



Contemporary Challenges and Censorship in School Libraries in Canada

Authors _ Richard Beaudry (librarianlai@icloud.com), Coordinator of the Teacher Librarianship Diploma and Certificate Program and an Adjunct Professor, University of British Columbia. Toni Samek (toni.samek@ualberta.ca), Professor, School of Library and Information Studies, Faculty of Education, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Alberta.

The purpose of this chapter is to familiarize readers with contemporary challenges and censorship in school libraries and learning commons in Canada. The informal narrative reflects the viewpoints of seasoned advocates for intellectual freedom and social responsibility in the Canadian library sector. Content concentrates on the main sources of challenges, four common types of challenges that can lead to censorship (content, curriculum, genre, and book leveling), an essential two step strategy and related resources for dealing with challenges and combating censorship, and a pointer for educators in library and information programs. The chapter closes with an expression of appreciation and concern for the individuals who take personal and professional risk in managing challenges and combating censorship in school libraries and learning commons in Canada and beyond.

Access to school library program services and collections should be based on the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, and should not be subject to any form of ideological, political, religious censorship, or to commercial pressures.
—IFLA School Library Manifesto 2021

On occasion in Canada, as elsewhere, parents and guardians have concerns with the school library or learning commons books and other resources their children read, view, listen and play either at school and/or when they bring resources home from school. They may challenge and even seek to censor these resources, contained and accessed in their child's library or learning commons, for various reasons.

While challenging reading, listening, viewing, and playing content is a parent's and guardian's prerogative for their child, removing access to a book or other resource from the library or learning commons for all the other students in the

school, or across a district, can constitute censorship and is an issue with which teacher librarians and other information workers must deal. Dianne Oberg explains, "Freedom of expression rights are essential to education in a free and



democratic society. These are the rights of everyone in the school community, including students. Teacher-librarians are charged with ensuring that those rights are acknowledged and respected” (Oberg 2022).

As Canadians, we value our democratic and *Charter* rights as expressed in The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Government of Canada 1982), and as global citizens our human rights are expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 1948). We hope that our teacher librarians, and information workers more broadly, can resolve book and other challenges and avoid censorship within our institutional library contexts to the satisfaction of all concerned parties. However, the reality is that every year some parents, guardians, and outside groups and lobbyists have sought to limit students’ access to and use of books and other resources in Canadian school libraries and learning commons. Even with district policies in place, teacher librarians sometimes find themselves confronted by parents, guardians, and/or outside groups and lobbyists, and are often directed by administrators under pressure, and/or district staff, to remove or censor items from their school libraries and learning commons. Most of the pressure in the realm of common challenges is triggered by parents or guardians who disapprove of language, viewpoints, and ideas that differ from their own. In select cases, a school administrator may instigate a challenge or perform an act of censorship. In some instances, the argument is made, the action taken only affects one school, or one item in the district, so why make a fuss? The simple answer is: *it does matter*. Whether a challenge or act of censorship occurs in one school or one district, the reality is the attempted or executed removal of any item from a school library or learning commons, anywhere in the country, may bring about challenges and censorship elsewhere in Canada (and potentially beyond).

Typically, school libraries and library learning commons in Canada contend with censorship challenges on four fronts. First, challenges can come from within a specific school and often start with a parent or guardian of students who attend the school. Second, requests for removal of reading or other resources within the school system can come from school boards, district personnel, administrators, teachers, or teacher librarians. Third, challenges from outside the school, on content in the library or learning commons collection and access services, can stem from parents or guardians seeking the removal of an item from all schools in the district. Fourth, external challenges may also stem from groups or lobbyists with a specific agenda on the removal of a type of book or other resource associated with a certain theme or content.

The most common types of challenges in school libraries and learning commons in the last five years reflect

individual or group disagreement with content coverage of sexuality, religion, race and ethnicity, and/or the age appropriateness of the resources with respect to who has access to them. Such disagreements threaten access to information and opportunity for knowledge development available to students and can lead to challenges and instances of censorship in schools. The issue is that challenges make it difficult to address students’ real concerns, satisfy their intellectual curiosity, their right to the free development of personality, or prepare them for lifelong learning. For example, a notable scenario involving censorship within the school system involved a teacher librarian filing a human rights complaint against a school district and school administrator based on their personal beliefs. The teacher librarian in this instance was removing the LGBTQia2s+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, agender, two-spirit, plus) books from the library learning commons and when asked to desist, refused and went to the British Columbia (BC) Human Rights Tribunal. The BC Human Rights Tribunal determined the teacher librarian’s case was without merit and dismissed the complaint (Steffenhagen 2009).

