

Reassessing Your Governance Toolkit

A Toolkit in Support of Moved to Action: Activating UNDRIP in Canadian Museums



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This section outlines the main objectives for the session, provides suggestions for pre-reading, and prompts for pre-reflection.

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This section on Accountability comes from the Indigenous Curatorial Collective | Collectif des commissaires autochtones (ICCA) Institutional Membership Handbook. The handbook was developed by Institutional Membership Coordinator, Laurena Finéus and Director of Membership, Emma Steen. To access the full handbook and join the ICCA's growing community of arts professionals and institutions striving for a better and more equitable arts sector for all BIPOC curators and arts professionals, visit their website at icca.art or reach out directly to membership@icca.art.

19 Recommended Resources

A curated list of supporting readings and resources.

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This toolkit was developed in support of the Canadian Museums Association report, Moved to Action: Activating UNDRIP in Canadian Museums. For more information, and to review the report itself, visit **www.museums.ca/movedtoaction**.

This project has been funded by the Government of Canada.



Overview

Reassessing Your Governance

This self-serve facilitated discussion is a guide for museum governance bodies to develop a strategy to actively and meaningfully support Indigenous-led governance in museums.

Estimated time: Full day session

This toolkit contains:

- Facilitator's Guide and Printable Session Agenda (DOCX)
- Session Slides (PPT)
- Preparing Strategic Plans: Core Considerations (PDF)
- Recommended Resources (PDF)

Other formats of these items are available upon request (reconciliation@museums.ca).

Facilitator's Guide

Reassessing Your Governance

Toolkit overview

This self-serve facilitated discussion is a guide for museum governance bodies to develop a strategy to actively and meaningfully support Indigenous-led governance in museums.

Estimated time: Full day session

Please note that each section of the session can be broken up and discussed incrementally over longer periods of time.

This document contains:

- Facilitator's guide
- Printable session agenda
- Institutional Accountability (PDF)
- Recommended Resources (PDF)

Recommended items:

- Group brainstorming recording tool (ex. whiteboard, flip chart, shared google doc, padlet, etc.)
- Individual recording tool (ex. Paper and pen, word document, etc.)
- Printed copies of the *Moved to Action Report*, Governance section for all participants
- Screen presentation or printed copies of Session Slides

Objectives

- Internal reflection on how colonial power systems are replicated in museum leadership and governance.
- Critical reflection on assumptions, biases, and systemic barriers in your museum governance structures.
- Develop a common understanding that museums must relinquish colonial privilege and accept that Indigenous communities and nations have the expertise and the right to lead and define governance processes, priorities, and outcomes in museums.
- Learn why committing to humility is central to making space for meaningful Indigenous governance.
- Build common understanding of what we mean by shared authority and authoritative governance.
- Build consensus on what learning is required and how your museum must change to become a site for meaningful shared and authoritative Indigenous-led governance.
- Develop approaches to incorporate meaningful Indigenous governance with decision-making authority, not simply advisory bodies.

To Start

Reading

Moved to Action: Governance Section

Institutional Accountability

Towards Braiding by Elwood Jimmy, Vanessa Andreotti, Sharon Stein

https://decolonialfuturesnet.files.wordpress.com/2019/02/towards-braiding-handout-1.pdf

Reflections

- How are **colonial power systems replicated** in museum leadership and governance?
- What are your overall goals for reconciliation, decolonizing, and supporting Indigenous-led self-determination as an institution?
- What does activating Indigenous authority in museums look like to you?



