

Fact Sheet:

Digital Dissemination: "Story Nations"

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Innovation Funding Project, 2014-2015

Project Description and Goals:

The goal of this project was to develop the tools and content to disseminate the results of the Principal Investigator's SSHRC-funded research project in a digital format in order to reach a broader audience than conventional scholarly modes of publication. Story Nations is a companion website to her book, *The Story of Radio Mind: A Missionary's Journey on Indian Land* forthcoming from the University of Chicago Press. The support of the *Religion and Diversity Project* for research assistance with digital dissemination has enabled her to develop innovative, creative methods for bringing this historical reflection on one of the earliest forms of "religious diversity" in Canada to wider audiences. With the support of a *Religion and Diversity Innovation Grant* and the University of Toronto, the team, including graduate and undergraduate students, has developed an interactive online space based on the diary of Anglican missionary-journalist Frederick Du Vernet, who visited the Rainy River for eleven days in the summer of 1898.

The team's intention for the digital project was to work in consultation with the Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre and the Rainy River First Nations to build an accessible website that could also be of use in the Historical Centre. The website offers an in-depth look into the history of Christianity and colonialism in early Canada through the lens of a diary that details the diversity of interactions one man had with the people and places of *Manidoo Ziibi*, the original Ojibwe name for the Rainy River. Story Nations, as an online space, aims to encourage engagement with how the story of the past is told, considering both who tells the story and how media is used to tell it.

Methodology:

- a) Digital preservation and coding of archival records through the U of Toronto Collections platform and an open access website, going live in spring/summer 2017.
- b) Community consultation with members of the Rainy River First Nations.

Student Involvement:

- Meaghan Weatherdon, University of Toronto
- Judith Brunton, University of Toronto
- Kaleigh McLelland, University of Toronto
- Annie Heckman, University of Toronto
- Suzanne van Geuns, University of Toronto
- Orvis Starkweather, University of Toronto
- Christina Nearing, University of Toronto
- Misia Robins, York University
- Audrey Rochette, University of Toronto
- Russell Turner, University of Toronto
- Erin Ray, University of Toronto
- Tamim Mansour, University of Toronto

Results:

Digital storytelling and digital mapping are increasingly important as both methods and dissemination tools for historical and religious studies research. Telling stories about indigenous-missionary relations in this format has prompted us to use sources differently, and to think more intentionally about the effectiveness of my scholarly analyses and framing when trying to communicate with audiences in the classroom and outside of the academy. Digital dissemination is also very time-consuming, both in terms of the labour involved and of the education and training that it requires. But the time and effort are worth it, as this process challenges scholarly conventions for how we organize and think with our sources, and enables us to turn our research into more accessible, yet still intellectually complex, arguments.

Being at the Rainy River First Nations on National Aboriginal Day in 2015, and just a few weeks after the release of the remarkable final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future*, was a powerful experience for everyone on the team. While religious diversity is often understood as a contemporary issue, Story Nations illustrates how the negotiation of religious difference was at the heart of the creation of the Canadian nation; a creation which first depended on a vision that sought to eliminate Indigenous nations.

Dissemination:

- With support from the Research Opportunity Program at U of T, the research team developed two drafts version of the website that we brought to the Rainy River First Nations in June 2015 and July 2016. Based on this consultation, and a follow up visit from Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung representatives in December 2016, they are redesigning the website to make it more accessible for use in the Historical Centre, and it will be live in summer 2017: <http://storynations.utoronto.ca>.