



inclusion2025

A Practitioner's Guide to Inclusive Museums

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I. A Letter from our Project Leaders

At the Ontario Museum Association (OMA) Conference 2016, we posed a challenge to the Ontario museum community: where are the gaps in diversity and inclusion in our sector, and how can we create substantive, meaningful and sustainable change? Museums have historically held the power to shape public narrative and decide which stories and objects from the past should be preserved to present to future generations. Recent conversations in the museum sector are beginning to recognize the importance of the voices and stories that have historically been excluded from the dominant narratives, and the ethical imperative for museums to include the full diversity of these narratives and embody a more inclusive approach to our work overall.

Inclusion 2025: A Practitioner's Guide to Inclusive Museums is one of many components of the Museum Accessibility Inclusion and Engagement Collaborative (MAIEC) project that was launched in December of 2015 by the OMA, the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) and the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI). The MAIEC project is our response to the challenge we posed to the broader museum community in the 2016 Conference, and a recognition of the needs we face as a sector to do better, and continue doing better, in truly being inclusive to the communities we serve.

Informed in part by [Ontario's Museums 2025](#), the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport's 2016 [Ontario's Culture Strategy](#), and the [Indigenous Collections Next Step](#) report, and with funding support from the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration and the Ontario Trillium Foundation, this project aims to inspire the Ontario museum sector to push the envelope on how museums can meaningfully engage diverse communities.

Diversity and inclusion are complex and fluid, ever-evolving subjects, which cannot be addressed with static solutions. As such, *Inclusion 2025* and the overall MAIEC project will not provide definitive rules on how to make your museum more inclusive, but rather, an invitation to all of you to use *Inclusion 2025* and the Inclusion in Action case studies to guide your process. Open the conversation in your own spaces and join us in creating a more inclusive museum sector in Ontario!

Inclusion 2025 includes:

- [Inclusion as a Lens](#) – guidelines on how to begin thinking about diversity and inclusion in your own spaces
- [Inclusion in Action](#) – stories from the field submitted by our 10 partner museums
- [Resources](#) – to support your own work in diversity and inclusion
- [Community](#) – a list of people committed to the cause of championing diversity and inclusion in the cultural sector

Thank you for joining us on this journey, and we look forward to working with you in building a more inclusive Ontario museum sector by 2025!

Sincerely,

Marie Lalonde, Executive Director, Ontario Museum Association
Cheryl Blackman, AVP Audience Development, Royal Ontario Museum
Cathy Gallagher-Louisy, Senior Director, Consulting, Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion

II. About the Project

Foreword

At a panel discussion at the Ontario Museums Association (OMA) Conference 2016, *Towards the Future: Diversity and Inclusion*, the OMA, the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) and the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI) publicly announced our collective intention to engage Ontario museums in a collaborative project to make our sector more diverse and inclusive. We challenged the community to reflect critically on the current gaps in diversity and inclusion in our sector and respond in a meaningful manner to long-present community voices calling for substantive change. We recognize that calls to action are not enough, and are committed to continuing our work to do right by our communities, audiences, staff and volunteers.

The challenge we raised was inspired by conversations that have been happening in the cultural sector for years, possibly decades, and in December 2015, the OMA, ROM and CCDI made a commitment to collaborate to enhance diversity and inclusion in concrete ways. Under the leadership of Marie Lalonde, OMA Executive Director, Cheryl Blackman, ROM AVP Audience Development, and Cathy Gallagher-Louisy, CCDI Senior Director, Consulting, it was decided to leverage the OMA's *Ontario's Museums 2025* vision and work across the province, the ROM's award-winning work in museums engaging communities through the ROM Community Access Network and the ROM Diversity and Inclusion Committee (previously the Accessibility Advisory Committee), and CCDI's expertise in diversity and inclusion research to develop and implement three primary project deliverables:

- A Diversity Census and Inclusion Survey of Ontario museums, to gauge current state demographic diversity and feelings about inclusion across the sector;
- An Emerging Museums Professional Mentorship project, which was delivered in partnership with Museums of Mississauga and Peel Art Gallery Museum and Archives in 2017; and
- A Guide to Inclusive Museums, to cover key areas of museum work and be developed in partnership with [10 museums across the province](#), who in turn would have mentorship and advisory access to [a committee of leaders](#) in diversity and inclusion in the cultural sector. [Inclusion 2025](#) is the result of this work.

If the museum of the future is driven by, entrenched in, and indistinguishable from, community, then how can we support museums and museum professionals in the complex work of becoming diversity and inclusion champions? As many working in the field can attest, there is no clear roadmap to diversity and inclusion. *Inclusion 2025* is therefore not a definitive toolkit but rather a collection of tools, guidelines, cases, strategies and practices that museums can use to increase their capacity and effectiveness in addressing accessibility, diversity, inclusion and equity. It is informed and inspired by the OMA's vision for the Ontario museum sector, [Ontario's Museums 2025](#), the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport's 2016 [Ontario's Culture Strategy](#), and reports like the [Indigenous Collections Next Steps](#).

We believe that museums and museum professionals are enriched by prioritizing diversity and inclusion, and we are committed to challenging established practice and advocating for greater access, diversity,

inclusion and equity across the sector. Moving forward, we will continue to be responsive to community needs, and develop and share resources, practices and learnings that will support efforts to integrate diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the culture sector.

We invite you to join us on our journey towards *Inclusion 2025*.

A note about this resource:

We recognize that diversity and inclusion is a complex ongoing process of learning and adapting which can shift from context to context based on community needs. Therefore, we propose that the information and resources offered in this guide should not be seen as an authoritative resource, but rather as a collection of guidelines and learnings from culture professionals and institutions who are themselves continuously learning about diversity and inclusion. This project aims to push the envelope, share collective learnings and open the conversation. We understand that mistakes may be made, and there will not always be successes. Nevertheless, we stress that we truly value, respect and appreciate all initiatives that aim to support the vision of *Inclusion 2025*.

We also acknowledge the other resources and guidelines around diversity and inclusion that have been developed by other organizations, some of which can be found in our [Resources](#) page. Our goal is that *Inclusion 2025* sparks conversation and dialogue on the necessity of practicing diversity and inclusion when doing museum work, and supports individuals who want to advocate for this need in their own museum communities.

We also recognize that though we will engage different communities, there may be times where some voices are not present. We apologize for this in advance, and invite any community who feels they are not represented to please reach out to oma@museumsontario.ca and let us know. We commit to doing better. Moreover, we respect and understand that while we continue to work with community partners, we do not represent their voices, needs and perspectives.

Project Team and Partners

The Museum Accessibility, Inclusion and Engagement Collaborative

In 2015, the OMA, ROM and CCDI formed the *Museum Accessibility, Inclusion, and Engagement Collaborative* (MAIEC), with the commitment to collaborate in making the museum sector more inclusive and representative of the diverse population of Ontario.

[Ontario Museum Association](#): The OMA strengthens capacity among institutions and individuals active in Ontario's museum sector, facilitates excellence and best practices, and improves the communication and collaboration of its membership. The Association advocates for the important role of Ontario's museums to society, working with all stakeholders, related sectors and industries, and other professional organizations.

[Royal Ontario Museum](#): The ROM is Canada's largest museum with collections that span art, culture and nature from across time and around the Globe. Among North America's most renowned museums, the ROM is home to more than 12 million objects and specimens, 40 galleries and exhibitions spaces and a range of fascinating exhibitions, lectures, tours and events. From contemporary art and fashion textiles

to South Asian art and culture, from dinosaurs and science to the history of Canada, the ROM invites you to explore and discover a remarkable array of offerings that will delight and inspire visitors of all ages.

[Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion](#): CCDI is a forward-looking social organization with research and learning woven into its DNA, tracing how people identify alongside demographic trends within the Canadian workplace to move employers from diversity to inclusion.

CCDI's mission is to help those they work with be inclusive, free of prejudice and discrimination – and to generate the awareness, dialogue and action for people to recognize diversity as an asset and not an obstacle.

Partner Museums

MAIEC engaged ten (10) Partner Museums from across Ontario's tourism regions to help develop content around a particular aspect of museum work in their own space. Each museum partner had a team of two staff: a *Catalyst*, an emerging museum leader committed to effecting diverse and inclusive change, and an *Advocate*, a member of their museum's management team who supports the Catalyst.

The Partner Museums are:

1. Art Gallery of Sudbury/Galerie d'art de Sudbury (Sudbury)
2. Ermatinger • Clergue National Historic Site (Sault Ste. Marie)
3. Hamilton Civic Museums (Hamilton)
4. Markham Museum (Markham)
5. Museum Windsor (Windsor)
6. Niagara Falls Museum (Niagara Falls)
7. Robert McLaughlin Gallery (Oshawa)
8. Simcoe County Museum (Minesing)
9. Toronto Ward Museum (Toronto)
10. Waterloo Region Museum (Kitchener)

Advisory Committee Members

The project was also supported by the vision and expertise of our Advisory Committee, composed of eleven (11) cultural leaders and innovators from across Ontario. These individuals are recognized for their outstanding work advancing diversity, equity and inclusion in Ontario's cultural sphere.

The Advisory Committee members are:

1. Cheryl Blackman, Assistant Vice President, Audience Development, Royal Ontario Museum
2. Karen Carter, Executive Director, Myseum of Toronto
3. Pauline Dolovich, Principal, Reich + Petch
4. Shelley Falconer, President and CEO, Art Gallery of Hamilton
5. Ravi Jain, Founding Artistic Director, Why Not Theatre
6. Cara Krmpotich, Associate Professor and Director of Museum Studies Program, Faculty of Information, University of Toronto
7. Jess Mitchell, Senior Manager, R+D and Design, Inclusive Design Research Centre, OCAD University

8. Penny Pine, Collections Coordinator, Canadian Museum of History
9. Vishnu Ramcharan, Specialist: Visitor and Community Engagement, Ontario Science Centre
10. Anita Small, Founder and Owner, *small* LANGUAGE CONNECTIONS; Co-Founder and Past Co-Director, DEAF CULTURE CENTRE
11. Jutta Treviranus, Professor and Director, Inclusive Design Research Centre, OCAD University

Learn more about the Advisory Committee [here](#).

Our Guiding Principles

The development of this guide has been one of continuous self-reflection. At every step, we have considered: why we do this work, who we do it for, and how are we positioned within a much larger system. As we move forward on this journey, we propose the following guiding principles as integral to diversity, inclusion and equity work. We welcome you to adopt them as your own or use them as inspiration as you develop your own principles.

1. Self-Reflection and Self-Awareness

- Inclusion and equity work often begins with critical self-reflection on how our personal, professional, organizational identity and/or social positions (identity, motivations, skills) aligns with the communities we aim to engage.
- How do our positions, biases and/or assumptions inform the work we currently do? How do they inform the relationships we want to develop, the perspectives we want to hear, and the communities we want to participate? If you're not sure, we recommend by starting with your own blind spots. What bias might you unconsciously hold? One useful tool for understanding your own biases is the [online Harvard Implicit Association Test](#).

2. Prioritize Community and Build Relationships

- Organizational structures, programs and process must be designed or adapted to meet the community context and foster community contributions. See how our museum partner Simcoe County Museum engaged their community with the [Affirmation Bowls Project](#).
- Our work must continue to be responsive to the needs and interest of our diverse communities.
- Active community engagement must be incorporated into vision, planning and goals of an organization, its operations and programming.
- Meaningful relationships with communities are built and strengthened over time.

3. Representation and Visibility

- A diverse and inclusive museum is one that is attentive to who are and are not represented in its audiences, staff and volunteers, and community. It is good to continuously ask, "Who is missing and why?"
- Representation is multilayered. Considerations include: people (who), representation in terms of form, process (how), content (what), and setting and the environment (where).

4. Diversity and Inclusion is a Process

- Diversity and inclusion practices and work are constantly evolving depending on context. It requires flexibility and adaptability that can respond to and implement ongoing change.

- Keep an open mind, and allow yourself space and time to collaborate on and think through ideas. A useful frame of reference is the [Inclusive Design approach](#), and you can find useful information on Inclusive Design on the [OCAD University Inclusive Design Research Centre website](#).
- This work can be complex, challenging and stressful, be mindful of burnout, and take time for self-care. See [our self-care section](#) for some useful tips on managing the emotional work of becoming and being a change agent.

5. Beyond Tokenism

- Change over the long-term requires a commitment to organizational and programmatic restructuring; it demands that inclusion and non-dominant perspectives be recognized as integral to all aspects of museum work.
- What you focus on grows. It is important to be mindful of where attention, time and energy is spent and that diversity and inclusion design are intrinsic to action.
- Recognize that work has already been done. Where possible, build upon or contribute to existing community initiatives rather than imposing externally derived projects and programs.

6. What Gets Measured Gets Done

- It is essential to establish methods of measurement to track goal progress. This allows for transparency and accountability in our work, as well as the opportunity to learn from successes and failures.
- Measures should be inclusively designed to ensure all groups are represented.
- Consider ‘who is missing and why?’ Data that is aggregated too comprehensively can leave small minorities misrepresented or excluded.

Development Process

Identification of the Gap

At the initial meeting between the OMA and the ROM in December 2015, the team agreed that there were gaps between the inclusive museum sector we wanted to become, and the museum sector as it currently was. This is through no fault of individual museums, but rather the result of systemic structures that create barriers between museums and the public we serve.

Under the leadership of Executive Director Marie Lalonde, the OMA has done extensive work in this area, most notably with *Ontario’s Museums 2025* and with annual symposia that create conversations around important subjects such as decolonizing collections, relationships with Indigenous communities, and diversity and inclusion in general.

At the ROM, Cheryl Blackman, AVP Audience Development, has created the ROM Community Access Network (ROMCAN) and the ROM Diversity and Inclusion Committee (formerly the Accessibility Advisory Committee) to meaningfully engage with community members in planning and delivering museum experiences.

Both organizations agreed there was a need for more, and a vision to scaffold on existing work to do better, not just for individual museums but for the Ontario museum sector as a whole. Some of the questions that arose include:

- How do we quantify the gap we know exists? (What gets measured gets done.)
- How do we ensure community voices drive our process?
- How can we create opportunities for aspiring museum professionals from underrepresented communities to join the sector and create meaningful change?
- How do we support museums who are committed to diversity and inclusion, but may not know how to start?

Ideation

Some ideas that came out of that initial meeting were:

- Invite the Canadian Centre of Diversity and Inclusion to the project team, as a leading expert in diversity and inclusion and particularly in metrics around these topics. Cathy Gallagher-Louisy, Senior Director, Consulting, brought CCDI on board as the third project partner.
- Survey staff in the museum sector to determine current state diversity demographics and perceptions around inclusion (CCDI Diversity Census and Inclusion Survey)
- Analyze ROM Audience Research to determine some initial gaps we could potentially use as a starting point. Alexander Johnston, ROM Audience Insight Coordinator, would lead that part of the work as well as serve as the project team lead for research.
- Develop a mentorship program for emerging museum professionals from underrepresented communities to deliver, under the guidance of museum leaders, a community project informed by community focus groups.
- Deliver a Framework for Action that will provide tips and strategies for museums who are looking for resources in developing and implementing their own diversity and inclusion strategy.

The OMA, with the support of the ROM and CCDI, applied for grant funding for this project, and in 2016 received funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. OMA Project Coordinator Rhiannon Myers was hired to manage the project deliverables, with the support of ROM Audience Coordinator Jaclyn Qua-Hansen.

As the project evolved, the “Framework for Action” developed as well into an Inclusive Museums Toolkit, and later on a Practitioner’s Guide that includes resources and cases that practitioners can refer to. Whereas the original idea was to develop this resource internally using data from audience research, museum staff surveys and community focus groups, the team realized that such a resource cannot come from a single collaborative, nor can it be as definitive a resource as the term “framework” suggests. More importantly, given the diversity of communities across Ontario and the diversity of museums in terms of size, collections and communities served, such a resource can only be useful if created by a plurality of perspectives.

As such, the team decided to invite museums from across Ontario to partner with MAIEC in developing and creating *Inclusion 2025*. The goal was to get representation across tourism regions and including a diverse range of museum types.

Research

The introductory sections of this guide were completed by, ROM Inclusion Advisor Christian Blake and OMA Inclusive Leadership Assistant Temma Pinkofsky in consultation with CCDI and the Advisory Committee. This pairing also conducted independent online research, to compile information on diversity and inclusion definitions, data-based research, and resources for further reading.

To develop each case study under [Inclusion in Action](#), an emerging museum leader (“Catalyst”) and a senior manager (“Advocate”) at each Partner Museum collaborated to research diversity and inclusion resources, guidelines and best practices around a particular aspect of museum work: collections development, exhibitions and curatorial practice, community engagement, volunteer and HR policies, facilities design, events and programming, marketing and communications, interpretation and education, and audience insight.

Community Engagement

Where applicable, Partner Museum teams connected directly with community groups and members to ensure that their project was in-line with any current initiatives, as well as to invite community participation in to the project itself.

Pilot Project

Partner Museums implemented a pilot project in their particular area of focus. This process was guided and supported by phone consultations with members of the Advisory Committee, the ROM Inclusion Advisor Christian Blake and OMA Project Coordinator Rhiannon Myers. All the members of the Advisory Committee had selected specific cases to consult on based on their areas of expertise

Inclusion in Action - Case Study

Partner Museums reflected on, and wrote about, what they’ve learned from their experiences. These experiences can be found in the [Inclusion in Action](#) section of this guide, with the compilation of all case studies covering a wide breadth of museum operations.

Guide Design

Concurrently, a subcommittee composed of members of the Advisory Committee and staff from the OMA and the ROM, met to take an [inclusive design approach](#) to structuring what would become *Inclusion 2025*. Using this lens, the subcommittee considered a diverse range of potential users of *Inclusion 2025* both within and outside the museum sector.