Facilitator's Guide

Set the Tone (20 mins)	Familiarize (40 min)	
Introductions	In this section, develop an understanding of	
Review agenda	10 min – individual reflection	
What do participants hope to gain or contribute?	30 min - group reflection	
Review the intended objectives for this session.	Individually, as someone who represents an institution, reflect on:	
Check:	✓ What are your intentions for including Indigenous governance in your museum?	
√ How is the discussion being recorded?	✓ What are the ways you envision this being successful?	
recorded? ✓ Participants have reviewed the Standards and the Governance Section of the Moved to Action report. ✓ Participants have read the "Institutional Accountability" resource provided in this toolkit.	As a group, discuss your answers to the above prompts. Following this, answer: What are your overall goals for reconciliation, decolonizing, and supporting Indigenous-led self-determination as an institution? List these together as a group.	
Understanding of participant expectations for the session.	Identify the expectations and goals for decolonization and Indigenous governance in your museum.	

REASSESSING YOUR GOVERNANCE

Break (10 min)

Review (40 min)

Define your expectations for ways Indigenous perspectives will inform the governance of your institution.

Individually, reflect on:

- √ What are the intended outcomes of making space for Indigenous governance?
- ✓ Are these different from the decolonial goals identified earlier? Why or why not?

Discuss:

- √ What do you expect Indigenous perspectives to do for your museum?
- √ What are the possible impacts of implementing Indigenous governance in your institution?
- ✓ In what ways does implementing Indigenous governance in your institution benefit Indigenous peoples participating?
- ✓ In what ways might there be an imbalance in benefits for the museum versus the Indigenous advisors?

For example, are you trying to "fix" or get sign-off on a pre-existing operations or strategies? Is the request being made to showcase the decolonizing initiatives of the museum?

Critical assessment of expectations and capacity to initiate Indigenous advisory and governance.

REASSESSING YOUR GOVERNANCE

Explore (60 min)

Individually, identify the underlying assumptions of your museum's goals and expectations for Indigenous governance.

For example, to what extent has your discussion focused on fulfilling museum needs or are defined by institutional expectations (timelines, governance structure, etc.).

Consider:

- √ How would you respond if you receive requests or encounter Indigenous perspectives that do not meet your expectations and projections?
- √ How would you accommodate these?

As a group, discuss ways that these ideas or requests will be identified and prioritized.

Discuss:

- √ What commitments can you make to the Indigenous governance group to ensure their input will be meaningfully accommodated?
- ✓ Are you coming with a preformulated plan or allowing space for the group or committee to meaningfully develop and guide the work, including the option to say no?
- √ What is your plan and response if the advisory or governance representatives recommends alternative courses of action?
- √ What systemic barriers might exist to hinder the meaningful incorporation of Indigenous governance in museums?
- How might your requests for advisory end up reproducing harmful patterns of relationship and representation?

Review the *Towards Braiding* resource by Elwood Jimmy, Vanessa Andreotti, Sharon Stein for additional guidance on reproducing harmful patterns of relationship and representation.

https://decolonialfuturesnet.files.wordpress.com/2019/02/towards-braiding-handout-1.pdf

Internal reflection on how colonial power systems are replicated in museum leadership and governance.

Meal Break (60 min)

If conducting the session in person, we encourage session organizers to provide a communal lunch for participants.

Reassessing Authority & Humility (30 min)

Individually, reflect on how authority is assigned, reinforced or enshrined in your museum's governance. Now reflect on John G. Hampton's quote in the Moved to Action report: "We are working toward a future of humbleness and restraint."

As a group, discuss:

- √ What does it mean to commit to humility as part
 of your museum governance?
- √ What are ways that leaders can shift to think of themselves as learners?
- √ What changes must be made to adopt a process of self-reflection to understand personal and systemic biases and to develop and maintain respectful processes and relationships based on mutual trust?

Defining Institutional Accountability (20 min)

Now that you have thought about the expectations and institutional operations that are driving and shaping your governance plans, consider the areas of institutional accountability that must be altered to make meaningful space for authoritative guidance and Indigenous governance.

As a group, discuss your initial responses to the "Institutional Accountability" section of the toolkit.

Reflection on how authority is assigned and reinforced in your museum.

Critical reflection on assumptions, biases, and systemic barriers in your museum governance structures.