The Nature of Challenges

Types of challenges in school libraries and learning commons can be classified, loosely, into four categories: content, curriculum, genre, and book leveling. Each of these are discussed below.

Content Challenges

In recent years, many censorship issues reflect LGBTQia2s+ content. Meanwhile, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) 123 offers educators prepared grade-appropriate SOGI-inclusive lesson plans that teachers can adapt or adopt. In the western provinces of BC and Alberta this includes SOGI 123 curriculum resources for classroom use by teachers and fiction and nonfiction reading materials for the school library. For example, *Drama* (Raina Telgemeier 2012), *Being Jazz* (Jazz Jennings 2015); the Harry Potter series (J.K. Rowling 1997-2016) (sorcery), the Twilight series (Stephenie Meyer 2005-2020) (horror), stories where teenagers interact in a physical manner (lust), and *The Hate U Give* (Angie Thomas 2017) (racist and adult content). Other books challenged recently include *Sisterhood of the Travelling Pants* (Ann Brashares 2001) and the *Shopaholic* series (Sophie Kinsella 2001-2019) (poor representation of young women). In January 2019, CBC News Online reported a scenario in the nation’s capital, which always troubles teacher-librarians across Canada: a request for removal of a popular book from all of the elementary libraries in the Ottawa Catholic School



Board. The headline read “*Catholic board pulls book with LGBT characters from elementary libraries*” (Osman 2019).

The 2012 graphic novel *Drama* by American author and illustrator Raina Telgemeier, tells the story of a student who wants to be a part of her middle-school theatre production. The side story, about same-sex relationships, includes two boys sharing an onstage kiss. A parent requested the book be removed from the learning commons at their child’s school and went to the district offices with their request. Instead of being directed to remove the book from the learning commons where the complaint was launched, the district directed all the schools to remove the offending book. The removal was reported to the press; after a social media uproar that included statements from the author of the book, librarians, LGBTQias2+ advocates, politicians, and parents, the Ottawa Catholic School Board reversed its decision the following day (Catholic school board 2019).

A very recent example of a request for removal of items from all schools occurred in April 2022, within the Durham District School Board in Ontario. A group of First Nations¹ (Government of Canada August 30, 2022) parents requested the book *The Great Bear (The Misewa Saga, Book 2)* by First Nations author David Robertson, and several other books, be removed from the learning commons throughout the district, pending a review. The *Toronto Star* reported the district had pulled several books from their learning commons because they contained “content that could be harmful to Indigenous students and families” (Follert 2022). Concerningly, the district offered no explanation as to what the harmful content was. After a contentious Board meeting in May, where questions were posed about why district policies were not followed, the district acquiesced, and the books in question were returned to the library learning commons, pending a review.

There are examples of challenges that were resolved by following district policies in Canada during the 2021-2022 school year. Three of these were for elementary collections: *Bad Kitty for President* (Nick Bruel 2012) (using “%#@\$”, bad words); *George* (Alex Gino 2015) (LGBTQia2s+ concern), and *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* (Jeff Kinney 2008) (bullying). The fourth was in a middle school: *We Are All Made of Molecules* (Susin Nielsen -Ferland 2015) (LGBTQia2s+ concern).

Clearly, to some people it may seem simpler for teacher librarians to remove one challenged resource by acquiescing to a school administrator or a district request rather than

going through the challenge process. However, any challenge in a school library or learning commons in Canada needs to be addressed ‘by the book.’ Reporting a challenge provides information about the source of the challenge, the type of challenge, and the resource(s) or access in question as the challenge or censorship occurs in a school library or learning commons. This critical information assists teacher librarians’ ability to understand and resolve a complaint, or a challenge to remove a book or other resource, and to combat censorship. Ideally detailed documentation takes place in-house and is also shared at the national level. The American Library Association’s (ALA) challenge reporting system provides a strong model and has influenced gatekeeping activity for national challenge reporting in Canada. For example, the Book and Periodical Council (BPC) in Toronto, an umbrella organization for associations that deal with writing, editing, illustrating, publishing, reading, and selling books, has been maintaining a list of challenged items, accessible via its Freedom to Read Week website, for years. BPC also offers a list of the top 100 works challenged in Canada. The Canadian Federation of Library Associations—Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques (CFLA-FCAB), through the work of its Intellectual Freedom Committee, runs an annual Challenges Survey and publishes reports dating back to 2006. More recently, the Centre for Free Expression (CFE), based at Metropolitan Toronto University, began building a new challenges database for Canadian public, school, academic, and government libraries.

