

Archival Harm Reduction

A Theoretical Framework for Utilizing Harm-Reduction Concepts in Archival Practice

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Article abstract

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KRYSTAL PAYNE

ABSTRACT Canadian archives arose from and help maintain white supremacist and settler-colonial frameworks. The inequitable power relations that exist in archives and archival practices contribute to the harms done to Indigenous people and communities;¹ they do so through the ongoing entrenchment of settler colonialism and the participation in extractive colonialism that occur within the processes of archiving and through the systemic racism that comes along with these processes. This article lays out the beginnings of a theoretical framework for an archival harm-reduction approach for managing records by, about, and for Indigenous people and communities that are held in settler archival institutions and managed by settler archivists. Built upon an explicit acknowledgement of the harm that can occur within archives and through archival practices, and connecting public health harm-reduction concepts with Indigenous scholars' ideas around relationality and power, this framework conceptualizes a process for shifting archival power by building relationships to ensure that the people and communities that records are about or from whom records originate are meaningfully involved in the stewardship of such records. The core harm-reduction concept of involving people and communities as the experts in their own lives (and records) is extended to archival practice – touching on topics such as consent, agency, autonomy, and social justice as well as on practices that are community-based, participatory, and reparative – helping to further articulate a person-centred archival theory and practice and illuminating the fact that settler archives cannot simply redescribe their way out of white supremacy.

¹ Throughout this article, I use the phrase "Indigenous people and communities" to acknowledge individual Indigenous people, Indigenous nations, and other Indigenous communities, groups, and organizations.

RÉSUMÉ Les archives canadiennes découlent et contribuent au maintien de la suprématie blanche et des balises du colonialisme d'occupation. Les relations de pouvoir inéquitables existantes dans les archives et dans les pratiques archivistiques contribuent aux dommages causés aux populations et communautés autochtones. Cela se traduit à travers les particularités dynamiques du colonialisme d'occupation et grâce à des procédés d'archivage ancrés dans un racisme systémique qui façonnent le colonialisme d'extraction. Cet article étale les débuts d'un cadre théorique axé sur une approche de réduction des torts en lien avec les archives produites par, sur, et pour les personnes et communautés autochtones se trouvant dans les institutions archivistiques coloniales et gérées par les archivistes-colons. Érigé à partir d'une reconnaissance explicite des torts qui peuvent émerger dans les archives et dans les pratiques archivistiques, en plus d'associer des concepts de la réduction de risques pour la santé avec les notions de relationalité et de pouvoir mis de l'avant par des concepts académiques autochtones, ce cadre de référence conceptualise un processus dédié à faire pivoter les pouvoirs archivistiques en développant des relations qui assurent que les personnes et les communautés représentées et concernées par les archives sont impliquées de manière significative dans l'intendance des documents. Le principe de base qui positionne les personnes et les communautés concernées comme les experts de leur propre vie (et leurs documents) est alors prolongé dans la pratique archivistique. En évoquant des sujets tels le consentement, l'agentivité, l'autonomie, la justice sociale ainsi que des pratiques ancrées dans les communautés, de manière participative et réparatrice, ce cadre de réduction des torts contribue à l'articulation d'une théorie et des pratiques archivistiques centrées sur les personnes. Par le fait même, l'article souligne que les archives coloniales ne peuvent simplement qu'effectuer de la redescription archivistique et ainsi penser se distancer de la suprématie blanche.

Introduction

Canadian archives are built upon frameworks arising from the settler colonialism and white supremacy that are foundational to Canada as a nation-state. As described by Crystal Fraser and Zoe Todd, Raymond Frogner, J.J. Ghaddar, and Adele Perry, archives have helped further settler colonialism and white supremacy through the telling of specific types of Canadian national narratives and through their roles in the colonial pursuit of land, resources, and records, resulting in what I think of as archival harm.² Examples of archival harm include (but are definitely not limited to) the impacts of symbolic annihilation, as described by Michelle Caswell, Marika Cifor, and Mario H. Ramirez;³ the barriers Indigenous people face in accessing and visiting archives, as described by Krista McCracken and Skylee-Storm Hogan;⁴ and the dispossession of Indigenous land, in which colonial archival practice and theory have played a role, as described by Adele Perry in writing on the *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* case.⁵ If we are to confront the ongoing entrenchment of settler colonialism and the participation in extractive colonialism that is evident throughout our currently inequitable but accepted archival processes, we need to restructure the ways we make decisions about archival management, including how we acquire records, determine provenance, create descriptions, provide access, and determine who has ownership and control over the management of archival records.

Archival harm reduction is a concept that I propose can be helpful to archivists as they attempt to engage in more justice-oriented and person-centred work. I develop the concept by considering how, in a settler-colonial context,

- 2 For an overview of the colonial roots of archives in Canada, see Crystal Fraser and Zoe Todd, "Decolonial Sensibilities: Indigenous Research and Engaging with Archives in Contemporary Colonial Canada," *L'Internationale Online*, February 14, 2016, http://www.internationaleonline.org/research/decolonising_practices/54_decolonial_sensibilities_indigenous_research_and_engaging_with_archives_in_contemporary_colonial_canada; Raymond Frogner, "The Train from Dunvegan: Implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in Public Archives in Canada," *Archival Science* 22, no. 2 (2022): 209–38, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-021-09373-0>; J.J. Ghaddar, "Total Archives for Land, Law and Sovereignty in Settler Canada," *Archival Science* 21, no. 1 (2021): 59–82, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-020-09353-w>; and Adele Perry, "The Colonial Archive on Trial: Possession, Dispossession and History in *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*," in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History*, ed. Antoinette Burton (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).
- 3 Michelle Caswell, Marika Cifor, and Mario H. Ramirez, "'To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing': Uncovering the Impact of Community Archives," *American Archivist* 79, no. 1 (2016): 56–81.
- 4 Krista McCracken and Skylee-Storm Hogan, "Laughter Filled the Space: Challenging Euro-Centric Archival Spaces," *International Journal of Information, Diversity and Inclusion* 5, no. 1 (2021): 97–110.
- 5 Perry, "The Colonial Archive on Trial."

principles and practices of harm reduction can be used in conjunction with Indigenous methodologies to address the harms archives have inflicted – and continue to inflict – through standard archival practice and theory. In elaborating a notion of archival harm reduction, I consider (1) the focus, in public health harm-reduction literature and practice, on addressing the need both to reduce the immediate source of harm and to address the structural and systemic roots of harm; (2) critiques of white harm reduction in Indigenous literature on decolonization; and (3) the specific types of harm enacted and perpetuated by archives, archival institutions, and archival practices. I propose that a focus on archival harm reduction can provide some helpful person-centred reparative⁶ guidance for harm-reduction work in archives.

