



archives
SOCIETY OF ALBERTA

Conference 2026
Archival Silence
May 21 –23, 2026
Program



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Territorial Acknowledgement

Canmore is located on Treaty 7 territory, the traditional lands of the Blackfoot Confederacy (Siksika, Piikani, Kainai), Îyârhe Nakoda (Chiniki, Bearspaw, Goodstoney), and Tsuut'ina Nation, as well as the Otipemisiwak Métis, District 4. By honouring the Indigenous peoples and their ongoing stewardship, we are recognizing their deep history and ongoing presence on these lands for reconciliation.



Welcome Messages

Welcome Message – The Honourable Tanya Fir, MLA, Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women



I am happy to extend warm greetings to everyone attending the Archives Society of Alberta (ASA) 2026 Biennial Conference, Archival Silence, in beautiful Canmore.

Thank you to the ASA for convening archivists, researchers and community

partners from across our province and beyond to help ensure Alberta's historical record continues to be useful to future generations.

Your leadership in championing archives and archivists ensures the preservation and accessibility of Alberta's heritage, helping the archival community remain relevant and reflective of the province's history.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the ASA, participants and presenters for creating a collaborative space to advance archival practice. I hope the conference is both insightful and inspiring.

Honourable Tanya Fir

Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women

Welcome Message — His Worship Sean Krausert, Mayor of Canmore



It is my pleasure to welcome you to Canmore for the Archives Society of Alberta's 2026 Conference. We are honoured that you have chosen our community as the gathering place for archival professionals from across Alberta and beyond.

Archives play a vital role in preserving our collective memory. They help ensure that the stories of individuals, communities, and institutions are not lost to time. The theme of this year's conference—Archival Silences—is both timely and important. It invites reflection on whose voices have been preserved, whose have been overlooked, and how archival work can illuminate a fuller, more inclusive understanding of our shared history.

Canmore has a long and storied past, from its Indigenous history to its coal mining heritage to the global destination that we are today. Our own museum and archival collections are strengthened by the knowledge, dedication, and advocacy of professionals like you. Your work enriches public understanding and helps communities like ours preserve the narratives that shape who we are.

I hope you find your time in Canmore to be both professionally inspiring and personally refreshing. May the mountains provide a beautiful backdrop for meaningful conversations, new connections, and thoughtful exploration throughout your conference.

I hope you enjoy your stay!

Sean Krausert

Mayor of Canmore

Welcome Message – ASA President, Philip Pype



Welcome to ASA's 2026 conference: Archival Silence.

This year's conference feels special as it's the first one in a few years that is completely in-person.

Over the next few days, we will be exploring not-so-much what

is on our shelves, but what is not; who we adequately serve and who we have not. Some discussions will be hard, and some will be enlightening.

My first wish for this weekend is for each of us to take with us an idea, a thought, the beginnings of a plan, or even a glimmer of hope that we can identify and fill some gaps, providing service that truly speaks to, and of all Albertans.

My second wish is that we meet up with old friends, make new friends, and enjoy this beautiful place.

I would like to thank our conference committee Vino Vipulantharajah, Susanne Clarke, Leland Reed, and Jennifer Willard, as well as the consistently exceptional work of the ASA's secretariat.