The Next Chapters

Inclusion 2025 is the result of a long and complex process involving many individuals and institutions. However, this resource is a living document and the development process is by no means complete. Just as we invited 10 museums across Ontario to partner with us in developing this Guide, we invite you to contribute your own experiences of [Inclusion in Action](#) and suggestions on [Resources](#) that supported your own diversity and inclusion journey. Please feel free to reach out to us at oma@museumsontario.ca with the subject line: “Inclusion 2025: [Museum Name]’s Story of Inclusion in Action” or “Inclusion 2025: Suggested Resources on [Topic].”

We’d love to hear from you and continue scaffolding on this resource to include the experiences from an even wider and more diverse breadth of museums.

How to Use this Guide

Inclusion 2025 is designed to fit your needs, and therefore, there is no particularly ‘correct’ way to use this guide. This resource is for you, whether you want an introduction to principles around diversity and inclusion ([Inclusion as a Lens](#)), or you are looking for true stories of institutions implementing inclusion in their own spaces ([Inclusion in Action](#)), or you are interested in resources about approaching your particular area of museum work with a diversity and inclusion lens ([Resources](#)). Use this guide in a way that suits you and your organization at this particular point in time, and feel free to come back to it for support as your needs change.

III. Inclusion as a Lens

Ontario is an incredibly diverse province, and our population is growing and changing daily. Approaching museum work through an equity and inclusion lens will help institutions make the diverse mix of communities, groups and organizations work.

The Numbers – Ontario’s Changing Demographics

The demographics of the Ontario population are changing, and therefore the needs that must be taken into account when planning for inclusion changes as well.

According to the Statistics Canada (2016):

- The proportion of Ontarians that identify as a visible minority is on the rise. It is projected that by 2031 forty percent of Ontarians will identify as a visible minority.
- Age demographics are shifting as the population steadily ages. One in four Ontarians will be 65 or over by 2031.
- One in seven Ontarians identify as having a disability. This number is projected to grow.

With these changes in our communities, museums are feeling the impact.

- As “traditional” audiences leave they are not being sufficiently replaced. As a result, a majority of organizations are reporting flat or declining attendance relative to population growth. (NAAU Study, 2014)
- Competition for leisure hours has grown, leading to an overall decrease in visitation. Even amongst audiences who describe themselves as “interested” in museums. (NAAU Study, 2014)
- Popular media has begun to [challenge cultural institutions](#) on topics of diversity and [inclusionary practice](#), while also [holding them accountable](#) for their positions in larger societal discourses.

There is a clear need for cultural institutions to grow alongside Ontario’s communities, but what does that mean? And how do we do so in a way that is authentic, equitable and long-lasting?

Looking Inward

Museums are meaning-making institutions. They play a crucial role in shaping our understanding of the world, our communities and our relationships through the knowledges they share and stories they tell. While best efforts are made to engage diverse audiences, the stories told and how they are shared are heavily influenced by an institution's 'status quo'. These explicit and implicit standards of practice are often rooted in legacies of power and oppression that persist within our institutions. These legacies tend to privilege the white male experience and ultimately reinforce Euro-centric ableist narratives of patriarchy, exploitation, colonization and heteronormativity. Unconscious bias and a lack of cultural competence further perpetuate these narratives within our institutions.

Museums need to look inward in order to understand how the internal practices and legacies of power impact *who museums are for* and how they may be failing to reflect diverse audiences. That is, by addressing how and by whom cultural institutions are designed, museums can begin to *critically reflect on whose experiences are acknowledged, whose are not*, and how this may impact audience and community engagement.

Ultimately, institutions need to acknowledge the power structures that exist throughout their organizations. Acknowledgement is a difficult but necessary step towards making the changes that will help to dismantle exclusionary practices and power structures. By reckoning with their own legacies of oppression, museums have the potential to positively disrupt dominant social narratives and spark discussion on issues of access, diversity, inclusion and equity – extending their impact far beyond their physical space. As institutions realize their potential reach, the moral imperative of embodying diversity and inclusion becomes all the more clear. That is, as leaders making a positive impact on the lives of communities and individuals, museums have the power to create empathy, foster dialogue and cross-cultural learning, reduce social and economic barriers that negatively affect well-being, promote understanding and respect, and meet local needs in a way that builds stronger communities.

Beyond the moral imperative, we would be remiss to not also acknowledge the organizational benefits of prioritizing diversity and inclusion within museums. Research makes it clear that organizations that care about diversity and inclusion perform better financially. According to [a 2017 report about the "Diversity Dividend"](#), produced by the Centre for International Governance Innovation and the Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, a one percent (1%) increase in workforce diversity is associated with a six percent (6%) increase in revenue in cultural institutions. Additionally, more diverse and inclusive organizations are better able to win and retain top talent, reach new markets, and improve customer orientation, employee satisfaction, and decision making. In brief, diversity and inclusion are not only good, they are also good sense.

Bias and Cultural Competence

An understanding of bias and cultural competence is essential to discussions of access, diversity, inclusion and equity. According to the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion:

Bias

Types of Bias:

1. Decision-making, belief and behaviour biases
2. Social biases or attributional biases

3. Memory errors and memory biases

Conscious Bias:

1. Public – biases that we are aware of and openly express to others
2. Private – biases that we are aware of, but don't express in public

Unconscious Bias: bias that we are unaware of, but which affect our behaviour and judgements

Bias within an institution can have far-reaching implications. More explicit bias can manifest in the form of discrimination, harassment, grievances and human rights complaints. While implicit or unconscious bias can lead to ineffective programs and services, disengaged employees and audiences, flaws in decision-making and collaboration, and a toxic institutional culture.

Cultural Competence

Cultural Competence is the ability to discern and take into account one's own and others' worldviews to be able to:

1. Communicate effectively
2. Solve problems
3. Make decisions
4. Resolve conflicts

...in ways that optimize cultural differences for better, longer-lasting, and more creative solutions

The four (4) components of individual Cultural Competence:

1. Awareness of one's own cultural worldview
2. Attitude towards cultural differences
3. Knowledge of difference in cultural practices and worldviews
4. Cross-cultural skills

The five (5) Essential Components of Organizational Cultural Competence:

1. Value diversity
2. Having the capacity for cultural self-assessment
3. Being conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact
4. Having institutionalized cultural knowledge
5. Having developed adaptations to service delivery reflecting an understanding of cultural diversity.

Common Misconceptions

Despite the case for prioritizing diversity and inclusion, misconceptions can often derail initiatives substantially. We've debunked some of the common ones below:

1. *Diversity and Inclusion are pointless, doesn't matter to me, doesn't apply to my community, only benefits certain groups, etc.*

Despite claims to the contrary, diversity and inclusion benefit and are relevant to everyone. Enabling all Ontarians to participate and engage with our cultural institutions helps us engage new audiences in meaningful and authentic ways and contribute to community well-being. Additionally, prioritizing diversity and inclusion creates vibrant, strong, collaborative and relevant cultural institutions that are poised for success in the 21st century.

2. *Diversity and Inclusion are divisive.*

This misconception is often driven by the correct assumption that diversity and inclusion work can be uncomfortable. Disagreement and tension are common growing pains that can arise when discussing these topics. Additionally, challenging well-established systems of power can be difficult on an individual and institutional level.

However, inaction only serves to reinforce the established status quo. Beyond a growth in understanding and empathy, an organization that makes diversity and inclusion a priority creates a culture of respect that allows for differences in opinion to be shared in a constructive manner. This cultural shift leads to happier, more engaged employees, and reduces instances of harassment and discrimination

3. *Diversity and inclusion means "lowering the bar."*

Such a statement as the one above ignores the human propensity for unconscious bias, which can often shape our views of who is the "best fit" for our organizations. In doing so, we mistake homogeneity for quality, incorrectly assuming that people who look, talk and act like us will be most capable of meeting the organization's needs.

However, [the research is clear](#) that a diversity of perspectives, lived experiences and areas of expertise drive success. Organizations that prioritize diversity and inclusion see gains in their ability to attract and retain top talent, an increase in revenues, and greater innovation - hardly "lowering the bar".

4. *Diversity and Inclusion can be achieved through a series of Human Resources initiatives and checklists.*

Diversity and inclusion is a complex topic that requires a collective effort to manage appropriately. A shared organizational agenda, consistently measured results, and ongoing communication internally, and with our communities, is essential if we wish to see positive outcomes. Without these elements diversity and inclusion initiatives can lack clarity in a way that can lead to tokenism, inequity and/or marginalization.

Change Agency

A Change Agent is an individual who uses their expertise and influence to responsibly advance access, diversity, inclusion and equity within their institution and their community.

Change Agents advocate with, and on behalf of, community while working towards positive change that improves programs, institutions and society. Practitioners work for population and community change in funding, management, policy and other practices that impact engagement and participation with culture. Change Agents collaborate with those inside and outside the sector, and draw on strategies to enable the empowerment of all audiences within their cultural institutions.

Common practices of a Change Agent include:

- Communicate the role and benefits, both moral and organizational, of access, diversity, inclusion and equity.
- Assist the organization in obtaining funding and services, as necessary and appropriate, so as to achieve access, diversity, inclusion and equity outcomes.
- Identify barriers to access and equity across organizational services, policies and practices.
- Identify vulnerable, marginalized or excluded community groups.
- Advocate appropriately for the vulnerable, marginalized or excluded communities to enable engagement and empowerment through participation.
- Balance the ethical and professional issues inherent in community advocacy, including altruism, autonomy, integrity, social justice, and idealism.
- Manage the conflict inherent between the advocacy role for a community group and the manager of finite services and resources.

Self-Care

Being a Change Agent and resisting museum practices which undermine equity, diversity and inclusion is challenging work, particularly in institutions with well-established systems of power. It is often equal parts interesting, stressful and frustrating, a combination of emotions that place people at an increased risk of burnout. For example, see [this study by Yale University](#) about highly engaged but burned out individuals in the US workforce.

In addition, this type of work can occasionally feel all consuming. We encourage you as a practitioner to personally reflect on your motivations for engaging in equity, diversity and inclusion work. By understanding our own position within these discourses, we can better grasp how it might affect us as individuals. Reflection can also provide greater clarity for when we need to create distance between ourselves and the work.

Burnout

Burnout is often considered to have a wide range of indicators; however, the collective definition proposes that it is caused by high levels of stress, whether work-related or otherwise. Some indicators that you or a colleague is at risk of burnout include:

- **Exhaustion:** Burned out people often feel drained physically and emotionally. Individuals may experience increased irritability, sadness or anxiety. Physically they may feel constantly tired, or struggle to sleep at night. A loss of appetite, increase in illness or challenges with focusing can also indicate burnout.
- **Detachment:** People who have burnout may become increasingly cynical about their work and their colleagues. At the same time, they may increasingly distance themselves emotionally,

and/or physically by isolating themselves in their office, frequently calling in sick or constantly coming in late.

- Reduced performance: Burnout mainly affects everyday tasks at work. Despite long hours, chronic stress prevents people from being as effective as they once were. This can lead to feelings of irritability and apathy, and can make you wonder: what's the point?

Self-Care

Self-care is the personal process of making sure that you don't burn out. It is about engaging in activities that centre and prepare you for whatever may come your way. Self-care is not an indulgence, but crucial to sustaining one's capacity to do the work. Listed below are a few examples of self-care drawn from our own experiences, take them as you need.

- Get outside. A [2010 study in Environmental Health and Preventative Medicine](#) found that spending time in nature leads to lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol, lower blood pressure and a lower pulse rate than spending time in urban settings.
- Write it out. Jotting down your thoughts and impressions about stressful, emotional or even traumatic experiences can help you overcome those events, according to a [2005 study published in Advances in Psychiatric Treatment](#).
- Take a deep breath. A few deep breaths can help to lower heart rate and blood pressure, relieving some of the physical symptoms of stress.

It is important to acknowledge that while self-care is important for self-preservation, stepping back from stressful situations may be perceived by some communities as inaccessible, a privilege and a luxury. This is especially true for individuals from marginalized communities who are constantly in conflict with overlapping systems of power that are meant to exclude and disappear them.

It is also important to recognize that while practicing and promoting self-care is beneficial, that too often the onus falls entirely to the individual. The employer's role is to be conscious and supportive of their employees' potential need for self-care. More importantly employers need to recognize the potential underlying issues within their workplace culture that contributes to employee need to engage in self-care practices, and be responsive in a way that better address the issues at hand.

Read more about self-care [here](#).

IV. Inclusion in Action

The following are a series of case studies from Ontario museums that provide a starting point for thinking about what inclusive practices look like and what questions we need to ask ourselves in doing this work.

Multi-layered Collections: Reframing the Whitehern Collection (Hamilton Civic Museums)



Hamilton

Preamble

Whitehern Historic House and Garden National Historic Site is a historic house museum in the heart of downtown Hamilton. The public museum is the former home to three generations of the McQuesten family, a prominent Hamilton family. The interpretation, public programming and exhibition of the site has traditionally focused on the historical elements that make the site significant (i.e. National Historic Site Designation), the intactness of the home and contents, and the accomplishments of the Honourable Thomas McQuesten who, in 1939, was the Ontario Minister of Highways. The home today is restored to 1939.

With this in mind, creating a more inclusive approach to Collections Development within a historic house museum such as Whitehern poses numerous challenges. Institutions often have a predefined collecting mandate which can be difficult to balance against inclusive collection practices. Due to this, broadening an organization's collecting mandate to collect and include materials from underrepresented groups may not always be possible. However, can we re-examine our existing collections to explore additional narratives that we may not be telling?

Objects and collections have complex and rich layers of meaning. These layers can be inherent to the object itself or attributed to it by interactions with our audiences. By understanding this dual nature of object meaning-making, we can and should be exploring both inherent and attributed meanings in a way that pulls back the surface layers to reveal the rich histories of our objects and untold stories. In doing

so, our collections documentation should have a mechanism to incorporate this meaning into object records.

Our Story

The artifacts in the Whitehern collection, which include a virtually intact archive of personal letters, have been used to frame the McQuesten family narrative in a rather traditional way. Both objects and archival material in the collection are used to highlight successes in the family narrative or are used as conversation points for a discussion of fine art. However, we know through the extensive archive of personal letters written by the family that four members of the McQuesten family suffered from varying degrees of what were referred to as 'nervous problems.'

'Multilayered Collections: Reframing the Whitehern Collection' looks to re-examine the collections of Whitehern by applying a new "lens" to the objects and records within the collection, which focuses on mental health.

Everyone has lenses through which they view and interact with the world around them. Your lenses can be inherited based on things such as your gender identity, your nationality or your level of ability. Your lenses can also be developed based on things such as your level of education, your political views or your religious views. Finally, your lenses can be behavioural such as the way in which you approach a problem or where you go for information. These lenses are always with us; however, individuals might not be aware that they have lenses or what those lenses are.

The manner in which we catalogue and describe objects in museum collections is frequently influenced by the lens of traditional museum education and training in which we learn to catalogue and describe objects based on their physical attributes such as material type and object dimensions or primary source information such as maker or acquisition date.

In order to challenge the lenses which we applied to the Whitehern collection in the past, it was understood that partnerships were required as a means of moving forward. We recognize that as museum workers, we are not experts on issues of mental health, so as part of this project, we chose to reach out to local mental health organizations to assist us in reframing the collection.

Partnership Goals:

- Partner insight and additional artifact information for specific artifacts in the Whitehern collection;
- Partner assistance in developing an inclusive language for discussing mental health and its relationship with the objects;
- Partner assistance in developing new catalogue records;
- Development of new field in City of Hamilton Collections Management software to capture a more inclusive description of the artifact.

'Multilayered Collections: Reframing the Whitehern Collection' offered an opportunity for our organization to engage with outside partners to re-examine our existing collections and to create a mechanism within our collections management database to capture information that goes beyond the physical description of the artifact. We were able to seek input on what type of information outside

users would like to see in the collections records as well as the type of language they would like to see used in collections records.

Partnerships – Canadian Mental Health Association Hamilton Branch

Working with staff from the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Hamilton Branch, we set out to explore individual objects and archival documents from the collection of Whitehern Historic House and Garden. We focused on the mental health narrative and the material culture which spoke most directly to the family's mental health. CMHA staff were toured around the site and given access to the collection in order to assist us with reframing our narrative and adding additional information to the artifact record.

Outcomes

Our partners from the CMHA provided the following insights and additional artifact record information:

- Overcoming the stigma of mental health through artifact focused discussions which demonstrated how we as staff project our own fears around discussing the McQuesten family issues, for example by museums staff not discussing a book which had several underlined passages referring to suicide.
- CMHA reframed how staff interpreted the archival letters by demonstrating the language in the letters not as oppressive or shameful but as demonstrating resilience, support and caring for the individual family members.
- Mental health challenges have no boundaries and anyone, regardless of socio-economic status, age, gender, religion, culture or ability can be affected.
- Artifacts provide an opportunity to engage with visitors in a positive manner to discuss a contemporary issue by creating a connection with the McQuesten family's mental health issues and those that people have today.

Additionally, CMHA provided assistance in developing an inclusive language by:

- CMHA staff assisted in developing inclusive language when referencing archival letters such as resilience, support and caring.
- Shaping language around discussing suicide such as not using the phrase committed suicide, which implies a crime has been committed to 'died by suicide'.
- Guiding how staff might address issues of institutionalization by not using terms such as "family locked her up and threw away the key" to "family kept her home for as long as they could until they no longer had the capability to provide her with the care that she needed".

One of the observations that staff from CMHA noted is how openly the family discussed their mental health challenges in their letters which they found to be unusual for a family in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This observation represents a drastic shift in the way we view the family attitude towards mental health. Previous narratives at the site focus on the family's reluctance to speak about their mental health challenges in the public sphere as being indicative of their shame. This new point of view offered by CMHA indicates a reluctance to talk about these issues in the public sphere as being

more indicative of nineteenth and twentieth century social norms than being indicative of the family's own shame around the subject.

The Hamilton Civic Museum's collections management software Proficio provided the ideal platform for adding additional information. As well the platform will soon have a visitor facing capability making these records accessible to a larger audience.