As a white settler archivist living in Canada, I believe that one of the most pressing tasks in archives is to address the harm that has been done to Indigenous people and communities as a result of archival complicity in ongoing settler colonialism. Aimee Carrillo Rowe and Eve Tuck, calling on Patrick Wolfe, assert that settler colonialism is unique when compared to other kinds of colonialism in that it is a societal structure that continues without a defined ending.⁷ Rowe and Tuck define settler colonialism as

the specific formation of colonialism in which people come to a land inhabited by (Indigenous) people and declare that land to be their new home. Settler colonialism is about the pursuit of land, not just labor or resources. Settler colonialism is a persistent societal structure, not just an historical event or origin story for a nation-state. Settler colonialism has meant genocide of Indigenous Peoples, the reconfiguring of Indigenous land into settler property. In the United States and other slave estates, it has also meant the theft of people from their homelands (in Africa) to become property of settlers to labor on stolen land.⁸

- 6 Reparative archives are described in Lae'l Hughes-Watkins, "Moving Toward a Reparative Archive: A Roadmap for a Holistic Approach to Disrupting Homogenous Histories in Academic Repositories and Creating Inclusive Spaces for Marginalized Voices," *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies* 5, no. 1 (2018): article 6. Work has also been done by the Reparative Archival Description Working Group based at Yale University Library. For more information, see Yale University Library, "Reparative Archival Description Working Group: Home," Yale Library, accessed September 15, 2022, <https://guides.library.yale.edu/reparativearchivaldescription>.
- 7 Aimee Carrillo Rowe and Eve Tuck, "Settler Colonialism and Cultural Studies: Ongoing Settlement, Cultural Production, and Resistance," *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies* 17, no. 1 (2017): 3–13, 4.
- 8 Rowe and Tuck, 4.

I am particularly interested in how a harm-reduction approach might be compatible with ideas presented by Crystal Fraser and Zoe Todd, Glen Coulthard, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, who address power and relationality in their writings about decolonization, reconciliation, and resurgence. I believe that a harm-reduction approach to archives can be useful because it acknowledges from the outset the possibility for harm to take place in archives and reframes archival practice to centre ways to reduce or minimize this harm. I have found that there is strength in considering harm-reduction concepts and Indigenous writings on power and relationality alongside each other not because the Indigenous literature is not compelling enough on its own (it is) but because there is a shared focus on building relationships and shifting decision-making power that can contribute to the reduction of some kinds of harms perpetuated in archives.

My background in community facilitation, where a “Yes, and” approach is preferable to a “No, but” approach, means I am not interested in prioritizing archival harm reduction above all other ideas. Rather, my aim is to share some thoughts that may act as building blocks that can be used with other justice-oriented archival ideas to reorient archives to be more relational and person centred, with the broad aim of reducing archival harm. This article will give a description of harm reduction, including its challenges and limitations; a working explanation of an archival harm-reduction approach; and analyses of similar themes that come up in contemporary Indigenous writings on power and relationality. Following these sections, I will offer a preliminary archival harm-reduction framework for archival practitioners.

As a settler archivist, I have some trepidation about speaking to the management of records by and about Indigenous people and communities, but I do feel comfortable speaking about what I can do to reduce harm and unsettle harmful archival power dynamics. These ideas represent my attempt to engage in the “unsettling” and “discomforting” liberatory memory work that Michelle Caswell suggests “demands radical shifts in oppressive structures.”⁹ She states,

Liberatory memory work is not as easy as putting less-offensive terms into a database built on white supremacist logics or providing cultural

9 Michelle Caswell, “Feeling Liberatory Memory Work: On the Archival Uses of Joy and Anger,” *Archivaria* 90 (Fall 2020): 148–64, 161.

competency training for white archivists so that they can then extract knowledge from communities of colour more fluently; it requires a radical repair, a rebuilding, a foundational theoretical shift in support of radical material claims.¹⁰

I can do this work in part by recognizing that Indigenous people and communities, as the experts in the management of any record involving, made by, or invested in Indigenous knowledge, should ultimately have the opportunity to be stewards of these records. While this article focuses on what I can do to express my commitment to working with Indigenous communities, I believe that there may also be potential to adapt and apply archival harm-reduction concepts to the management of archival records involving many different communities.

For about a decade before deciding to study and work in archives, I worked as a community health educator in a variety of harm-reduction-oriented roles, including as a provider of new needles, other safer drug use equipment, and safer sex supplies to community members and as an educator in direct-care, community, health-care, and school settings. My experience and knowledge of harm reduction comes more from direct practice in the community than from academic theory, and what I know I learned mainly from the community, which welcomed and trusted me enough to share their knowledge and lived experiences with me. This background helps me to envision myself as an archival harm-reduction practitioner. Informed by the field of community health, this approach foregrounds individuals and community members as the experts in their own lives (and their own records) and urges archivists to collaborate with community to determine what changes need to be made throughout archival practice and management. In my role as a project archivist and researcher with the Kishaadigeh Collaborative Research Centre at the University of Winnipeg, where I am working with the Manitoba Association of Friendship Centres on a pilot project assisting some of the provincial Friendship Centres with telling their histories and archiving their own records on their own terms, I am trying to use an archival harm-reduction approach to guide my work.¹¹

¹⁰ Caswell, 161.

¹¹ To learn more about the beginnings of this project, see Aabijjiwan, "Understanding the Manitoba Friendship Centre Foundation: Listening to the Visionaries," Aabijjiwan, accessed September 15, 2022, <https://aabijjiwanmedialab.ca/current-projects/friendship-centre-foundation>.

Exploring Harm-Reduction Concepts

As Harm Reduction International notes, harm reduction has a multitude of definitions, many of which focus on substance use.¹² Informed by an organization in the province where I have learned and practised harm reduction, I am drawn to the broad definition used by the Manitoba Harm Reduction Network:

Harm reduction is looking at the big picture, to the systems and policies that create harm for people who use drugs, and working to change those systems. Drug policy, criminalization and the war on drugs have been historically harmful, so dismantling those frameworks is a key part of harm reduction.

Harm reduction is a process, of engaging with peers, policy makers, health workers, researchers and activists, to build relationships, listen, and create community-driven social change.