Thank you,

Philip Pype

President, ASA

Conference Schedule

Program Schedule and Overview

Archival Silence

May 21–23, 2026

Coast Canmore Hotel, Canmore, AB

Thursday, May 21, 2026		Coast Canmore Hotel (511 Bow Valley Trail)	
8:30 am – 9:00 am	Registration		
9:00 am – 12:00 pm	Archival Enclosures Workshop (Wolverine Room, Coast Canmore)		
12:00 pm – 1:00pm	Lunch (for workshop participants only)		
1:00 pm – 4:00pm	Archival Enclosures Workshop (continued)		
6:30 pm – 7:00pm	Conference Registration – Coast Canmore Ballroom Foyer		
7:00 pm – 9:00pm	Opening Reception – Crocus/Arnica Ballroom		
Friday, May 22, 2026		Crocus/Arnica Ballroom – Main Meeting Space	Wolverine Room – Breakout Space
8:30 pm – 9:00 am	Conference Registration (Coast Canmore Ballroom foyer)		
9:00 pm – 10:00 am	Session 1 – Navigating Archival Silence: Lessons from a Chinese Canadian archivist – June Chow		
10:00 am – 10:30 am	Break		
10:30 am – 12:00 pm	Session 2A – Strategies to Fill Internal Silence (Rebecca Mbanyele, Jia Jia Yong, Jesse Carson)	Session 2B – Illuminating Indigenous – related Records in the Vaults (Maryna Chernyavska, Sandy Hoye, Ashley Sims)	
12:00 pm – 1:00 pm	Lunch		
1:00 pm – 2:30 pm	Session 3A – Building an Archives from Absence (Chantelle Desjarlais, Lelland Reed, Kathryn Ruddock, Kim Gerald)	Session 3B – Surveillance and Missing Records (Braden Cannon, Susanne Clark)	
2:30 pm – 3:00 pm	Break		
3:00 pm – 4:30 pm	Session 4A – Illuminating the Invisible (Marlena Wyman, Philip Pye, Ciaran Purdome)	Session 4B – Exhibiting from the Silence (Amanda Oliver, Karen Cyrus, Curtis Frederick)	
4:30 pm – 6:00 pm		Institutional Forum (ASA Institutional members only)	
Saturday, May 23, 2026		Crocus/Arnica Ballroom – Main Meeting Space	Wolverine Room – Breakout Space
8:30 am – 9:00 am	Conference Registration – Coast Canmore Ballroom foyer		
9:00 am – 10:30 am	Session 5 – Institutions/Institutionalization and Erasure (Michael Gourlie, Angie Dilts, Brendan Griebel)		
10:30 am – 11:00 am	Break		
11:00 am – 12:30 pm	Session 6 – Making Space for Indigenous Voices at the Whyte (Colleen Crawler, Dagny Dubois, Kate Nielsen)		
12:30 pm – 1:30 pm	Lunch		
1:30 pm – 2:30 pm	AGM (ASA members)		

Program Details

Pre-Conference Workshop: Archival Enclosures

Instructor: Lisa Isley

Location: Wolverine Room, Coast Canmore Hotel

Time: Thursday, May 21,
9am - 4pm

Description: In this workshop we will make custom archival enclosures for materials in your collection. Please bring at least 2 items that might be found in your collection (ie. flat document, photograph, pamphlet, book) and we will make custom archival enclosures for them. In this workshop we will discuss various challenges with housing and protecting items in your collection and the different ways these can be addressed. This is an opportunity to ask specific preservation and conservation questions from an accredited conservator and discuss different solutions that might be used within different constraints (ie. tight budgets) and how to know what is appropriate. You will learn about material choices, best practices for measuring and cutting materials and what works for your collection and circumstances. We'll cover encapsulation and various phase boxes. Lisa will bring samples from her collection and speak about her experiences working with books, paper and archival materials over the last 20 years.

Biography: Lisa is a bookbinder, conservator and artist that has served the Calgary area since 2004. She has trained across North America and Europe, and is experienced with many bookbinding traditions.

She is a Professional Associate of the American Institute for Conservation with a specialization in book and paper and an accredited member of the Canadian Association

of Professional Conservators with a specialization in books. Her work includes preventive conservation of collections as well as conserving and restoring books, paper and archival materials for institutional, private, and public collectors.

Lisa exhibits her art locally, nationally, and internationally. Her works are held in public and private collections in Canada, Japan, the United States and several European Countries. Lisa is passionate about her craft and is an avid bibliophile.

Lisa has a Finance degree from the University of Alberta. Her foundational art studies were taken through the Alberta College of Art and Design. She has a diploma in Book Conservation from the American Academy of Bookbinding, supplemented with ongoing professional development including internships, private study, conferences and workshops. She's studied with bookbinders, book/ paper/ photograph conservators, and finishers in Europe and North America including Reg Beatty, Don Etherington, Lee Oldford Churchill, Monique Lallier, Julia Miller, Sün Evrard, Héléne Jolis, Luigi Castiglioni, and François Brindeau. Lisa has an MA in Preventive Conservation from Northumbria University. She has experience with a variety of collections and materials and is currently working with the Canmore Museum as the Executive Director.



Opening Reception

Location: Coast Canmore, Crocus/Arnica Ballroom

Time: Thursday, May 21, 7 – 9 pm

Join us for welcoming speeches, light snacks, refreshments, and a cash bar to open our conference. The reception provides an opportunity to network with other conference delegates.