With support from the CMHA we were able to build more comprehensive and inclusive database records. The information that our partners provided us as part of our sessions is invaluable and in order to ensure that this information is accessible, we needed to ensure that it was appended to the digital collection records appropriately. Ultimately, the field chosen needed to be easily accessible so that information was not buried within the record, as well as searchable for anyone researching the collection.

Learnings

Learning #1:

People want to engage, but you may need to guide them as to how. Our collaborative partners at the CMHA were fully engaged with the history of the site and the stories of the family. Following the project the CMHA shared that the opportunity to apply a different lens to historical representation was a unique and valued one, and that it allowed them to further illustrate the importance of an open and honest discussion of mental health in a new and exciting way.

However, the opportunity to engage directly with artifacts was a positive experience but one which our partners shared as being, 'nerve-wracking at first'. With guidance from our conservation staff, our partners gained confidence for engaging directly with history and provided valuable insight on individual items as well as on the collection as a whole.

Learning #2:

Our recording methods for the session held with our partner organization focused on the collection of information surrounding specific artifacts within the collection. The tour of Whitehern and subsequent discussions resulted in valuable information about the importance of the collection as a whole, and as we had not fully anticipated this, we had no formal method for capturing this information. Our partners spoke of the incredible resilience of the McQuesten family in the face of mental health challenges and the manner in which the family banded together to support each other and it would have been beneficial for us to have a method to capture this discussion. Going forward, we would recommend that a means for capturing this information be developed; whether in writing via a scribe or by permission from the partner organization to record the session.

Learning #3:

Be prepared for staff fear. As part of this project, we knew that going forward we would need a change management approach to developing inclusive practices. Even with this knowledge, we weren't prepared for some of the fear from staff surrounding the inclusion of mental health narratives at Whitehern. Particularly, fears around the re-interpretation of history were voiced by some. It was necessary to communicate that the aim of the project is not to reinterpret history but rather, to tell a

more complete version of history by incorporating narratives that have previously been omitted from the site interpretation and the collections records.

Moving Forward

We carefully chose our partner organizations because they are leaders in mental health care in the Hamilton community. Unfortunately, St. Joseph's Health Care Addiction and Mental Health Services was not able to participate within the time frame of this project. However, we still believe it is vital that staff from St. Joseph's engage with the Whitehern collection and so we will be hosting a session with staff from Addiction and Mental Health Services as a follow up to our pilot project in March of 2018.

We hope that our pilot project has provided an opportunity for us to create lasting partnerships with our partner organizations. In 2018, Whitehern will be partnering with the Canadian Mental Health Organization to support their 'Shine Green for Mental Health Week' campaign by shining a green light on Whitehern Historic House. Work will continue in updating the records in the collections management software.

Using the material from this project, staff at Whitehern will be trained to discuss the families mental health challenges in a constructive and inclusive manner leading to better public programming. Additionally, public programming partnerships will be followed up with towards the fall of 2018 with partner organizations such as speaking engagements with high school students to discuss the McQuesten families' mental health challenges.

Our work in 2018 will look towards creating a museum wide strategy for adopting more inclusive practices for all Hamilton Civic Museums.

Acknowledgements



Special thanks to Jill Dennison and Craig Marenick from the Hamilton Branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association for their willingness to participate in this project, for their enthusiasm and for their insights into the Whitehern artifact collection.

Special thanks to Tom Minnes and Daryl MacTavish for sharing their insights and knowledge of the McQuesten family to help inform this project.

Special thanks to Richard Barlas, Curator Collections, City of Hamilton.

Special thanks to Itxel Castro-Soto for assisting with artifact handling at the CMHA session.

Contributors



Advocate:
SONIA MRVA
Curator, Hamilton Civic Museums

Sonia is responsible for the management of cultural heritage resources for the City of Hamilton. Her most recent work includes the Downtown Built Heritage Inventory Project, a cross departmental initiative between the Heritage Resource Management section and Cultural Heritage Planning. This project was a departure from traditional built heritage inventories through its inclusion of the community in developing an understanding of the value placed on heritage resources. Sonia believes that the inclusion of community is critical in developing a better understanding of the role Museums plays in our society. Prior to her current position, Sonia held Curatorial positions at both Whitehern Historic House and Garden and Dundurn National Historic Site. Sonia has a Bachelor of Arts, History with post graduate work in Museum Studies, Cultural Management and Leadership.



Catalyst:
ROBERTA SEALY
Conservator, Hamilton Civic Museums

Roberta holds an Honours B.A. in Studio Art from McMaster University and a Diploma in Collections Conservation and Management from Fleming College. She is also currently working towards completing a certificate in Emergency Management from the Justice Institute of British Columbia. She has been with the Hamilton Civic Museums since 2009, working part-time as a Collections Assistant and Historical Interpreter. In 2010, she joined the section full-time as a Conservation Technician and then in 2016 took on the role of Conservator for the Museums.



Advisory Committee Member:
CARA KRMPOTICH
Associate Professor and Director, Museum Studies, Faculty of Information, University of Toronto



Advisory Committee Member:
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Collection Coordinator, Canadian Museum of History

Resources

[Guide to Collections Development and Questionnaire](#)

Dig Deeper

- [Museums, Migration and Cultural Diversity: Recommendations for Museum Work, 2016](#)
- [Including Museums: Perspectives on Museums, Galleries and Social Inclusion](#)
- [From Disciplinary Control to Co-Creation - Collection and the Development of Museums as Praxis in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century](#)
- [Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums](#)
- [Royal BC Museum and Archives Official Response: Regarding the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action](#)
- [Beyond Diversity: a Deeper Focus on Race and the Museum](#)
- [Significance 2.0: A Guide to Assessing the Significance of Collections](#)
- ['Access for All' Toolkit: Enabling Inclusion for Museums, Libraries and Archives](#)
- [National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries - V.1.5, Part B: Involving People](#)
- [Collections Trust: Revisiting Museum Collections \(A toolkit for capturing and sharing multiple perspectives on museum and gallery collections\)](#)
- [Collections Trust: Revisiting Museum Collections with Young People and Community Groups](#)

Access 2 All: Programs and Events (Ermatinger • Clergue National Historic Site)



Ermatinger • Clergue National Historic Site

Preamble

Owned and operated by the Corporation of the City of Sault Ste. Marie, the Ermatinger • Clergue National Historic Site (ECNHS) offers a year-round cultural attraction for residents and visitors to Sault Ste. Marie. The ECNHS includes the Nationally Designated Ermatinger Old Stone House, the house of F.H. Clergue (whom was Nationally Designated as an important person), heritage gardens, historically interpreted yard, and the interactive Heritage Discovery Theatre. Visitors enter through the Heritage Discover Theatre where they're engaged by a multimedia movie which acts as an orientation to our site, at this time they're also able to visit our 1812 gallery, and "The Post" gift shop.

The [Ermatinger Old Stone House](#) has been restored to depict the domestic and professional life of Charles Oakes Ermatinger (a successful and influential fur trader), and other prominent residents and visitors of the House between 1808 and 1870.

The [Clergue Blockhouse](#) was relocated to the Site in 1996, and served as the home of industrialist Francis Hector Clergue from 1894 – 1908. The original stone story (main floor) of this blockhouse originated as a gunpowder magazine for the Northwest Fur Trade Company / Hudson Bay Company, before Mr. Clergue turned it into his residence, adding the second floor on top.

Situated in the small Northern Ontario community of Sault St. Marie, the ECNHS has found that our programs and services are often not tailored enough to be inclusive of ALL audiences. As our northern city expands to invite newcomers to Canada, and works toward the strategic pillars of our new municipal mandate (common cause and new direction) we are forced to think outside the box to create a culturally vital and vibrant institution. As such, we have been charged with evaluating our current methods of service, creating new programs, and developing partnerships to maximize our ability to remain relevant within our changing community.

Within Sault Ste. Marie's strategic pillars as laid out in our municipal mandate, some of the calls to action are to: invite immigration and welcome newcomers; advance relationships with Indigenous

peoples; improve community well-being as we collectively eliminate barriers; and celebrate our history, cultural heritage, diverse identities towards the creation of a Pride of Place.

Keeping these strategic goals in mind, the staff and Board members at ECNHS eagerly stepped forward to participate in this project. We were excited to better understand our current capacity, and to grow the programs and events offered at ECNHS. Through changes to our Fall Rendezvous, an annual festival run in partnership with our 'Friends of' group we desired to create a more welcoming and inclusive experience for Sault St. Marie's diverse community. Due to the dates of this event, the festival also incorporates "Culture Days" and is registered as an Ontario Culture Days event.

Our Story

[Fall Rendezvous](#) is a four day festival put on by the ECNHS that provides our local community, tourists, and educational boards an opportunity to learn about the life, livelihood and politics of Sault St. Marie from 1808 to 1820. To begin creating a more inclusive event, we first examined which audiences were historically not engaging with, or attending the festival. In doing so, we identified three communities: (1) Francophones (2) persons with a disability and (3) Indigenous peoples.

Once we had identified our gaps, we created three core mandates to inform our work in creating a truly inclusive experience with the support of these communities:

- Focus on removing barriers to, and create opportunities for, participation and engagement.
- Promote the event in a way that can reach the breadth of our community.
- Accurately and respectfully represent the diversity of the community in which we reside, as well as the historic role of diverse community groups.

In planning and creating a truly inclusive event, we initially reached out to community organizations, school boards, and Indigenous partners to establish a network of contacts to assist, guide, and lend professional expertise to our process.

Once established, we secured funding for any additional services required for the festival, to ensure we could provide supports for these new audiences. Additionally, we ensured that traditions and ceremonies were observed and implemented as part of our engagement with various communities. An example of this was offering of tobacco bundles to our Indigenous partners as a request for their participation. Acceptance of the tobacco, before their participation, was required for the Ojibwa culture.

Based upon consultation with our local communities we identified several services that could assist in making our Fall Rendezvous more inclusive to our historically disengaged audiences:

- Provide an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter on-site at our opening ceremony.
- Make available ASL interpreters for students who may require one during our educational days.
- Create a map which highlights accessibility features and entrances.
- Translate into French our festival handouts and teacher packages.
- Make available onsite a Francophone guide with French language interpretation and locations of program stations across the festival grounds.
- Provide a French language evaluation for teachers and /or visitors.

- Create a symbolic evaluation for persons with a disability to provide feedback on their experience. See our Resources for more info.
- Better represent Indigenous culture within our event and programming. For the Fall Rendezvous, three out of ten stations were programmed by Indigenous peoples: Indian Friendship Centre – the story of the Wampum; Native Drums and ceremonial customs; and Métis – Song, dance, and Sash.

Learnings

Learning #1

During the planning stages of developing programming and events, it is crucial to share authority with community partners. Building trust, creating a dialogue, learning and listening prior to planning and implementing assists in identifying bias or barriers that can impede equitable inclusion. By inviting and including everyone in the planning stages, the end result will be inclusive, engaging, and inviting to all. This take away was highlighted by feedback from our Métis partners, ‘inclusion in the Fall Rendezvous provides the opportunity to highlight the local Métis Community and their distinct customs and way of life.’

Learning #2

Do not be afraid to ask questions. When working with diverse communities, it is important to ask questions if you are unsure. By asking questions you are engaging in the conversation, showing a willingness to build your own understanding, and building trust and rapport. Further, ask questions of not only your program partners and presenters but of your visitors as well. Doing so allows you to track engagement, evaluate success and recommend adjustments. For us, the evaluations that came in from our Francophone classes were largely positive in all aspects of the school visit and tour of the historical stations on the site. Yet they also highlighted the importance of having a French Language interpreter attend those stations with the students and teacher in order to translate what the English speaking presenter was providing.

Learning #3

When working with cultural groups or organizations, it is important to respect and acknowledge their traditions and culture. We learned when it is appropriate to offer Ojibwa Indigenous groups tobacco when asking for their participation as well as any honorarium/fees they may wish for participation. Cultural traditions are as important and may even replace the traditional ‘contracts’. By respecting custom and tradition and building reciprocity throughout, you are building the foundations for inclusive dialogue rooted in respect and understanding.

Moving Forward

Museum inclusiveness requires staff, volunteers, and Board Members to openly embrace change, view our practices with new lenses, listen, and allow for partners to have the shared authority in making the change, and learn from those whom we are partnering with. Transforming our programs, events, and services to embrace this adds value, diversity, and equity. It needs to be in the forefront of our museums as we move forward.

The Ermatinger • Clergue National Historic Site is committed to developing diverse and inclusive programming and events. We understand that within programs and events, our attempt to be diverse and inclusive still showed gaps in services. We plan to reach out to local community groups and organizations to help us to shape and develop these programs and events moving forward.

We have begun many new partnerships since this festival. We are as well working to keep an open dialogue with the partners we created during this process. Our Fall Rendezvous festival/event is our biggest endeavor each year, and we would like it to be as inclusive as possible, especially since we have tied it also to Culture Days within Ontario and Canada.

Since the festival the following new partnerships have been formed:

- Local Immigration Partnership
- Settlement and Newcomer Services
- Algoma University – Shingwauk
- Baawaating Family Health

There still is a need to build greater dialogue and understanding with Batchewana First Nations, Garden River First Nations, Nogdawindamin Community Services, and the Métis Nation of Sault Ste. Marie, to ensure our programs and services are interpreting Indigenous heritage with integrity.

We are also pursuing further avenues to create greater accessibility within or organization and at our events by working with our Accessibility Committee and partner organizations. We do so in order to create an organization in which:

**“Accessible programs: more than physical facilities
Inclusive programs: more than sharing a space”**

*The Art of Inclusion
McMichael Art Gallery*

Acknowledgements

The Ermatinger • Clergue National Historic Site would like to thank the following organizations and people for their assistance, participation, and expertise in assisting us in creating a successful festival:

- Sault Ste. Marie Indian Friendship Centre
- Healing Lodge Singers – Indigenous drumming and singing – all women
- American Sign Language Interpreter – Lesley Sawchyn
- Métis Nation of Ontario – Sault Ste. Marie Division
- Breaking Away – special needs program
- Nouvelon – Notre Dame School, Francophone School
- Sault Community Career Centre, Multicultural contacts, Culture Day partner, funding partner
- Leo Binda, Indigenous program presenter
- Jean Marie Wissel – French language interpreter & translator
- Staff, volunteers, and re-enactors, heritage interpreters who assisted in the program/event,
- City of Sault Ste. Marie

- Friends of ECNHS
- Francophone champion: Jean Marie Wissell, Nouvelon School Board

Indigenous Program Content

Indian Friendship Centre - Indigenous program station and advisory.

- Kimberly Pelletier, Healing & Wellness Coordinator
- Amber Jones, BSW candidate: Algoma University

Healing Lodge Singers - Women's drumming and singing group.

- Theresa Binda

Indigenous program station, drums and ceremony.

- Leo Binda

Métis Nation of Sault Ste. Marie - Indigenous program station and materials for teacher packages.

- Anne Trudell, Education Officer, Métis Nation of Ontario

Persons with a Disability:

- Easter Seals Canada – ACCESS 2 ENTERTAINMENT
- Local Public & Separate School Boards – Special needs resources
- City of Sault Ste. Marie – Accessibility Committee

Contributors



Advocate:
KATHY FISHER
Curator, Ermatinger • Clergue National Historic Site

Kathy has been working within the museum sector in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario for 25 years. Receiving her Certificate in Museum Studies from the Ontario Museum Association (OMA), she has remained an active member of the community having hosted courses and the OMA conference in Sault Ste. Marie. Kathy has also hosted workshops for the Ontario Historical Society and assisted the development of the 4Culture Network of Cultural Attractions, as well as the North Shore Cultural Attractions Networking in Algoma District. She is a participating member of the Board of Directors for Regional Tourism Marketing Partners and the Culinary Tourism Strategy for Algoma. Additionally, Kathy is a member of the Local Immigration Partnership Committee and the

Provincial Lead in the Bicentennial of the War of 1812. Kathy holds a B. Sc. in Recreation Management and Therapeutic Recreation, as well as Associate Degrees in Fine Arts and Humanities.



Catalyst:

WILL HOLLINGSHEAD

Heritage Programmer, Ermatinger • Clergue National Historic Site

William has a Bachelor in Fine Arts – Sculpture/Installation Art from the Ontario College of Art and Design University and he has completed a Certificate in Museum Studies with the Ontario Museum Association as well as an online Certificate in Library Management. He has been working in museums and galleries for 7 years taking on a variety of roles and responsibilities. Having recently relocated to Sault Ste. Marie, his hometown, from the Greater Toronto Area, Will is now a full-time Heritage Programmer. Will sits on a variety of boards including: Steering Committee for Regional Museum Networks with the Ontario Museum Association, Acting Co-Chair of the North Shore Cultural Attractions Network, Vice Chair for the Group of Emerging Museum Professional, Director on the St Mary's River Marine Heritage Centre Board of Directors, and various other cultural and heritage committees. His areas of interest are public education programming, strategic planning, exhibit planning and design, and special events and volunteer management. He sees museums, galleries, and historic sites as a place where not only the past, but also the present can and should assist us in informing the future; a place where we can use artifacts and histories to foster a discourse, inspire, and engage not only the visitors we serve but also the staff that work in these facilities; a place where communities can come together to share in and experience culture.



