Background Brief on Local Contexts and the TK Labels
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Contact: info@localcontexts.org

What is Local Contexts?

Local Contexts is the name of an online platform and project that was developed to address the intellectual property needs of Native, First Nations, Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples in relation to the extensive collections of cultural heritage materials currently held within museums, archives, libraries and private collections. Local Contexts combines both legal and educational options in order to offer new mechanisms to re-position cultural authority over these collections. One of these options comes in the form of the newly developed Traditional Knowledge Labels (see below).

Who is Local Contexts?

Local Contexts was developed by Jane Anderson and Kim Christen in 2012. We work in collaboration with communities, tribal archives, museums and libraries and collecting institutions to build this project in ways that address specific Native and First Nation concerns about access, ownership and control of collections. We are currently working with over sixteen Native and First Nation communities and over ten cultural institutions and universities to test and implement the TK Labels. In 2015 we received a three-year NEH grant from the Division of Access and Preservation for the further development and national implementation of the TK Labels and a new curatorial model for Native cultural heritage material. The grant application itself is available on the NEH website. For the project see: www.localcontexts.org

Why?

Almost all the problems that now exist in relation to intellectual property law and Indigenous cultural materials and collections have their legacies in the uneven and unequal research practices that rendered Indigenous peoples as subjects for research and study, rather than collaborators and owners of the research outcomes and products. This meant that almost all representations of Native life, language, voice and image that was recorded or documented by a researcher, became that individuals intellectual property (via copyright). For many communities, issues around who owns these collections, and who decides who can control and circulate these is now a critical knowledge sovereignty matter. Local Contexts addresses some of these legacies by developing a strategy to deal with both cultural materials that are now in what is called ‘the public domain’, those still owned by non-Native peoples and institutions, as well as those being created and owned by Native, First Nation and Indigenous peoples.

TK labels are one practical way to empower Native, First Nations, Aboriginal and Indigenous communities to define the circulation routes and access obligations for
digital cultural heritage materials. The also help institutions address the uncomfortable histories in their collections’ provenance. Importantly, the TK Labels are aimed at enabling relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous rights holders by correcting and providing more information about materials to help those who want to use the materials outside of the communities make better decisions about re-use and circulation. They are also helping institutions build better relationships with communities whose collections they hold, steward, own and manage. The TK Labels are not designed to manage rights within a community context.

**The TK Labels**

The **TK Labels** are an educative and informational strategy to help non-community users of traditional cultural knowledge understand the importance and significance of this material, even when it is in the public domain and appears within an institutional catalogue as though it can be shared and used by everyone. The TK Labels are designed to identify and clarify which material has community-specific protocols of access and use associated with them.

The TK Labels provide an option for conveying important information about cultural heritage materials—their proper use, guidelines for action or responsible stewardship. The TK Labels can be used to include information that might be considered ‘missing’, for instance the name of community from where it derives, what conditions of use are deemed appropriate, how to contact the relevant family, clan or community to arrange appropriate permissions.

There are currently 15 TK Labels:

1. Attribution
2. Community Use Only
3. Non-commercial
4. Men’s Restricted
5. Family Use
6. Seasonal
7. Verified
8. Outreach
9. Sensitive
10. Community Voice
11. Commercial
12. Men’s General
13. Women’s Restricted
14. Secret/Sacred/Private
15. Women’s General

To see the icons for the TK Labels and their descriptions click here: http://www.localcontexts.org/tk/label

**Who is currently testing and working with Local Contexts?**

We are currently developing and testing the TK Labels through hands-on workshops and guided community feedback with sixteen First Nation and Native American communities and over ten cultural institutions (see list below). The TK Labels must work for Native, First Nations, Aboriginal and Indigenous communities first and foremost. Secondly, they need to work for institutions that hold these precious
belongings and allow them to create new Indigenous-driven access, ownership and circulation options that reflect community practice, governance and law. We are working with each institution to refine how the TK Labels are implemented into catalogue and archival management systems.