Conference

Session 1: Navigating Archival Silence: Lessons from a Chinese Canadian Archivist



Abstract: In this talk, June will share lessons from her personal and professional experience on both sides of archival silence – from the perspective of fighting against it and being in a position empowered to break it. She will argue that, if any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot

writes in *Silencing the Past: Power and Production of History*, then archivists are strategically placed to refuse its processes.

Biography: June Chow 周慕慈 is a settler born in Canada of immigrant parents, and was raised and educated in Vancouver. She holds a Master of Archival Studies from the School of Information at The University of British Columbia. She is an archivist, archival scholar, and award-winning heritage worker practicing across Chinese Canadian communities and specializing in the histories and contemporary challenges of Chinatown neighbourhoods.

June is a recognized leader in research and practice of Chinese Canadian archives which crosses and connects

community and institutional contexts. In her community-based practice, she spent the past five years as archivist for the landmark public history project, *The Paper Trail to the 1923 Chinese Exclusion Act*, which brought her to the national archives to open restricted government records, and to UBC Library, Rare Books and Special Collections, to build a reparative archive. The records of this past, and her community's ongoing struggle for meaningful access needed to overcome its secrets, silences and traumas, are shared in her forthcoming article in *Archivaria*.

For the past few years, June has been working in Toronto helping major public institutions fulfill new commitments made to collect and preserve the records of Chinese Canadians. The city's history is notable for the displacement of its first Chinatown to build a new city hall and civic square; however, this neighbourhood and turning point in the city's Chinese community continues to go under-represented in the archival record and is quickly being lost. June first worked at the Toronto Public Library and its Chinese Canadian Archive; she currently works at University of Toronto Libraries, setting vision and direction for its Richard Charles Lee Chinese Canadian Archives.

Session 2A: Strategies to Fill Internal Silence

PRESENTERS: Rebecca Mbanyele, Jia Jia Yong, Jesse Carson

The panel explores strategies used in the cases of community archives and a government archives for addressing records that are missing in the holdings. Presenters will discuss their programs at the Spruce Grove Archives, Xwi7xwa Archives, and City of Edmonton Archives.

Rebecca Mbanyele: The Internal Fracture: Archival Silence Within Community Archives

Community archives are often established to address gaps and silences in institutional holdings. By prioritizing community control, lived experience, and alternative forms of documentation, they play a critical role in preserving marginalized histories. While community archives challenge external archival power, this paper suggests that silence can also emerge internally within these spaces.

Drawing on examples from community-based archival initiatives, this presentation explores how everyday decisions about collecting, description, and access, shaped by internal power dynamics, unintentionally reproduce gaps in the historical record (Moss & Thomas, 2021). In the effort to present a cohesive and affirming community history, some community members' experiences may be underrepresented. The paper highlights three recurring patterns. First, collection practices often privilege records from established organizations or visible community leaders,

while informal or grassroots materials are less likely to be preserved. Second, descriptive practices and existing metadata standards may fail to represent complex, evolving, or intersectional identities, limiting the discoverability of records. Third, materials documenting internal conflict or trauma may be excluded to maintain a positive public image.

Rather than framing these gaps as individual failures, this paper approaches internal silences as structural outcomes of standardized archival workflows and community power hierarchies. It concludes by highlighting practical strategies archivists use to respond to internal silences, including collaborative storytelling, reflective descriptive policies, and trauma-informed practices. By reframing archival silence as an ongoing condition rather than a resolved problem, this paper invites discussion about how community archives can better recognize, document, and respond to what is missing in their holdings.

Jia Jia Yong

Jia Jia Yong became the Community Archivist at the City of Edmonton Archives in 2023, the first position of its kind in a municipality. To address gaps in the archival collection and confront barriers to access, Jia Jia works closely with diverse communities in Edmonton to raise awareness of archives and support the preservation of their documentary heritage. This archives engagement and outreach is shaped by principals of community participation, cultural responsiveness, and social advocacy. In this presentation, Jia Jia will outline her approach to archival community outreach and share about projects and initiatives completed in collaboration with community members.