Advisory Committee Member:

PENNY PINE

Collection Coordinator, Canadian Museum of History



Advisory Committee Member::

VISHNU RAMCHARAN

Specialist: Visitor and Community Engagement, Ontario Science Centre

Resources

[Fall Rendezvous Evaluation Form](#)

[Symbolic Evaluation Method](#)

Dig Deeper

Art of Relevance – Nina Simon

“The Question of Inclusiveness” Sault Ste Marie Hosts 2005 National Conference on Community Economic Development and Social Economy

Accessibility

[Easter Seals Access 2 Card Program](#)

[Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, Diversity through Inclusive Practice](#)

[An accessible survey method: Increasing the participation of people with a disability in large sample social research](#)

[Ryerson University – Guide to Accessible Events](#)

[Government of Ontario - Guide to Accessible Festivals and Outdoor Events](#)

Community Groups

[Youth Odena](#)

[Indian Friendship Centre in Sault Ste. Marie](#)

[Breaking Away – Supporting Independence for Adults with Developmental Disabilities](#)

Indigenous Community

[Muskrat Magazine, Ojibwe Chief Shingwaukonse – One Who Was Not Idle](#)

[Great Lakes Research Alliance Aboriginal Arts & Cultures](#)

[Algoma University – Karl Hele Launches New Book This is Indian Land](#)

Francophone Community

[Nouvelon](#)

[Conseil scolaire public du Grand Nord de l'Ontario](#)

[Including Students with Special Education Needs in French as a Second Language Programs: A Guide for Ontario Schools](#)

Diversifying Human Resources and Volunteer Policies: Activating change in small to medium-sized galleries (Art Gallery of Sudbury)



art gallery of sudbury
galerie d'art de sudbury

Preamble

In 2017, writer and curator Michael Maranda published an article in Canadian Art entitled ["Hard Numbers: A Study on Diversity in Canada's Galleries."](#) In this report, Maranda gathered data on upper management at 80 publicly funded galleries across Canada. His rationale for selecting this sample was to better understand the diversity of "those with more control over the shape of the galleries' programming." To do so, Maranda examined demographics amongst this group based on gender, and identification as a visible-minority or as Indigenous, then comparing the data with public-funding trends, and national diversity censuses completed by Waging Culture (2012) and Statistics Canada (2011).

Maranda found that "The entire pool of arts professionals in this survey consists of 184 persons, and of these, just shy of 92% are Caucasian, just less than 4% are Indigenous and just more than 4% are visible minorities."

Maranda concluded his assessment with a pointed statement directed at accountability at the boardroom management level.

"In the end, it is the boardrooms of these institutions that must be held accountable. They set conditions of representation within the galleries' programs through their hiring. It, perhaps, should come as no surprise that diversity in the boardrooms of Canada (a population somewhat equivalent to the pool of candidates for the boards of, at least, the larger galleries) is similarly unrepresentative of Canada at large. In 2016, for example, a mere 4.5% of board members at the 500 largest corporations in Canada were visible minorities, and a mere 0.6% were Indigenous."

For public cultural institutions to embrace Canada's diversifying populations, we must also make an effort to embed inclusive and progressive hiring practices in Human Resources (HR) management policies and volunteer policies. Small, but focused changes in HR and Volunteer Policies can spur awareness within an organization and especially amongst hiring managers and committees.

The origin of Human Resource Policy dates back to the industrialization era, manufacturing, and production. Museums and galleries at their functional core must properly administer and support a safe and productive working environment for staff and volunteers to see projects to fruition. However,

despite its assembly line origins there is opportunity to adapt traditional HR and Volunteer policies in a way that supports key recruitment, museological and gallery responsibilities, as well as professional development that will encourage the recruitment, hiring and retention of a talented and diverse workforce.

The benefits of a diverse workforce have been outlined in [“Diversity Dividend: Canada’s Global Advantage.”](#) Diverse organizations are better able to win and retain top talent, reach new markets, and improve customer orientation, employee satisfaction, and decision making, leading to a cycle of increasing returns. Studies have even shown that in cultural organizations, a one percent (1%) increase in workforce diversity is associated with a six percent (6%) increase in revenue.

Additional benefits:

- Innovative and different ideas can emerge from a more diverse workforce
- Better community representation increases customer service and expands opportunities for different audiences and markets
- Boosts the organization’s own image by promoting equality, diversity, etc.
- Lack of diversity in volunteer and HR policies risks alienating current employees and encouraging an unwelcoming/hostile workplace.

The Art Gallery of Sudbury/Galerie d’art de Sudbury (AGS/GAS) will adapt simple and relevant procedures and revisions to the Employee Handbook (i.e. Human Resource Policy). The research is relevant for small to medium-sized galleries who face challenges related to limited staff resources and strict operating expenses. Throughout the development of the project, we acknowledged the following regional considerations: demographics, language, accessibility (physical and social), and geography (rural vs. urban). The organizational impacts include employees, volunteers, Board of Directors, funding initiatives, and museological implications.

Our Story

Mission: The Art Gallery of Sudbury / Galerie d’art de Sudbury (AGS/GAS) is a dynamic bilingual public visual art gallery and key art educational, cultural and tourism destination in Northeastern Ontario, creating meaningful engagement opportunities in dialogue with contemporary artists and our permanent collection for all who visit the gallery -- and beyond.

The AGS/GAS is located in Sudbury, Ontario in the traditional territory of the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek and is part of the Robinson-Huron Treaty ([Vital Signs 2016](#), Sudbury Community Foundation). Home to a diverse and expanding population, it was reported in the 2016 Statistics Canada Census that of the 161,531 Greater Sudbury residents:

- 25.35% identified French as being a mother tongue language
- 9.25% identified as Aboriginal
- 3.7% identified as being a Visible Minority (South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Arab, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, Japanese, Visible Minority, Multiple visible minorities) (Census Profile, [2016 Census](#), Greater Sudbury, City [Census subdivision], Ontario and Ontario [Province])

Greater Sudbury was the only population in Northern Ontario to increase (0.8%) since the 2011 Census data was released. Driven by the diverse growth of student populations attending Laurentian University, College Boreal, and Cambrian College.

The AGS/GAS is a public art gallery and has been in continuous operation since 1967. The AGS/GAS strives to offer a work environment that supports bilingualism through public outreach, programming, and exhibition text. AGS/GAS front-line staff including receptionists, education coordinators, and marketing and media staff are fluent in both official languages.

The AGS/GAS is committed to representing Sudbury's demographics on staff by hiring and retaining permanent positions in coordinator and management roles. As of January 2018, there are five full-time, two part-time, and eight contracted staff:

- 35% identified as being bilingual (5/14)
- 7% identified as Aboriginal (1/14)
- 93.3% identified as female (14/15)
- 0% identified as a visible minority (0/15)

*figures do not total 100% as there is an overlap of females who identify as being bilingual and Aboriginal.

Section 2.10 of the AGS/GAS Employee Handbook (i.e. Human Resource Policy) outlines employment equity, safety, and expectations of both the staff and organization. Discrimination and harassment are never tolerated in the workplace. The Employee Handbook outlines the following distinctions as discriminatory topics: race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, family status, disability, age (when 18 or older), a record of offences, same-sex partnership.

Learnings

Learning #1 - *Collecting consistent and relevant quantitative data*

Collecting and analyzing consistent and relevant quantitative data will illustrate diverse representation within your organization. Consult with current staff, Board Members, and volunteers to tailor a survey that supports organizational strategic goals. It is important to define *what*, *how*, and *why* data is collected.

Please note, disclosing equity and diversity data is always **voluntary**. Treat each survey result ethically by not disclosing individual identifiers. Furthermore, survey results will be managed (recorded, analyzed) by senior staff.

Diversity Statistics Directives can be embedded directly in the HR and Volunteer Policy. Policy clause considerations:

- State *how* data is collected.
- State *why* data is collected.
- Outline *how* data is analysed.
- List *who* manages the data and confidentiality.
- Confirm *when* data is made available to the public.

See an [example of an employee](#) survey, and the disclaimers we used.

Learning #2 – Defining relevant terminology

As society progresses into a more inclusive environment, terminology also advances. Ensure members of your organization are aware of current terminologies related to diversity and inclusion.

Defining barriers in the HR and Volunteer Policy extends to listing consequences to barriers and providing proactive solutions. Incorporating inclusive language in HR and Volunteers Policies can:

- Educate and influence upper-management with decision-making processes and hiring practices.
- Provide safeguards for employers and employees.

A simple way to achieve this is supplying a glossary of terms in your HR and Volunteer Policy. See our [glossary of terms](#) we created.

Learning #3 – Mirroring regional demographics with organizational representation

Analysing regional demographics using reputable sources (Statistics Canada) illustrates the culture and community of your region. In Sudbury, for example, the 2016 Statistics Canada census determined of 161,531 residents: 25.35% identified French as being a mother tongue language; 9.25% identified as Aboriginal, and 3.7% identified as being a Visible Minority.

Making real efforts to, at the very minimum, *mirror* regional demographics with upper-management and staff ensures that a variety of voices are heard and considered.

Moving Forward

- Implement changes to the HR and Volunteer Policy. Including:
 - Incorporating voluntary survey, activating data analysis.
 - Promoting diverse language within the HR and Volunteer Policy.
 - Seeking qualified and diverse Board Members, staff, volunteers.
- Present changes and suggestions to the HR Committee and Board of Directors.
- Review Diversity and Inclusion Survey results with upper-management.
- Use survey results to influence the hiring and retention of staff and volunteers.
- Monitor the need for further updates to the HR and Volunteer Policies, as necessary.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank City of Greater Sudbury council, staff, and volunteers who strategized, adopted, and continue to implement the Greater City of Sudbury Cultural Plan 2015-2020. We would also like to thank city staff, and volunteers who contributed to “The Diversity Thrives Here!” a municipal Diversity Plan for the City of Greater Sudbury (2005).

We would also like to thank the Art Gallery of Sudbury/Galerie d’art de Sudbury Board of Directors, sub-committee members, volunteers, and staff who continuously encourage, embrace, and foster an inclusive environment within the gallery and community at-large.

Contributors



Advocate:

DEANNA NEBENIONQUIT

Collection Manager | Curator Alternate, Art Gallery of Sudbury/ Galerie d'art de Sudbury

Deanna Nebenionquit is Anishinaabe from Atikameksheng Anishnawbek, formerly known as Whitefish Lake First Nation. Since 2014, Deanna has curated a number of exhibitions for the Art Gallery of Sudbury | Galerie d'art de Sudbury including: For Better or For Worse: The Comic Art of Lynn Johnston; Darlene Naponse's bi mooskeg | surfacing (2016 Exhibition of the Year Under \$10,000 by the Ontario Association of Art Galleries); and Mariana Lafrance's to not be so lonely | À boire sans soif.



Catalyst:

TADDRICK TREMBLAY

Visitor Services and Operations Coordinator, Art Gallery of Sudbury/ Galerie d'art de Sudbury

After a number of years working in the visitor services department at the Canadian Museum of History (former Canadian Museum of Civilization) in Gatineau, Taddrick moved back to his hometown of Greater Sudbury. Since 2014, he has worked at the Art Gallery of Sudbury | Galerie d'art de Sudbury where his tasks include visitor services and sales.



Advisory Committee Member:

CHERYL BLACKMAN

Assistant Vice President - Audience Development, Royal Ontario Museum



Advisory Committee Member:
SHELLEY FALCONER
President and Chief Executive Officer, Art Gallery of Hamilton

Resources

- [Statistics Canada, 2016 Census](#)
- [Greater Sudbury Cultural Plan \(2015-2020\)](#)
- [Diversity Plan for the City of Greater Sudbury \(2005\) “The Diversity Thrives Here!”](#)
- [Canadian Art, Hard Numbers: A Study on Diversity in Canada’s Galleries \(Michael Maranda, 2017\)](#)
- [Running a Museum: A Practical Handbook. Article: Managing People \(Patrick J. Boylan, Professor Emeritus, City of University London\)](#)
- [Canadian Museums Association: Human Resources Guidelines](#)
- [Accessibility Ontario](#)
- [Diversity at Work](#)
- [Canada Council for the Arts, Corporate Policies](#)
- [Society for Human Resource Management: Hiring Fit vs. Hiring for Inclusion: Which Route Should You Take? \(Lin Gensing-Pophal, 2017\)](#)

Dig Deeper

[Community Mapping Tool: Mapping At-Risk Communities in Canada](#)

[Gender inequalities in the workplace: the effects of organization structures, processes, practices, and decision makers’ sexism.](#) Cailin S. Stamarski and Leanne S. Son Hing

[Public Service Alliance of Canada, 2017 National Equity Conference](#) (Workshop Handouts)

Curating Change: Bringing Diversity to Museum Collections through Audience Insight (Markham Museum)



Preamble

Markham Museum is a 25-acre (10ha) open-air museum, located just north of historic Markham Village in the City of Markham. The site features 30+ historic buildings, including houses, barns, sheds, a train station, a school, a general store, a church, a blacksmith shop, a harness shop, a cider mill, and a saw mill. Since its creation nearly 50 years ago, the museum's scope and direction have evolved. Initially a historic village with a collection mandate that covered Markham Township and the surrounding district, the museum now focuses on the contemporary geographic boundaries of Markham and utilizes its historic structures and new, LEED Gold certified collections facility to understand Markham through a science and technology lens.

The museum's current strategic direction is the result of a careful examination of the effectiveness of the museum's traditional approach. In 2009, after nearly 40 years of the museum's existence, the demographics of Markham had undergone tremendous change. These changes guided a shift, whereby the museum now aims to examine Markham by engaging technologies developed and used by all human cultures to live in the natural world; agriculture and food; material culture; engineering; and environmental. It engages science, industry, history and the arts to understand how Markham became what it is today and what its possible futures could be.

The aim of this change was to allow the museum to always start from a place that is inclusive of everyone in Markham, regardless of whether or not they belong to the community's "founding families," and/or the historically predominantly European population groups. This new approach was formalized into a strategic plan, which was officially adopted in 2017. This approach has been employed however, for the last nine years, and in that time: revenue, community engagement, and programming success have all increased.

Our Story

Changing the museum's strategy from the top affects different aspects of museum operations at different rates. While programming and temporary exhibitions have seen a fairly rapid overhaul, the museum's collection, by its nature, is not as quick to adapt to a new mandate. Presently, Markham is one of the most ethnically diverse municipalities in Canada, but its museum collection and our long term exhibition program lags in representation.

In order to address this, the Museum has been developing a comprehensive *collections review*, in order to create a standard process meant to simultaneously guide both collecting and deaccessioning. A crucial component built into this process is audience insight. It is imperative that the Museum engages with, and listens to, its diverse, cosmopolitan and urban community if it hopes to ensure that all individuals can see themselves reflected in the collection at Markham Museum. Information gathered in the study will help us establish guidelines and a strategy for allocating resources toward the collection today and in the future.

Collecting audience insight for this project took the form of a workshop designed to engage participants that are representative of the contemporary population of Markham. As of 2011, 72% of Markham residents identified as visible minorities, with 58% of Markham's population being immigrants. Through collaboration with faculty at Unionville High School, our first workshop consisted of 18 students from three different high schools across the City. Starting with this cross section of our population not only ensured ethnic and cultural diversity (16 of the 18 students were not born in Markham), but also targeted consultation with a group that is more difficult to capture in a more traditional way as part of a museum audience. The second run was a post-graduate group of museum studies students, and the third and fourth with students from another Markham High School.

The workshop consisted of two parts. The first half involved an introduction to Markham Museum as an institution, our new strategic approach and the basics of what, how and why museums collect. Participants were split into three small groups and rotated between stations in both behind-the-scenes and public spaces in the museum. Staff at each station facilitated hands-on artifact assessments, storage vault and exhibit gallery tours and participatory artifact handling lessons. The morning overall was a crash-course in curatorial work and understanding how museums function.

For the afternoon, participants were provided with a map and a series of check points and were sent on a self-guided scavenger hunt across the museum's 25 acres. The checkpoints were located in exhibitions, historic building displays, artifact storage vaults, and administrative office spaces. Each checkpoint included a QR code and a URL, and participants could use their smart device to connect to a short survey about what they were seeing. The questions were designed to encourage answers that highlight the museum's biases, inclusivity and representativeness.

The higher level curatorial staff who facilitated the morning orientation took a step back for the afternoon portion. The morning ensured that participants were well-equipped with an understanding of museum foundations, and the core programs that guide our new strategic direction. In the afternoon, participants were trusted to visit the checkpoints independently, without an intellectual authority hovering over them. The surveys were also anonymous. This was done with the aim of encouraging responses that were participants' most honest observations.

This strategy was continued with the debrief discussion which finished the day. The session was facilitated by one of the museum's junior programs staff, someone who would be perceived as less of an authority, or someone looking for the "correct" answers. Notes from this session combined with the survey results provided valuable, focused insight on our collections and how we use them, from groups that reflect the diversity of Markham.

Learnings

Learning #1: *The more data the better*

The survey was designed to provide helpful audience insight, specifically regarding diversity and inclusion in our museum's collection and exhibitions. We chose this intense format because we felt it was essential to provide participants with a lot of knowledge in order to extract meaningful feedback. While valuable, this turned out to be a lot of time and energy input for a relatively small quantity of responses. While we were satisfied with the ethnic diversity within our workshop groups, four groups of participants from mostly the same age group lacks representation of the Markham community in other ways. Fortunately, the success of the program and positive feedback from participants on the overall experience has encouraged us to offer this workshop on an ongoing basis. The time invested in developing this program can now also be carried forward to a public program we can offer on a fee basis that not only continuously strengthens the representation in our survey results, but that also serves an added value to the institution.

Learning #2: *Empowering participants is crucial for gathering quality insight*

It was critical to design a process for audience insight that was engaging and empowering. Our initial run of workshops was tailored to a mostly teenage audience, which informed the inclusion of two important elements that ended up being critical to the workshop's success. Firstly, we designed a data collecting process in which participants were encouraged to use their smartphones. And secondly, we made a point to treat participants like adults. This was done by offering enough trust to allow them to carry out the scavenger hunt without any direct supervision. Students had access to parts of the museum usually closed to public access, and after being equipped with the appropriate knowledge in the morning, could even touch and pick up artifacts in storage. By setting them up to be active and self-directed participants in the museum, we believe they came at our survey questions with greater confidence in the value of their feedback. In our debrief discussions participants consistently pointed out that being trusted to touch and interact with the objects was one of the most enjoyable parts of their whole experience.