Harm reduction is a practical set of strategies and tools to help people stay safer when engaging in activities that could have risk, like sex and drug use.¹³

Harm reduction, now seen as broadly addressing safer substance use and sexual activity, took hold as a public health tool in response to the HIV pandemic. While harm-reduction practitioners now widely stress the need to involve impacted community as a core principle (at least in theory), public health as a whole has not always welcomed the expertise of community members. Steven Epstein's research provides an example of the struggle to ensure community members not only have a voice but are also seen as credible voices in HIV prevention, research, and treatment.¹⁴ While it is now widely acknowledged

12 Harm Reduction International, "What Is Harm Reduction?" Harm Reduction International, accessed September 15, 2022, <https://www.hri.global/what-is-harm-reduction>.

13 Manitoba Harm Reduction Network, "Harm Reduction," Manitoba Harm Reduction Network, accessed September 15, 2022, <https://mhrn.ca/harm-reduction>.

14 See Steven Epstein, "The Construction of Lay Expertise: AIDS Activism and the Forging of Credibility in the Reform of Clinical Trials," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 20, no. 4 (1995): 408–37; and Steven Epstein, *Impure Science: AIDS, Activism and the Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

that community members bring a great deal of expertise to the harm-reduction table, the fight for greater involvement in policy and decision-making processes has continued, as outlined in the 2008 “*Nothing About Us Without Us*” report, by the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, International HIV/AIDS Alliance, and the Open Society Institute.¹⁵

Policies originating from a harm-reduction perspective are often described as pragmatic, evidence based, and non-judgmental because, at their core, they seek to alleviate the harms that may come from common human experiences such as sexual activity or substance use.¹⁶ In 2010, the International Harm Reduction Association listed the following principles of harm reduction:

Is client-centered, non-judgmental and facilitative, rather than coercive.

Targets the causes of risks and harms.

Is evidence-informed, practical, feasible, effective, safe, and cost-effective.

Promotes autonomy and dignity.

Is transparent and accountable.¹⁷

The association also states that harm reduction “values meaningful engagement and participation of affected communities in the program and policy decisions that affect them” and “challenges policies and practices that maximize harm,” including “criminalization, discrimination, abstinence-only services and social inequities.”¹⁸

With the evolution of harm-reduction policy has come a broadened understanding of what constitutes harm. For example, the harm-reduction guidance from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA) (iterations of which have

¹⁵ Ralf Jürgens, “*Nothing About Us Without Us*”: *Greater, Meaningful Involvement of People Who Use Illegal Drugs: A Public Health, Ethical, And Human Rights Imperative*, International ed. (Toronto: Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, 2008).

¹⁶ Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, *Position Statement on Harm Reduction* (Winnipeg, MB: Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, 2016), 3, 7, <https://wrha.mb.ca/files/public-health-position-statement-harm-reduction.pdf>.

¹⁷ Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, 3.

¹⁸ Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, 3.

helped to guide the harm-reduction work that I have done) frames harm as being “shaped differently across the power axes of race, social class, gender, and other categories,” necessitating “working with affected populations to understand the complexity of harms from their perspective.”¹⁹ The WRHA statement highlights that “risk is shaped by social, structural, and historic factors” including colonialism, and further, that “harms are exacerbated by structural determinants such as race, housing status, and employment, and by the invisibility of particular groups in policy arenas.”²⁰ The statement further points to the multi-dimensional aspects of harm that may be experienced by Indigenous people and communities, stating that

In Canada, one important context is the systematic cultural oppression and marginalization of Indigenous Peoples. . . . Harm reduction approaches must therefore include Indigenous self-determination and leadership . . . and must be context-specific, locally informed, and culturally safe.²¹

This broad, justice-oriented understanding of harm, harm reduction, and the issues that push people toward and into risk is also echoed by other harm-reduction organizations such as the previously mentioned Manitoba Harm Reduction Network, the US-based National Harm Reduction Coalition, and the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network (CAAN).²²

Using these understandings of harm reduction developed by public health agencies, it is obvious that harm must be addressed at more than an individual level; it must also be addressed at political, social, and environmental levels.

¹⁹ Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, 7.

²⁰ Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, 8–9. Please note: the concept of risk categorization is not undisputed. While this document acknowledges that risk is shaped by many factors, its idea of who is at risk might ignore the structural issues that disproportionately push some people into more risky positions. This stance can also lead to a number of other issues, including stigma and perceived distancing of those who are at risk, as described here: Nina Glick Schiller, Stephen Crystal, and Denver Lewellen, “Risky Business: The Cultural Construction of AIDS Risk Groups,” *Social Science & Medicine* 38, no. 10 (1994): 1337–46, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536\(94\)90272-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-9536(94)90272-0).

²¹ Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, *Position Statement on Harm Reduction*, 7.

²² See National Harm Reduction Coalition, “Principles of Harm Reduction,” National Harm Reduction Coalition, revised 2020, https://harmreduction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/NHRC-PDF-Principles_Of_Harm_Reduction.pdf; and Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, “Harm Reduction,” CAAN, accessed September 15, 2022, <https://caan.ca/research/current-research/harm-reduction/>.

The Inter-Agency Coalition on AIDS and Development (ICAD), in partnership with CAAN, outlines what Indigenous harm reduction means in its 2019 policy brief *Indigenous Harm Reduction = Reducing the Harms of Colonization*.²³ The policy brief asserts that Indigenous harm reduction would involve the following features: decolonization, achieved by centring issues of power and control; community-based and peer-led approaches; trauma-informed interventions; culturally safe and reflexive practices; and Indigenization, achieved by being culturally grounded, strengths based, and Indigenous led. It would also be both holistic and wholistic, inclusive, innovative, and evidence based.²⁴

Harm reduction has not gone uncriticized. As mentioned earlier, public health in general has not always welcomed the voices and input of those most impacted. The ICAD and CAAN policy brief outlines some of these critiques, explaining that harm reduction does not work well when it is “too narrowly focused on technological or behavioural interventions that disregard the broader context in which those behaviours occur”; when “the focus of harm reduction is on individual change while ignoring the systems and structures within which the individual must operate”; when “harm reduction policies, programs or practices address only one aspect of health, such as physical health, while disregarding mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects”; when it is “too focused on the individual and excluding family, friends, community, and other relationships”; and when it focuses “on numbers instead of people.”²⁵

As well as identifying colonial practices that are at odds with foundational concepts of Indigenous harm reduction,²⁶ critiques of harm reduction have also focused on the limitations of institutional reform and policy work as a pathway toward social justice. Dean Spade²⁷ suggests four questions that should be asked

23 Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development and the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, *Policy Brief: Indigenous Harm Reduction = Reducing the Harms of Colonialism* (n.p.: Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development, 2019), <http://www.icad-cisd.com/publication/indigenous-harm-reduction-reducing-harms-colonization/>.