Jesse Carson

Over the past year, the Xwi7xwa Archives has been working to address an archival silence caused not by a lack of records, but by a lack of archival management of extant records. Since hiring its first archivist, Xwi7xwa Library has started to resurface troves of important records that previously sat silent due to a lack of support for its archival program. One of these collections, *Today's Ancestors*, consists of ca. 600

photographs and contact sheets from a 1973 project that sent photographers to six BC First Nations to photograph everyday life. The collection made its way to Xwi7xwa Library, but was effectively lost as the Library did not have a sustained archival program to properly manage and describe it. Due to the work of student staff, several of the photographers from the original project, the Xwi7xwa Archivist, and partners from the Nations, the photographs are now being returned to the communities, more than 50 years later.

I would like to share the story of these photographs, and connect their management to my own forthcoming thesis on how archivists conceive of, and implement, access as a unique component of archival theory and archival work. The story of *Today's Ancestors* demonstrates the importance of archival expertise (and a robust archival program) for facilitation of responsible access, the complexity of access as a component of archival work, and the central importance of collaboration with records creators, donors, and First Nations communities when attempting to mediate access in accordance with Indigenous data sovereignty.

Session 2B: Illuminating Indigenous-Related Records in the Vaults

PRESENTERS: Maryna Chernyavska, Sandy Hoye, and Ashley Sims

One presentation touches on Indigenous initiatives at UofA's Archives. The other presentation explores how Indigenous community direction combined with digital access to archives can support Indigenous peoples' access to information about their communities.

Maryna Chernyavska: Gentle Ways to Break the Silence: Indigenous Initiatives at the University of Alberta Archives

This presentation deals with an ongoing initiative at the University of Alberta Archives to make Indigenous-related records in our holdings more easily discoverable. We try to address archival silences by utilizing a variety of tools and approaches, including Local Context labels, subject terms, automatic speech recognition, as well as reparative description, and consultations with Indigenous communities.

Many records within the University of Alberta Archives (UAA) holdings have Indigenous-related content. However, they are difficult, if not impossible, to discover. Most of such records were created by university departments and offices or researchers and faculty who were researching Indigenous communities. These records and their descriptions often contain outdated or offensive language. Indigenous people in such records frequently remain unnamed or are not mentioned altogether. Therefore, searching for specific communities or individuals is extremely challenging.

Ghaddar and Caswell emphasize that western colonialism and imperialism continue to shape archival practice, and point to "the need to reflect on the structure and content of the records, collections and archives we steward, the principles we espouse, and our intellectual and professional identities" (p. 74). This initiative is one of the UAA's responses to the Calls to Action of the Canadian Commission on Truth

and Reconciliation, the International Council on Archives Tandanya-Adelaide Declaration, and the Association of Canadian Archivists' Reconciliation Framework. It is a small step in our commitment to reconciliation-based archival practice. This presentation will offer an example of what can be done to advance this work.

Sandy Hoye and Ashley Sims: Bridging the Gap: Archival Research for and with Indigenous Communities

In 1982, Section 35 of Canada's Constitution Act recognised and affirmed the existence of Aboriginal rights but, critically, did not define those rights. In the decades since, First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples have engaged in discussion with governments to prove they possess credible claims to the rights enshrined in Section 35. Overwhelmingly, these discussions hinge on Indigenous peoples' ability to articulate their historical presence and legal identity – something which is often achieved through careful explication of historical documents. While it is essential to acknowledge that these documents were created by colonial authorities about Indigenous people, the records nevertheless hold meaning for contemporary Indigenous peoples and historians alike. For Indigenous peoples, these documents are representative of colonial trauma but also provide direct access to their ancestors. For the historian, these documents provide raw materials for understanding the past and a way to connect archival research and contemporary issues.

This paper explores how historical researchers can bridge the gap between academic and public histories by working for and with Indigenous communities. Historical documents concerning Indigenous peoples in Canada are innumerable and strewn across disparate archival institutions which pose challenges to both researchers and Indigenous communities. Fortunately, digital technologies can aid in the

location, organisation, and dissemination of these materials. Drawing on their own research programs, Hoye and Sims will demonstrate how archival research, when made digital and directed by community priorities, can produce histories that deepen our understanding of Canada's past and advance Indigenous peoples' ongoing negotiations of their Aboriginal rights.