Learning #3: *Keep your data collection process flexible and tailor it to the group participating*

Creating a process that relied on utilizing one's smartphone came out of initially developing our workshop for a teen audience. This proved to be a very effective way of engaging this particular demographic (in addition to simplifying our own data collecting process). However, feedback we received from the graduate student group indicated that some participants felt that it took away from their enjoyment of the process. Having a greater knowledge of, and engagement with, the topic led them to want to write longer responses than the method was intended to capture. Therefore it is important to consider the group with which you are engaging, and be flexible with how the process unfolds. Tailoring your audience insight data collection to specific audiences on a case-by-case basis is important to ensuring the best response.

Moving Forward

Though the quantity of our survey responses was small when considering the community of Markham in its entirety, there were some useful insights gained from our participants, including the following:

Room for improvement...

A semi-permanent exhibit which explores the high school experience in Markham lacks coverage of a non-typical school experience – those who couldn't go to school, or finish it. There was also no mention of residential schools.

In other exhibits, certain panels were seen as telling pioneer history, men's history, European history, rather than an inclusive *Markham* history. We need to do more to re-examine how we are writing our history, down to the fine details of the language we are using. Old habits in label writing may be hard to break but community feedback is clear that language matters.

In our latest exhibit, our strategy when it came to indigenous content was to approach it from a technology perspective – looking at ancestral Wendat farming technique and how similar principles are recently being applied by contemporary non-indigenous farmers in Markham. Our feedback indicated that this approach mentioned enough to acknowledge indigenous existence, but they would prefer to see a greater context and indigenous presence in our narrative overall.

There is a general desire for more interpretation in historic building displays, including first-person interpretation.

Lastly, beyond our exhibition content, the museum staff is mostly white women which is not representative of the diversity of the Markham community.

What we are getting right...

Some feedback confirms that the new approach our museum is taking is on the right track. Our focus on interactivity has been very well-received, as has our focusing on personal experiences rather than just historical facts. Interactive components, even those specifically designed for children, received a lot of positive feedback as being memorable and a highlight of their experience.

Other indications that an inclusive starting point is well-received include participants enjoying:

- An emphasis on “student experience” over “the history of schools”
- Quotes from modern farmers coupled with historical farming information – tying in the contemporary community component of a particular topic.

Further, our intention to focus on the ability for our audience to make connections between museum objects and their own personal experience seems confirmed by the fact that participants singled out objects that were most interesting to them because they could link them to their own experience and interests.

What came as a surprise...

While there was feedback that some participants did not feel it was their history being told at the museum, some indicated that they were ok with that and were still interested in hearing about the people who lived in Markham before them.

At our museum we are trying to reinterpret collections in a contemporary way, but some of the more traditional/nostalgic components of the museum are still some of the most popular with our audience – such as 30-year old static diorama displays. Even with a mostly non-white audience, feedback indicated that they still expect such displays at a museum and enjoy seeing them.

Next steps...

An important next step is to carry out discussions about how to turn the data we are collecting into action. Additionally, we plan to carry out more iterations of this workshop. Capturing a larger portion of the Markham community will increase our representation and the usefulness of the data that informs our collecting as well as our programs and exhibition development. It will also be important to use our audience insight to continuously adapt the questions we ask in our survey.

Contributors



Advocate:
JANET REID
Curator, Markham Museum

Curator, assumed responsibility for the collections and exhibitions at Markham Museum in 2009. She executed the transfer and consolidation of the Museum's artifacts and archives to a centralized facility in 2011 and initiated the museum's online collections programs. Working collaboratively with the program staff she is currently working to bring the collections and exhibitions in line with our new strategic direction. She collaborates with partners internally and externally in the development of exhibitions.

Prior to joining the Markham Museum, she was the Manager of Museum Services at the Textile Museum and also worked as a consultant to the field for seven years. Janet has a Masters of Museum Studies from the University of Toronto and an undergraduate degree in science from the University of Ottawa. She is currently Vice Chair of the York Durham Association of Museums and Archives.



Catalyst:
MARK SCHEIBMAYR
Assistant Curator, Markham Museum

Mark Scheibmayr has been Assistant Curator at Markham Museum since joining the team in 2014, where his responsibilities include coordinating researcher access to the museum's community archives, junior staff training and support, exhibition planning, and graphic design. Notable exhibition projects for which Mark was design lead include Construction City (2016), In Our Own Words (part of Myseum of Toronto's 2017 Intersections Festival), and Geared for Growing (2017-19).

Prior roles include Exhibitions Coordinator at the Design Exchange, and Education and Programs Coordinator for the Association of Registered Graphic Designers (RGD). He is also a freelance illustrator and fine art collections consultant. Mark is a graduate of Fleming College's Museum Management and Curatorship program and has an undergraduate degree in Anthropology from McGill University.



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Dayne Jespersen, Program Instructor, Markham Museum

Matthew Wright, Visitor Service Coordinator, Markham Museum

Shane Clodd, Visual Arts Department Head, Unionville High School

Ministry of Education – Government of Ontario

Resources

[Markham Museum Question Template for Scavenger Hunt](#)

Dig Deeper

[The Dreamspace Project: A Workbook and Toolkit for Critical Praxis in the American Art Museum Part 2 Inluseum](#)

[Dictionary of the Queer International](#), Yevgeniy Fiks

[What the Data Tell Us About the Challenges Facing Female Artists of Colour](#), Amy Mannarino, Mara Kurlandsky

What the Data Tell Us About the Challenges Facing Female Artists of Colour, Amy Mannarino, Mara Kurlandsky <https://hyperallergic.com/429885/what-the-data-tell-us-about-the-challenges-facing-female-artists-of-color/>

Making Indigenous Collections Accessible: A Collaboration with Nin Da Waab Jig (Museums Windsor)



Preamble

Museum Windsor is a municipally funded museum under the management of the City of Windsor, and located on the traditional territory of the Anishnaabeg people of the Three Fires Confederacy (Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa). Due to Windsor's unique location along the Detroit River, many different groups have called this area home including: Haudenosaunee, Attawandaron (Neutral), and Huron (Wyandot) peoples. Today, many Indigenous people and Métis across Turtle Island call this area home. We are grateful for the opportunity to work in this territory.

Initially opening as the Hiram Walker Historical Museum in 1958, the museum was established in the nationally designated François Baby House, a property that dates back to 1812 and played a pivotal role during the War of 1812. Today, Museum Windsor has grown to include the historic François Baby House, the Duff-Baby Interpretation Centre, and the newly opened Chimczuk Museum. Museum Windsor's mission statement is as follows: "Museum Windsor inspires passion, arouses curiosity and promotes learning about the unique history and the natural, social, technological and cultural development of the City of Windsor and area for the benefit of our community and our visitors. The museum will acquire, preserve, document, illustrate and promote this history." Museum Windsor's collection currently includes over 15,000 artifacts, the oldest of which includes archaeological material dating back to 3,000 BC.

Based on community research and consultation, the main challenge we sought to address in this project was how to increase access to Indigenous materials for Indigenous communities in a respectful and collaborative manner. Generally speaking, based on past experiences and methods of collecting, museums and Indigenous communities have had a tenuous and rocky relationship. One way museums

can mend this and move towards reconciliation is to establish a respectful, working partnership with the Indigenous community to improve access to their cultural materials.

Our Story

The challenges and goals of this project were identified through consultation with local Indigenous community members. This consultation took the form of group and individual meetings, roundtable discussions, and a publically available survey on the topic of Indigenous approaches to material collection and museum collaboration. Once these challenges were identified, the following project was undertaken to address the discovered gap in collection management and accessibility of Indigenous material.



For this project, Museum Windsor partnered with Nin Da Waab Jig (Those who seek to Find) - Walpole Island Heritage Centre, located within the Bkejwanong - Walpole Island First Nation, to help catalogue and index a portion of their historical collection. This information was then added to a shared database created and maintained by Museum Windsor which is accessible to historical institutions, local Indigenous communities, and the general public. This database also includes Indigenous material from Museum Windsor's collection and is open to content additions from other local historical and Indigenous groups. The hope is that this initiative will lead to increased research, cooperation, accessibility, and sharing of material between local Indigenous communities and historical organizations.

Located approximately 121 kilometers from Windsor, Ontario on unceded territory in the mouth of the St. Clair River, the Walpole Island First Nation has a registered population of approximately 4860 members with 2317 living on the reserve. The Walpole Island Heritage Centre was opened in 1989 as a land claims and historical research centre. Today the centre is a multi-functional facility which houses a Natural Heritage Program, Environmental Program, Research Department, External Projects Program and archival building for land claims, and research.

At the start of the project, Museum Windsor staff met with staff from the Walpole Island Heritage Centre to discuss the parameters of this project and conduct an initial survey of the Centre's collection. From here, it was decided that the focus of the work would be directed at cataloging and indexing the Centre's extensive book and oral interviews collection. Staff from Museum Windsor then made several trips to the Walpole Island Heritage Centre over the next few months and worked with volunteers to index, organize, and digitize the identified materials. By the conclusion of the project, staff and volunteers had indexed over 450 books and 85 cassette tapes. Catalogue information pertaining to these items was entered into an Excel document created by Museum Windsor staff. This document will serve as the foundation for a database of Indigenous material that will continue to grow as content from other local historical institutions and Indigenous communities is added. Currently, this database is available in hard copy and digital form at Museum Windsor, and is available to researchers, Indigenous community members, and historical institutions. In the future, we hope to make this database accessible online with the hopes of fostering greater access and information pertaining to Indigenous materials and culturally significant artifacts.



Learnings

Learning #1

The success of any collaborative project relies on community consultation. Museum staff created a public survey and hosted a roundtable discussion for Indigenous community members to provide feedback on our collections-based project proposal. The feedback from the Indigenous community was overwhelmingly positive and supportive towards creating a shared database of local Indigenous collections to increase accessibility for Indigenous communities. The roundtable discussion as a method of consultation was instrumental in providing open and insightful dialogue between the museum and the Indigenous community. Through this process we were able to understand and conceptualize the project through diverse lenses. We look forward to continuing this dialogue and creating a collaborative partnership with the Indigenous community.

Learn more about your local Indigenous community here:

[Chiefs of Ontario Directory](#)

[Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada First Nations Directory](#)

[Native Land](#)

Learning #2

It was suggested at the roundtable discussion that a good starting point would be to collaborate with Nin Da Waab Jig – Walpole Island Heritage Centre in organizing, cataloguing, and documenting their diverse collection. Museum staff worked with Heritage Centre staff to implement museum standard accession numbering and provide ideas for artifact storage and display. Museum staff also utilized an Indigenous classification system for the Heritage Centre library collection. The Brian Deer System was created for use in Indigenous contexts with the goal of reflecting Indigenous viewpoints and values in knowledge organization. Although the Walpole Heritage Centre has a relatively small collection, it was not feasible to complete the cataloguing process within the time constraints of this project. That being said, staff at the Heritage Centre were pleased with what our collaboration accomplished and are willing to pursue future partnerships with Museum Windsor.

Learn more about the Brian Deed System [here](#).

Learning #3

Taking the initiative to create a shared database to make collections more inclusive and accessible demonstrates a leadership role; however, concerns may arise regarding content, intellectual property, and logistics. In our instance, the Walpole Island Heritage Centre was quite receptive to having their collections entered into a shared database, but this may not always be the case. It is important to keep in mind the duty to consult with organizations and local Indigenous communities prior to undertaking a project like this as opinions on this issue may vary. It would also be pertinent to set clear parameters about the intellectual property of the database e.g. who owns the database, who administers it, who can add material, etc. The current database for the Heritage Centre collection was created in Microsoft Excel and is administered by both Museum Windsor and Walpole Island Heritage Centre staff.

Learning #4

When working with Indigenous collections, the issue of repatriating culturally sensitive or culturally significant objects may arise. Repatriation was not the focus in this case study, however, if your institution does not have a Repatriation Policy, here are a few guidelines:

- Consider and address all repatriation requests in a respectful manner.
- Stay mindful that concepts of ownership may vary among Indigenous groups, therefore requests should be handled case-by-case.
- Recognize that most Indigenous groups may not have “written” evidence, but oral testimonies supporting their request.
- These oral testimonies should be given equal validity when considering a repatriation request.

- Consult, accommodate, and adopt a collaborative approach with the local First Nation or Indigenous community to resolve repatriation requests.

Want to adopt a Repatriation Policy? See examples from other institutions below:

[Royal Saskatchewan Museum](#)

[MOA-UBC](#)

[ICOM](#)

Moving Forward

Museum Windsor will be partnering with Turtle Island-Aboriginal Education Centre at the University of Windsor and the Walpole Island Heritage Centre to continue cataloguing and indexing their historical collection. Turtle Island is offering an Alternative Spring Break program to approximately 15 students who will continue the process of cataloging and digitizing the Heritage Centre collection. Museum Windsor plans to continue establishing collaborative and respectful relationships with other Indigenous communities and historical institutions with the hopes of adding information pertaining to their collections to the shared database.

Acknowledgements

Museum Windsor would like to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations for their assistance with the completion of this project:

- Nin Da Waab Jig - Walpoole Island Heritage Centre
- University of Windsor Turtle Island Aboriginal Education Centre
- Bkejwanong First Nation - Walpole Island First Nation

Contributors



Advocate:
CRAIG CAPACCHIONE
Museum Coordinator, Museum Windsor

Craig Capacchione has been with Museum Windsor since 2015 and is responsible for overseeing education and public programming. Craig holds a BA (Hons) in history and BEd from the University of Windsor and a MA in public history from the University of Western Ontario.



Catalyst:

MELISSA PHILLIPS

Museum Collections Assistant, Museum Windsor

Melissa Phillips is currently the Museum Collections Assistant at Museum Windsor, a role she has been in since 2012. She is a member of Oneida Nation of the Thames, Turtle Clan. Melissa holds a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master's degree in History from the University of Windsor. She is also a graduate of the RBC Aboriginal Training Program in Museum Practices—an 8 month internship at the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec.



Advisory Committee Member:

CARA KRMPOTICH

Associate Professor and Director, Museum Studies, Faculty of Information, University of Toronto



Advisory Committee Member:

PENNY PINE

Collection Coordinator, Canadian Museum of History

Resources

- [Snapshot of Indigenous Collections Database Template](#)

Dig Deeper

- [We Are Coming Home: Repatriation and the Restoration of Blackfoot Cultural Confidence](#), edited by Gerry Conaty (Athabasca Press)
- [American Alliance of Museums Diversity and Inclusion Policies \(Collections Development Policy\)](#)
- [Canadian Museums Association Ethic Guidelines](#)
- [International Council Of Museums Code of Ethics for Museums](#)

- [Canadian Archaeological Association Statement of Principles for Ethical Conduct Pertaining to Aboriginal Peoples](#)
- [Turning the Page: Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples](#)
- Collections Policies from Various Museums which include repatriation policies and culturally sensitive objects policies: [Royal BC Museum](#), [Museum of Anthropology](#), [British Columbia Museums Association](#), [Pitt Rivers Museum](#), [National Museums of Scotland](#), and [National Museum of Australia](#), [Royal Saskatchewan Museum](#)
- [Art Beyond Sight: Disability and Inclusion a Resource for Museum Studies Programs](#)
- [Canadian Conservation Institute \(Government of Canada\) Caring for Sacred and Culturally Sensitive Objects](#)
- [Protocols for Native American Archival materials](#)

Exhibitions and Curatorial Practice (Niagara Falls Museum)



Preamble

Diversity in exhibitions and curatorial practice is an ongoing effort. Collections and exhibitions, especially those with an extended custodial history, are often constricted by the long-standing roots of a single lens (namely white, straight, cisgender, and male). Stretching ourselves to embrace and display objects and stories beyond this lens requires consistent and concentrated efforts, whether an institution is installing a new temporary exhibition or making room within an existing exhibit for new perspectives.

The Niagara Falls History Museum underwent a \$12 million renovation in 2012, including a complete revamp of the gallery spaces -- The Museum now has 2 permanent galleries and 1 temporary gallery, all of which are located on the traditional homeland of the Neutrals, Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe nations. The Niagara Falls Community Gallery is one of the Museum's permanent galleries. When designed it was intended to represent the City's local community but in reality, it presently only represents a portion of the people who live in Niagara Falls. This project looks to change that. Through direct communication with the LGBTQ2+ community, we seek to enable people to direct their own narratives within the Museum.

In striving towards making the Niagara Falls Museum a more inclusive place, we found it helpful to look to previous diversity and inclusion projects that have been undertaken. We surfaced projects which Museum staff has undertaken in collaboration with the First Nations community dating back to 2014. The experience gained through working directly with the local Indigenous community has helped to inform our current project as we attempt to find successful methods of reaching out to new and underrepresented groups, in the case of our current project, the LGBTQ2+ community in Niagara Falls. We started with this particular community in part because our Catalyst identifies as LGBTQ2+, and felt that this would be a comfortable starting point.

Our Story

Over the course of this project we liaised with several LGBTQ2+ community groups and made the decision to expand a current exhibition in one of the permanent galleries entitled 'Community Mosaic' with stories from those communities we have previously underrepresented here in Niagara Falls. The

Community Mosaic is a montage of images of local residents blended together to recreate a famous painting of Niagara Falls. This section of the Gallery also includes a panel that describes how the early European migrants to Niagara have now been joined by people belonging to many other ethnic backgrounds. In order to add stories and/or objects to this section of the Gallery, we are making a concentrated effort to reach out to those who don't already see themselves reflected in the Museum.

The goal of this project is threefold: to reach out to the LGBTQ2+ community in Niagara Falls, to create lasting and strong partnerships with various LGBTQ2+ organizations in the area, and to utilize these partnerships to gather diverse stories and perspectives for our galleries and curatorial content. A task that is easier said than done.

