

Indigenous Artists and Wikidata

Brit Johnston and Frédéric Julien
WikiConference North America
November 11, 2023



Link to this presentation in Google Doc format

<https://bit.ly/3suHYgE>



Background

Today's presentation is based on research, consultation and prototyping projects led by the [Canadian Association for the Performing Arts](#) (CAPACOA) as part of the [Linked Digital Future Initiative](#).

The Linked Digital Future Initiative was funded by the Government of Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts and the Wikimedia Foundation.



Canada Council
for the Arts

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du Canada



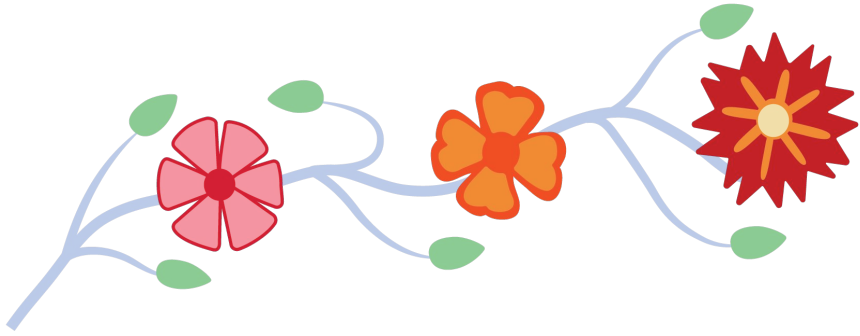
The team

Core team

- ▶ Brit Johnston
- ▶ Anju Singh
- ▶ Frédéric Julien

Contributors

- ▶ Denise Bolduc
- ▶ Stacy Allison-Cassin
- ▶ Heather Steinhagen
- ▶ Beat Estermann
- ▶ Bridget MacIntosh
- ▶ Caitlin Troughton
- ▶ Gregory Saumier-Finch
- ▶ Tammy Lee
- ▶ Cynthia Licker-Sage



Guiding principles



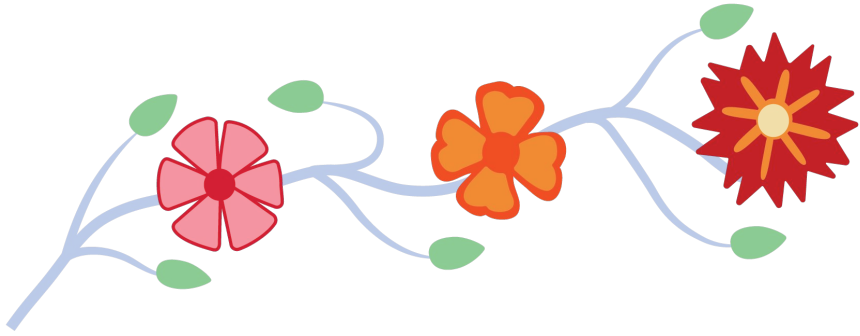
“Nothing about us without us”

Since the impetus for these initiatives came from settler allies, it was essential to involve Indigenous collaborators and stakeholders in the project.

Control needed to reside with the Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance and their members.

Benefit- oriented

We wanted this initiative to begin with discussion, and then to quickly move into tangible actions that would derive benefits to Indigenous artists.



The journey



Main research question

How can descriptive information about Indigenous performing artists, their practices and their works be accurately and respectfully represented in the Web of data?

Intended use case

Make it easier for culture goers to find information about works and performances by Indigenous artists over the Web.

Timeline – Action Research

April 2019: Discussion paper *Indigenous Worldviews In the Web of Data*

August 2019: Research report [*A Linked Digital Future for the Performing Arts*](#)

February 2021: Initial group consultation

July 2021: Individual consultations (user acceptance testing method)

November 2021: Group consultations

December 2022: [*Indigenous Artists and Wikidata: Explorations and Consultations Report*](#)



Parallel activities – Applied prototyping

May 2020: Proposal and agreement between CAPACOA and the Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance (IPAA).

December 2021: Consent strategy defined.

