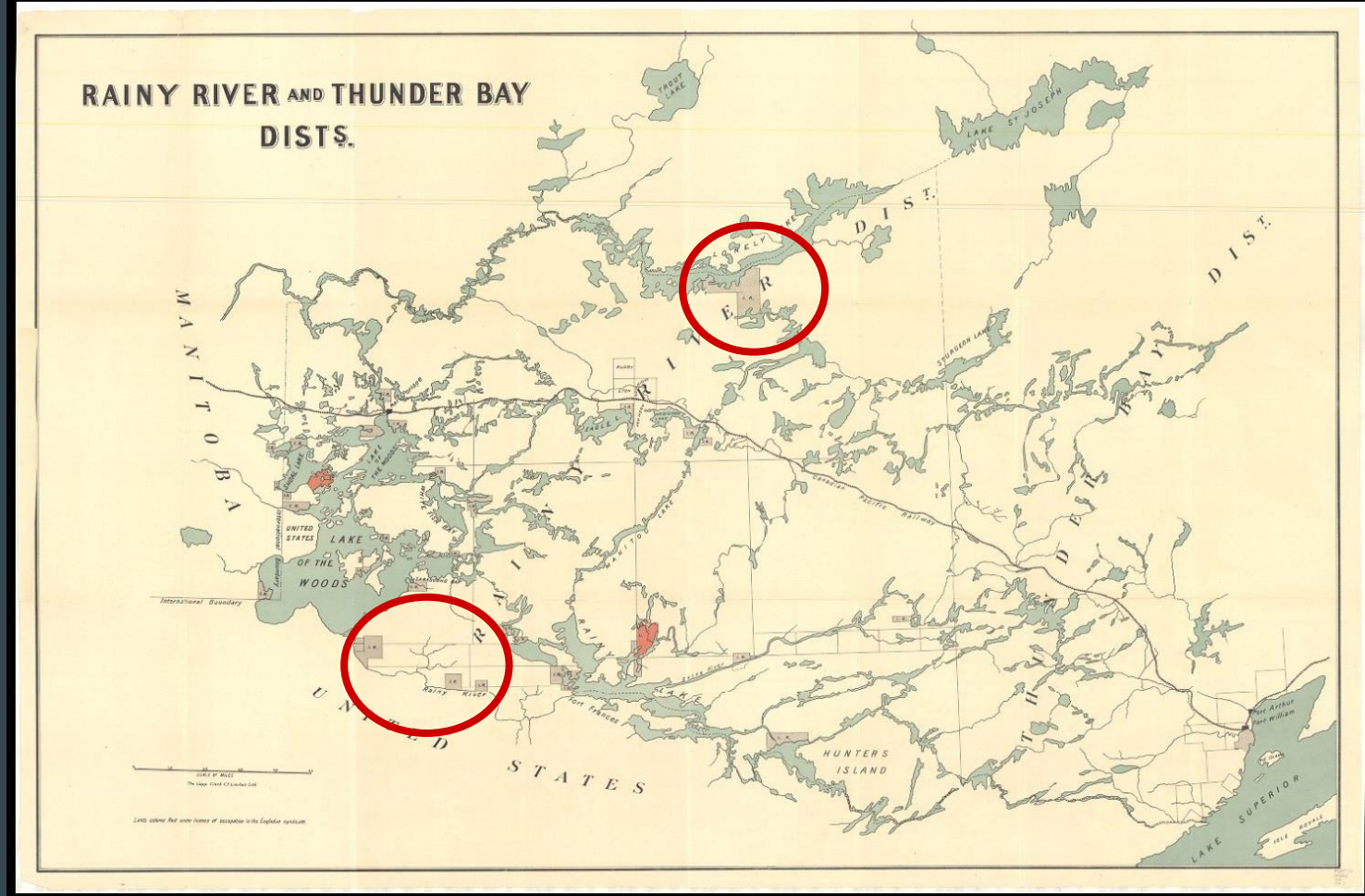
Indigenous peoples - land tenure (G24493)

Other examples

- Prioritize use of family-inclusive language
- Eliminate "never married" and "had no children" from bios
- Avoid uneccessary assumptions about gender or sex
- Identify instances of Blackface, Brownface, Redface and Yellowface

Family-Inclusive LANGUAGE

avoid	why?	instead
"parents" "mom" "dad" "mom and dad"	Not everyone accompanying a child is a parent. Grandparents, step-parents, and nannies may not identify as parents. Not all children have a mom and dad.	"grownup" "adult" "caregiver"
"son" "daughter"	The children in someone's care could be grandchildren, nieces, nephews, godchildren, etc. You may also not want to assume the gender of a child.	"children"
"extended family"	This term is usually meant to include grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins but for folks of many cultures this isn't "extended" family- it's just family.	"family"
"family resemblance"	We're conditioned to look for similar features in family members so you may see resemblance where there is none. Many families include step-parents, adoptive parents, or parents who conceived with donated eggs or sperm. Inversely, don't assume that a child who doesn't look like their caregiver is adopted- many multi-racial children resemble one parent more than the other.	keep it to yourself
"members of a household"	Families don't always live together. For example, families with divorced parents or incarcerated parents.	"family members"

2014 Margaret Middleton @magnidd

Challenges and work ahead

- Not knowing what we don't know

- Lack of suitable RAD fields

- Talking (more) openly about the inherent whiteness of our holdings

Woolen Mill employees (GA227-3-17)

Further reading

- [Anti-Racist Description Resources](#) (Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia 2019)
- [Archiving Hate: Racist Materials in Archives](#) (Nelson 2020)
- [Identifying & Dismantling White Supremacy in Archives](#) (Caswell & UCLA Archives, Records, and Memory students 2016)
- "[Language Matters: Writing Inclusive Finding Aids](#)" (Suárez 2020)
- [SCRC Statement on Potentially Harmful Language in Archival Description and Cataloging](#) (Temple University Libraries 2018)