Curriculum Challenges

As in the United States (US), where states are responsible for their education systems, education is the responsibility of provincial and territorial governments in Canada. The curriculum for each province or territory is a set of educational expectations which outline the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn and apply by the end of a grade or course, from kindergarten to grade 12. The mission of the teacher librarian in the school library or learning commons, is to assure students and staff have access to appropriate resources and information in multiple formats and languages to complement the learning outcomes in the curriculum. Of course, this work receives critique and criticism.

In January 1997, James Chamberlain, an elementary school teacher in BC submitted three books for Board approval to use in his grade one class. They were *One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dads, Blue Dads* (Johnny Valentine 1994) *Asha’s Mums* (Rosamund Elwin and Michele Paulse 1990), and *Belinda’s Bouquet* (Leslie Newman 1991). He wanted to use the books to teach about families, which is part of the grade one curriculum. Some parents complained and the

1. The Canadian Constitution recognizes 3 groups of Aboriginal peoples: Indians (more commonly referred to as First Nations), Inuit and Métis. These are 3 distinct peoples with unique histories, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.



Board refused Mr. Chamberlain's request. Mr. Chamberlain took the matter to court; the case ended up in the Supreme Court of Canada, and on December 21, 2002, a ruling was announced (*Chamberlain v. Surrey District School Board* 2002). The Supreme Court of Canada ruled the ban on books about gay and lesbian parents has no place in a public school system that claims to promote diversity and tolerance. Former Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin wrote in the seven-two ruling, "Parental views, however important, cannot override the imperative placed upon the British Columbia public schools to mirror diversity of the community and teach tolerance and understanding of difference." And one small section of the 2002 ruling had important implications for challenges in Canadian school libraries or learning commons: "The distinction between actions and beliefs is present in Canada's constitutional case law: persons are entitled to hold such beliefs as they choose, but their ability to act on them, whether in the private or public sphere, may be narrower" (*Chamberlain v. Surrey District School Board* 2002).

When the BC Ministry of Education introduced the SOGI 123 program in schools it was challenged by some parents and groups, such as Culture Guard. Challenging the implementation of SOGI 123 was used as a political platform for some candidates running as school trustees in the last municipal elections, in BC, in 2018. Parents and groups in certain districts demanded school boards rescind the implementation of the program and for the removal of offending resources from both the classroom and the learning commons. Even though the BC Ministry of Education policy allows parents the flexibility to have their children participate or not participate, in "sensitive areas" of the curriculum, specifically topics related to reproduction and sexuality, the program was not rescinded. Further, only four candidates who ran on a specific anti-SOGI 123 platform were elected.

Requests for removal of the SOGI 123 program are now being renewed with the approach of municipal elections in the fall of 2022. The groups in opposition are now better organized and are using the same playbook as the one used in certain American states. This includes accusing the school library or learning commons of peddling pornography to children with the LGBTQia2s+ resources made available to districts for the program. One such group is Action4Canada, situated in Surrey, BC. The group, after the 2021-2022 school year concluded, sent a *Notice of Personal Liability—Facilitating in Exposure of Minors to Sexually Explicit Materials, Activities and/or events* to school districts. The letter is divided into three sections (an explanation of notice, the laws included in the email, and the request), as shown in the appendix.

Since these notices were sent to school districts after the end of the school year, when teacher librarians and teachers are, for the most part, on summer holidays, a response would have had to wait for the school year 2022-2023. However, some librarians, teacher librarians, and teachers in BC, as well as their associations, prepared a response. The BC Teacher-Librarians' Association (BCTLA) was notified, and emails were sent to teacher librarians across the province. The BCTLA attempted to find out which districts had been contacted, or if all the districts had received the *Notice of Personal Liability*. The president of the BCTLA was in contact with the CFLA-FCAB's Intellectual Freedom Committee. There was concern within the BCTLA that these emails were received after the end of the school year, and teacher librarians were not actively involved in responding to these emails.