24 Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development and the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, 10–15.

25 Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development and the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, 8–9.

26 Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development and the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, 8–9.

27 In addition to numerous articles, Dean Spade has also written two books that are particularly relevant for explaining this critique of harm reduction and the limits of institutional reform and policy work as a pathway toward social justice. See Dean Spade, *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); and Dean Spade, *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (and the Next)* (New York: Verso Books, 2020).

when evaluating the worthiness of reform work:

Does it provide material relief? Does it leave out an especially marginalized part of the affected group (e.g., people with criminal records, people without immigration status)? Does it legitimize or expand a system we are trying to dismantle? Does it mobilize people, especially those most directly impacted, for ongoing struggle?²⁸

Spade argues that, given the limits of reformism, it will actually be mutual aid, defined as “a form of political participation in which people take responsibility for caring for one another and changing political conditions,”²⁹ that will lead to the most transformative changes, which are needed for a more just and livable society.³⁰

Although harm-reduction principles emphasize that those most impacted should have a voice in decision-making, this does not directly translate to those most impacted actually having this power over the programming, policies, and laws that most affect their lives. Here, I am thinking of the fact that both the people who use drugs and harm-reduction advocates still face harmful drug use laws and a lack of options for safer use.³¹ In September 2021, in Winnipeg, advocates from the Manitoba Harm Reduction Network and other volunteers put together a pop-up overdose prevention and supervised consumption site in response to climbing drug poisoning overdose incidents.³² In October 2021, in Vancouver, advocates including City Councillor Jean Swanson handed out packages of safe drugs at pop-up events organized by the Vancouver Area Network

28 Dean Spade, “Solidarity Not Charity: Mutual Aid for Solidarity and Survival,” *Social Text* 38, no. 1 (2020): 131–51, 133.

29 Spade, 136.

30 Spade, 147.

31 A broad, global perspective on the harms associated with the ongoing criminalization of drug use is outlined in Richard Elliott, Joanne Csete, Evan Wood, and Thomas Kerr, “Harm Reduction, HIV/AIDS, and the Human Rights Challenge to Global Drug Control Policy,” in “Emerging Issues in HIV/AIDS,” special issue, *Health and Human Rights* 8, no. 2 (2005): 104–38.

32 CBC News, “Overdose Prevention Pop-Up in Winnipeg Shows Need for Permanent Sites across Manitoba: Advocate,” CBC News, September 8, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/overdose-prevention-manitoba-harm-reduction-network-safe-consumption-drug-use-1.6168504>.

of Drug Users (VANDU) and the Drug User Liberation Front (DULF), again in response to mounting drug poisoning and overdose incidents.³³ Safe consumption sites and a safe supply of drugs are key in reducing harm and making drug use safer, and in the absence of such programs, advocates took action to raise awareness and reduce harm. The inclusion of impacted voices in organizations is not enough; what these examples show is that, without widespread change for the better, action needs to take place in the absence of policy, procedure, or accepted practice – or sometimes in opposition to policy, procedure, and accepted practice. Based on these examples, I find myself asking, What can we as archivists learn? and, How can we push our policies, procedures, and accepted practices to do what it takes to reduce harm?

Decolonization and the Limits of Settler Harm Reduction

Before considering how public health concepts of harm reduction can inform a practice of archival harm reduction, I want to introduce the cautions that Eve Tuck (Unangax) and K. Wayne Yang discuss in their concept of settler harm reduction. Tuck and Yang argue that decolonization centres the importance of land and the connections that flow between land, power, and control. They point out that within settler colonialism, land becomes both home and capital for settlers, and connections to land are defined along ownership lines.³⁴ This settlement is a cause of ongoing “epistemic, ontological and cosmological violence”³⁵ against Indigenous Peoples. With land relations so central, Tuck and Yang warn against turning decolonization into a metaphor, arguing that those who do not emphasize the repatriation of land and life are missing the most essential point of decolonization, which simply cannot be separated from the repatriation of land.³⁶

Turning decolonization into a metaphor is part of what Tuck and Yang call

33 Kendra Mangione, “Here’s Why Police Say a Vancouver City Councillor Wasn’t Charged for Handing Out Heroin,” CTV News Vancouver, October 21, 2021, <https://bc.ctvnews.ca/here-s-why-police-say-a-vancouver-city-councillor-wasn-t-charged-for-handing-out-heroin-1.5634999>.

34 Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1–40, 5.

35 Tuck and Yang, 5.

36 Tuck and Yang, 7.

settler harm reduction.³⁷ Tuck and Yang describe settler harm reduction as a necessary activity in raising “critical consciousness” but caution that critical consciousness on its own is not the same as decolonization and may in fact “relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility, and conceal the need to give up land or power or privilege.”³⁸ They are unequivocal in stating that power relations and control over land must be shifted to Indigenous Peoples in order for decolonization to happen.

Tuck and Yang note that, while settler harm reduction is required, it does not necessarily guide us toward decolonization.³⁹ In fact, the authors argue, “the pursuit of social justice through a critical enlightenment, can also be settler moves to innocence” that “relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility.”⁴⁰ Tuck and Yang assert that critical consciousness is integral to addressing the harms that have been inflicted through settler colonialism, but it must be paired with a commitment to Indigenous sovereignty in order to effect real and lasting changes to colonial systems.⁴¹

Archival Harm Reduction

I propose a working definition of archival harm reduction that focuses on a reflexive and relational practice that seeks to reduce the likelihood of archival harm by making space for active collaboration with impacted communities, who act as co-experts in archival management and decision-making. A broad example illustrating what archival harm reduction could look like reimagines archival practice and theory through a stewardship lens. A stewardship lens allows us to see solutions for reducing many kinds of archival harm through activities such as encouraging active collaboration to redescribe problematic descriptions;

37 Tuck and Yang, 21. Tuck and Yang adapt the term *settler harm reduction* from Anna Jacobs' work on white harm reduction. They indicate that white supremacy is at the core of many public health issues in stating that Jacobs describes white harm reduction as attempts to “reduce the harm that white supremacy has had on white people, and the deep harm it has caused non-white people over generations.” Tuck and Yang, 21.

38 Tuck and Yang, 21–22.

39 Tuck and Yang, 22.

40 Tuck and Yang, 21–22.

41 Tuck and Yang, 21–22.

addressing community access and ownership concerns by entering into collaborative archival management decision-making agreements; offering stable archival storage spaces, without transferring ownership, to help address inequitable archival resources in communities that are underfunded or without stable funding for archival work; and working with Indigenous groups to build resources to archive materials within their own communities. Archival harm reduction in this sense necessarily touches upon and troubles all aspects of archival management, including the ways that we acquire records, assign provenance, describe records, make preservation and access choices, undertake advocacy and outreach, invite people into archival spaces, and determine who can make decisions about the management of archival records, including repatriation.