Session 3A: Building an Archives from Absence

PRESENTERS: Chantelle Desjarlais, Adriaehna Faithful, Lelland Reed, Kathryn Ruddock, Kim Gerald

In this session we learn about a pilot diversity audit for the University of Calgary Archives. We also hear about the establishment of a new archival program at Frog Lake First Nation.

Chantelle Desjarlais and Adriaehna Faithful: Reclaiming Our Stories: Digital Empowerment and Community-Led Archival Practice at Frog Lake First Nations

Indigenous histories are frequently fragmented, displaced, or absent within colonial archival institutions. Frog Lake First Nation Library and Archives was established to address these silences through a community-driven, digitally empowered archival model rooted in cultural responsibility, relational knowledge, and Nation sovereignty over its own records.

Over the past four years, Frog Lake First Nation has built its archives from the ground up. Fifteen community members have been trained through the Archives Society of Alberta and the BC Archives in digitization and archival practices. Five rounds of Elder interviews have been conducted to preserve oral histories, language, land-based knowledge, and lived experiences that were never formally documented. In parallel, Frog Lake has actively repatriated and consolidated dispersed archival records from institutions including the Alberta Provincial Archives, Lloydminster Archives, Heinsburg Historical Society, Treaty 6 Confederation, Parks Canada, Fort Battleford, Tribal Chiefs Ventures, and private collections.

This presentation will explore how digital technologies are being used to close archival gaps and empower community knowledge keepers through a Nation-controlled online archival platform designed to share teachings with Frog Lake members and the wider public. It will also highlight creative, community centered approaches, such as Elder-led storytelling, youth digitization training, and cultural knowledge preservation that challenge traditional archival models and restore voice to records historically excluded by colonial systems.

This presentation will explore how digital technologies are being used to close archival gaps and empower community knowledge keepers through a Nation-controlled online archival platform designed to share teachings with Frog Lake members and the wider public. It will also highlight creative, community centered approaches, such as Elder-led storytelling, youth digitization training, and cultural knowledge preservation that challenge traditional archival models and restore voice to records historically excluded by colonial systems. By grounding archival practice in community

governance, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and digital accessibility, Frog Lake First Nation demonstrates how archives can move beyond institutional silos toward reconciliation, repatriation, and Indigenous data sovereignty.

Lelland Reed, Kathryn Ruddock, Kim Gerald: Creating an archival diversity audit for the University of Calgary Archives and Special Collections

The University of Calgary Archives and Special Collections holds nearly 13 linear kilometers of archival material and over 250,000 rare books, making it the second largest academic archive in Canada. However, scale alone can create a misleading impression of representational breadth. Like many archives, past collecting practices have privileged mainstream narratives while excluding those that have been historically and systematically overlooked. While these imbalances are often acknowledged anecdotally, they have not been assessed at scale to act strategically.

This presentation reports on a collection diversity audit initiative currently underway as a pilot project at the University of Calgary Archives and Special Collections. Using Glenbow Archives and their corresponding digitized records, this project examines how archival silences manifest in publicly available descriptive and access data, and how those silences may impact user experience. The pilot applies distant reading methodologies to large volumes of metadata to analyze patterns of representation and diversity, with the goal of identifying collection and description gaps and surfacing diversity dimensions that may not be apparent to users.

This project is intended as a practical, replicable model for large archival collections, where traditional audit approaches are often impractical. Findings from this phase will inform future acquisitions, digitization priorities, and metadata remediation. While grounded in this single repository context, we aim to repeat and expand this approach across UCalgary collections, designing for broader application within the GLAM sector.

Session 3B: Surveillance and Missing Records

PRESENTERS: Braden Cannon, Susanne Clark

One presentation discusses how silence can occur due to policy around privacy legislation. The other presentation examines government surveillance and repression of dissenting movements which results in missing information in archives and how to address this issue.

Braden Cannon: “Subversive Activities:” Dissent, Surveillance, and Archival Absence

Governing powers sometimes view dissent as subversion and treat individuals and associations that organize toward goals counter to government policy as an external threat. This can lead to surveillance of “subversive” elements, which creates a record of activity, and even the confiscation of property including records. Such records may then be found in public archives and are sometimes the only archival evidence of dissent related to certain periods, places, or topics. Of course, these records exist within a very specific context and from the perspective of power over dissent. Furthermore, the existence of such records implies the existence of an absence: the perspective of the dissenters, whose records are often unavailable in public archives, destroyed, or even used as evidence against the dissenters. To complicate matters, public archives are themselves an arm of the state and as such, public archivists face challenges building trust and relationships with potential records donors who have faced state repression.