The CFLA-FCAB's Intellectual Freedom Committee, the BCTLA and the CFE worked to prepare useful information for all teacher librarians in BC public schools. This includes position statements and documents from the CFE and CFLA-FCAB. Information was sent regarding contacting local teacher unions and the BC Teachers' Federation (BCTF) for additional assistance. The CFLA-FCAB's Intellectual Freedom Committee contacted both Master of Library and Information Studies (MLIS) and related teacher librarian programs across the country and requested they incorporate this information in any courses they offer on intellectual freedom or library policies associated with this issue. Instructors in the *Diploma in Teacher Librarianship* at the University of British Columbia were also contacted. A short lesson was created on the *Notice of Personal Liability* and how to deal with it, and it was incorporated into the summer courses offered. The lessons were also used in courses during the next academic year.

As well, Canadian School Libraries (CSL) was contacted; it sent out information to membership through its email list and blog in late August 2022. Everyone was informed the *Notice of Personal Liability* holds no legal weight, given that it was not sent by a lawyer but a small organization with their own agenda. Accusing anyone in education in BC associated with the SOGI 123 program of distributing pornography does not make it so. The work done by the librarian associations, librarians, teacher librarians, and allies before the next school year opened offered the frontline workers the information and tools needed to respond effectively to these accusations.

Genre Challenges

Challenges based on genre are the most common type in a school library or learning commons or public library in Canada. Notably in the early 2000's, a small group of parents



presented a list of book genres they requested be removed from the learning commons at a middle\high school in Canada. The list included art books, photography books, dark, horror or evil books, and books that dealt with teenage lust or contained recurring swearing. The parents signed a caveat with the previous principal of the school that effectively, in their opinion, superseded the existing policies in the district pertaining to removing items from the collections. The teacher librarian contacted the local teacher union, the Langley Teachers' Association (TLA), which launched a grievance and sent a response to the parents of the school. TLA noted "any attempt at censorship in any type of library is a significant issue for the library community in Canada as a whole and will be reported to the press and referred to the appropriate specialists who will mount a vigorous defense against it. The secretary treasurer (of the district) should refer to the decision of the court case in Surrey" (Richard Beaudry, personal notes, September 15, 2009). As a direct result of the union grievance, the teacher librarian was able to keep the collection in place. Importantly, the caveat signed between the parent group and school administration was rescinded.

Leveled Book Challenges

The freedom to choose what to read, view, listen, or play is at the heart of our school library or learning commons programs and what it means to be a student in Canada who is poised to engage in literacy in many forms. What is not in question is that teacher librarians want all students to read. They encourage students to read for recreation, education, information, and culture, and to love reading for the sake of reading.

A few years ago, an important censorship challenge occurred in an elementary school in Canada where the administration had decided to level all the books in the library, in the bookroom (a space used to house multiple copies of the same title to be used by teachers in the classroom), and including the teachers' personal collections of books in classrooms (Richard Beaudry, personal notes, October 20, 2016). In requesting all the books in the school be leveled, the administrator had a list of specific leveled books that was to be available for students in the school. If any existing book was not on the list, it was to be removed from the collection, bookroom, or classroom. The teacher librarian in the school objected to the removal of so many books and, as a result, the teacher librarian position was eliminated. The library technician expressed the same concerns and was transferred to another school. With a new library technician in place and parent volunteers, the process of eliminating large swaths of the fiction books was undertaken. The staff contacted the local teachers' union and two grievances were

launched: the first addressed the issue of the removal of the books from the learning commons and the second addressed the issue of teacher autonomy.

The school administration had been asked to stop removing books from the library, bookroom, and classrooms. But the administration neglected to ask the library technician and parent volunteers to stop weeding the collection and leveling the books. So the process continued another week before the union notified the district; they then requested the administration stop removing books. After an inventory was requested by the teacher union, it was determined that 5,000 books had been weeded from the learning commons collection in two years. Thirty boxes of books were located and ready to be incinerated before they were returned to the school. With assistance from the Canadian Library Association's (predecessor to CFLA-FCAB) Advisory Committee on Intellectual Freedom, the BCTLA, and the BCTF, the grievance was settled. The School Board committed to having in place a request for reconsideration form that would prevent any further opportunity for one person to remove books from a school library or learning commons without a consensus and following the district policy. The School Board agreed to rehire the teacher librarian who lost their position. The learning commons received funds from the school district to rebuild the collections in the library and the bookroom. Individual classroom teachers were compensated for the loss of their personal classroom collections.

