

# Verna J. Kirkness fonds

Compiled by Christopher Hives (2012)

Last revised February 2022



University of British Columbia Archives



a place of mind  
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



The Library

# Table of Contents

- **Fonds Description**
  - Title / Dates of Creation / Physical Description
  - Biographical Sketch
  - Custodial History
  - Scope and Content
  - Notes
  
- **Series Descriptions**
  - Speeches/Presentations series
  - Publications/Reports series
  
- **File List**
  
- **Catalogue entry** (UBC Library catalogue)

# Fonds Description

**Verna J. Kirkness fonds.** – 1964-2009.

5 cm textual records.

## Biographical Sketch

Born of Cree heritage on Manitoba's Fisher Reserve in 1935, Verna Jane Kirkness attended the Manitoba Normal School graduating with a teaching certificate in 1957. She then taught elementary school in the Manitoba public school system before working as a teacher and principal in First Nations schools. From 1967 to 1970, Kirkness served as Elementary School Supervisor with Frontier School Division where she was instrumental in establishing Cree and Ojibway as the languages of instruction in several Manitoba schools. In the early 1970s as Education Directors for the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood and then the National Indian Brotherhood, Kirkness participated in the development and implementation of the Manitoba Chiefs, *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* and the landmark 1972 national policy of Indian Control of Indian Education. She completed her B.A (1974), B.Ed. (1976) and Master of Education (1980) at the University of Manitoba. In 1981 she joined the faculty at the University of British Columbia where she provided leadership for the Native Teacher Education Program (NITEP) and created the Ts'kel Graduate Program. Kirkness became the first director of UBC's First Nations House of Learning in 1985 and she was also instrumental in the conception and construction of the First Nations Longhouse which opened on the campus in 1993.

In recognition of her numerous and varied contributions to Aboriginal education over more than four decades, Kirkness has received numerous awards. Amongst these are: Outstanding Educator of British Columbia award (1990), the Golden Eagle Feather Award from the Professional Native Women's Association and the Canadian Youth Education Excellence Prize as Canada's Educator of the Year. She has also been awarded the Order of Canada (1998) Order of Manitoba (2007), Queen's Golden Jubilee Medal (2003) as well as honorary degrees from UBC (1994), University of Western Ontario (1992) and Mount St. Vincent (1990), and the University of Manitoba (2008).

## Custodial History

Materials transferred to the University Archives by Verna Kirkness via the Xwi7xwa Library on January 4, 2012.

## Scope and Content

The Kirkness fonds consists of speech and presentation texts and notes and copies of published articles and a report.

## Notes

File list available.

Further accruals are expected.

The term "Indian" is now outdated and is considered by many Indigenous Peoples to be offensive. However, it is retained in some places in this inventory as part of an historical organizational name (e.g. National Indian Brotherhood).

## Series Descriptions

**Speeches/Presentations series.** – 1964-2009.

4 cm. textual records.

This series includes notes and texts for speeches and other presentations delivered by Kirkness between 1964 and 2009.

Box 1 (1-6)

**Publications/Reports series.** – 1971-1987.

1 cm. textual records.

This series consists of three publications or reports authored by Kirkness and co-writers.

Box 1 (7)

# File List

## BOX 1

### SPEECHES/PRESENTATIONS SERIES

Descriptions includes the title assigned by Verna Kirkness, the capacity in which she was working at the time, or the event at which the talk was delivered.

- 1-1      1960s  
[No title], Counsellor – Dept. of Indian Affairs, Winnipeg, 1964 (9 pp.)  
[My First Real Speech outside of Teacher’s Conference] at Norway House, January 25, 1965 (8 pp.)  
Medical Faculty of Women – University of Manitoba, February 23, 1966 (9 pp.)  
“Education of Indian and Metis Children”, Brandon University, January 17, 1969 and University of Manitoba March 25, 1969 (7 pp.)  
“Frontier School Division #48” Brandon University, 1969 (4 pp.)
- 1-2      1970s  
“Trends in Indian Education in Manitoba”, [Indian Education Conference, The Pas, 1972?] (9 pp.)  
“Theme: Spiritual Survival through Indian Languages and Indian Culture: Documents of Survival”, N.A.B.E.C, May 17, 1977 (7 pp.)  
“P.E.N.T [Program for the Education of Native Teachers], Brandon University, August 9, 1979 (13 pp.)  
“Theme: Quality Education through Community Involvement”, Quetico Centre, October 26, 1979 (9 pp.)
- 1-3      1980s  
“The Needs of the Native Indian Student in the Educational System and in Teacher Education”, N.I.T.E.P., February 8, 1980 (12 pp.)  
“Canadian Indian Education” (29 pp.)  
“Indian Education: The Challenge Ahead”, ca. 1982 (9 pp.)
- 1-4      1990s  
“University Education for First Nations” U.B.C. Alumni Association, November 20, 1990 (11 pp.)  
“University of Western Ontario – Convocation”, June 6, 1992 (7 pp.)

- “Khot-La-Cha: Man with a kind heart: Dr. Chief Simon Baker”, ca. 1992 (6 pp.)
- “Vision on the Future of Aboriginal Education”, July 6, 1993 (13 pp.)
- “Honorary Degree Speech”, UBC Congregation, May 24, 1994 (7 pp.)
- “Resources and Skills for First Nations Libraries”, Library Conference, Vancouver, June 13, 1994 (8 pp.)
- “We Must Know the Past to Understand the Present and Plan for the Future”, ca. 1997 (8 pp.)
- 1-5      2000s
- “First Nations House of Learning Graduation”, UBC, May 24, 2003 (9 pp.)
- “Ohpinitowin – Lifting Each Other Up / Honouring Indigenous Knowledge in the Academic Community”, May 2, 2006 (7 pp.)
- Research: The Aboriginal Discourse”, Aboriginal Education Forum, Winnipeg, June 2, 2006 (11 pp.)
- “Ways of Being in the Academy”, March 15, 2008 (3 pp.)
- “Wahbung: Our Tomorrows – 37 Years Later”, M.F.N.E. R.C. conference, May 21, 2008 (13 pp.)
- “Thank Wayne and Loud Sounding Thunder / Welcome – Fisher River and Others” , ca. 2009 (1 p.)
- 1-6      Undated
- “Reminiscing/Reflections [Dual celebration – F.N.H.L Grad. 2003??] (6 pp.)
- “Education Through Spiritual Awareness”, n.d. (4 pp.)
- “What do you know about the Canadian Indian?”, n.d. (2 pp.)
- “Indian Philosophy of Education”, n.d. (5 pp.)
- “Post Secondary Education in Northern Manitoba” Power Point notes, n.d. (3 pp.)

## REPORT/PUBLICATIONS SERIES

- 1-7      “Education for and about Children of Native Ancestry” by the Curriculum Branch, Dept. of Youth and Education by D.B. Sealey and V. Kirkness, January 1971 (13 pp.)
- “Education for and about Children of Native Ancestry” for the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood by V. Kirkness, ca. 1972 (22 pp.)
- “Teacher Education for Aboriginal Groups: one model and suggested applications” William McEachern and Verna Kirkness, *Journal of Education for Teaching*, Vol. 13, No.2, 1987 (12 pp. )