Initially our intent was to encourage the sharing of individual and personal stories, but we found that this type of engagement requires a deeper level of trust than we could feasibly earn in the 6-month time frame we had for this project. Engaging people and getting any kind of response proved to be our biggest challenge. We began by compiling a list of LGBTQ2+ organizations operating in Niagara and reaching out to them. We garnered some initial interest from the groups' leaders and from that followed up with a suggested email blast and poster outlining the project for them to circulate to their communities. Unfortunately, we did not get any response whatsoever from individuals. This reality led us to re-focus our energy on building relationships with a few community leaders, and encouraged them to share their lived experience, professional expertise and deep connection to the community as a means of creating a broader look at the LGBTQ2+ community in Niagara Falls.

Eventually, through research at the local library and archival materials given to us by PFLAG Niagara, we shaped a few possible narratives to add to our Community Gallery. Despite our initial challenges in gaining the perspectives of individuals, our work with community organizations has provided us with the opportunity to connect directly with the LGBTQ2+ community. With the assistance of OutNiagara and Positive Living, we are currently in the process of gathering together some community members for a focus group to offer suggestions and criticism of the narratives we are considering. Ensuring that a broad range of diverse voices within the LGBTQ2+ community are heard is critical before we move forward to the next step, implementation of an expanded Community Mosaic.

We will be putting significant effort into maintaining lasting partnerships through events and future exhibitions, and we are working on changing our written policies and guidelines to reflect a focus on community outreach, collaboration and empowerment. While our focus was initially on the LGBTQ2+ community, our intent is to use what we have learned through this project and apply it to engaging with other communities as well.

Learnings

Learning #1

Failure is a good teacher. One of the biggest takeaways from our case study is the fact that things did not turn out the way we envisioned in the beginning, and that failure was critical in our process. Our initial inability to connect with our local LGBTQ community prompted us to reframe how we build trust in a community which we have historically underrepresented. It is by our associations with, and support of, champions who are working, and embedded, in the community that we begin to create a space for trust, sharing and collaboration.

Learning #2

Time is more important than instant results. This initiative was done on a timeline, and while it was necessary it was also a detriment to the building of authentic and meaningful relationships. It's quite possible that some people felt rushed when given the timeline, or got the idea that we were only interested in a single short-term project. Long term engagement is essential to building community trust and facilitating the sharing of lived experience and expertise.

Learning #3

What we might consider a single community has a great degree of diversity within itself. Certain aspects of community may not engage with initiatives that are intended to serve 'them', and this should be expected. Understanding this allows us as professionals to begin examining more closely the layers of diversity within our communities as we continue to grow.

Learning #4

If you go in with the expectation that people will be excited about any one initiative, it's a setup for disappointment. Creating large-scale engagement requires ongoing relationship development and sustained collaboration. Additionally, building engagement can be especially hard when the community is spread out and/or has many small segmented organizations. These challenges can be magnified when there is already a small population to begin with, as is the case for the LGBTQ community in Niagara. Anticipating this will be helpful in the future, as a means of managing expectations.

Moving Forward

Our next steps in the latter part of 2018 will be implementing our new content in the gallery and evaluating its impact, mainly through front-of-house staff feedback, community feedback, informal visitor comments, and through the liking/rating system in our new Augmented Reality program – guests who use it can indicate that the content was interesting through the technology, and we can track how many visitors stop to view the content using the system.

Another goal we have is to use our learnings from this experience and apply them to future engagements with the diversity of Niagara Falls. We don't want to stop our gallery expansion at the LGBTQ community – we want to reach out to other underrepresented groups and create relationships that will lead to trust, engagement, and collaboration. This initiative will be a continuous effort. The mistakes we made in our initial reaching-out phase will be revisited, and revised for the future. We remain dedicated to bettering and correcting ourselves at every opportunity, and growing into a more inclusive space.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the invaluable help given to us by Cathy Mackenzie and Gail Benjafield of PFLAG Niagara, Hailea Squires from Positive Living Niagara, and the Pride Niagara network. Their engagement and assistance has been greatly appreciated and allowed us to see the project through to the end. We would also like to thank the staff of the Niagara Falls Museums for their support and encouragement over the course of this project.



Contributors



Advocate:
SUZANNE MOASE
Curator, Niagara Falls Museum

Suzanne Moase B.A., M.A., is the Curator of the City of Niagara Falls Museums. Prior to joining the team in Niagara Falls in 2011, Suzanne worked for more than 10 years with the Culture Divisions of the City of Toronto and the City of Adelaide, in South Australia. Her love of material culture, particularly from the mid-19th century, has drawn her to the diversity of objects found within municipal collections and to her career in the world of museums.



Catalyst:
JASMINE FISHER
Curatorial Assistant, Niagara Falls Museum

Jasmine graduated with an Honours BA in Ancient Mediterranean Studies and Medieval Studies from Wilfrid Laurier University in 2015 and a Masters of Museum Studies from the University of Toronto in 2017. She works with the Niagara Falls Museums as a former intern and current volunteer.



Advisory Committee Member:
PAULINE DOLOVICH
Principal, Reich + Petch Design International



Advisory Committee Member:
CARA KRMPOTICH
Associate Professor and Director, Museum Studies, Faculty of
Information, University of Toronto

Resources

[Example Email to Potential Community Partners](#)

Dig Deeper

The resources that we have been using to inform our project have been, rather than publications, people. The community leaders that we have had contact with so far have been very helpful in pointing us in the right direction, and we have used resources and archival research materials that they have provided us:

- PFLAG Niagara (Cathy Mackenzie and Gail Benjafield)
- Pride Niagara Network
- OutNiagara (Sarah Burtsch)
- Positive Living Niagara (Hailea Squires)

We encourage you to connect with your local community organizations as a means to begin building bridges towards meaningful participation and engagement.

From the Outside In: The Welcome Experience Beyond the Front Door (The Robert McLaughlin Gallery)



The
Robert
McLaughlin
Gallery

Preamble

The Robert McLaughlin Gallery (RMG) is situated on the traditional lands of the people of Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, a branch of the greater Anishinaabeg Nation, in the heart of downtown Oshawa. Featuring a Permanent Collection of over 4,500 works, and five galleries of diverse and changing contemporary and historical exhibitions, the RMG holds an important collection of modern Canadian abstraction and the largest holdings of works by Painters Eleven. The gallery has significant collections of Canadian contemporary art, including public art, and an active acquisitions program. A roster of dynamic public and educational programs, thriving volunteer program, gallery shop, inspiring event spaces, art archive and library, artist-in-residence lab, and art studio, comprise the gallery's many rich and diversified assets.

As Toronto becomes increasingly unaffordable and saturated, the population in Durham Region grows steadily, with it comes increasing diversity. Aware of this, and the needs of the growing and broadening population, I was excited to participate in this project and began by delving into the ways that we perceive our public spaces.

One night after work, I headed for dinner and a drink with a friend. The two of us are notoriously picky Caesar drinkers – we like what we describe as a “thick” Caesar which means it's using thicker tomato juice, probably has horseradish, and has some kind of food attached to it like an accessory.

To understand what we'd be getting into we took to Instagram to check out photos taken at this location assuming that people would take pictures of their food/drinks and post them to Instagram. We also checked the establishment's account. We were able to verify that this place's Caesar was satisfyingly thick before ordering.

A day or two later, the gallery hosted a comedy show called SHADE which is a collective of comedians who are queer, female-identified, and/or people of colour. Because comedy is so off-the-cuff and responsive, each of the performers had content in their shows that revealed their opinions and perspectives of the gallery. Describing it as “intimidating” or “the fanciest place” they have ever been became humorous in the context of the show, but also provided insight about some of the ways that our institution is inaccessible.

I felt something was beginning to come together but was looking for more information.

I was also a member of the Board of Directors for Durham Region Pride and by virtue of this am often in conversation with my local queer community. The gallery has hosted Pride events and has been trying to make deeper, more meaningful connections with the queer community. I was able to chat casually with members of the community who expressed excitement that the gallery had previously been so supportive but shared again the need for increased representation and consideration of how queer people navigate the space.

It clicked then that the ways in which we form perceptions about restaurants, and its ability to suit our unique preferences, parallels how people form perceptions about our cultural institutions. Similarly, people can access images by you and others at your site to form opinions and make decisions. The welcome experience is self-directed and self-informed and now extends well beyond our front doors.

Our Story

The RMG is dedicated to diversity, inclusion, and accessibility. Understanding that individuals are forming impressions of our institution well before they arrive on-site, I wanted to promote the diverse range of programming that the RMG already offers so that our communities could begin to see themselves reflected in our space.

As a second part to the project I wanted to make adjustments to our lobby and signage in order to make the transition from outside to inside easier and friendlier. In doing so, it was our desire to see community welcome begin outside of our physical space and extend all the way through our front doors.

Some elements of this project are still in process. We're excited to document these changes and record feedback from the community as an opportunity to learn and grow!

Digital Presence

Two pieces of video content are planned that demonstrate the RMG's diverse and inclusive programming. These pieces of content are intended to promote our programming while also highlighting our commitment to visibility and representation in our space. These videos were produced by Empty Cup Media who we regularly work with.

RMG Fridays, a recurring first-Friday event, is one of the events that would be included in this 'sizzle reel' video content. Each month the gallery highlights and celebrates local arts and culture through musical performances, film screenings, tours and talks, and more. Often these events explore diverse issues and identities.

Another similar event is OPG Second Sundays – a family-focused event that use exhibitions as an entry point into learning more about real-world happenings and issues. RMG Fridays and OPG Second Sundays are often both co-produced with community groups or members in order to ensure the needs of our communities are met.

Video One: Sizzle reel

A sizzle reel of our free public programming that is often quite diverse and inclusive will promote the quality and content of our offers and emphasize that these programs are free and accessible.

The goal of this video is to energize and excite both existing and new audiences about this programming. ([View here](#))

Video Two: Pen Friend

This short video will demonstrate how to use Pen Friend. The Pen Friend is an audio labeller that allows us to use a braille label system to provide guided audio tours of our exhibitions. It provides information about the work including its context, dimensions, and formal details (including information about colour, technique, and texture) for those who have vision loss. ([View here](#))

Social media boosting and other posts will support these video projects. For example: a social media post done in large format font that promotes the large format option of our exhibition information.

This project is readily adaptable for different sized teams with different availability of resources. Photos can replace the more expensive video content. Social media boosting can be done on smaller amounts.

On-Site Experience

In order to make the entry experience more welcoming, changes were made to the face and lobby spaces. The welcome facing doors will include vinyl reading “welcome” in English, Ojibway, and French. Immediately after the front doors, before a second set of entrance doors, we sought to place a land acknowledgement for our area.

We reached out to Kim Wheatley, a local elder and consultant who we work with regularly. She put us in contact with the Chief of Scugog Island First Nation who provided us with new text, which reads more as a welcome than an acknowledgement.

Recognizing the need for artistic and personal representation and a spatial opportunity, a space off-of the lobby space was transformed and dedicated as a space for Indigenous interpretation and reflection on works from the permanent collection. One of our goals this year was to deepen and maintain our relationships with regional artists. With that objective, we reached out to Reagan Kennedy, a local Indigenous artist who selected a photo by Edward Curtis and responded to it. The response looks at the artist’s perspective on this kind of photo documentation, considers a local and regional relevancy, and calls the viewer to consider a new perspective.

Learnings

Learning #1: Prioritize a person-first perspective

When planning an event at the RMG we often try to put ourselves in the position of the visitor, imagining the flow of foot traffic, if signage is clear for navigating needs, etc. What this project taught us is that we’re not always able to perform this exercise fully since our lived experiences are not necessarily shared with the visitors coming through our doors. It will be important to include the appropriate community members in this practice in order to complete it holistically.

Learning #2: Shared respect in shared authority

The communities we work with appreciated not having decisions made for them, but rather, being a part of the decision making process. Being consulted and considered as changes to the gallery are being made reiterated the respect and commitment we have to these communities.

We received feedback from community members we consulted with, expressing their satisfaction with the way the gallery approaches community members when making such decisions, stating that they felt our continued work and outreach was meaningful, in-depth, and thorough.

Learning #3: Prioritizing partnerships

It is important to work with community members and partners in programming and communications in order to make sure things are done thoroughly and respectfully. It is also important to note that working in this way will require a shift in responsibilities, a realignment of resources and the allowance for time to develop this type of community-informed work.

Moving Forward

I believe that the changes we have made have set a foundation for future projects and engagement that represents our complete community. We're excited to expand on these projects and increase their impact. An interactive component is going to be added to Reagan Kennedy's response where visitors are invited to reflect on the work and on what they've learned before being given the opportunity to respond as well. This exercise will allow the community to be a part of the conversation and has the potential to provide us with more information on how to continue making space for others' stories.

We are also looking to make the welcome experience more engaging and holistic by having video welcome in ASL and LSQ play in the lobby on a TV mounted to the wall.

We are excited to continue putting artists and community members at the centre of the work we do. Building partnerships, deepening connections, and nurturing an ecosystem that supports and enables artists to thrive and communities to participate will strengthen the programming, make way for new ideas, and enhance our capacity to better serve our community.

Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge our local queer and our local Indigenous communities who we look forward to working with in continually meaningful and impactful ways. We'd also like to thank Kim Wheatley, Anishinaabe Cultural Consultant, Kelly LaRocca, Chief of Scugog Island First Nation, and Reagan Kennedy for their contributions to this project. We look forward to working with these communities and their members as this project grows.

Contributors



Advocate:

DONNA RAETSEN-KEMP

Chief Executive Officer, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery

Donna Raetsen-Kemp is actively cultivating arts and culture through her role as chief executive officer at The Robert McLaughlin Gallery. Previously, Donna served as the chief executive officer of Station Gallery. Through her work Donna hopes to connect communities with art in order to contribute to flourishing cultural and civic landscapes. With all hands on deck, Donna integrates the passion and perspective of stakeholders into meaningful, informed strategies.

Donna served as the Lieutenant Governor appointee on the Durham College Board of Governors. She is a founding member of the Art of Transition Creative Leadership Group and is the recipient of the Association of Fundraising Professionals Organizational Excellence Award and the Paul Harris Fellowship.



Catalyst:

LUCAS CABRAL

Communications and Digital Media Lead, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery

Lucas Cabral graduated from the University of Western Ontario where he received a BFA: Honors Specialization in Studio Arts. Lucas is currently the Communications + Digital Media Lead at The Robert McLaughlin Gallery and has worked in marketing and communications for McIntosh Gallery in London, Ontario and the Harbourfront Centre, Toronto.



Advisory Committee Member:

RAVI JAIN

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ANITA SMALL

Founder and Owner, small LANGUAGE CONNECTIONS; Co-Founder and past Co-Director, Deaf Culture Centre

Resources

[PenFriend Video](#)

[RMG Fridays Promo Video](#)

[Regan Kennedy's Response to Edward Curtis photograph](#)

Dig Deeper

This project was produced in consultation with people rather than publications. It has been rewarding and meaningful to strengthen existing connections and build new ones. We recommend looking deeper into your area, discovering the resources that serve your communities, and connecting with them.

Things to Remember: Re-Examining the Design of *Out from Under* (Royal Ontario Museum)



Preamble

The Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) is Canada's largest museum with collections that span art, culture and nature from across time and around the Globe. Among North America's most renowned museums, the ROM is home to more than 12 million objects and specimens, 40 galleries and exhibitions spaces and a range of fascinating exhibitions, lectures, tours and events. We consider access to our collections and information to be one of our primary and defining responsibilities, and are committed to creating inclusive experiences for all visitors.

Our missteps when it comes to access, diversity and inclusion have been well documented, and as an institution we acknowledge our shortcoming, and continue to grow in our understanding of how best to create equity throughout our museum practices. In doing so, we also recognize that it is important to share the challenges and learnings that arise from what has been widely considered a success. To illustrate this, we've chosen to spotlight the award-winning exhibition *Out From Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember*, an important moment for institutional change at the ROM, to shed light on our process in creating access within the physical constraints of a heritage building, and designing an exhibition that is inclusive to all.

Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember premiered in October 2007 at the ten-day Abilities Arts Festival in Toronto. From there, it was adapted to fit within the ROM's physical space during its run from April 17, 2008 to July 13, 2008. Currently, it is part of the permanent exhibitions at the Canadian Museum of Human Rights in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The first of its kind in Canada, *Out from Under* was curated by faculty members from Ryerson University's School of Disability Studies. Content was largely generated through a special topic seminar designed to uncover the hidden history of disability. Students were invited to identify an object representing a particular era or moment in Canadian disability history and explore its significance. The product of these seminars was a display of 13 diverse objects revealed a rich and nuanced history that pays tribute to the resilience, creativity, and the civic and cultural contributions of Canadians with disabilities.

Our Story

Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember was not initially planned to be shown at the Royal Ontario Museum. As so often occurs, the initial spark for this transformational event was a seemingly ordinary interaction and the willingness of a Change Agent to speak up. In this case, that interaction was the attendance of the Abilities Arts Festival by a woman named Christine Karcza.

At the time Christine was a member of the ROM board of trustees, a motivational speaker, life coach, and adviser on “how to remove barriers of all kinds.” Christine also identifies as having a disability. Experiencing *Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember*, Christine noted that the show was very physical, and seamless in the way that it created access through clever design choices and by providing multiple avenues to engage with the content; but most impressive in her view was that it was an exhibit like every other exhibit. It did not present as a heavy-handed attempt to integrate access into an exhibit, rather, it was simply an inclusive exhibition.

Shortly after attending *Out from Under*, Christine made the case to the ROM board and executive to bring the show to the ROM, and received the go-ahead. Of course, this is not the end of the story. The exhibition of *Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember* was a transformational experience for the ROM, and one which even internally we may have yet to fully realize. It set the tone for how we engage with community on exhibitions related to their culture and narrative, how we create equity across our exhibition offerings, and how we create greater access within our spaces in a way that is inclusive to our diverse audiences.