Drawing from practices highlighted in harm-reduction literature and actions that have already been undertaken could help archivists make the important shift advocated by recent work on more person-centred conceptions of archives:⁴² from focusing primarily on the records they care for to including the people who create, use, and/or are documented in those records. At its core, harm reduction as a practice and theory can recognize the unbalanced power relationships that force some people to face disproportionate harm and experience unequal standing in decision- and policy-making contexts. Harm reduction seeks to challenge these power imbalances in an attempt to stem further harms. One way this can be done is by meaningfully involving the people and communities who are harmed in creating and enacting programming and policy that redresses these harms. Harm reduction's focus on building relationships that are facilitative rather than coercive also centres another principle of harm reduction:

42 The field of person-centred archives continues to grow, but work that has inspired me includes Jennifer Douglas and Allison Mills, "From the Sidelines to the Center: Reconsidering the Potential of the Personal in Archives," *Archival Science* 18, no. 3 (2018): 257–77, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-018-9295-6>; Jennifer Douglas and Alexandra Alisuskas, "'It Feels Like a Life's Work': Recordkeeping as an Act of Love," *Archivaria* 91 (Spring/Summer 2021): 6–37; Michelle Caswell, Marika Cifor, and Mario H. Ramirez, "'To Suddenly Discover Yourself Existing': Uncovering the Impact of Community Archives," *American Archivist* 79, no. 1 (2016): 56–81; Michelle Caswell, "Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Records Documenting Human Rights Abuse: Lessons from Community Archives," *Archival Science* 14, no. 3–4 (2014): 307–22; Anne Gilliland and Michelle Caswell, "Records and Their Imaginaries: Imagining the Impossible, Making Possible the Imagined," *Archival Science* 16, no. 1 (2016): 53–75, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-015-9259-z>; Anne Gilliland, "Moving Past: Probing the Agency and Affect of Recordkeeping in Individual and Community Lives in Post-Conflict Croatia," *Archival Science* 14, no. 3–4 (2014): 249–74, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-014-9231-3>; and Anne Gilliland and Sue McKemmish, "The Role of Participatory Archives in Furthering Human Rights, Reconciliation and Recovery," *Atlanti: Review for Modern Archival Theory and Practice*, no. 24 (2014): 78–88, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/346521tf>.

honouring autonomy and dignity. Recognizing this principle means entering into relationships with affected people while affirming that they are worthy of participating equally in decision- or policy-making processes. Harm reduction may ultimately be seen as a person-centred and relational practice and theory.

A core element of public health harm reduction involves working to alleviate and prevent immediate harms while also advocating for and implementing systemic changes that address the root causes of harm, which writers such as Tuck and Yang identify as being related to settler colonialism. The fact that there are two tracks to this work is helpful for conceptualizing change in archives because addressing the root cause of harm in archives – the white supremacy that exists within the overarching system of settler colonialism – will require that archives and archivists examine and change power relations. Adapting this two-track method of reducing harm to an archival harm-reduction practice may help archivists avoid the pitfalls of settler harm reduction, which fails to consider issues of power, privilege, and ownership and control of land and resources. All things considered, harm-reduction principles can be aspirational, but they also entail multiple challenges, particularly in relation to the potential limitations of reform, as described by Spade as well as Tuck and Yang, and to ongoing linkages with colonial concepts of individualization and compartmentalization, as described by the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network.⁴³

A more immediate archival harm-reduction practice might be a redescription that addresses racist language and ideology while ensuring that the original descriptions are retained so that past societal and institutional racism cannot be erased. This approach would address harm in an immediate way but would not necessarily shift the uneven power structures that led to the racist description practices; as such, it represents only part of the work that needs to be done. To address power inequities that led to racist descriptions in the first place requires us to interrogate, first, how our Euro-Canadian settler archival traditions have determined who has access, control, ownership, and/or possession over archival records and the decision-making processes related to records and, second, how archivists can work to shift these power imbalances so that archival processes are more equitable. As

43 In addition to the discussion above, Warwick Anderson's work on colonial medicine describes the relationship between colonialism, medicine, and public health. See Roberta Bivins, review of *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines*, by Warwick Anderson, and *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health, and Racial Destiny in Australia*, by Warwick Anderson, *Technology and Culture* 48, no. 4 (2007): 866–68.

mentioned above, one such shift could involve reframing archival work as more about stewardship and less about possession; such a reframing might help to revise assumptions about who has decision-making power over the management of archival records, possibly creating a path for the structural change needed as part of a full harm-reduction approach. As public health harm reduction teaches, addressing immediate harms is never the full solution because overarching structural factors drive the ways harm is inflicted and enforced. While redescription is absolutely integral in addressing archival harm, we cannot redescribe our way out of white supremacy and settler colonialism.

In some ways, public health harm-reduction concepts can be viewed as both beacons and warning signs for the archival harm-reduction work to be done. Structural change and shifting power relationships are at the core of harm-reduction concepts, yet it is obvious that this more structural advocacy work has yet to succeed. Efforts to address crucial structural concerns in other spheres also illustrate the difficulty of doing so; for example, attempts to adequately address climate change or deal effectively with the COVID-19 pandemic similarly face resistance to structural solutions, and individual actions are often emphasized instead as necessary changes. While it may be harder to achieve structural change, it is absolutely necessary to work toward it because these foundational issues must be shifted if harm is to be reduced in any sustainable way.

Relationality and Power

Positioning archival harm reduction as a tool to bring about structural change requires explaining that archives are simultaneously sites of empowerment and disempowerment. Furthermore, interrogating archives' long colonial history can assist in building a reparative archival harm-reduction framework that refuses archival systems, practices, spaces, and standards born of a colonial inheritance. The examination of archival power has been a central focus of archival discourse over the past few decades,⁴⁴ and it is increasingly recognized that archives have long acted as sites for powerholding and narrative building within settler-

⁴⁴ It would be impossible to cite all of the work on archival power here, but the work of Saidiya Hartman, in addition to that of the archival theorists named, has been helpful for me as an examination of archival power. See Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008): 1–14, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/241115>.

colonial Canada.⁴⁵ It is worth examining how Indigenous peoples, communities, and histories are portrayed or silenced within Canadian archival institutions in the pursuit of the colonial project. Archival records of the colonial past (and the ongoing colonial present) can prove the harms of the settler-colonial structure while also guarding against possible future denials of responsibility for these harms. How records are kept within institutions can both represent and continue to reproduce the power relations within settler colonialism and the dispossession of Indigenous culture, knowledge, and language.