Essential Strategy and Resources for Dealing with a Challenge

With most censorship challenges in a school library or learning commons in Canada, the issue is resolved when the parties involved follow the policies and protocols in place. This process usually includes filing a 'Request for Reconsideration' form, the formation of a committee to review the resource, a decision on how to deal with the request, and a concluding response sent to the person or group that initiated the challenge. In most cases, this process works well, and the public generally does not hear about the challenge. Problems arise, though, when, rather than using the district's selection and deselection criteria per the policies, school or district administration simply request the quiet removal of the resource(s) in question, bypassing the protocols and consultation with the teacher librarians in the decision process. In the latter scenario, a grievance is initiated, based on the teacher contract, and the matter is resolved internally. While there have been times when the challenge is published in the media, administrators, in most cases, relent and permit the resource(s) to remain in the school library or learning commons.



When a challenge occurs, there is an essential two step strategy that has proven to be effective. First and foremost, be proactive. Make sure at the start of each school year the district's policies for school libraries or library learning commons are up-to-date, the form for reporting challenges is available as a document or downloadable pdf, and relevant parties are in the know. Secondly, address the issue in an informed and constructive manner. If, for any reason, an administrator or the school district decides to remove a book or other resource or block access, from one or several schools, there are legal documents and statements in Canada that can be used to reinforce effective arguments to follow the district process for challenges.

An example of a district policy that deals with challenged materials includes the directives

1. Request for Formal Reconsideration
 - 2.4. The request for reconsideration of materials in school-based collections shall be referred to a reconsideration committee at the school or District level for re-evaluation of the resource.
 - 2.5. The reconsideration committee may choose to consult District support staff and/or community persons with related professional knowledge.
 - 2.6. The reconsideration committee shall review the challenged resource and judge whether it conforms to the principles of selection outlined in Administrative Procedure 251—Selection of Learning Resources.
 - 2.7.4. The decision of the respective reconsideration committees is binding on the individual school.
 - 2.7.5. Notwithstanding any procedure outlined in this Administrative Procedure, the questioner shall have the right to appeal any decision of the reconsideration committee under Section 11 of the School Act. (Vancouver School Board 2021)

Each of the provinces and territories in Canada has a School Act that covers the establishment of school districts and how they are run. Library learning commons across Canada also take direction from the School Act within their province or territory, but choosing the reading materials is not only based on the curriculum; it also has to do with age-appropriate reading materials that are based on the reading interests of the students. Section 76 of the BC School Act, for example, states “All schools and Provincial schools must be conducted on strictly secular and non-sectarian principles” and “the highest morality must be inculcated, but no religious dogma or creed is to be taught in a school or Provincial school” (Queen's Printer 2022).

The BC Civil Liberties Association's includes the following directive:

Standing to invoke a review process: Adequate evidence of widespread concern.

In our Association's view, there must be sufficient evidence of significant opposition to the material before the review process is commenced. For example, evidence of widespread concern sufficient to invoke the process could be presented in a petition. It should not be enough for the subjective views of one person to invoke an expensive and time-consuming process. Evidence of communal concern is, of course, not enough in itself to prohibit any particular material since the views of the majority should not automatically determine access to ideas and information, even for youth. (British Columbia Civil Liberties Association 1997)

The British Columbia Library Association's (BCLA) Statement on Intellectual Freedom assert it is “the responsibility of library administrators and librarians, as guardians of the peoples' freedom to read, to contest encroachments upon that freedom by individuals or groups seeking to impose their own standards or tastes upon the community at large” (British Columbia Library Association n.d.)

Important resources at the national and international level are offered below, starting with the CFLA–FCAB Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries, which affirms:

The Canadian Federation of Library Associations holds that libraries are a key institution in Canada for rendering expressive content accessible and affordable to all. Libraries are essential gateways for all persons living in Canada to advance themselves through literacy, lifelong learning, social engagement, and cultural enrichment.

Libraries have a core responsibility to safeguard and facilitate access to constitutionally protected expressions of knowledge, imagination, ideas, and opinion, including those which some individuals and groups consider unconventional, unpopular or unacceptable. To this end, in accordance with their mandates and professional values and standards, libraries provide, defend and promote equitable access to the widest possible variety of expressive content and resist calls for censorship and the adoption of systems that deny or restrict access to resources. (Canadian Federation of Library Associations 2016)

The CFLA-FCAB Position Statement on Diversity and Inclusion, carried over from the CLA, insists libraries “understand that an acceptance of differences can place individual and collective values in conflict. Libraries are committed to tolerance and understanding. Libraries act to ensure that people can enjoy services free from any attempt



by others to impose values, customs or beliefs (Canadian Library Association 2008).