Institutional investment (40 min)

As a group, identify the ways your institution will invest in making space for Indigenous authority.

Discuss:

- √ How do you define Indigenous authority? How can you ensure this is being defined from the perspective of the Indigenous communities you engage in your museum?
- ✓ How can you ensure meaningful and authoritative Indigenous guidance at the governance level (not just arms-length advisory bodies)?
- ✓ What changes need to be made at the governance level to provide space for this support? What is your museum's ability to maintain long-term nation-to-institution partnerships?
- √ How will capacity be left in the Indigenous community through your governance partnership?
- ✓ What measures can you put in place to ensure that your requests do not create additional burdens for Indigenous partners?
- ✓ List some strategies your institution will develop for accommodating community-driven timelines or additional requests should they emerge. For example, providing transportation or childcare at meetings.
- ✓ What steps can your institution take for responsible succession planning in the form of laying out a step-bystep roadmap to support and elevate Indigenous candidates* into leadership roles?
- ✓ How can your museum support (financially and otherwise) long-term relationships and investment in governance mentorship?

*Note that this is PLURAL—meaningful governance means the incorporation of multiple Indigenous voices and perspectives at the table.

Common understanding that museums must relinquish colonial privilege and accept that Indigenous communities and nations have the expertise and the right to lead and define governance processes, priorities and outcomes in museums.

REASSESSING YOUR GOVERNANCE

Break (10 min)

Re-Evaluating Compensation (15 min)

As a group, identify and review all costs involved in the long-term partnership.

Discuss:

- ✓ Are there hidden costs and labour involved in your invitation to participate in the governance of your museum?
- √ How will the community be consulted on how they would like to be compensated for their participation, including fees/rates for additional engagements with the community, timing for payment, and method of payment?

Honouring Protocols (15 min)

As a group, discuss any protocols that might be required in conducting your governance activities.

Discuss:

- ✓ Do you know the specific community protocols and practices related to governance and advisory?
- ✓ Are you aware of the governance structure of the Indigenous community (traditional and contemporary)?

Development of compensation plan and budgetary requirements.

Protocol awareness.

Institution Self-reflection (30 min)

As a group, further reflect on the institutional barriers that may inhibit this work from happening in a culturally safe and anti-colonial manner.

As a group, discuss:

- √ What steps need to be taken to ensure antioppressive training, policies and resources are at all levels of the museum?
- √ What requirements need to be revised to address and overcome systemic limitations?
- Has your institution adopted or in the process of adopting the Truth and Reconciliation's Calls to Action and UNDRIP?
- √ Has your institution adopted or in the process of adopting any de-colonial or anticolonial policies, protocols or practices?
- √ What additional learning needs to happen to identify or break down colonial barriers?

Consolidating an Approach (30 min)

Now that you have reflected on the intentions and barriers regarding implementing meaningful Indigenous governance into your institution, return to your initial list of overall goals for reconciliation, decolonizing, and supporting Indigenous-led self-determination mean as an institution.

As a group, discuss how these goals have changed based on this session.

List some strategies your institution will develop for accommodating community-driven timelines or interruptions to your projects should they emerge. For example, maintaining notes and records, ensuring long-term funding is in place to support projects.

Assemble

Now that you have considered and analyzed approaches for making space for Indigenous governance, discuss how these may be assembled into strategic planning processes.

Build consensus on what learning is required and how your museum must change to become a site for meaningful shared and authoritative Indigenous-led governance. Build common understanding of what we mean by shared authority and authoritative governance.



Institutional Accountability

This section on Accountability comes from the Indigenous Curatorial Collective | Collectif des commissaires autochtones (ICCA) *Institutional Membership Handbook*. The handbook was developed by Institutional Membership Coordinator, Laurena Finéus and Director of Membership, Emma Steen. To access the full handbook and join the ICCA's growing community of arts professionals and institutions striving for a better and more equitable arts sector for all BIPOC curators and arts professionals, visit their website at icca.art or reach out directly to **membership@icca.art**.