In this presentation, I intend to examine a few instances of government surveillance and repression of dissenting movements that eventually led to the preservation of records of or about said movements created or confiscated by state agents, where no such archival records exist from the movements themselves. I will also examine issues of trust and relationships between archivists and dissenting movements and how archivists can help address these archival absences.

Susanne Clarke: Archival Appraisal, Privacy Concerns, and the Potential Impact of Silencing of Complaining Voices

As privacy becomes a greater issue within our society, ethical considerations of privacy can greatly influence archival appraisal and selection decisions. When a body of records contain large amounts of personal information combined with strong opinions one must consider the ethical implications of keeping private correspondence, especially when this correspondence was sent to public officials. The sender will likely not have considered that their correspondence may become a part of the organization’s official records and could be made publicly available to an alternate audience for secondary purposes in the future— i.e. research. An individual may have had strong opinions on controversial topics that may have evolved over time and could cause reputational harm or embarrassment to the individual or their families in the future.

Although privacy can be protected through use of time restrictions and possible removal of identifiers, the time required to review documentation at the item level prior to access being granted to researchers can be resource heavy, and it may be simply easier not to accession these items and remove the risks associated with them. Although tempting to apply blanket policy to avoid the risks associated with the retention of these materials in our archival holdings, might we also be silencing the voices of our community that might not be reflected in our other records. Letters of complaint can often provide a clear view and feel for the issues of the day and may have influenced public policy and decision making.

Session 4A: Illuminating the Invisible

PRESENTERS: Marlena Wyman, Philip Pype, Ciaran Purdome

This panel explores the missing records of women, people with disabilities, as well as missing records in a university archives with religious roots. The presentations examine creative methods for including these missing voices.

Marlena Wyman: Finding Missing Voices Through Art

In my former work as an archivist, I found that one of the significant gaps in archival collections is the documentation of women’s lives. In particular, the voices and contributions of early prairie women are largely excluded.

After leaving my work at the Provincial Archives of Alberta, I returned as a member of the public to research archives for the diaries, letters, and other records of the first women to immigrate to the Canadian prairies. These documents provide inspiration for my paintings. Through my art

exhibits, didactics, and artist talks, I honour these women’s considerable contributions, advocate for their rightful place in history, and address the gap in women’s archival records by encouraging women to deposit their own and their foremothers’ records in archives.

Due to the focus of my art practice, additional events and panel discussions have resulted from several of my exhibits, with opportunities for me to speak about the importance of diverse representation in archives.

Having worked as an archivist, I understand the demands on an archivist's time. Creative approaches can help to engage with individuals and communities who are not within the usual archives reach. Through innovative creative approaches, the crucial inclusion of voices that are presently missing in archival holdings can find advocacy and gaps can be filled.

Marlena's artworks may be viewed at:
<https://www.artworkarchive.com/profile/marlena-wyman>
<https://bugeralambart.ca/>

Philip Pype: Disability and Visibility

People with intellectual and developmental disability have been long hidden from our society, and from the publicly accessible record.

Over the past 75 years our society has been evolving from segregation of this diverse marginalized group, towards integration. Individuals and community organizations have been striving towards integration for decades to ensure that people with disability are seen and heard. Our community's archives should embrace and encourage this through openness, acquisition of records, and being prepared to be knowledge-holders of our society, whose treatment of the disability community has historically been very problematic.

I intend to present how the Esplanade Archives has been working towards the integration of the voices of people with disability through representation in our collections.

Specifically, I will summarize the how we have received records from one defunct and one very active organization, the stories these records tell, the challenges in acquiring and providing access to these records, the overall importance, and potential future importance of these records. I hope to stimulate discussion about what we can do as archivists, institutions, and society to ensure that those who had been made invisible are seen.

Ciaran Purdome: The Silences We Inherit: Baptist Settler Memory and the Making of a 'Regional' Archives

When researchers seek information about Mi'kmaq, Acadian, or African Nova Scotian communities at Acadia University Archives, they encounter systematic gaps - silences built through 175 years of Baptist settler collecting designed to preserve what collectors called "the precious memory" of denominational founders and establish colonial legitimacy in Nova Scotia.