The BPC's Statement on Freedom of Expression and Freedom to Read, which notes the "freedom to choose what we read does not, however, include the freedom to choose for others. We accept that courts alone have the authority to restrict reading material, a prerogative that cannot be delegated or appropriated. Prior restraint demeans individual responsibility; it is the anathema to freedom and democracy" (Book and Periodical Council n.d.).

The ALA Code of Ethics includes the following directives, among others:

We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources.

We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces. (American Library Association 2021)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Canada in 1990, observes:

The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

The exercise of this right may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary. (United Nations 1989)

A Pointer for Educators in Library and Information Programs

It is imperative to address any challenge and censorship in a school library or learning commons. Local colleagues, as well as local, provincial/territorial, and national library associations, are available to support any teacher librarian who is confronted by a challenge to remove a book from their school library or learning commons. It is in the teacher librarian's best interest to contact their provincial/territorial association to report any censorship issues and to contact the CFLA-FCAB's Intellectual Freedom Committee to report the challenge and the reasons it occurred. This advocacy work should be addressed in any library and information

program. It is particularly important to have a solid educational foundation on which to scaffold post degree or diploma professional development, some of which for example may be offered in-house or by support groups such as the CFE's Intellectual Freedom Working Group. Any such teaching and learning should be inclusive of attention to the role of trustees in sustaining the library as a hub for open inquiry and critical thinking. Encouragingly, the ALA launched an e-course on the first Amendment and library services on September 12, 2022.

Teaching and learning provide opportunity to facilitate important examinations of intellectual freedom and social responsibility as two core values of librarianship and the range of related issues impacting librarians, library institutions, and library associations. Teachers and learners can delve into intellectual freedom and social responsibility in the context of library and information work across sectors, so that students can apply theory to practice and weigh out critical considerations (e.g., moral persuasions, professional ethics and rhetoric, institutional policy, legislation, and human rights codes) as numerous contexts come into frame (e.g., philosophical, ideological, political, social, cultural, legal, economic, or technological). Both the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Government of Canada 1982) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations 1948) provide important windows into the development of library rhetoric as an ongoing task and the work of reconciling rhetoric with realities.

This education is heightened given library and information students prepare to handle information and knowledge across the K-12 curriculum, and thus engage with transdisciplinary concerns, including access to information and the right to know, misinformation and disinformation, data sovereignty, digital inequities, the power of naming, epistemicide, knowledge justice, and the deliberate destruction of the material evidence reflected in cultural heritage in times of conflict to name a few. A special resource in the latter regard is the CFLA-FCAB Deliberate Destruction of Libraries Position Statement, carried over from CLA, which states:

The firebombing of the United Talmud Torah grade school library in Montreal, Quebec on April 5, 2004 brought our close attention to the issue of intentional destruction of libraries here in Canada. With the more recent news of the temporary closing of the Library and Archives of Iraq in December 2006 and even more recent occupation of its building for military purposes, we were reminded of the true precarious status of libraries on the global stage. It is important for CFLA/FCAB to adopt a statement on the intentional destruction of libraries. A precedent resolution exists



in ALA dating back to 1971. As well, in 2003, UNESCO adopted its related international Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage. (Canadian Federation of Library Associations 2016)

Conclusion

As we bring school libraries, teacher librarianship and learning commons into sharp focus, we observe challenges in K-12 schools and libraries are in the North American media just about every day. Some of these events are inclusive of book bans *and* gag orders. Canada is not immune from the censorship prevalent in our world. School libraries or learning commons in Canada continue to reflect challenges and censorship. What does the future hold? We should pay attention to the world's oldest and largest library association, the ALA, and its recent release of a statement entitled ALA

Condemns Threats of Violence in Libraries in response to “the alarming increase in acts of aggression toward library workers and patrons as reported by press across the country” and what might bode for Canada (American Library Association 2022).

This chapter has aimed to aid our understandings of contemporary challenges and censorship in school libraries in Canada and to recognize an urgent need demanding attention from us, from our profession, and from society more broadly. We thank, defend and applaud our colleagues engaged in managing challenges and combating censorship, who raise awareness about members of our school (and other) library communities in need of intercultural supports to navigate troubling occurrences of teacher-librarianship seen as insurgency and delegitimizing trust in educational space.