Zoe Todd (Métis) and Crystal Fraser (Gwichyà Gwich'in) advocate for the adoption of “decolonial sensibilities”⁴⁶ that examine power and relationality in the archives and acknowledge the colonial past and present of archives as a way forward. They caution that change will not come simply from ensuring that more Indigenous archivists are trained or hired or that more records are digitized for accessibility.⁴⁷ By looking at who controls the archives (both the institutions and, through sometimes-restrictive acts, access to these) and seeking to understand what is absent from the archives, Todd and Fraser point out that what is recorded in archives can still be identified as predominantly “biased and one-sided.”⁴⁸ They urge archivists to think about the ways that power structures are produced under settler colonialism and to ask ourselves “how we have benefitted and continue to benefit” within these structures. Todd and Fraser suggest that it may not be possible to decolonize the archives, when doing so “requires an erasure or negation of the colonial realities of the archives themselves.”⁴⁹ They argue that

45 Fraser and Todd, “Decolonial Sensibilities”; Raymond Frogner, “‘Innocent Legal Fictions’: Archival Convention and the North Saanich Treaty of 1852,” *Archivaria* 70 (Fall 2010): 45–94; Raymond Frogner, “‘Lord, Save Us from the Et Cetera of the Notary’: Archival Appraisal, Local Custom, and Colonial Law,” *Archivaria* 79 (Spring 2015): 121–58; Frogner, “The Train from Dunvegan”; and Ghaddar, “*Total Archives* for Land, Law and Sovereignty in Settler Canada.”

46 Fraser and Todd, “Decolonial Sensibilities.”

47 Fraser and Todd, “Decolonial Sensibilities.” Dr. Gabrielle Lindstrom also discussed this at an Association for Manitoba Archives educational workshop, wherein she cautioned that attracting Indigenous youth to archival studies requires us to be aware of what we can offer them and to recognize that adding Indigenous ways of knowing and being to archival theory will be essential to ensuring that archives are a safer place for Indigenous people. Gabrielle Lindstrom, “Beyond Indigenous Awareness” (presentation, Association for Manitoba Archives, Zoom, January 20, 2021).

48 Fraser and Todd, “Decolonial Sensibilities.”

49 Fraser and Todd, “Decolonial Sensibilities.”

making archives friendlier to Indigenous people and pursuits is essential, but given the complex and sometimes troubling history of the Canadian nation-state and its draconian and oppressive approach to and relationship with Indigenous peoples, it is essential that we continue to recognise archival spaces, especially state archives, for their original intent: to create national narratives that seek to legitimise the nation-state by excluding Indigenous voices, bodies, economies, histories, and socio-political structures.⁵⁰

While the archive may not be fully decolonized, and evidence of the roles archives play in ongoing colonialism should certainly not be eradicated, the potential for archival harm can be reduced. An archival harm-reduction approach could work alongside Todd and Fraser's "decolonial sensibilities" by explicitly acknowledging and examining the reality of how archival harm takes place and attempting to reduce said harms in both immediate and structural ways.

In another analysis of power and relationality, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) centres Indigenous resurgence, describing her work as "refocus[ing] from trying to transform the colonial outside into a flourishment of the Indigenous inside."⁵¹ Simpson explains resurgence as a process that communities can do for and with themselves, without requesting resources or allowances from governments or settlers; Indigenous resurgence works outside of or beyond the colonial constructs, moving communities "beyond resistance and survival"⁵² and toward "flourishment . . . and an ongoing process of rebirth, renewal, reciprocity and respect."⁵³

Simpson highlights the importance of resurgence in the work of reconciliation, saying that "it must support Indigenous nations in regenerating our languages, our oral cultures, our traditions of governance and everything else residential schools . . . attempted to obliterate. Reconciliation must move beyond individual abuse to come to mean a collective re-balancing of the playing field."⁵⁴

50 Fraser and Todd, "Decolonial Sensibilities."

51 Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg, MB: ARP Books, 2011), 17.

52 Simpson, 17.

53 Simpson, 27.

54 Simpson, 22–23.

Considering the many records containing information and observances about Indigenous languages, governance, and culture that are held within institutional vaults, this kind of “collective rebalancing” is necessary in archives. The work archivists are doing to address the individual and collective abuses of racism and white supremacy within institutions is integral, but this work must also expand to identify those who have the power to make decisions for archival management and to rebalance power relations through long-term, sustainable relationships. This type of rebalancing aligns with the harm-reduction principle that recognizes people as experts in their own lives and communities, which necessitates an examination of who has control in making decisions and setting policy. An examination and rebalancing of power relationships must impact archival work within institutions, and it might also nudge archivists to take their work outside of the institution, lending skills where they are invited to help communities archive their own records on their own terms.

Simpson’s writing on treaty relationships is particularly relevant when considering how to frame honourable and just engagement and relationships. Simpson uses the necessary conditions for successfully breastfeeding her children as an analogy for the qualities needed to make treaty relationships work: the mutual benefits for all parties must be understood; no one party can be in complete control over the resources or the process; time and effort are required for the relationship to come to fruition; and none of this necessarily comes naturally.⁵⁵ Simpson explains that recognizing these conditions helps with understanding that treaty relationships are long-term relationships and that “the relationship comes first above all else, above the pain.”⁵⁶ Similarly, building sustainable relationships that recognize impacted people as expert partners is an important principle in harm-reduction work. Thinking of how to lessen archival harm, we might see archival spaces as places of stewardship and our roles as those of facilitators and collaborators, with Indigenous people and communities as partners in the management of records involving them. Simpson’s teachings on relationships and shifting power can be key in guiding this shift.

An examination of power and Indigenous resurgence by Glen Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene) can also be useful for archivists. Coulthard argues that the

⁵⁵ Simpson, 106–7.

⁵⁶ Simpson, 108.

Canadian settler state relies on the use of “negotiated recognition”⁵⁷ to maintain superiority, with the resulting recognition politics often best serving those who already hold the most power.⁵⁸ Calling on Patrick Wolfe’s scholarship to explain that “the primary motive [of settler-colonialism] is not race . . . but access to territory,”⁵⁹ Coulthard argues that the structural nature of settler colonialism is the reason that agreements based on recognition politics reproduce colonial relations and continue dispossession of Indigenous lands, as the Canadian nation-state maintains its power through the ongoing dispossession and control of Indigenous lands and attempts to thwart Indigenous self-determination.⁶⁰ Rejecting this recognition politics, which “promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous people’s demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend”⁶¹ is central to Indigenous resurgence within settler colonialism. This discussion of negotiated recognition indicates that it is necessary to critically examine the way archivists undertake collaboration for archival management. If we see inclusion as an endpoint but stop short of shifting decision-making power over archival records to impacted communities, we may be merely engaging in a process that again redraws the power lines to our institutional advantages.