**Implementation**

As a digital tagging system, the TK Labels are being developed to be implemented within a wide range of content management systems. Our NEH grant is helping us make these machine readable as well as have the necessary conversations with IT departments within institutions about where and how to place the TK Label. We are working with stand along CMS – like that used by the Library of Congress. We are also working with more standard CMS including Emu and Past Perfect. We are also in the process of developing our TK Label adapter which will allow communities to create their own human readable and machine readable TK Labels. If you have any questions about implementation – please contact us at: info@localcontexts.org
THREE EXAMPLES of USE:

1. Sq’ewlets Band (Sto:lo First Nation)

In this project we have been working together on incorporating TK Labels, and in particular Sq’ewlets adaption of the TK Labels. The TK Labels are being used on a public website that has been developed to convey Sq’ewlets history and experience around archaeology. The audience for this website is Sq’ewlets youth and for non-First Nations youth across Canada and the world. This is a screenshot of the title page of the website and three TK Labels are visible at the top of the screen next to the word FRANCAIS.

While the Sq’ewlets have worked to develop the content for the site, they decided to use the TK Labels to convey community expectations for reading and engaging with this content. They decided on three labels: Attribution, Outreach and Non-Commercial. In workshops that we held with the Sq’ewlets they decided these three labels should be used for the whole site. We then worked to adapt the labels into the Sq’ewlets language of Halqemelem. Here is an example of the adaption for the Attribution Label and the Outreach Label.
Attribution Label:

**SKWIX QAS TÉMÉXW** (lit. name and place)

This website represents the true knowledge and history of Sq'ewlets people. The attribution label literally means 'name' and 'place' in our language, skwx qas te Téméxw. We ask everyone that visits this website to attribute our knowledge and histories to us, the Sq’ewlets First Nation, a tribe of Sto:lo. Our history has not always been respected or told correctly. Here we tell our own story in our own words. We are both holders and caretakers of our own lands, resources, and histories. It is the responsibility of our families and communities as Sto:lo people to take care of these things in a respectful way. Please feel free to contact us with further questions about attribution.

More about Traditional Knowledge labels

Outreach Label:

**S’íwes** (lit. education, teachings)

This website is intended to share who we are as Sq’ewlets people, and particularly to educate. The outreach label means 'educating' and 'teaching' in our language, s’íwes. We ask that outsiders respect our culture by not using the content out of context. If you use content on this website, please be respectful. We also encourage you to contact our Band to learn more about us and to create opportunities to learn more about us and our culture and history. [Click on the Sq’ewlets logo for our contact information]

More about Traditional Knowledge labels

Secret/Sacred Label:
Other labels may be used for specific purposes on the website. For example:

SECRET/SACRED

XA:XA

In our Stó:lō culture, certain types of knowledge are restricted in some way. This knowledge is considered sacred, secret, potent and/or private, and only certain people or families can and should have access to them. We call this xaxa in our language. This label indicates that there is additional knowledge about a certain subject that cannot be shared on the website.

Example:

- Community Archaeology
- Ancestor Mound 1
- Afterlife Belongings
- Ancestor Tree
- Caring For Ancestors
- Ancestor Cairn
- Ancestor Mounds
- The Development of Community Archaeology at Qithyl
- Taking Care of Ancestors: Fieldwork Protocols
- Repatriation
- The Long House
2. Musqueam First Nation

Since 2013 we have been working together on developing the TK Labels for use with their library collections and creating Musqueam versions of these for the Musqueam Digital Heritage Platform. This is a screenshot of what this looks like from a Musqueam perspective. This includes an example of the translation of the Musqueam version of the Attribution Label. The first text in italics comes from our template at www.localcontexts.org. The following text was produced by Musqueam representatives in directed workshops and then received tribal council approval for use.