This presentation traces the origins and development of Acadia's archives from 1845 to the present, examining how denominational memory-making became naturalized as neutral regional history. I demonstrate how Isaac Chipman's 1845 project to preserve the Baptist father's "victories over the empire of darkness" established collecting patterns that privileged white Baptist perspectives and neglected to preserve other community voices.

When Acadia University separated from the Baptist Convention in 1966 and began repositioning as a secular institution, no one questioned what this meant for the archives. Baptist collecting infrastructure - built to preserve denominational memory - became the foundation for the new mandate of the archives with its colonial origins unexamined and naturalized. Speaking as the archivist who inherited stewardship for these collections, I explore the ongoing implications of these founding choices and the challenges of contextualizing colonial collecting practices while caring for records that remain valuable to descendant communities. It is critical to make visible the collecting practices that have shaped our modern collections to help researchers understand what our collections represent.

Session 4B: Exhibiting from the Silence

PRESENTERS: Amanda Oliver, Karen Cyrus, Curtis Frederick

In this panel we hear about challenges in creating exhibits when there are silences in the records. One case is for the University of Calgary's 60th anniversary and another case is for Wilfrid Laurier University's digital exhibit on staff, students, and faculty of African descent.

Amanda Oliver and Karen Cyrus: Sounding silent voices: Building the Scholars of African Descent Exhibit at WLU

It is well documented that significant contributions and rich experiences of persons of African descent have often been overlooked in post-secondary archives due to exclusionary practices (Carter, 2006; Caswell, 2016; Cook, 2013; Gilliland & McKemish, 2014; Jimerson, 2007). This gap became especially evident during the data collection phase of our project, *Scholars of African Descent at Wilfrid Laurier*

University—a virtual exhibit designed to commemorate the lives and experiences of staff, students, and faculty of African descent at the university from 1911 to 2022. The exhibit draws on primary sources and contextual research to celebrate the presence of persons of African descent at our institution and to support efforts to redress archival silences. It highlights both local and national challenges faced by individuals and communities of African descent, situating their achievements and experiences within the broader institutional context. This

paper outlines the process of creating the exhibit, including challenges such as locating archival records, confronting harmful language and imagery within materials, and securing project funding. It also details strategies employed to mitigate these issues. First, we describe the content and context of the university records examined and identify practices that shaped the presence—or absence—of relevant materials. Second, we discuss three strategies used to address past arrangement, and descriptive practices, as well as the soft skills required to navigate these challenges. Ultimately, we aim to demonstrate how research using primary sources can uncover archival silences and identify gaps in holdings, offering guidance for others undertaking similar work.

Curtis Frederick: From Celebration to Reflection: Lessons from the University of Calgary’s 60th Anniversary

Major anniversaries serve as an opportunity to celebrate and show off what is an archival collection. Yet, they can also be used as an opportunity to reveal archival silences and

what voices are absent. In preparation for the University of Calgary’s 60th anniversary as an independent institution in 2026, archivists researched highlights and stories from the past to share and promote. What emerged was not just what was in the archives, but the absence of many voices – from students to academics to community members, especially during critical time periods.

This presentation will examine how these archival silences were uncovered and how they reflect broader challenges in appraisal, collection mandates, and professional norms. It will explore strategies developed to address these gaps, including leveraging the momentum of the anniversary for advocacy and engagement. Additionally, it will also consider how current policies and resource constraints both enable and hinder efforts to represent diverse voices. Finally, the presentation will share examples of successes in promoting the archives and the use of archival material to help celebrate not only the history of the institution, but its future as well.

Institutional Forum

A meeting for ASA institutional members only. An agenda will be presented at the meeting.

Session 5: Institutions/Institutionalization and Erasure

PRESENTERS: Michael Gourlie, Angie Dilts, Brendan Griebel

The panel looks at the scarcity of records of incarceration institutions and the erasure of eugenics records. Methods to fill in the missing information will be explored.

Michael Gourlie and Angie Dilts: An Appalling Responsibility: Eugenics Records at the Provincial Archives of Alberta

Alberta’s controversial eugenics program ran from 1928 to 1972, during which the Eugenics Board oversaw the sexual sterilization of 2832 individuals. According to academic research, women, children, and Indigenous people were targeted at a higher rate than others. The Board’s actions came under public scrutiny for various reasons, and, in the late 1990s, there were numerous lawsuits against the Alberta Government for wrongful sterilization.