57 Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 3, 7.

58 Coulthard, 17. Coulthard states that recognition politics “promise to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples’ demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend.” *Red Skin, White Masks*, 3.

In an interview with *Upping the Anti*, Coulthard explains that, while Indigenous Peoples’ rights were recognized as a result of opposition to the 1969 White Paper of the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau, which would have furthered the assimilation of Indigenous people and further impeded rights regarding self-determination and sovereignty, Indigenous land dispossession continues through capitalist systems of development and settlement. See Karl Gardner and Devin Clancy, “From Recognition to Decolonization: An Interview with Glen Coulthard,” *Upping the Anti*, no. 19 (2017), <http://uppingtheanti.org/journal/article/19-from-recognition-to-decolonization>.

59 Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 7.

60 Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 3, 7; Gardner and Clancy, “From Recognition to Decolonization.”

61 Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 3.

Coulthard's analysis also centres the importance of natural resource use and profit to dispossession under settler colonialism.⁶² While archives in Canada may not necessarily have direct control over land, archival institutions do hold the documents that record and authorize colonial land ownership and have also played a role in upholding the authority and legitimacy of the written record over oral records – practices that have helped continue Indigenous land dispossession.⁶³ The roles that archives have played in land dispossession (and the benefits that archives have received) is a topic that certainly deserves more exploration than this article can cover, particularly in regard to discussions around archival decolonization. Archives also hold and control a significant amount of information pertaining to Indigenous land, people, and communities, at least some of which was collected with questionable consent or without consent, through exploitative and extractive research,⁶⁴ and the ongoing management of which does not actively include Indigenous input. If we are not open to developing ways to share control over the management of these archival records, including repatriation when requested, are we furthering a form of archival dispossession?

Building an Archival Harm-Reduction Framework

Considering what can be learned from these contemporary Indigenous writings on resurgence, power, and relationality, how can a harm-reduction approach to archival practice be helpful? It is important to keep in mind the limitations of settler harm reduction, as described by Tuck and Yang, as focusing mainly on critical consciousness is unlikely to shift any power imbalances, create any structural change, or lead to the repatriation of any land or records. Archival harm-reduction work must not only address immediate harms but must also shift who has the power to make decisions about the management of archival records, including decisions around repatriation. It may not be easy to separate

62 See Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 7; and Andrew Bard Epstein, "The Colonialism of the Present: An Interview with Glen Coulthard," *Jacobin*, January 13, 2015, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/01/indigenous-left-glen-coulthard-interview>.

63 Perry, "The Colonial Archive on Trial."

64 Linda Tuhiwai Smith discusses exploitative and extractive research in her book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2012).

the process of stopping immediate harms from that of rebalancing archival power. Indeed, addressing immediate harms to make archives friendlier places, as Fraser and Todd encourage, will work best in collaboration with the people who are impacted, and this collaboration would ideally shift archival power.

An archival harm-reduction approach can be applied to specific archival activities and areas. A preliminary list of activities that could be undertaken within an archival harm-reduction practice, mapped to corresponding harm-reduction principles,⁶⁵ could include the following:

TABLE 1 Preliminary archival harm-reduction activities

PUBLIC HEALTH HARM-REDUCTION PRINCIPLE	ARCHIVAL HARM-REDUCTION ACTION
<p>Acceptance</p> <p>Work to meet people where they are.</p>	<p>Acceptance</p> <p>Meet archival users, donors, and subjects where they are most comfortable, accepting that people may not feel comfortable in archival institutions.</p> <p>Build in the time and budget needed to develop relationships and build trust with interested and impacted communities.</p> <p>Accept that archival institutions are not the only suitable homes for archival records.</p> <p>Accept that research value does not override community consent and needs around access.</p>

65 The principles shown in the table, which reflect common principles used in harm-reduction practice, were pulled from a graphic used in Andrew Tatarsky, "They Didn't Have to Die," *Psychology Today*, September 15, 2019, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/beyond-disease/201909/they-didnt-have-die>.

<p>Compassion</p> <p>Work to reduce stigma and judgment in service delivery.</p>	<p>Compassion</p> <p>Apply radical empathy and a feminist approach to care that centres the unique needs of archival users, donors, and subjects.</p> <p>Incorporate into archival work the principles of trauma-informed archival practice, as detailed by Nicola Laurent and Kirsten Wright: safety, trust and transparency, choice, collaboration, and empowerment.⁶⁶</p> <p>Implement Krista McCracken and Skylee-Storm Hogan's recommendations for improving archival spaces for Indigenous archival users.⁶⁷</p> <p>Develop community support plans for working with and using records that involve trauma and violence.</p>
<p>Respect</p> <p>Acknowledge the value of lived experience; acknowledge that people are the experts in their own lives.</p>	<p>Respect</p> <p>Create archival spaces and practices that are equally accessible to all users.</p> <p>Respect impacted people and communities' abilities to provide valuable contributions, decisions, and guidance regarding archival work.</p> <p>Interrogate descriptive standards and adapt these to allow multiple creators of records to be explicitly named; ensure that community input and involvement in archival work are explicitly noted.</p> <p>Compensate community members for their engagement and labour, as is standard practice in harm-reduction organizations.</p>

66 Kirsten Wright and Nicola Laurent, "Safety, Collaboration, and Empowerment: Trauma-Informed Archival Practice," *Archivaria* 91 (Spring/Summer 2021): 38–73, <https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/13787>.

67 Krista McCracken and Skylee-Storm Hogan, "Laughter Filled the Space: Challenging Euro-Centric Archival Spaces," *International Journal of Information, Diversity & Inclusion* 5, no. 1 (2021): 97–110, 107.

McCracken and Hogan's discussion, in an article on residential school community archives, of the operation of the Shingwauk Residential School Centre is also helpful for reimagining archival practices, including by interrogating descriptive standards, adapting these to allow for the explicit naming of multiple creators of records, and ensuring that community involvement is explicitly noted. Krista McCracken and Skylee-Storm Hogan, "Residential School Community Archives: Spaces of Trauma and Community Healing," *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* 3 (2021).

