

Q&A with Lorisia MacLeod: The skill of applying



Lorisia MacLeod is a 2017-2018 Scholar and currently works as an Instruction Librarian at NorQuest College in Edmonton, Alberta. Lorisia holds an MLIS from the University of Alberta, where she also received her BA in Anthropology and French Language and Literature. She was recently selected as a 2019 ALA Emerging Leader (<http://www.ala.org/news/member-news/2018/11/ala-announces-emerging-leader-participants-class-2019>) and will be working with the American Indian Library Association (<https://ailanet.org/>) (AILA) on a project over the next year. Lorisia is a member of the James Smith Cree Nation and was a 2016-2018 Association of Research Libraries (ARL) Diversity Scholar (<https://www.arl.org/news/arl-news/4085#.W-nlb5NKiUk>). Here, she shares about her journey to librarianship, her

professional committee work, and why it's meaningful to be sponsored by AILA in her Emerging Leaders selection.

What drew you to the field of library and information science?

To be honest, when I finished my Bachelor's degree, I thought the one field I definitely wouldn't be going into was librarianship, mostly because my Dad (Kirk MacLeod (<http://www.ala.org/advocacy/spectrum/Kirk-MacLeod-champion>), 2012-2013 Scholar) is really good at being a librarian and I wasn't sure if I could be as good. So I spent about two years working for the City of Edmonton (my local municipal government) where I realized that I find information policy fascinating and that I wanted a degree that would help me build my leadership and management skills. When I discussed the program with staff from the University of Alberta's School of Library and Information Studies, I realized that librarianship was the field that I belonged in despite my earlier fears. Funny how it all worked out - in the end, I took an MLIS from the same school as my Dad, and loved it!

What are some skills you learned in your MLIS program or prior positions that you apply in your current role as an instruction librarian?

Teamwork! In most of my classes, the assignments were partner or group assignments so we really learned how to work with other people and different schedules. I think this might be the most underrated but most used skill of my MLIS.

Networking: AKA - most current professionals enjoy engaging with new professionals and students! I was always nervous when I went to contact anyone who is established in the profession, whether a professor or a professional, because I was worried that they would feel like I was wasting their time. In reality, every library professional and professor I connected with was so helpful, welcoming, and just all-around nice. I know how scary it can be to send that "Could we grab a coffee - I'd love to discuss your ideas on..." email but trust me, it is worth it.

The skill of applying: by this I mean the skill of applying for programs, for funding, for opportunities, and avoiding feeling down when you aren't selected. Not only would I not have the position I'm in now if I hadn't learned this skill, but I wouldn't have applied for ARL IRDW Diversity Scholars, ALA Spectrum or any of the other amazing opportunities that helped develop me as a student.

As an Instruction Librarian, I'm super grateful that I took the "Instructional Practices in Library and Information Services" course. Not only did it help me with the theory of teaching, but it also had a practical element where I got to run an instruction session. Most importantly, I got to see instruction sessions run by the other students which really opened my eyes to great ideas that they had or ways of presenting that just made me think "Wow, that was neat." That said, so many of my courses have been applicable, whether it's professionalism learned from my "Practicum" or figuring out how to quickly learn a new technology as I did in "Emerging and Evolving Technologies" - every day brings a new challenge and I'm glad I've learned a broad range of skills.

You're currently part of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations' Indigenous Matters Committee (CFLA-IMC) and a member of the American Indian Library Association (AILA) - could you tell us what activities you've been involved in with these groups, and what drew you to get involved?

Anyone who knows me, knows I love professional committee work. One major reason I enjoy being on committees or a member of associations is to meet other librarians. I really enjoy connecting with others to discuss ideas or challenges and I feel like it makes me a better librarian because I get to discuss all elements of librarianship including the hard stuff with other professionals.

On the Canadian Federation of Library Associations' Indigenous Matters Committee (http://cfla-fcab.ca/en/about/committees/indigenous_matters_committee/) (CFLA-IMC for short), I'm a co-chair of the Website Working Group and a member of the Future Leaders Committee. My co-chair position means I help put material created by the other working groups of CFLA-IMC onto the website and constantly improve the accessibility while the Future Leaders Committee is a group for Indigenous library students and new professionals to support and develop each other with guidance from Elders. In general, I also get to work with a great team of library professionals across the nation who are all dedicated to improving library/information services for Indigenous people across Canada and who wouldn't want to hang out with those people? Truthfully, through groups like CFLA-IMC I've connected with mentors and peers who have and continue to support and guide me - that has really drawn me to be involved.

