



The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan

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Introducing Maawn Doobiigeng – the new classification system of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Libraries

The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe of Michigan is pleased to announce the introduction of Maawn Doobiigeng, the new classification system of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Libraries. The three primary systems of classification that were in place – the Dewey Decimal System (DDC), the Library of Congress Classification System (LCC), and the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) – are inherently damaging to Indigenous people and are insufficient for accurately describing and providing access to Native topics. In 2019, The Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Libraries were awarded the IMLS National Leadership Grant to facilitate the creation of a new classification system by members of the community. As of April 2024, this new system, titled Maawn Doobiigeng (Gather Together), has been created and is being implemented into the libraries.

Arionna Crispin, project facilitator mentions, “When I heard about a project that was aiming to decolonize and Indigenize the Tribal Libraries, I knew I had to be a part of it. I learned so much about how harmful the previously utilized classification systems are, and I worked with truly amazing people in the creation of this new system. I’m grateful to have been a part of something so incredible and revolutionary, and I hope this work inspires others to make similar changes.”

The Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Libraries were awarded the National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) in 2019 with the purpose of addressing the question: “How can tribal libraries use traditional ways of knowing and being to break free of the colonialist epistemology of existing library organizational systems that reinforce a damaging worldview?”

There were four phases of the grant project. The first phase was to **Assess** the cataloging and classification systems currently in place through a decolonizing lens. Next, the team had to **Create** a system of organization for cataloging and classifying library materials according to Anishinaabe ways of knowing and being. This was followed by having the ability to **Implement** this system to decolonize and indigenize the Tribal Libraries collections. Finally, gathering data to **Analyze** results and share documentation that outlines how this project was conducted, provided a framework that other libraries could use as a template for decolonizing the knowledge organization of their collections.

Anne Heidemann, tribal librarian shares, “Over the years of doing the work of cataloging and classifying the books and other materials in the Tribal Libraries, it became clear to me that the existing systems weren’t

working well for the community I serve, which led me to write the application for the IMLS National Leadership Grant.

Heidemann continues explaining, “The opportunity to turn this work over to the community, to see dedicated community members gather to use their knowledge and experience to create an entirely new-to-libraries classification system, was so exciting and truly an honor. The Tribal Libraries team has now begun the work of reclassifying all the items in the collection, and we look forward to seeing the community enjoy using Maawn Doobiigeng in their libraries.”

A work group of community members was established to create a new system of organization for cataloging and classifying library materials according to Anishinaabe ways of knowing and being. The work group created this new system, Maawn Doobiigeng, based on the seven original clans and their respective responsibilities, as described in the “Mishomis Book” by Edward Benton-Banai, and based on the cultural knowledge of the group members. The clan responsibilities were adapted into subcategories that the committee felt best represent both the clan and the types of knowledge traditionally shared in books and libraries. Careful thought was put into each clan and subcategory, with the understanding that it may need additions or adjustments after implementation. It was important to the committee that the new classification system also double as a teaching tool, with users of the libraries gaining knowledge of the clans and the Anishinaabemowin language.

Please contact Anne Heidemann, Tribal Librarian, at (989) 775-4519 or at ahaidemann@sagchip.org for more information on the announcement.

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The Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Libraries include the public Saginaw Chippewa Tribal Library (SCTL), the preK-5th grade Saginaw Chippewa Academy elementary school library (SCA), and the public two-year community college Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College library (SCTC). For classification, the former two used DDC, the latter used LCC, and all used LCSH, all of which employ colonialist logic to classify and describe items relating to Indigenous people.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's approximately 120,000 libraries and 35,000 museums and related organizations. The agency's mission is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. Its grant making, policy development, and research help libraries and museums deliver valuable services that make it possible for communities and individuals to thrive. To learn more, visit www.ims.gov and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.