Upon greenlighting *Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember*, we ran into our first roadblock: we had no idea where to put it. Despite having an exhibition to install, we still had to heavily adapt it to work within our space. At the time, the ROM was still more or less under renovation as the finishing touches were being put on the Michael Lee Chin Crystal, and our gallery space was at capacity. Considerations related to where to house the exhibition included: elevator access, barrier-free washroom availability, path of travel clearances, whether doors had automatic features, and the lighting set-up. Access to the exhibition was critical in selecting the physical space in which the exhibition would be housed, and by applying this lens, *Out from Under* changed the way we thought about our own space, space we had been working in for years!

The [Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design](#) were used for their technical specifications relating to physical access when installing exhibitions. To further guide our efforts, and provide crucial lived experience expertise, a steering committee for the exhibition was created. Eventually through committee insight, a comprehensive review of our physical space, and the use of the guidelines referenced above, a space was selected.

Like most spaces, our space was not perfect. Accessible design in 2008 had only truly come into prominence following the passing of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act in 2005, and even then compliance to the minimum requirements of the Act is not best practice. As such, we needed to find or create inclusive solutions for imperfect spaces. To further compound the necessity to get it right, as part of *Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember* the ROM would be hosting a 300 person grand opening and reception for a diverse range of attendees, many of whom identified as

having a disability.

A work plan was created, within it were key tasks to ensure access including: removing doors, testing access features, securing American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters and real-time captioning for the opening, adding a ramp to our speaking platform, ensuring availability of seating, and bringing on attendants to assist guests in navigating a barrier-free route through our still under-construction space. In hindsight, many of these features have become commonplace in our museum. Currently, in 2018, access features are tested daily by security on their patrols, seating is spread throughout all of our spaces, and ASL interpretation is provided for keynote programming. However, in 2008, these were novel, and as a result, somewhat daunting, tasks.

We highlight the discrepancy between past and present to communicate a key takeaway: the learnings we gained from *Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember* have bolstered our capacity to engage with our audiences, and by incorporating inclusive elements into the very fabric of our institution, tasks that were once daunting have become routine.

In opening *Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember*, the community told us that not only did we do accessibility right, but that they also felt included. In their willingness to share we realized the magnitude of what we had accomplished with the show. How did we know? We asked them, and captured feedback during our opening. Of those in attendance a majority identified as having a disability, they told us how we did:

- “A thoughtful and detailed representation of such a significant piece of hidden history. I have a strong appreciation for the tremendous amount of thought, energy and organization behind this complex work.”
- “Terrific! As an adult living with a disability since birth, seeing and recording this display of history (**my** history) instills a greater sense of pride in me.”
- “Fantastic! The tangibility of items and visualizing the roles in peoples’ lives offers a level of meaning that is **experienced** as opposed to learned.”
- “Every once in a while, someone, usually another PWD [person with a disability], holds up a mirror. The Reflection reminds me of my greatness, beauty and collectivity. This exhibit does that – all of us reflected, all of us together. How wonderful we are better together!”
- “Absolutely wonderful exhibit! This is history as it should be – by people who lived it and live it today. Inspiring, thoughtful and moving. Congratulations to everyone involved. A true remembrance of people with disabilities’ past.”
- “Yes! We need more of this three-dimensional documentary.”

Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember was a success. In 2008, the iteration showcased at the ROM was awarded an Access Award for disability issues by the City of Toronto, and was widely praised by the public and the media. However, perhaps the most meaningful outcome, was the shift that it ignited internally. *Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember* cemented the importance of access, representation, diversity and inclusion, provided a tangible business case for this work, and created a group of advocates amongst ROM staff who continue to drive this agenda to date. It gave us things to remember, and forced us to be better. There is no going back.

Learnings

Learning # 1 – Physical access is about more than the physical.

By creating a physically accessible space in collaboration with experts and community, and based in established practice, we set a tone for how *Out From Under* would be perceived. That is, by creating a foundation of access we were able to build towards inclusion. We removed the often cited barrier that “physically” the museum does not feel like a place for me, and in doing so, allowed the content and the connectivity of the show to further draw audiences into their museum.

Learning # 2 – Authentic community representation drives authentic community engagement.

“[*Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember*] is a project of celebration and struggle, of solidarity and subversion,” said co-curator Catherine Frazee. “Disabled people don't seek merely to participate in Canadian culture – we want to create it, shape it and stretch it beyond its tidy edges.” By creating an environment in which community voice was represented, heard and included, we aimed to include those who identify as having a disability in authentic and meaningful ways. However, we were somewhat overwhelmed by the feedback which we received directly from our audiences. In hindsight, this is not surprising but it is worth noting that representation and equity, are inextricably linked to audience engagement.

Learning # 3 – Design for one, apply to many.

Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember was an innovative approach to the exhibition process. It shared agency in ways that were previously considered unthinkable, created access in ways which were previously untested, and broke down barriers in ways that were previously unimaginable. However, it was also experimentation by any definition of the word. Well-considered experimentation, but experimentation none-the-less. The beauty of this design process was not only the development of guidelines and roadmaps for a single community, but the creation of guidelines and practices which continue to be adapted, and applied across diverse audiences to date.

Learning # 4 – Best practice changes. Willingness to change shouldn't.

We recognize that standards and best practices are a moving target, some of the approaches that we had taken during the *Out from Under* exhibition may now be considered dated, and we have adapted several of the initial processes that were created then. This is important, as it highlights that this work is never completely done. A desire to learn more, and do better, is needed. As new institutions continue to set the bar higher and the demand for access and inclusivity from the public gets greater, we need to be ready and willing to respond.

For more information on current practices, check out the [Resources section](#).

Moving Forward

Beyond our physical space, *Out from Under: Disability, History and Things to Remember* was a transformational exhibition for the Royal Ontario Museum. It laid the groundwork for how we share authority, and include community voice in our space. That is, by integrating community in planning, curation, content, design and communication. This approach is a roadmap which we unintentionally created, and which, we have yet to fully understand the history or the scope of. It is incomplete, and likely flawed, and requires reflection, collaboration and innovation to remain relevant and appropriate.

However, it is a testament to the power of a single advocate, a single project, and a willingness to embrace uncertainty and learn with humility. It is the culmination of all these things that creates a more accessible, diverse, inclusive and equitable ROM.

Acknowledgements

A most gracious thank you is owed to the team of Catherine Frazee, Melanie Panitch and Kathryn Church at the School of Disability Studies at Ryerson University. It is your vision and passion which propelled *Out from Under* to the forefront of the arts and culture conversation in an era when such topics were unprecedented.

We would also like to acknowledge Christine Karcza for her relentless advocacy for matters of access, diversity, equity and inclusion at the Royal Ontario Museum.

Lastly, thank you to all involved in the exhibition of *Out from Under* at the Royal Ontario Museum, your diligence allowed the crucial conversations of *Out from Under* to be given a voice in one of North America's premiere cultural institutions.

Contributors



Advocate :
CHRISTIAN BLAKE
Inclusion Advisor, Royal Ontario Museum

Christian Blake is the Inclusion Advisor at the Royal Ontario Museum where he works directly with the museum's access, diversity, equity and inclusion portfolio. Beyond his role within the Museum, he is also a clinical Occupational Therapist working with children and youth. Christian brings his unique clinical lens for enabling participation and engagement, and a profound passion for museums and galleries to the pursuit of equity and inclusion across the cultural sector.



Catalyst:
EMILIO GENOVESE
Exhibit Designer, Graphics, Royal Ontario Museum

Emilio is an experiential graphic designer at the Royal Ontario Museum. He has designed exhibitions of all types presenting, art, culture and nature as well as social issues such as gender, genocide and nature conservancy among others.

By incorporating human-centred design methodologies he aims to create accessible and meaningful experiences for visitors. Innovation and inclusivity is the heart of this design process.



Advisory Committee Member:
PAULINE DOLOVICH
Principal, Reich + Petch Design International



Advisory Committee Member:
JESS MITCHELL
Senior Manager, Research+Design, Inclusive Design Research
Centre, OCAD University

Resources

- [Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach](#)
- [International Best Practice in Universal Design: A Global Review, Canadian Human Rights Commission](#)
- [Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design](#)

Dig Deeper

- Mobilizing Metaphor: Art, Culture, and Disability Activism in Canada (Kelly and Orsini eds, 2016)
- Representing Disability: Activism and Agency in the Museum (Sandell, Dodd and Garland-Thomson, eds, 2010)
- Church, K., Panitch, M., Frazee, C., & Livingstone, P. (2010). [‘Out from under’: A brief history of everything](#). In R. Sandell, J. Dodd & R. Garland-Thomson (Eds.), Re-presenting disability: Activism and agency in the museum.
- Exhibiting activist disability history in Canada: *Out from under* as a case study of social movement learning (Church, Landry, Frazee, Ignani, Mitchell, Panitch, Patterson, Phillips, Terry, Yoshida & Voronka, 2016)
- Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design
<https://www.si.edu/accessibility/sgaed>

Engaging Community: The Affirmation Bowls Project (Simcoe County Museum)



Preamble

Simcoe County Museum is located in the centre of Simcoe County, just a few minutes' drive from Barrie, Ontario. The museum was founded in 1928 by Women's Institute members Mrs. Stocking and Sutherland. Originally a collection of artifacts for a temporary display, the display grew into a permanent collection of objects from Simcoe County that depict the history of the area, from 10,000 BCE to today.

Like so many other rural, community museums, Simcoe County Museum is in an area that, until recently, has been similar in demographics. However, for the past several years, the population demographic in Simcoe County has been changing; from two percent of the population who identify as a visible minority in 1996, to approximately thirteen percent in 2016. While this is still well below the provincial average, it is an indication that the County will only continue to become more diverse.

It was during a Museum at the Mall event, a pop up exhibit we hosted at Georgian Mall in 2012 where staff really became aware of the changing community of Simcoe County. The temporary exhibition at the mall allowed staff to reach members of the public that had never connected with the museum. During this time, staff heard many stories from new Canadians about their experiences and connections with the various artifacts and exhibitions.

Today, cultural institutions as a whole are seeking new ways to become relevant to new, diverse audiences. Within Simcoe County, population growth and increasing diversity in the area, have made our staff aware that there are community groups who are underserved or underrepresented by the museum. To better connect with the people of Simcoe County, and to encourage participation from multiple communities, staff chose to implement the Affirmation Bowls Project as a means of connecting our local LGBTQ+ folks, persons with a disability, newcomers, and the Indigenous community.

Our Story

The Affirmation Bowls Project is an initiative by Barrie Artist Laura Thompson. In this project, 108 participants received a fabric bowl, described by the artist as a sculpture. The artist instructed

participants to display the sculpture in a prominent location where it will be seen daily, prompting them to think of friends, family or even strangers who have been an important part of their lives.

After three months, participants must pass their bowl to someone whose presence in their life they wish to affirm. They must tell the recipients why they want them to have the bowl and why they are special to them. Over the year, the cycle will repeat four times. As the bowls travel, the stories of why they are given and received will be collected. The fourth person will return the bowl for a final exhibition of the bowls and the stories of their travels.

In order to confirm interested participants, the team met with folks from The Gilbert Centre and PFLAG Barrie-Simcoe County (LGBTQ+), the Local Immigration Partnership, Barrie Native Friendship Centre, CNIB and Deaf Access. Through discussions with these groups, it was confirmed that these community members often feel underserved and underrepresented by their cultural institutions. During these meetings it was also realized that the LGBTQ+ stories are not told and there are still areas where improved accessibility is greatly needed.

While the project launch on January 28, 2018 confirmed participation from 108 people, the team were slightly disappointed that these 108 are not fully reflective of the communities that were approached. Upon reflection, the team agreed that the participation from diverse communities would have been improved if the team could have presented the project to the regular meeting attendees and not only the leaders, in order to get the message out to a broader number of individuals and share their passion for the project.

It will not be until January 2019 that the full results of this project will be realized, as these 108 bowls and their travels will directly impact 432 people. Already, the project has attracted participants from Simcoe County, and from as far away as California and the United Kingdom. It is hoped that the final 432 participants will be comprised of community members from all of the different groups approached by staff, and will be reflective and relevant to the community served by Simcoe County Museum.

Learnings

Learning #1

All 108 participants are engaged in making this year long project a success. Based on the initial gathering, it was clear that there was excitement from participants to be part of the storytelling, and the exhibition. Although the artist expressed that there could be anonymity in the stories written, the group seemed eager to have their stories told, and to share them with the exhibition audiences.

Learning #2

Community driven initiatives like this are bringing more meaning to the museum experience for people in the community. The fact that people are eagerly accepting the opportunity to create the stories, participate in the activities, and see the project to the finish demonstrates that the community is ready for a more participatory, community-based experience.

Learning #3

In a community-based project, staff will not have absolute control. There will always be What Ifs, and staff have to know that it's okay to relinquish some authority. In the Affirmation Bowls project, the artist designed the format and the schedule of the project, which left staff with a number of

questions. For example, What if the bowls don't move on? What if people don't follow the rules? What if bowls go missing? The joy (and stress) of working on a yearlong project with 108 people, 108 pieces of art, and an artist is that staff will not know how it all unfolds until the pieces and stories of their travels return to the museum for the exhibit.

Moving Forward

It is clear that the museum must engage the community in the projects, exhibits, and events being planned and presented. It is also clear that the community is eager and willing to participate. The Affirmation Bowls project reinforced the importance of these types of collaborations. It is also clear that community engagement in museums happens in many different ways; it's not just through an exhibit, an education program, a single event or activity. Community engagement is woven through all museum operations, programs, and services. To be successful, it must be woven this way.

In 2019, the results of the project will be known, and it will not be fully understood what the impacts of this collaboration have been until that time. It is the hope of all parties involved that the bowls travelling - whether around the world, across the country, or down the street will bring people together in a positive way, and build stronger relationships to the museum, and to the community.

In the meantime, community shared with us what the Affirmation Bowls project meant to them and why they wished to participate, we've included some of their insights here:

- "I believe in the power of thoughts and words"
- "[The Affirmation Bowls project] sounds inspiring and interesting, I love the creativity of it"
- "Because I believe connection, community and creativity are incredibly valuable and important"
- "[The Affirmation Bowls project] felt like a neat way to connect to my niece in B.C."
- "I really love the universality of positive sharings"

Acknowledgements

Simcoe County Museum extends appreciation to Laura Thompson for bringing her vision for the Affirmation Bowls project to the museum. During a time when people are facing difficult or uncertain times, this project serves to remind us of the kindness and generosity that still exists in our day to day lives. Thanks also to the folks who spread the word to get the message out to others so that this project could be a success.

Partner – Laura Thompson

Funding – Ontario Museum Association, Simcoe County Museum

The Gilbert Centre

CNIB Barrie

Deaf Access Barrie

Barrie Native Friendship Centre

Local Immigration Partnership

PFLAG Barrie-Simcoe County

Contributors



Advocate:

KELLEY SWIFT-JONES

Curator, Simcoe County Museum

Kelley Swift Jones is Curator for the Simcoe County Museum in Minesing, Ontario. Kelley has worked in the museum field since 1990, starting in a summer position at a museum in a tourist town. From those early experiences, she realized that the needs of the museum visitors are equally as important as the needs of museum collections, and that every visitor, like every artifact, has a unique story to share.



CATALYST: LORETTA FEARMAN

Museum Reception, Simcoe County Museum

I have worked at the Simcoe County Museum for 5 years as the Gift Store Receptionist. I am an advocate for LGBTQ2SIA+ rights, in 2015 I was board member for Barrie Pride and I am the co-facilitator of the Barrie-Simcoe County PFLAG chapter.

This project was also supported by artist [Laura Thompson](#).



Advisory Committee Member:

RAVI JAIN

Founding Artistic Director, Why Not Theatre



Advisory Committee Member:

ANITA SMALL

Founder and Owner, small LANGUAGE CONNECTIONS; Co-Founder and past Co-Director, Deaf Culture Centre

Resources

[Listen with Your Eyes](#)

[Immigrants, visible minorities underrepresented in Barrie, Simcoe County: Census](#)

[Statistics Canada](#)

Not Just the Numbers: Representation and the Canadian Census



Preamble

Despite the old refrain that Canadian History is boring and despite the publication of many, handwringing national surveys that document how few school children know John A. MacDonald's middle name, Canadians are in fact deeply and actively engaged with the past. Their engagement emerges from family story-telling and from their curiosity about the origins and changes in familiar places such as their own homes, neighborhoods, shops, school, workplaces and places of entertainment.

Museums, along with many other public institutions, struggle to engage this popular engagement with the past. The challenge emerges from many, deeply held practices of museum interpretation and education. Simply put, museums do not much trust Canadians to interpret their own pasts. They seek expertise almost exclusively among highly trained professional historians whose interpretations of the past too often still tell a single, national or unitary story that marginalizes diversity so obvious in the lives of ordinary people past and present. When museums present the past as an arena filled only by best-documented Canadians—people who were almost always wealthy and powerful, white and male—culturally diverse audiences cannot connect their own lives to that past.

[“Not Just Numbers: Representation in the Canadian Census”](#) (hereafter NJN) attempts to rethink the past by bridging one of the divides separating diverse publics from museums. It aimed to create accessible, welcoming events where interactive, communal discovery could occur through hands-on, collaborative research. It brought together individuals who did not necessarily know one another into non-judgmental conversations about the lives of earlier residents of Canada's cities. These lives were documented in packets of census, newspapers, photographs, and other reproductions of archival materials. NJN events assumed a detective game with documents serving as clues and three rounds of questions challenging participants to work together to piece together the individual story represented in the documents. The NJN exercise repeatedly demonstrated that everyone, regardless of age, education, or background, could be a researcher. Conversations among these researchers typically required empathy, the making of connections between past and present, and discussions of overlaps among the life-stories of the researchers around the table and the life of the person whose story they sought to tell. The exercise increased public awareness of the considerable resources freely available to them to explore their own past and own family stories, promoting scholarship and story-telling through supportive, collective dialogue.