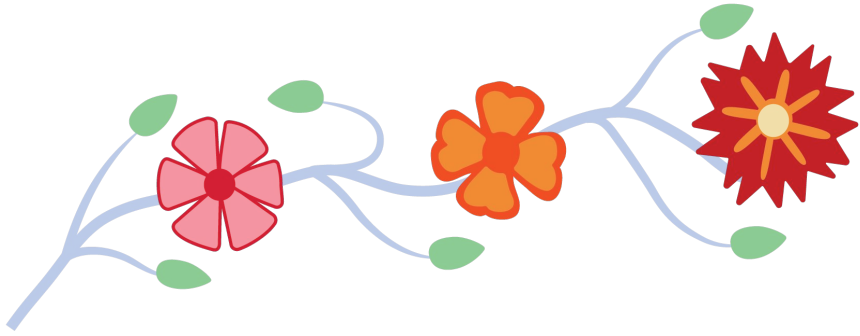
January-March 2022: IPAA enhanced their membership form.

March 2022: [Indigenous Data Sovereignty strategy](#) launched and announced to members.

August 2022: Member information extracted, transformed and loaded to [Artsdata](#) and Wikidata.
176 items created or edited ([query](#)).



The screenshot shows the top portion of a web page. At the top is a dark red header with social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Below this is a white navigation bar with a hamburger menu icon on the left and the IPAA logo (Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance) on the right. A teal banner below the navigation bar contains the text "DATA SOVEREIGNTY STRATEGY". The main content area has a white background with the title "IPAA's Commitment To Open Data And Indigenous Data Sovereignty" in a dark red font. Below the title is a link "Click to view as plain text PDF." and a button labeled "Contents [show]". The section "Linked And Open Data" is highlighted in bold, followed by a paragraph of text explaining the IPAA team's work with the Linked Digital Future Initiative to interconnect publicly available information in the IPAA membership directory with Artsdata and open databases such as Wikidata. A final paragraph describes the Linked Digital Future Initiative's role in providing technical know-how to format the information held by IPAA into linked, open data and to add it to the Artsdata knowledge graph.



What we learned along the way



Self-identification information is critical

If you're unable to query
Indigenous artists,
then you can't query:

- ▶ Indigenous-led organizations
- ▶ Works by Indigenous artists
- ▶ Performances by Indigenous artists

**Representing
Indigenous
identities in
Wikidata is possible
although not simple.**



“Ethnic group” is a problematic term

The property (i.e., field) by which you can query Indigenous artists in Wikidata is called “[ethnic group](#)”. This label was received with mixed reactions during our consultations.

- ▶ When explained what an “ethnic group” means and what purpose it serves in Wikidata, the majority of Indigenous artists to whom we spoke could relate to this form of identification.
- ▶ Indigenous artists would however prefer to have their identity documented under terms such as “ancestry”, “ancestral group”, “affiliation”, “tribal affiliation”, “traditional homeland”, “traditional territory” or “home community”.

Ethnic group: determining the right value

Broader vs specific values

- ▶ Some Indigenous artists prefer being identified with a broader Indigenous People or Nation (e.g. Dene, Cree or Haudenosaunee), others prefer a specific Nation (e.g., Sayisi Dene, Sakāwithiniwak/Woodland Cree, Atikamekw).
- ▶ Artists who self-identify as Métis, sometimes mean they are descendents from the Red River Métis and sometime intend to affirm a “mixed Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal ancestry”¹.

¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, 1996.

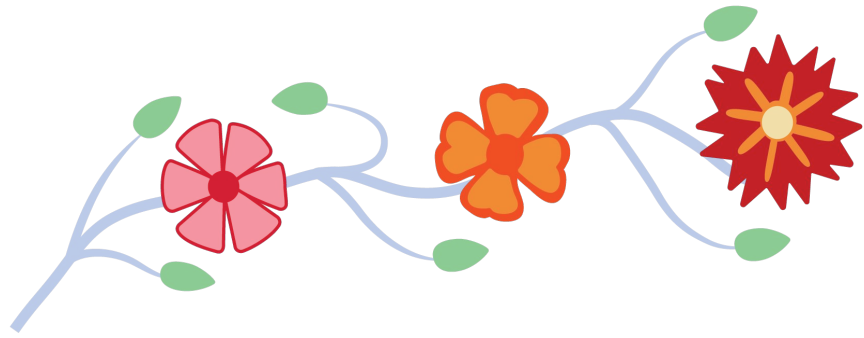
Indigenous identities are multi-faceted

- ▶ Indigenous persons usually want to acknowledge their multiple ancestries.
- ▶ First Nations artists often self-identify on the basis of both their traditional People and the their First Nations band.
Example: Kevin Loring identifies as “A Nlaka’pamux from the Lytton First Nation”.
 - ▶ [affiliation \(P1416\)](#) may be used to denote registration with a band.