References

- Action4Canada. n.d. “A Curated List of SOGI-Inclusive Books for K-12 Schools.” Accessed September 11, 2022. <https://action4canada.com/wp-content/uploads/List-of-SOGI-Inclusive-Books-for-K-12-Schools.pdf>.
- American Library Association. 2021. “Code of Ethics.” <https://www.ala.org/tools/ethics>.
- American Library Association. 2022. “ALA Condemns Threats of Violence in Libraries.” <https://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2022/06/ala-condemns-threats-violence-libraries>.
- Beaudry, Richard. 2022. “When a Book by an Eminent Indigenous Author Is Pulled from a School Library, Something is Wrong.” *Centre for Free Expression* (blog), May 4. <https://cfe.ryerson.ca/blog/2022/05/when-book-eminent-indigenous-author-pulled-school-library-something-wrong>.
- Book and Periodical Council. n.d. “Challenged Works.” Accessed September 11, 2022. <http://www.freedomtoread.ca/challenged-works/>.
- Book and Periodical Council. n.d. “Freedom of Expression and Freedom to Read.” Accessed September 11, 2022. <http://www.thebpc.ca/whats-happening/freedom-to-read-week/>.
- Book and Periodical Council. n.d. “Welcome to the BPC.” Accessed September 11, 2022. <https://www.thebpc.ca/>.
- British Columbia Library Association. n.d. “Statement of Intellectual Freedom.” Accessed September 11, 2022. <https://bclaconnect.ca/about/statement-of-intellectual-freedom/statement-of-intellectual-freedom/>.
- Canadian Federation of Library Associations—Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques. 2016. “Deliberate Destruction of Libraries Position Statement.” <https://cfla-fcab.ca/en/guidelines-and-position-papers/deliberate-destruction-of-libraries-position-statement/>.
- Canadian Federation of Library Associations—Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques. 2018. “Intellectual Freedom Challenges Survey.” Accessed September 11, 2022. <http://cfla-fcab.ca/en/programs/intellectual-freedom-challenges-survey/>.
- Canadian Federation of Library Associations—Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques. 2022. “Notices of Personal Liability: Memo from CFLA’s Intellectual Freedom Committee.” July 6. <https://cfla-fcab.ca/en/intellectual-freedom/notices-of-personal-liability/>.
- Canadian Federation of Library Associations—Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques. 2016. “Statement on Intellectual Freedom and Libraries.” <http://cfla-fcab.ca/en/guidelines-and-position-papers/statement-on-intellectual-freedom-and-libraries/>.
- Canadian Library Association. 2008. “Position Statement on Diversity and Inclusion.” <https://cla.ca/wp-content/uploads/Diversity-and-Inclusion-May-2008.pdf>.
- “Catholic school board changes mind, allows book depicting 2 boys kissing back in libraries.” CBC News. January 16, 2019. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/drama-graphic-novel-catholic-library-1.4980153>.
- Chamberlain v. Surrey School District No. 36. Supreme Court Judgements—Report [2002] 4 SCR 710—Case Number 28654. Last modified December 20, 2022. <https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/2030/index.do>.
- Follert, Jillian. 2022. “DDSB Responds to Criticism after Book by Indigenous Author Pulled from School Library Shelves.”