NJN Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3PVBhNGo79A>

Interested in learning more about new, NJN plans to design a tool for classrooms? See the forthcoming blog by Dan Panneton: <http://www.wardmuseum.ca/2147-2/>

Our Story

The Toronto Ward Museum (TWM) is a community-engaged museum without walls that facilitates the preservation and sharing of personal stories of migrants in Toronto's history. We utilize collaborative processes to identify community needs and opportunities, then use those insights to create programming that promotes empathy and curiosity between storytellers, community members and the larger public. The museum creates forums for dialogue relevant to migration, citizenship and pluralism within an urban context. Finally, it acts as a catalyst in community initiatives and forges partnerships between individuals, communities, and organizations toward our collective empowerment. The name and logo of the museum illustrate the importance of Toronto's wards or neighborhoods, as the most important sites for community-building, communication, and the interpersonal adaptations and changes occurring among all who live in diverse cities, whether they are newcomers or descendants of indigenous people or earlier European settlers.

NJN had its origins in discussions between TWM's Gracia Dyer Jalea and public historian Daniel Panneton about how to scale-up popular modes of engaging with the past (through family stories and curiosity about individual neighborhoods) into a public discussion. Dyer Jalea and Panneton met with representatives from several TWM organizational partners for a test-run of a draft NJN event. Feedback collected and through further conversation, a three-round discussion format emerged. By harmonizing diverse communal and individual histories, NJN encouraged participants to envision their nation's past as a varied and kaleidoscopic collection of stories. Multiculturalism might be a relatively new Canadian policy but cultural diversity has characterized Canada from its earliest days.

NJN was a Canada 150 and Ontario 150 project. It ran as a public program during 2017, holding editions at the Toronto Reference Library, the Global Centre for Pluralism in Ottawa, and the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 in Halifax. Evaluation of these events is now completed and a second phase of NJN is in development, creating a toolkit for classroom use.

Participant testimony shared with us their personal feelings on the program:

"It forced us to confront assumptions that we make."

"[NJN] is a fabulous program. As a historian I have worked with this type of information before, but it makes history more accessible for all. Well done!"

"A good opportunity to reflect on how diverse Canada's past is/was."

"An engaging and meaningful program about identity, representation and migration. I felt welcomed in the conversation."

Learnings

Learning #1

Participants reacted very positively to the activity. The mechanics of the game, the historical documents used, and the diversity of case studies were all singled out as having impressed individual participants. Facilitators from partner organizations were impressed with how participants were engaged by the primary documents, and with the quality of discussion that occurred within their respective groups.

Many participants were not aware that the resources used in the program are readily available through private and public repositories. In conversation after several of the events, select participants described their intention to perform their own historical research.

Learning #2

While we were able to include documents on the lives of individual LGBTQ2S+, Indigenous, and African Canadians, allowing participants to discuss questions relating to class, gender, physical accessibility, sexuality and immigration status, a number of participants noted the lack of gender parity in our case studies. For example, at our first event of 16 cases, only 4 were women. This was a consistent comment at several events, pointing to a need for sensitivity surrounding gender representation and inclusion. The fact that all NJN events were hosted by a white male may have exacerbated these concerns by setting the tone and guiding events. Ensuring greater diversity among hosts and facilitators should be remedied in any future iterations of NJN.

Learning #3

Concerns were raised following one of our events about our inclusion of Indigenous material, and our right to interpret indigenous lives or identities in the absence of indigenous participants. Although we reached out to a number of Indigenous organizations seeking partnership and consultation, we were not successful in doing so. Remediating this will be a prime focus for NJN going into 2018. However, it is not the job of representatives of each community to guide stakeholders through the process, and we should recognize that consulting is not an act of delegating work. The shift of venue for NJN from public libraries to classrooms may be important in guaranteeing the participation of indigenous participants in the interpretation of the case studies.

Moving Forward

In 2018 we will be transitioning our focus from public events to kits that teachers can use in their own class room. We will be reaching out to heritage, community, and activist organizations for guidance and consultancy. We hope that in doing so, we will be able to decentralize intellectual authority further, extending its reach among Canadians and empowering youth to become confident researchers and interpreters of the past.

In an ongoing project such as NJN, reviewing and responding to the issues raised through evaluations and summarized here under the “Learnings” rubric, will be especially important. Collaborative planning and commitments to the inclusion of young professionals and marginalized communities do not alone guarantee inclusive outcomes. By developing NJN as a resource for classrooms and classroom teachers, we hope to reach more diverse, younger audiences and to facilitate both their own engagement as researchers into Toronto’s past and their capacity for reflecting upon, recognizing and critiquing their own place in Toronto’s constantly evolving, complex, multi-cultural population. If you’re an educator concerned with issues of inclusivity and student empowerment in the classroom, we would appreciate any insights, suggestions and feedback you might have: info@wardmuseum.ca.

Acknowledgements

All Toronto Ward Museum Programs are developed as collaborations with multiple partners. For NJN we especially want to acknowledge the growing scholarly and professional expertise of several young adult

professionals who planned and implemented the program, notably Dan Panneton, Project Leader & Researcher, and Gracia Dyer Jalea, Founding Executive Director of the Toronto Ward Museum. Special thanks are owed to the Toronto Public Library for providing space for NJN events. We offer acknowledgment and special thanks to our funders, the Community Fund for Canada's 150th, (a collaboration between the Toronto Foundation, the Government of Canada, and extraordinary leaders from coast to coast) and the Myseum of Toronto.



We thank our lead partners--the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, the Toronto Public Library and the Myseum of Toronto—for their contributions of space, staff time, and inspirational guidance.



Supporting Partners also provided critical assistance in promoting NJN programs. We are grateful to the British Home Children Advocacy & Research Association, the Canadian Language Museum, The Gallery of Portuguese Pioneers, the Jewish Genealogical Society of Toronto, Legacy Voices, the Multicultural History Society of Ontario, OCASI, Ontario Black History Society, the Ontario Historical Society, the UJA Federation's Ontario Jewish Archives at the Blankenstein Family Heritage Centre, and the Toronto Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society.



Multicultural History
Society of Ontario



Ontario Jewish Archives
Blankenstein Family Heritage Centre



Toronto Branch
ONTARIO
GENEALOGICAL
SOCIETY

Contributors



Advocate:
DONNA GABACCIA
Chair and President, Torono Ward Museum

Donna Gabaccia is a Professor of History at the University of Toronto and past Director of the Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota, where she developed the award-winning project "Digitizing Immigrant Letters." She is the author of 14 books and dozens of articles on immigration to the United States, Italian migration around the world and migration in world history. Her book, *Foreign Relations* won the 2012 Theodore Saloutos Prize of the Immigration and Ethnic History Society; her most recent book *Gender and International Migration* received an Honourable Mention from the American Sociological Association. She is a the past president of the Social Science History Association and the recipient of the 2013 University of Minnesota Outstanding Community Service Award for

faculty, which acknowledged her public history work with older and newer immigrant and refugee communities in the United States.

The granddaughter of Italian and German immigrants to New York City, she migrated to Germany where she worked (with a temporary academic work contract) from 1982 to 1986 and she migrated to Canada in 2014. In February 2017, she acquired sufficient points to apply for permanent residency.



Catalyst:

GRACIA DYER JALEIA

Founding Executive Director, Toronto Ward Museum

Gracia is a co-founder and the Founding Executive Director of the Toronto Ward Museum (TWM), Toronto's first museum of migration. She has worked in the non-profit sector for over a decade as an administrator and programmer. Most recently, she was the Programming Director for Friends of the Pan Am Path, working on Toronto's largest Host City Showcase project for the 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games. Prior to the Games, she worked for the Montreal Life Stories Project based at Concordia University, and co-authored Mapping Memories: Participatory Media, Placed-Based Stories and Refugee Youth. In 2012 she produced the Montreal Life Stories Rencontres, a series of 48 events that took place throughout the city to disseminate the life stories of newcomers and refugees to Quebec. The Rencontres included a yearlong exhibition at the Centre d'histoire in Montreal. She holds a BA in Cultural Studies and World Religions from McGill University and a MA in Media Studies from Concordia University.



Advisory Committee Member:

SHELLEY FALCONER

President and Chief Executive Officer, Art Gallery of Hamilton



Advisory Committee Member:
VISHNU RAMCHARAN
Specialist: Visitor and Community Engagement, Ontario Science Centre

Resources

Many people dismiss census statistical data because they firmly believe people are “Not Just Numbers”. We agree but try to find stories in the census. See a thought-provoking discussion of the “Not Just Numbers” argument from a student’s point of view:

<https://www.hastac.org/blogs/amandamaier/2015/12/10/im-not-just-number>

Want to learn more about Turning Statistics into Stories: There are workshops for that:

<https://www.statcan.gc.ca/cgi-bin/workshop/wst2.cgi?workshop=2>

Canada 150 encouraged Canadians to think about the Census as a place of story-telling:

<https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/blog/stories>

Dig Deeper

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Interpretation and Education (Waterloo Region Museum)



Preamble

The Waterloo Region Museum is the largest community museum in Ontario. Our main gallery tells the story of Waterloo Region from 12,000 years ago to today, and our feature gallery showcases local exhibits and travelling exhibits from around the world.

Doon Heritage Village is also a part of Waterloo Region Museum. It is a picturesque 60-acre living history village open seasonally from May 1 to December 22 that features historic buildings, period dressed interpreters, farm animals, and fun activities.

Collecting of local history artifacts in Waterloo Region predates the opening of Doon Pioneer Village, now known as the Doon Heritage Village. The Waterloo Historical Society began collecting in 1912, donating their collection to the museum in 1960. Since this time, the Waterloo Region Museum has grown into one of the largest community museum collections in Ontario. Presently, the Waterloo Region Museum has a wide-ranging local history collection of more than 52,000 artifacts.

The Waterloo Region Hall of Fame is also located on-site. It honours individuals and organizations - now numbering more than 400 - for their significant contributions to the community.

The Waterloo Region Museum houses a collection of stories that are capable of connecting us. But what are these stories? And, how do museums make those meaningful connections? How do we keep visitors engaged and willing to return?

The answer: effective interpretation with visitors and making an impact that is memorable, relatable, experiential, and which fosters and develops curiosity.

By focusing on the tangible, intangible and universal concepts of interpretation, we are utilizing research and best practices to stimulate discussion and generate quantifiable results for our interpreters. By engaging both new and seasoned interpreters, we are revamping our interpretive training to focus on promoting and fostering diversity and inclusion.

Our Story

The Waterloo Region Museum is developing a new training plan for their teacher interpreters (TI's) with a focus on diversity and inclusion. To do so, we developed three projects to pilot – a diversity and inclusion survey for interpreters; a new training program, and a steering committee created to brainstorm innovative solutions to topics pertaining to diversity and inclusion. An online survey was created to determine the comfort level of interpreters (both new and seasoned) in regards to interpreting to visitors with diverse needs and backgrounds.

After reviewing our current training program for interpreters, we realized there was a need for a session which explicitly applied a diversity and inclusion lens to best interpretive techniques. Incorporating diversity and inclusion into the training was essential, and provided the interpreters with the tools, knowledge and confidence to interact with the public and foster authentic and meaningful connections. From these conversations, a new training program was created, aimed to change and improve interpretation techniques in ways that are inclusive of our diverse communities.

Learnings

Learning #1

We have the advantage of employing between 15 to 35 student teacher interpreters at any point throughout the year. We developed an online survey designed to solicit feedback regarding their comfort and knowledge level in their new roles. A special lens was placed on diversity & inclusion, and this area generated a high level of discussion. Many of the new TI's indicated that there was in fact a need to create specialized training in this area to improve the quality of their interactions with visitors.

Interested in the survey? [Click Here](#)

Learning #2

After collecting the feedback, a presentation on inclusive interpretation was developed and presented to the students, and several full-time staff. The result? Students felt more comfortable with interpreting and connecting with diverse members of the public after the re-designed training session. Utilizing role-playing and scenario-based learning allowed them to gain first-hand experience and confidence in this area.

Interested in the Training presentation? [Click Here](#)

Learning #3

Diversity and inclusivity training is fluid, and continually needs to be adapted and changed as our understandings expand, and our communities change. In an effort to keep the dialogue flowing, we are in the midst of creating a steering committee who will meet on a quarterly basis to review visitor questions, interactions and current 'hot topics'. Also addressed will be the topics brought forward from the interpreter survey. We want to create an environment in which it's safe to ask questions, seek clarification, and develop a consistent message regarding inclusivity throughout our interpretation. We will document the conversations; provide answers and salient talking points. We will provide the interpreters with the confidence to engage in conversations with the public without fear, awkwardness or hesitation.

Moving Forward

In 2018, we will continue using this training model with our new interpreters, and continue to issue the survey to quantify our efforts. Our steering committee will meet throughout the year, to ensure consistency with our support of diverse audiences and to maintain quality customer service.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all of the staff at the Waterloo Region Museum for their support in this endeavour. Our staff eagerly provided feedback and participated in the proposed training program and survey. Kevin Thomas, Interpretation Specialist for the Waterloo Region Museum, should also be commended for participating in the training, and providing suggestions for improvement. We also recognize the efforts of Vishnu Ramcharan from the Ontario Science Centre, who very thoughtfully and comprehensively provided us with feedback. Finally, we would like to thank Rhiannon Myers from the OMA and Christian Blake from the ROM, for their guidance and suggestions.

Contributors



Advocate:

KERI SOLOMON

Supervisor of Guest Services, Waterloo Region Museum

Keri has spent a career in the customer-service field, primarily in the hospitality sector. When the Waterloo Region Museum was built in 2009, Keri was hired to implement the first Guest Services Department. It now consists of a team of over 10 full and part-time staff.



Catalyst:

MEGAN CRAWFORD

Teacher / Interpreter, Museum Galleries, Waterloo Region Museum

After completing her Bachelor of Education and becoming an Ontario Certified Teacher, Megan realized her true passion was with non-traditional forms of education, particularly at museums. She is a Senior Interpreter in both the Waterloo Region Museum galleries, and in the historic village.



Advisory Committee Member:
SHELLEY FALCONER
President and CEO, Art Gallery of Hamilton



Advisory Committee Member:
VISHNU RAMCHARAN
Specialist: Visitor and Community Engagement, Ontario Science Centre

Resources

[Supporting Diversity + Inclusion through Interpretation: Case Studies Activity](#)

[Interpreting to the Public Presentation Notes](#)

[Interpreter Survey](#)

Dig Deeper

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V. Resources

Diversity + Inclusion

- [Glossary of Terms](#)
- [Ottawa Equity + Inclusion Lens Handbook](#)
- [Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks: Standards for Organizations Around the World](#)
- [AAM LGBTQ+ Welcoming Guidelines](#)
- [Air Bnb another Lens](#)
- [Neighborhood Arts Network Arts & Equity Toolkit](#)
- [UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)
- [Deloitte's Waiter, is that inclusion in my soup?](#)
- [American Alliance of Museums Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Resources](#)
- [6 Degrees All of Us: What We Mean When We Talk About Inclusion](#)
- [Museum as Site for Social Action Toolkit](#)
- [The Empathetic Museum](#)
- [Incluseum](#)

Self-Assessments

- Museum As Site for Social Action – [Readiness Assessment](#)
- [Harvard Implicit Association Test](#)

Accessibility / Disability Arts + Culture

- <http://www.disabilityartsinternational.org/resources/>
- <http://talkingasl.ca/>
- [Ontario Interpreting Services / Canadian Hearing Society](#)
- [Ontario Association of Sign Language Interpreters](#)
- [Smithsonian Accessible Exhibition Programming](#)

Community Engagement

- [Ontario Museum Association Community Engagement Toolkit](#)
- [Tamarack Community Engagement](#)
- [Tamarack Index of Community Engagement Techniques](#)
- [Tamarack Context Experts](#)
- [Community-Led Library Toolkit](#)

Events and Programming

- Ryerson University – [Guide to Accessible Events](#)
- Homeless Hub – [Checklist for Planning Inclusive and Accessible Events](#)

Audience Insight

- [Tamarack Tool: Insight Communities](#)
- [Tamarack Tool: Developing Evaluations that are Used](#)
- [The Audience Agency](#)

- [Meaningful Segmentation from ARTS PROFESSIONAL](#)
- [Wallance Foundation, Service to People: Challenges and Rewards - How museums can become more visitory-centred](#)

Governance

- DiverseCity – [Diversity in Governance: A Toolkit for Non-Profit Boards](#)
- [DiverseCity onBoard](#)
- Deloitte – [The six signature traits of inclusive leadership](#)

Human Resources and Volunteers

- Work in Culture - [Inclusive HR Toolkit](#)
- HR Council Canada - [Diversity at Work](#)
- Catalyst - [Engaging in Conversations About Gender, Race and Ethnicity in the Workplace](#) and [Conversation Ground Rules](#)

Facilities

- [National Disability Authority, Building for Everyone: A Universal Design Approach](#)
- [International Best Practice in Universal Design: A Global Review, Canadian Human Rights Commission](#)
- [Smithsonian Guidelines for Accessible Exhibition Design](#)

Collections

- Alliance of American Museums - [Developing a Collections Management Policy](#)
- Canadian Museum Association - [Ethics Guidelines](#)

Exhibitions and Curatorial Practices

- [Embracing Inclusive Design in Multitouch Exhibit Development](#)
- [The Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience - Community Process](#)

Education and Interpretation

- [MuseumNext: Creating the inclusive museum through storytelling](#)
- [American Alliance of Museums - Education and Interpretation](#)

Marketing and Communications

- [Web Accessibility Initiative](#)
- [A Diversity & Inclusion Toolkit for the Interactive Digital Media Industry](#)
- [Learning and Work, How to produce clear written materials for a range of readers](#)

Self-Care

- [University of Calgary, Self-Care Starter Kit](#)
- [ARTREACH Self-Care Guide for Youth Working in Community](#)
- [Time and Space Self-Care Plan](#) by Semma Rao
- Objective Lessons: Self-Care for Museum works by Seema Rao (book)