“Nothing about us, without us”

You can't make the assumption that an Indigenous person wants to be publicly identified by their First Nations band, their People, a broader cultural group, (or wants to be publicly identified at all).

- ▶ **You have to ask them.**
 - ▷ [See our template emails.](#)



Key recommendations for the Wikidata community



Validate identification information

- ▶ Verify with the artist themselves if and how they would like to be identified in Wikidata.
 - ▷ Use/adapt this [email template](#) ([version française](#))
 - ▷ When you consult with Indigenous artists, you may be provided with information that is not publicly available or else that differs from publicly available information.
 - ▷ We need methods of documenting primary-source self-identification information obtained directly from an Indigenous artist. Until better methods are defined, you may use the item's talk page to provide a short account of your consultation (as in [this example](#)).

Let's revisit the idea of “ethnic group”

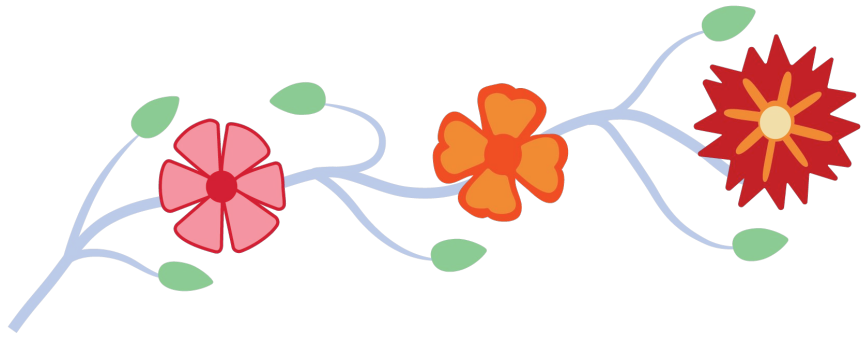
- ▶ The Wikidata community should revisit both the property and the class item for the “ethnic group” concept.
 - ▶ If the label cannot be changed, then the description and the aliases should be edited to include references to the notion of ancestral group and to the idea of affiliation to a traditional territory.
 - ▶ Further usage instructions should be added via the [WikiProject: Ethnicity](#) to encourage Wikimedians to consult with living persons before stating their ethnic group.
 - ▶ The WikiProject: Ethnicity's instructions for the ethnic group class should also be enhanced to acknowledge other aspects by which a group of people can identify with each other, including ancestry and traditional territories.
 - ▶ Suggestion: Canada's statistical agency has renamed the concept “[ethnic or cultural origin](#)”... Could we implement it as a label in Canadian English?

“As the People call themselves”

- ▶ It’s time to start using endonyms in labels for Indigenous Peoples rather than exonyms given by settlers (see [UNDRIP, article 13](#)).
 - ▷ In Canada, “Kanien’kehá:ka” is once again becoming the most commonly used name to designate the People colonially known as “Mohawk”.
 - ▷ Suggestion: Start implementing endonyms at the regional level using en-CA and fr-CA languages. Then, we’ll rally the rest of the Wikidata community.
- ▶ Endonyms can also be documented with these properties:
 - ▷ [self-identified name \(P12089\)](#) (created October 2023) – suited for documenting translations and transliterations of endonyms
 - ▷ [name in native language \(P1559\)](#)

Document Indigenous works: creator + language

- ▶ Any work created by an Indigenous artist is an *Indigenous work*. Efforts should therefore be made to state creator and contributor roles to Indigenous works in Wikidata.
- ▶ The property [language of work or name \(P407\)](#) should be used to state that a work is in an Indigenous language.
 - ▶ **Some Indigenous language subtags may not have been implemented in Wikimedia yet.**
The Wolastokwey language (pqm) was recently added.



