

# Indigenous liaison at library builds more inclusive setting

BY CRAIG WABOOSE

THE Thunder Bay Public Library (TBPL) has taken steps to promote inclusivity and diversity within its organization to make it a welcoming place. Our libraries are built upon the traditional territories of the Fort William First Nation (Animkii Wajiw), signatory to the Robinson Superior of 1850. We also recognize the contributions made to our community by the Metis people.

I grew up using the Brodie Library branch and always felt welcome with the friendly staff. Now that I am part of the Thunder Bay Public Library, I strive to provide the same excellent service I received. When patrons ask for help, I want to ensure that they leave having had a great experience. Also, being Indigenous and in the role of First Nations, Metis and Inuit liaison gives representation in spaces that were primarily non-Indigenous.

Over its 50-plus year history, the Thunder Bay Public Library has transformed itself from a public library to a community hub with four accessible branches in the city. Patrons are able to come and utilize the various programs, collections, and services we have available.

In the role of the First Nations, Metis and Inuit liaison, I aim to help indigenize our library space by ensuring the In-



ONE CITY,  
MANY VOICES

**The Thunder Bay Anti-Racism and Respect Advisory Committee and Diversity Thunder Bay produce this monthly column to promote greater understanding of race relations in Northwestern Ontario.**

Indigenous Knowledge Centre at each branch provides only Indigenous and Metis materials. In addition to this, I host programs such as a variety of craft workshops, Indigenous author readings, and NDN (Indigenous) book clubs, which help make the space more inclusive.

In an era of reconciliation, genuine work is an ongoing process between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and how the mechanism of colonialism affects that relationship. The Thunder Bay Public Library has engaged in this work since the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report and, in 2017, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations also released its Truth and Reconciliation Report and Recommendations. The Thunder Bay Public Library response to the recommendations is outlined

in our Reconciliation and Relationship Building Action Plan — a plan that was created by Indigenous library staff and members of the Indigenous Action Council utilizing a Medicine Wheel methodology.

At our Brodie and Waverley Indigenous Knowledge Centres, the custom-made furnishings are the products of a collaboration project between Thunder Bay Public Library staff, CoDesign, Sheridan College's furniture students and members of the local Indigenous community. The furniture itself is reflective of the principle that Indigenous people can be included, not just consulted, on spaces that affect them and that this relationship building is essential to the purpose and vision of the Thunder Bay Public Library.

Visit our website ([www.tbpl.ca](http://www.tbpl.ca)) to learn more about upcoming events for September which we have designated as Truth and Reconciliation month. Our weekly workshops will involve an Indigenous storytime, explaining the lore behind each of our traditional crafts.

*Craig Waboose is the First Nations, Metis, and Inuit liaison at the Thunder Bay Public Library. Craig is from Eabametoong First Nation and is a longtime Thunder Bay resident. The views and opinions expressed in this column are those of the author.*