What We Mean When We Say 'Accountability'

What we must demystify is the way accountability is currently understood in within institutions. We take very seriously our 'Accountability Mandate' and encourage all institutions to think about how accountability is enacted in their workplace.

In their workbook, 'So you're ready to choose love', Kai Cheng Thom gives us a clear definition of the term. "Accountability means many different things to different people: Accountability can be a stand-in word for punishment, for apology, for repair, for change, for transparency, and much more. Sometimes, we use one definition of accountability for ourselves and another definition for everybody else. People of privilege are held to one standard of accountability, while marginalized people are held to another." (Thom 2021)

Through the Institutional Membership Program at the Indigenous Curatorial Collective, we are building a complete definition of accountability for cultural institutions as a means to stop the multiple discrepancies we have observed in their operations.

Beyond collaboration or providing opportunities for Indigenous peoples, institutions and museums have a responsibility to provide healing spaces for Black, Afro-Indigenous and Indigenous communities to reflect and recover from the remnants of colonialism they've perpetuated and profited from for hundreds of years. As Indigenous scholar and anthropologist Amy Lonetree highlighted in 'Decolonizing Museums Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums,'(2012) if museums were to engage Indigenous partners with a truthful discussion on the role of cultural institutions in colonialism, these partners may experience relief from historical trauma and feel more inclined to collaborate.

Indeed, cultural institutions can transform with the right framework and important dismantling of their governing structures, but they first need to realize their responsibility within this colonial past. Lonetree further explains that these spaces can shift from "sites of colonial harm into sites of healing, and restoring community well-being" and "from sites of oppression into sites of revitalization and autonomy." (Lonetree 2012, p.173)

We want to see this radical change happen for our community members and this membership was built upon the belief that facilitating dialogue and collaborative practice will enable this vision.

This happens by practicing accountability holistically and wholeheartedly. We have enunciated a few aspects that we believe are key in considering if your institution is doing all that it can to keep its space equitable, diverse and inclusive. Our commitment through this membership is to keep your organization accountable to these points listed below, among others.

Partnership/Relationship

All institutions across so-called Canada are operating on Indigenous land and territories. As an institution you should have both relationships and partnerships with a diversity of Indigenous peoples. These should be LONG TERM, RECIPROCAL, and MEANINGFUL.

As an institution, or someone who represents an institution, ask: what are your intentions?

- How are you making sure you are in constant good relations with the Indigenous peoples you seek out, the Indigenous territories you live/work within, and the Indigenous people you employ?
- Do you understand the concepts of Indigenous sovereignty and jurisdiction?
- Do you understand the colonial histories and current realities of the territory you're on?
- Do you understand how your institution profits off of Indigenous dispossession?

Labour

Indigenous labour within institutions functions differently than non-Indigenous labour. Remember these spaces, institutions, were not built with us in mind, they often house our relatives, have complicated histories of oppression and exclusion, and can be harmful places for Indigenous folks to enter.

Within an institutional space, Indigenous people may experience: exclusion, erasure, commodification, and outright harm. Because of these realities, Indigenous people working in institutions experience added pressures to correct or prevent these harms from happening within their workplace.

When you work with Indigenous curators and other Indigenous heritage workers, you are inherently working with their communities.

Working with Elders should be conducted with the utmost respect and with long term intentional relationships. Hiring Elders requires adequate compensation and importantly, adequate care. Free transportation, nutritious meals and drinks, gifts, following specific local protocol, and flexibility are essential to hosting and caring for Elders in a good way.

Youth and Elders

Indigenous youth deserve to be included in all institutions, as a part of your inherent responsibility to the lands you occupy and benefit from.

Indigenous youth are the future and deserve to be included and respected. Indigenous youth commonly experience racial profiling, exclusion, systemic barriers and microagressions within institutions.