A one-time schedule to transfer the board’s records to the Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA) was approved in 1987. The case files were given a final disposition of “Specimen” at a rate of 1 in 5, meaning 80% of them were destroyed. The ones retained by the PAA are covered by access and privacy legislation, which restricts access for 75 years. The known gaps in the records, their sensitive nature, and the controversy around the program compounds the short-sighted record-keeping decision and leaves the PAA looking to provide information that no longer exists.

In our proposed presentation, we will discuss which Eugenics records the PAA acquired, theories on why the records were given a specimen disposition, how the specimen disposition has silenced the experiences of many of the patients, and how the PAA is using alternate records to uncover some of these stories. We will provide examples of extended search techniques, demonstrate how researchers are impacted by restrictions, and outline changes the PAA has made to scheduling policies.

Brendan Griebel: Crafting an Archive of Confinement

From 1890 to 1960, the Canadian Prairies were home to a disproportionate number of institutions designed for incarceration: prisons, psychiatric hospitals, sanatoria, residential schools, Prisoner of War and internment camps. The stated purpose of these spaces—whether care, education, or correction—was often secondary to their role in isolating individuals deemed unfit for society, and containing them within more strictly controlled environments through surveillance, restraint, and enforced similitude.

While these facilities changed significantly during the de-institutionalization movement of the 1960s, the history of daily life in their midst continues to live behind high walls. Archival documentation is scarce; many organizational records having been destroyed, redacted, or otherwise removed

from the public eye. Early institutional photography often plays unreliable witness, the camera's lens trained on what institutions wanted others to see: grandiose architecture, order, and morality. Such opacity shields the asking of fundamental questions: Why were so many people confined in Canadian Prairies, and what were their lives actually like?

This presentation provides an overview of my research, titled *Crafting Freedom in Confinement*, to understand the origins, rise, and impact of institutional incarceration in

Canada's prairie provinces. Through partnership with 32 prairie museums and archives, I have assembled an "archive of confinement" bridging first person accounts and material craftwork from these institutions as a means of questioning and building upon their often-silent official records. In this talk, I explore several case studies from Alberta, highlighting their potential for shedding light on the lived experience, ingenuity and resistance of those confined to historical institutions.

Session 6: Creating Connections: Making Space for Indigenous Voices at the Whyte

PRESENTERS: Colleen Crawler, Dagny Dubois, Kate Nielsen

Colleen Crawler, Dagny Dubois, and Kate Nielsen will present a case study of how archives staff at The Whyte in Banff are tackling issues of missing context and a lack of Indigenous voices in the archives, and how the impact of this work has extended beyond the archives department. The Whyte is building on past and current work to foster an environment of open access, public engagement, and community-led representation.

A key part of the presentation will highlight Hosting Indigenous Community Relations (HICR) team member Colleen Crawler's work leading the redescription of sound recordings to more accurately reflect how *íyârhe* (Stoney) Nakoda community members access and use these records. Colleen challenges the rigidity of traditional archival descriptive methods by adopting a user-centric approach which incorporates accessible and culturally appropriate language and ways of being.

The latter part of the presentation will discuss how other initiatives, like the formation of the UNDRIP Alignment Working

Group (UAWG) at The Whyte in early 2025, are expanding on the HICR team's crucial work by advocating for change at an institution-wide level. The UAWG brings representatives from all departments at The Whyte to critically examine the organization's current practices, identify instances where voices are underrepresented or excluded, and facilitate meaningful change. The Whyte's efforts are ongoing, and this portion of the presentation may be adjusted ahead of the conference.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Archives Society of Alberta which includes reports from our 2025 – 2026 year as well as elections for our Board of Directors. ASA will also be presenting awards at the meeting.



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Conference Organizers

ASA's Conference Program Committee volunteers include Vino Vipulantharajah, Susanne Clarke, Leland Reed, and Jennifer Willard. Thank you for all the work you did in preparing the conference program. The ASA Secretariat was also responsible for organizing this conference – Rene Georgopolis, Executive Director, Ericka Chemko, Conference Coordinator and Amy Leigh, Administrative Assistant.