Querying and reusing data about Indigenous artists



Queries (and counts as of November 10)

Indigenous artists *from* what is known as Canada (ethnic group: Indigenous people in Canada, no filter for location)

▶ <https://w.wiki/6boy> (391 results)

Same as above with ethnic group labels

▶ <https://w.wiki/6biv>

Indigenous artists around the world

▶ <https://w.wiki/6biy>
(3791 results)

Indigenous artists *in* what is known as Canada (born in, citizen of, residing in or working in Canada)

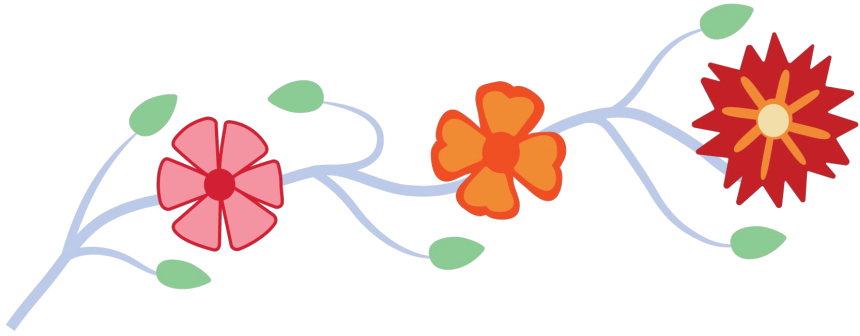
▶ <https://w.wiki/6bgn> (241 results)

Several issues make it challenging to query Indigenous artists:

- Data completion issues: Artists without an “ethnic group” statement obviously can’t be queried.
- Data modelling issues:
[Read more](#) and see the next slide for details..

Ontological (i.e. data model) challenges

- ▶ Relationships between [indigenous people \(Q103817\)](#) and narrower population groups are inconsistently modelled: sometimes with [subclass of \(P279\)](#), some other times with [part of \(P361\)](#).
- ▶ Some People's traditional territories span both Canada and the United States.
- ▶ Modelling, labels and descriptions of items for Indigenous Peoples (and related concepts) should ideally be defined and maintained by the [WikiProject Indigenous peoples of North America](#). However, this project is currently inactive.



The journey continues



Our next steps

- ▶ Creation of an **Indigenous Librarian position** in collaboration with the Indigenous Performing Arts Alliance and the National Arts Centre's Indigenous Theatre.

Our next steps

- ▶ The **Indigenous Librarian position** will primarily focus on:
 - ▷ Wikidata items about artists;
 - ▷ Wikidata items about performance works;
 - ▷ Linked open data about live performances featuring Indigenous artists, organizations and their works (via the [Artsdata knowledge graph](#)).

Other activities may include

- ▶ Wikipedia editing.
- ▶ Upload of images via Wikimedia Commons.
- ▶ Collaboration with [Métamusique](#) and the [National Indigenous Knowledge and Languages Alliance](#).
- ▶ Engage with the Wikidata community to implement recommendations from the report.



Size of this preview: 400 × 600 pixels. Other resolutions: 160 × 240 pixels | 320 × 480 pixels | 683 × 1,024 pixels.

[Original file](#) (683 × 1,024 pixels, file size: 238 KB, MIME type: image/jpeg)

Martica1974 at English Wikipedia, [CC BY-SA 3.0](#), via Wikimedia Commons.



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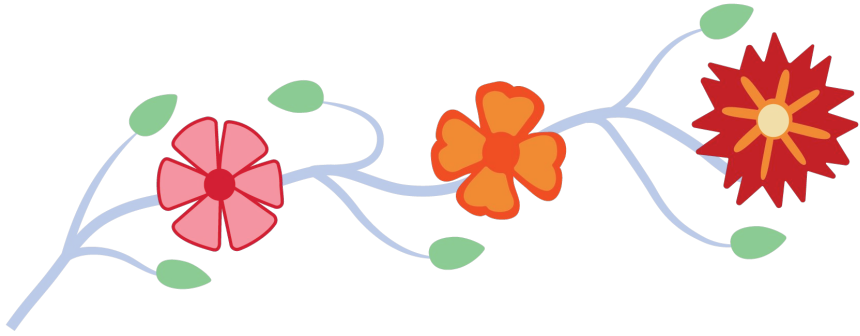
So?
Which of these
recommendations
and actions do you
find appealing?