To develop meaningful and long-lasting relationships within the local and territorial Indigenous communities youth must be supported and respected.

Compensating Indigenous youth to attend institutional programs and opportunities is one way to engage Indigenous youth and combat systemic oppression within institutions.

Note that unpaid internships perpetuate systemic barriers- they privilege people who do come from privileged backgrounds and do not provide people who can not afford to work without compensation.

Land Acknowledgements

If your institution is planning on writing or has already written a public Land Acknowledgement here are some things to consider:

- Has your institution supported your local Indigenous community through outreach programs, employment opportunities, waving entrance fees, etc.?
- Has your institution adopted or in the process of adopting the Truth and Reconciliation's Calls to Action and UNDRIP?
- Has your institution adopted or in the process of adopting any de-colonial or anti-colonial policies, protocols or practices?
- Institutions are non-neutral spaces contending with structures that oppress Indigenous peoples means that it is important to have appropriate channels for critique, feedback and accountability.
- Anti-oppression frameworks allow institutions to limit oppression in the workplace. All staff, volunteers, and board members should have free and yearly anti-oppression training.
- Systems of accountability: a space for formal complaints, Informal channels for growth and feedback, and antioppression built into institutional frameworks.

Accountability Mandate

Factors to help you re-evaluate the state of your organization and build a sustainable decolonial/antiracist mandate.

Note: See **Reassessing Your Governance Section** for a self-facilitated session related to this content.

Accountability means the divestment from institutional, colonial, and capitalist methods of change and instead the investment into slow and long term reciprocal relationships that emphasize mentorship, place BIPOC professionals in leadership positions and change the internal ways that arts institutions have functioned across colonized and western spaces.

Steps Towards Accountability

It is crucial that institutions view accountability as a vital step they take towards creating a more equitable museum sector. Institutional investment in the development of Indigenous success means a shift in what has previously been accepted to a radically different approach which invests in anti-capitalist, anti-racist and anti-colonial work spaces and structures.

Accountability should be approached through many different means, such as:

✓ Institutional investment

Support (financially and otherwise); less short term relationships; an investment in mentorship. Institutional investment means using institutional funds to hire, retain and support permanent Indigenous and BIPOC staff.

This can mean cluster hiring Indigenous or BIPOC staff, creating a safe and supportive workplace. It can also mean budgeting for long term, growth based entry-level positions intended to develop skills without immediate deliverables expected. A financial investment means allowing for periods of growth and of change.

This also means giving more emerging staff the tools needed to move into leadership roles through mentorship and long-term professional relationships. Mentorship is a vital aspect of success, mentorship can come from identified senior staff who have the skills, experience, and knowledge to support and care for emerging BIPOC but mentorship also comes from our communities. If there is not someone with this skill set and lived experience it can mean putting funds aside to hire mentors to support emerging BIPOC staff.

INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

✓ Anti-capitalist investment

Institutions putting money into the growth and development of Indigenous staff, not grant-based or short-term contracts; slowing down work and taking time; recognizing all work, all labour, at all levels, will always be compensated. Work outside of contracts will be honoured through consultant fees.

Relying on grants and short term funding to hire Indigenous or BIPOC staff members leaves them in precarious positions where they know the institution is not investing in them or their growth in a permanent capacity. This 'gig economy' has only been amplified by our present situation with COVID-19 which saw Indigenous arts professionals across the country disproportionately lose professional opportunities and have contracts cut as institutions could no longer retain their short-term staff. Slowing down work and allowing for times of care is a way to invest in the long-term health and success of staff. Lastly, all labour at all times must be paid for. There is no way around this. If an employee is asked to present on their lived experience, on their expertise outside of their job description or to be used in any public way they must be paid at a consultation fee.

√ Succession Plans & Leadership Roles

Implementation of responsible succession plans; investment into new leadership roles; non-Indigenous leadership in Indigenous organizations making space and moving aside.