<p>Collaboration</p> <p>Collaborate with impacted people and communities to ensure they are meaningfully involved in program and policy planning.</p>	<p>Collaboration</p> <p>Collaboratively review existing descriptions for racist and violent language and redescribe these with community involvement.</p> <p>Reimagine descriptive standards and systems to be less hierarchal in design, allowing the interrelations of records and their counterbalances to be more easily connected, visualized, and understood.</p> <p>Collaboratively write descriptions and add contextual details as determined by the involved people or community. This could involve adding Indigenous social memory records to counterbalance the archival record, as discussed by Raymond Frogner.⁶⁸</p> <p>Collaboratively decide on access restrictions and permissions with impacted community members, not only the traditional creators of the records.</p>
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⁶⁸ Frogner, "Innocent Legal Fictions," 81.

<p>Empowerment</p> <p>Empower impacted people and communities to have control over the decisions that affect them; upskill communities wherever possible.</p>	<p>Empowerment</p> <p>Rethink archival spaces as sites of stewardship rather than sites of ownership.⁶⁹</p> <p>Restructure legal agreements to accommodate stewardship options when desired.⁷⁰</p> <p>Stay open to the possibility of repatriation and digital return of records whenever requested and wherever possible.</p> <p>Work in partnership with communities to enable them to care for their own records by sharing archival skills and resources.</p> <p>Advocate for interested communities to receive funding to develop their own archival facilities and programs, including funding for education and infrastructure.</p>
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69 I believe that there are many guiding documents that can help us envision this shift toward stewardship. See Kathryn Beaulieu, Briana Bob, Sheree Bonaparte, Steve Crum, Amelia Flores, Alana Garwood-Houng, David George-Shongo et al., *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials* (n.p.: First Archivists Circle, 2007), <http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/protocols.html>; First Nations Information Governance Centre, *Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP): The Path to First Nations Information Governance* (Ottawa: First Nations Information Governance Centre, May 23, 2014), https://fnigc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/5776c4ee9387f966e6771aa93a04f389_ocap_path_to_fn_information_governance_en_final.pdf; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* (Winnipeg, MB: Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015), Internet Archive, May 6, 2020, https://web.archive.org/web/20200506065356/http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf; The Steering Committee on Canada's Archives, *Reconciliation Framework: The Response to the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Taskforce* (n.p.: Steering Committee on Canada's Archives, 2022), https://archives2026.files.wordpress.com/2022/02/reconciliationframeworkreport_en.pdf; United Nations Economic and Social Council, Updated Set of Principles for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights through Action to Combat Impunity, E.C.N.4/2005/102/Add.1 (February 8, 2005), <https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/2005/102/Add.1>; United Nations General Assembly, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, A/RES/61/295 (September 13, 2007), http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf.

70 Shelley Sweeney, Archivist Emerita at the University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, describes the creation of a shared stewardship approach here: Shelley Sweeney, "Academic Archivists as Agents for Change," *Comma* 2018, no. 1–2 (2018): 65–76, <https://doi.org/10.3828/comma.2018.6>.

Rebecca Johnson describes a shared stewardship agreement between artist Carey Newman and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights here: Rebecca Johnson, "Implementing Indigenous Law in Agreements – Learning from 'An Agreement Concerning the Stewardship of the Witness Blanket,'" *Reconciliation Syllabus* (blog), January 31, 2020, <https://reconciliationsyllabus.wordpress.com/2020/01/31/implementing-indigenous-law-in-agreements-learning-from-an-agreement-concerning-the-stewardship-of-the-witness-blanket/>.

Many of these activities have been discussed in the context of community archives and reparative archival work. Taking inspiration from Dean Spade's questions on the worthiness of reform,⁷¹ each activity could also be evaluated from a harm-reduction perspective to determine whether it is actually working toward shifting power over decision-making to ensure that it does not simply replicate the current inequity regarding control over archival records and that we are not merely relieving settler guilt.⁷²

The list of archival activities provided here is not exhaustive, definitive, or perfect, and some of the principles and corresponding activities might be seen to blur or to fit together differently; in fact, this list is best seen as a living, generative document to be changed and questioned. The suggested activities can be used to address immediate causes of harm and may begin to acknowledge and address more structural causes of harm by attempting to level out archival power imbalances through both institutional changes around decision-making and broader advocacy efforts. While many of the above activities pertain to institutional archival work, Spade's ideas on mutual aid and Simpson's focus on working outside of colonial systems might also lead archivists to think about how to more directly share their skills and shift resources in communities when invited, rather than staying inside institutions.

Conclusion

Ultimately, I am offering up my thoughts on archival harm reduction because I find it helpful to use a relational lens in my work. Rectifying archival harm is an inherently person-centred practice that represents a call for the type of slow archives that makes space and time to build relationships wherein harm may be repaired.⁷³ At its core, it is also about recentring people over product and process and resisting a neoliberal push in archives that requires constantly doing more with fewer resources. I suggest that this concept be read alongside the work of Indigenous authors because I think that harm-reduction principles are bolstered

71 Spade, "Solidarity Not Charity."

72 See Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor."

73 For more on slow archives, see Kim Christen and Jane Anderson, "Toward Slow Archives," *Archival Science* 19, no. 2 (2019): 87–116.

by Indigenous scholarship, which addresses some of the gaps that emerge from typical harm-reduction practice. In particular, Indigenous scholarship describes ways that settlers might build honourable and just relationships and reminds settlers that recognition alone will not disrupt harmful settler-colonial power imbalances. Harm reduction can provide companion concepts that open up yet another field from which archivists can learn, borrow, and adapt ideas. Personally, with the reality of archival harm at the forefront of my archival work, I can stay attuned to the ways that I might try to reduce harm through my practice.

In archives, a harm-reduction framework acknowledges that addressing archival power and privilege requires interrogating the archival principles and practices that structure the Western archival tradition in the first place. Tuck and Yang's critique of settler harm reduction warns settler archivists that we cannot redescribe our way out of racism and white supremacy; we must also do the work of evening out existing power relations and addressing who holds control both within archives and over archival records. Archival harm reduction can remind us that the work we must do is twofold – not only individual but also structural – and that our best results will come from both meeting community members where they are and inviting community members in.

BIOGRAPHY Krystal Payne is a settler archivist living on Treaty One Territory (Winnipeg, Manitoba), the birthplace and homeland of the Métis Nation, and Kishaadigeh Collaborative Research Centre (University of Winnipeg) and as an incoming PhD student at the University of Manitoba, trying her best to practice relationship-based archival work in the spirit of reconciliation and collaboration while imagining the archival possibilities that come with centring people and communities.