- thestar.com. April 18. <https://www.thestar.com/local-oshawa/news/2022/04/18/ddsb-responds-to-criticism-after-book-by-indigenous-author-pulled-from-school-library-shelves.html>.
- Government of Canada. 2019. Justice Laws Website. Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Constitution Act, 1982 (80) Part I—Fundamental Freedom. Last modified February 19, 2019. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html>.
- Government of Canada. 2022. Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada “*Indigenous Peoples and Communities*.” Last modified August 30, 2022. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100013785/1529102490303>.
- Government of Canada. 2022b. Justice Laws Website. Criminal Code (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-46) 163.1 (1). Last modified June 29, 2022. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/c-46/section-163.1.html>.
- Government of Canada. 2022c. Justice Laws Website. Criminal Code (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-46) 152. Last modified June 29, 2022. <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-46/section-152.html>.
- Hensley, Laura. 2018. “Certain Books Continue to Cause an Uproar in Canadian Education—Here’s Why.” Global News. October 19. <https://globalnews.ca/news/4571476/banned-books-in-canadian-schools/>.
- International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions. 2021. “IFLA School Library Manifesto 2021.” https://www.ifla.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/assets/school-libraries-re-source-centers/publications/ifla_school_manifesto_2021.pdf.
- Mollard, Murray. J. 1997. “Civil Liberties in the Schools.” British Columbia Civil Liberties Association. April 10. https://bccla.org/our_work/civil-liberties-in-the-schools/.
- Oberg, Dianne. n.d. “Freedom of Expression Rights and the School Library: Who Speaks for the Kids in Your School When the Censor Comes Calling?” Book and Periodical Council. Freedom to Read. Accessed September 11, 2022. https://www.freedomtoread.ca/articles/freedom-of-expression-rights-and-the-school-library/?fbclid=IwAR2Pc_jvoOtE1TEt5RROqPHIs_fAJuUN-PWgEuFzqLg9xjX0JlOz4VwXOhM.
- Osman, Laura. 2019. “Ottawa School Board Pulls Book with LGBT Characters from Elementary Libraries.” January 15. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/drama-telgemeier-banned-ottawa-catholic-school-1.4977546>.
- Queen’s Printer, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. n.d. BC School Act [RSBC 1996] CHAPTER 412. Part 6—Boards of Education. Division 1—Corporate Status and Meetings. Section 76—Conduct. Accessed September 11, 2022. https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96412_06#section76.
- “SOGI 123.” n.d. bc.sogieducation.org. Accessed September 11, 2022. <https://bc.sogieducation.org/>.
- Steffenhagen, Janet. 2009. “Human Rights Complaints in Two B.C. Schools.” *Vancouver Sun*. October 6, 2009. <https://vancouver.sun.com/news/staff-blogs/human-rights-complaints-in-two-b-c-schools/>.
- United Nations. 1989. “Convention on the Rights of the Child.” <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>.
- United Nations. 1948. “Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.
- Vancouver School Board. 2021. “Administrative Procedure 252—Learning Resources—Challenged Materials.” Administrative Procedures Manual. Last modified January 26. https://www.vsb.bc.ca/District/Departments/Office_of_the_Superintendent/Administrative-Procedures-Manual/Pages/Default.aspx.

Appendix: Notice of Personal Liability—Facilitating in Exposure of Minors to Sexually Explicit Materials, Activities and/or events

An Explanation of the Notice

It has become evident that the LGBTQ SOGI learning resources, implemented into the provincial educational curriculum across Canada in the past several years, have become an avenue to expose minors to sexually explicit, pornographic and inappropriate teachings, materials and activities.

As a Canadian citizen I have the duty to report the following concerns. Students (K-12) are being instructed on how to masturbate and exposed to pornographic cartoon material depicting minors engaged in explicit sexual activity.

Hundreds of these pornographic/explicit books are being found in schools and public libraries across Canada.

It is understood that many of these books have been permitted in an attempt to support the diversity and inclusion guidelines. However, the books must be age appropriate, not cause emotional harm and should not be sexually explicit so as to stay within the bounds of the rule of law and School/Education Acts.

Schools are also encouraging students to participate in Pride parades and events which are exposing minors to nudity, sexually explicit acts and sexual paraphernalia. Pride



day has turned into pride month and now into pride year as the school calendar is filled with activities that are indoctrinating children and further exposing them to sexually explicit groups and organizations who are grooming children. For e.g., Youth for a Change promoting events that involve Twinks.

The Laws Included in the Email

The author of the Notice for Personal Liability offers an overview of Section 163.1 (1) of the criminal code of Canada that includes “A Definition of Child Pornography,” “What Child Pornography means,” “Making Child Pornography, Distribution, etc. of Child Pornography,” and “Possession of Child Pornography.” Also included is the Criminal Code Section 152, which describes offences related to sexual counselling of a minor, and the definition of the Canadian Center for Child Protection related to non-contact sexual abuse.

The Request

I therefore demand the following books, and other titles by the same authors, be immediately removed. <https://>

action4canada.com/wp-content/uploads/List-of-SOGI-Inclusive-Books-for-K-12-Schools.pdf

I further demand a Freedom of Information providing all the details (to include the emails, attachments and any other correspondence) of who approved these books, as well as the grounds for this approval, any instructions given to anyone else in relation to this approval, and the minutes of all meetings in relation to such approvals.

Due to the rising number of concerns from parents in response to the highly politicized and controversial SOGI 123 learning resources, and their negative impact on the well-being of the majority of children, these resources must immediately be removed from the provincial educational curriculum.

School guidelines do not supersede the Criminal Code in these matters. Individuals/educators who approve and/or use or make accessible to minors any pornographic materials, resources or activities, will be held personally liable and may be subject to criminal charges.