Summary of recommendations and actions

1. Validate and state artists' identities
2. Revisit the label and description for “ethnic group”
3. Document endonyms in statements and labels
4. Address ontological (i.e. modelling) challenges
5. Validate and state artists' place of birth and place of work
6. Document Indigenous works
7. Link artist, work and live performance data





Find out more



Read the report

[Indigenous Artists and Wikidata: Explorations and Consultations Report](#)

ISBN: 978-1-9991984-7-3

[Les artistes autochtones et Wikidata : rapport d'exploration et de consultation](#)

ISBN: 978-1-9991984-8-0



Sample Wikidata items

The image displays three Wikidata profiles side-by-side. Each profile includes a Wikidata logo, a main title with its QID, a description, a table of labels in various languages, a 'Statements' section with property-value pairs, and a sidebar with navigation options.

Olivia C. Davies (Q107277484)

Canadian Indigenous dance artist
Olivia Davies

Language	Label	Description	Also known as
English	Olivia C. Davies	Canadian Indigenous dance artist	Olivia Davies
French	Olivia C. Davies	artiste canadienne Autochtone en danse	Olivia Davies
Chinese	No label defined	No description defined	
Cantonese	No label defined	No description defined	

Statements:

- Instance of: human (1 reference)
- sex or gender: female (0 references)
- country of citizenship: Canada (0 references)
- given name: Olivia (0 references)
- family name: Davies (0 references)

Brit Johnston (Q113502273)

Indigenous artist in what is known as Canada
Brittany Johnston

Language	Label	Description	Also known as
English	Brit Johnston	indigenous artist in what is known as Canada	Brittany Johnston
French	Brit Johnston	artiste autochtone sur le territoire autochtone appelé Canada	
Chinese	No label defined	No description defined	
Cantonese	No label defined	No description defined	

Statements:


- Instance of: human (1 reference)
- sex or gender: female (0 references)
- place of birth: Toronto (0 references)
- occupation: artist (1 reference), actor (1 reference)

Leela Gilday (Q6516255)

Devo-Canadian singer-songwriter

Language	Label	Description	Also known as
English	Leela Gilday	Devo-Canadian singer-songwriter	
French	Leela Gilday	autrice-compositrice-interprète canadienne Devo-Canada	
Chinese	No label defined	No description defined	
Cantonese	No label defined	No description defined	

Statements:

- Instance of: human (1 reference)
- image:  (0 references)
- sex or gender: female (0 references)

Participant in the one-on-one consultations.

Artist profile uploaded from the IPAA directory.

Artist consulted about her self-identification.

Stay on top of the latest developments

Keep in touch at:

linkeddigitalfuture.ca

frederic.julien@capacoa.ca

A CAPACOA Initiative

LINKED DIGITAL FUTURE

PERFORMING ARTS METADATA HAS EMERGED AS ONE OF THE MOST PRESSING ISSUES FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS SECTOR IN CANADA.

To address the challenges that come with digital literacy, online discoverability and transformation, CAPACOA, the Canadian Association for the Performing Arts, and partners are undertaking a flagship

The image shows a mobile application interface. At the top, it says "A CAPACOA Initiative". Below that is the "LINKED DIGITAL FUTURE" logo, which includes a colorful network of dots. To the right of the logo are a magnifying glass icon and a hamburger menu icon. The main content area has a background of colorful, abstract shapes. The text is centered and reads: "PERFORMING ARTS METADATA HAS EMERGED AS ONE OF THE MOST PRESSING ISSUES FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS SECTOR IN CANADA." Below this, a smaller paragraph begins: "To address the challenges that come with digital literacy, online discoverability and transformation, CAPACOA, the Canadian Association for the Performing Arts, and partners are undertaking a flagship".