Write Up: Indigenous Language Speakers Wikipedia Edit-a-thon for IYIL2019

On August 13, 2019, the University of Toronto Libraries hosted a Wikipedia Edit-a-thon as a part of the UNESCO's declaration of events celebrating the International Year of Indigenous Languages.

> "In 2016, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution proclaiming 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages, based on a recommendation by the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.
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> At the time, the Forum said that 40 per cent of the estimated 6,700 languages spoken around the world were in danger of disappearing. The fact that most of these are indigenous languages puts the cultures and knowledge systems to which they belong at risk.
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> In addition, Indigenous Peoples are often isolated both politically and socially in the countries they live in, by the geographical location of their communities, their separate histories, cultures, languages and traditions.
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> And yet, they are not only leaders in protecting the environment, but their languages represent complex systems of knowledge and communication and should be recognized as a strategic national resource for development, peace building and reconciliation.
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> They also foster and promote unique local cultures, customs and values which have endured for thousands of years. Indigenous languages add to the rich tapestry of global cultural diversity. Without them, the world would be a poorer place.
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> Celebrating IYIL2019 will help promote and protect indigenous languages and improve the lives of those who speak them. It will contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development."
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> -   2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages: Background

This event was made possible through a collaboration between Desmond Wong (Outreach Librarian, OISE), Alex Jung (Wikipedian-in-Residence), Jesse Carliner (Communications Librarian), and myself (TALint – Indigenous Metadata Assistant).

The direction we decided to go with for the edit-a-thon was looking at individual Indigenous language speakers who are either part of a language revitalization movement or were among the final language speakers.

Leading up to the event, I conducted some online research and data cleaning to assist in making the edit-a-thon run smoothly. In my research, I determined 51 individuals who may have enough notability to have a Wikipedia article (44 already did) from various areas across the Americas. I then narrowed the scope further to focus only on individuals who spoke Indigenous languages of North America, were 'contemporary' and already had an existing Wikipedia article (33 individuals). I also cleaned the data to signify which articles may be easier to clean up or may require more effort; another section for 'historic', for page creation (which is one of the more difficult things to do on Wikipedia is to create an article and

have it not get deleted), and for individuals who wanted to work on Wikidata. The full sheet is still available online and can continue to be worked on post-event, and can be viewed here: bit.ly/IYILwikisheet

After the land acknowledgment, Alex gave an overview on how to use Wikipedia as an editor, then I gave an overview on how to access the research spreadsheet. Then, the editing began!

Alex Jung's Overview on Wikipedia is accessible here: bit.ly/IYILwiki

Results from our event

The Outreach Dashboard is accessible here: https://outreachdashboard.wmflabs.org/courses/University_of_Toronto/International_Year_of_Indigenous_Languages/home

Our outreach dashboard was created on August 13 at the beginning of our event, and was active until 4am on August 14, 2019, to give time to any attendees who left the event early. Our overall attendance was 9 participants, of which 4 were new to Wikipedia.

In all, we created one new article, and edited 31 existing articles, which had a total of 67 edits. We added 78 references and added one Commons upload. Since the changes, the articles collectively had over 180,000 views. Most attendees worked on articles, while some edits were done in Wikidata.

Improvements for next time

For our next event in October, I would improve by playing music during the edit-a-thon by Indigenous artists. While it made it easier to hear any questions that arose during the course of the event, it would have also helped with the atmosphere. A second change that I would do is have a walkthrough on sample edits for participants.