Responsible succession plans means laying out a step-by-step roadmap to support and elevate Indigenous and BIPOC staff into leadership roles. Responsible succession also means that the change over is not done hastily and never without support from the predecessor, the institution (board, governing exec, senior staff), or without mentorship. If an organization is receiving Indigenous government or grant funding at any level then there has to be Indigenous leadership in paid positions. Board members alone do not count as leadership for Indigenous organizations, who the organization hires is critical and we take it very seriously.

INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

√ Transparency & Anti-Racist/ Anti-Colonial Structures

Making salaries transparent and public; funds towards mentorship positions; anti-oppressive training and resources for all levels; needing public facing anti-racist/ discriminatory or decolonial mandates; revision of requirements to meet systemic limitations.

It is widely acknowledged that the hiding or shame of sharing salaries leads to inequitable pay. If you are unaware of what your colleague, boss, or the person who last had your position makes then how can you ask for equitable compensation? BIPOC women and trans folks are drastically paid less than cis, male and white people are. Transparent salaries and the public display of funds allows for public and internal trust as well as a standard of accountability. Anti-oppressive training and public anti-racist/discriminatory or decolonial mandates sets a precedent for all staff, board members, and governance committees to adhere to and a chance to become better educated on the struggle your BIPOC staff, audiences, and hired professionals may be experiencing within your institution. This education can lead to better hiring practices that revise requirements for hiring that may previously have excluded or drastically limited the chance for marginalized community members to succeed or be accepted by your institution.

A better institutional practice would be sharing the antiracist, anti-oppression, anti-discriminatory, etc. resources you develop for the staff working in your institution publicly. This yes, would mean that you use your own resources to benefit others.

√ Shifting Scope Towards Equitable Hiring Practices

Valuing lived experience; valuing non-institutional education; changing requirements for emerging professionals.

Equitable hiring practices depend on a change in how lived experience and non-institutional education is valued. It is paramount that degrees are no longer the only means necessary to value expertise or ability. Indigenous community members are experts in colonialism - although with varying degrees of interaction - as all Indigenous people must live within this system and experience the systemic oppressions that make access to formal education often unattainable. Institutions that wish to work with Indigenous curators and creatives need to set up training and mentorship or thorough onboarding processes as part of their hiring. Valuing what Indigenous inherent knowledge can bring to professional arts positions separate from university or college education. By creating workspaces where emerging Indigenous arts professionals can grow and thrive will support the next wave of emerging professionals and so on.



Recommended Resources

Topic	Description	Source
Decolonization is Not a Metaphor: Eve Tuck & K. Wayne Yang	This article reminds readers about what is unsettling about decolonization. Because settler colonialism is built upon an entangled triad structure of settler-native-slave, the decolonial desires of white, non-white, immigrant, postcolonial, and oppressed people, it can similarly be entangled in resettlement, reoccupation, and reinhabitation that actually further settler colonialism.	https://clas.osu.edu/sites/clas.osu.edu/files/Tuck%20and%20Yang%202012%20 Decolonization%20is%20not%20a%20metaphor.pdf
Organisational Decolonisation Action Plan Toolkit: VIDEA	This toolkit provides suggestions of actions that organisations can take as part of building and implementing their own decolonization plan.	https://videa.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ VIDEA_actionplan.pdf
Strategic Plan and Policy Examples		https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/8fa8-11X8.5-2021-WorkplanAugust-18.pdf University of British Columbia Indigenous Strategic Plan https://aboriginal-2018.sites.olt.ubc.ca/files/2021/06/UBC.ISP_StrategicPlan2020-SPREAD-Borderless-REDUCED.pdf Politique des Musées de la civilisation à l'égard des peuples autochtones https://www.mcq.org/documents/10706/21548/Pltq_autochtoneanx_fr_VF_maj_20150204.pdf/84dc0e01-2526-4347-929c-341e068f9135