I chose to join the American Indian Library Association (AILA) because I had a great experience meeting members of AILA when I was at an ALA conference as a Spectrum Scholar and I knew I had to join because there was so much passion, experience, and knowledge. There was no way I was going to miss out on that! I also often tell myself that librarianship doesn't stop at the Canada-USA border so why should I? In fact, there are a number of library-related challenges that Indigenous people face in both Canada and the USA. I knew there was plenty that I could learn from AILA members and I hope as I develop as a librarian that I'll be able to share my own knowledge and experiences to help others.

That was a pretty long way of saying - there were some of my library idols in these associations and joining these groups meant I got to work and learn alongside them which is way better than just following them on Twitter! Honestly, I can't stress enough to new professionals the empowerment and mentoring that associations offer you - join, learn, and then - in time- find a way to give back!

What do you hope to accomplish as an ALA Emerging Leader with AILA, and what does it mean to you to be sponsored by this group?

I think the most important thing that I hope to accomplish is to be a role model. Growing up, I was really lucky to have my Dad as a role model constantly showing me that Indigenous people had a place in libraries - in fact, that we had a place as librarians. But I know not everyone has someone like my Dad, so they might look at the librarians they know and feel like they aren't represented, that they couldn't be a librarian, that it's not a place for them. So I want to be that visible role model for others like my Dad has been and continues to be for me. I want future Indigenous librarians and minority librarians to feel empowered to apply for Emerging Leaders or other programs because that's what librarianship needs - strong, diverse voices striving for their vision of excellence.

I was so excited when I found out that I was being sponsored by AILA; it was really tough to not take to social media to express my joy! It's difficult to put into words the feeling of being sponsored by AILA but I'll try. Overall, it feels like I have a whole association of friends cheering me on and supporting me to reach my goals. For me, it's especially great that AILA decided to sponsor me because I've had some struggles in the past with finding space for my identity as an Indigenous Scholar/Indigenous Librarian so to have AILA support me feels like a confirmation that I'm on the right path.

I'm very excited to work with a group on a team project for the ALA Emerging Leaders and though I don't know the details of my project yet (at the time of writing this) I know it will be an excellent project that contributes to the continual improvement of librarianship. Needless to say, I'm pretty excited!



How has your experience as a Spectrum Scholar influenced your life thus far (personally, professionally, etc.)?

Gosh, if I listed all the ways I think we'd have pages and pages but I'll try to focus on a couple of key ways.

Simple truth: Without the ARL Diversity Scholar program and the ALA Spectrum Scholar program, I don't know if I would have completed my MLIS degree. I cannot express how much having those bonds with the other Spectrum and Diversity Scholars meant to me when I was dealing with lateral violence, imposter syndrome, or just even a

rough day. Spectrum is an amazing team of epic, inspiring individuals who would always be ready with a kind word or a virtual hug. We cheer each other on, we share stories and opportunities, we push each other to be the best we can be while making sure that we still feel supported by each other. That is a pretty empowering feeling and I probably don't tell them enough how much it means to me when I see us lifting each other up. I'm so proud to be a part of the Spectrum family.

Professionally, I know the Spectrum Scholarship has been a great addition to my resume but it's also given me a broader sense of what a better tomorrow in librarianship looks like to me. It's easy to start thinking about how to improve the system for my people but it provided me with a better understanding - that if we are gonna change things, we might as well improve it for all under-served groups. The biggest strength of

the Spectrum Family is our fierce passion - we all might have slightly different areas of librarianship we focus on but we all are committed to always improving. It's a pretty powerful family to be a part of and professionally it's hard not to constantly feel inspired by everyone- but hey, being inspired all the time isn't too bad!

With Spectrum, I have met peers, friends, and mentors that I don't know if I would have ever met without this program. I honestly would not be as good a librarian without my experiences as a Spectrum Scholar - it's just that simple.

Of course, there are many other elements - getting to share the honour of being the first second-generation Spectrum Scholar with my Dad for example - but if I listed them all we'd be here for quite a while!

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