![TK Attribution (TK A)](image)

This label is being used to correct historical mistakes or exclusions pertaining to this material. This is especially in relation to the names of the people involved in performing or making this work and/or correctly naming the community from which it originally derives. As a user you are being asked to also apply the correct attribution in any future use of this work.

This material is an aspect of Musqueam intellectual property and should be treated with respect. Musqueam has a Protocol that includes a formal research permitting process. Use of this material or further research should be done in consultation with the Musqueam Indian Band. Contact Musqueam Administration at research@musqueam.bc.ca to go through the permit request process.

When using this material please properly attribute to the “Musqueam Indian Band.” For online usage please attribute to “Musqueam Indian Band” and link to Musqueam.bc.ca.

Most often Musqueam materials and intellectual property has been misattributed to Cowichan, Squamish, or Sto:lo. This is the legacy of attempts of classifications done outside of consultation with communities.

3. Library of Congress and Passamaquoddy Tribe at Indian Township in Maine

Since 2014, we have been working to assist the Passamaquoddy Tribe develop a set of TK Labels for the first sound recordings of Native American voices ever recorded in 1890. These were made by Jesse Walter Fewkes with Passamaquoddy tribal members, Peter Selmore and Noel Josephs. These recordings are in the process of being digitized and will be included on the Library of Congress website with the Passamaquoddy TK Labels, which will allow a range of publics to experience a different cultural authority in relation to these recordings. Working closely with the American Folkife Center at the Library of Congress and Passamaquoddy elders, Passamaquoddy titles for the songs will be privileged as well as corrections to any inter-titles and metadata that came with
the cylinders before Passamaquoddy vetting. The Library of Congress will not be making recordings digitally available that the Passamaquoddy deem as ‘Sensitive’ or ‘Restricted’. Any public who comes to the AFC to access these recordings will need direct permission from the Passamaquoddy tribal administration. While part of the record will be displayed, this will be vetted according to Passamaquoddy protocols.

In developing the location for the online catalogue display, long conversations have been held within various divisions of the LoC (including Office of Technology and General Counsel) as to where the TK Label symbol will be placed. We have arrived at an agreement that it will be placed in a new field as close to the content as possible. It is not buried in notes or accompanying information. We are also working together to connect dispersed items that related to these recordings, including fieldnotes by Fewkes, letters Fewkes wrote on the day of the recordings and photographs when he returned to play the recordings back in May 1890. Below is a mock-up of where the TK Label will be placed when they are finalized. Local Contexts team have been central in brokering these relationships, negotiating around the TK Label display at the Library of Congress, working with Passamaquoddy tribal members to develop their set of TK Labels and helping the LOC develop their new workflow in relation to implementing these Labels.

With the Library of Congress we have also been developing institutional training modules to assist in the implementation of the TK Labels within institutional
cataloguing systems and working with metadata specialists and archivists engaging with the material that will be labeled.

**Communities Currently Working Local Contexts**

Penobscot Nation, Maine  
Passamaquoddy Tribe of Indian Township and Pleasant Point, Maine  
Karuk Tribe, California  
Plateau Peoples from Spokane, Colville, Umatilla, Coeur d’Alene, Warm Springs and Yakama Nations, Washington  
Hopi Nation, Arizona  
Pokagon Band of Potawatomi, Michigan  
Kaw Nation, Oklahoma  
Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head, Massachusetts  
Tejon Tribe, California  
Sto:Lo First Nation, Canada  
Musqueam Nation, Canada  
Ziibiwing center for Anishinabe Culture and Lifeways, Michigan

**Institutions Currently Working with Local Contexts**

American Folklife Center, Library of Congress  
Field Museum  
Abbe Museum  
American Philosophical Society  
Yale Indian Papers, Yale University  
Columbia University Center for Ethnomusicology  
Washington State University  
National Museum of the American Indian  
Brooklyn Museum  
University of Maine (Orono)  
Bobst Library, New York University  
Sam Noble Museum

Please contact us if you have any further questions:  
info@localcontexts.org