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Small Museums Handbook

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



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This workbook is designed to provide guidance to support Indigenous self-determination where only one or a few are taking on this work.

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Canada



Introduction

As conveyed in the *Moved to Action* report, it is not up to Indigenous People to reconcile, but to speak truth to power. It falls to settlers to reconcile themselves to the true history of where institutions like museums have caused harm, and address this in ways identified by Indigenous Peoples. New museum standards have been set with the understanding that achieving these will take time, respect, and reciprocity.

Small museums are both uniquely challenged and positioned to support Indigenous self-determination and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). With few staff and minimal resources, small museums must be strategic. But, as they are often community gathering spaces, small museums can and do build strong relationships across communities.

This workbook is designed to provide guidance to support Indigenous self-determination where only one or a few are taking on this work. It is divided into four sections, repatriation, engagement, governance, and operations, that provide step-by-step support. As an interactive workbook, there is also space for notes to reflect and record your progress, as well as links to relevant resources, recommended case studies, and crowd-sourced solutions to some common hurdles.



Repatriation

Responsibility, Relationships and Readiness

Taking on the work of repatriation is about more than giving back. This begins by acknowledging that the cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples belongs to Indigenous peoples—the rights holders.

Indigenous communities have preserved and protected their Indigenous cultural heritage since time immemorial. In part, this occurred through preserving the inextricable connection between cultural items and traditional knowledge, including ceremonies, protocols, and stories.

The plundering of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Nations was motivated and bolstered by the overt genocidal policies and practices that began with European colonial powers and continued with the Canadian government. The removal of ancestral remains and cultural belongings often happened under duress, in conjunction with land dispossession, forced relocation and attempted erasure of Indigenous Nations.

Connections to and protection of these knowledge systems persisted even in the face of extreme duress and genocide faced by Indigenous communities. These means of keeping history have assisted Western science, exploration, settlement, and settler survival from the time of contact through to today. See the Historical Considerations section of the Moved to Action report for a more fulsome overview of the colonial impacts on Indigenous heritage and the rise of Indigenous museology.

Indigenous Peoples seeking the return of their cultural belongings and ancestral remains have long asserted that these were removed under duress due to political or religious coercion, dire economic circumstances, and other circumstances that meet the definition of duress. Any acquisitions taken from Indigenous communities under duress are considered unethical. Their continued use, display, and ownership by museums violates the rights of Indigenous Peoples to free, prior and informed consent as made necessary by UNDRIP. As stated in the Moved to Action report, many consider the period of duress to extend back to first contact with European peoples and continue today.

Supporting Indigenous rights holders by taking the onus off those who are looking for their cultural belongings and ancestral remains is key. While colonial legal frameworks may uphold a museum's right to keep items within their collection, the historical and ongoing colonial context of their acquisition calls into question the ethical or moral right of a museum to possess them. Put another way, repatriation is not reconciliation, it is the museums' job. Being proactive in assessing, researching, and preparing collections for repatriation are central first steps, although the work of repatriation must be guided by Indigenous rights holders at every step to the utmost extent possible.

When we talk about repatriation, one of the difficulties most often cited by museums is the difficulty of tracing provenance of belongings to their rights holders. This is because of the uneven practice of documenting thoroughly and properly where belongings have come from, either due to the Indian Act-enforced separation of communities, or the lack of recording proper traditional names of nations, families, and places, or simple negligence. As a result, many museum databases use outdated names or methods of cataloging that obscure the histories of those belongings.

For small museums, commitments to repatriation are impeded by a lack of capacity and funding. No matter how small your collection may be, assessment of items of Indigenous descent is essential. Each belonging is invaluable to their rights holders. However, small museums can also lean into their strengths, with their relatively localized collections and community focus.

Repatriation Readiness Checklist

It is the job of museums to provide information on their collections to Indigenous rights holders, as well as to implement the necessary protocols for their proper care, including cultural and spiritual care. This will enable communities to take informed and proactive steps toward repatriation and stewardship and will also assist the museum's engagement and consultation processes.

The checklist below will help you document your collection and assessment processes. This is not a linear process, and you will circle back through these processes as you find additional information on your collections and develop approaches to their access and care. Keeping records of your work is essential, as the work of repatriation may span decades, and so make use of the notes section. Note this is not an exhaustive list of activities.

Checklist

Assessing Collections — Pre-Engagement	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify all parts of your collection that hold tangible heritage or traditional knowledge of an Indigenous community. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify items of intangible cultural heritage value that you may have overlooked. 	

Need help? Indigenous tangible and intangible cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and intellectual property include such items as including maps, photographs, archival documents, and songs, plants, seeds, and language recordings. For further guidance, see “Understand Cultural Heritage” by CCUNESCO <https://en.ccunesco.ca/blog/2019/10/understanding-intangible-cultural-heritage>

REPATRIATION

Research the collection and extend your search to cover all museum holdings, including archival and digital sources, as well as external sources and networks including resource library, archives, etc. to properly contextualize the cultural belongings in your collection.

- Determine which belongings your collections have clear provenance.
- Identify which belongings in your collection require additional research.
- Determine if there are Indigenous belongings in your collection that have not been accessioned.
- Gather documentation and related research materials, including information on the use of the belonging(s).
- Maintain and update detailed research notes. Provenance research may span decades.
- Document any observations of rituals or associated stories which may relate to the collection, including protocols, ceremony or restrictions.
- Share provenance research across museums, academic, heritage, and Indigenous nations networks to gain additional insight.

REPATRIATION

Learn the specific protocols and cultural practices of the Indigenous communities connected to the cultural belongings in your collections.

- Consider culturally appropriate methodologies for cataloguing and documenting.

There may be culturally defined rules for transmitting and controlling knowledge about the collection, which may involve rituals or prohibitions.

Need help? For additional guidance, see “Caring for sacred and culturally sensitive objects”, by Miriam Clavir and John Moses. This resource presents key considerations related to sacred and culturally sensitive belongings in heritage collections. <https://www.canada.ca/en/conservation-institute/services/preventive-conservation/guidelines-collections/caringsacred-culturally-sensitive-objects.html>

Review collections to ensure respectful storage and care.

- Identify the additional research, learning and consultation that must occur to ensure cultural belongings are being cared for in a respectful and proper manner.

Traditional care might include keeping separate or displaying belongings in a traditionally appropriate configuration (for example, with pipe bowls being separated from pipe stems) ensuring that a traditionally appropriate plant or herbal offering is placed inside a display case alongside the cultural belongings or conducting or using the belonging in ceremony.

Review all terminology in your collections to ensure respectful naming, including culturally appropriate terminology and Indigenous names for places, communities, nations and peoples.

Note which areas require additional consultation, either to facilitate research or to determine proper care in accordance with Indigenous protocols and methods.

Assessing Collections – Community Engagement	Notes
<p>Invite Indigenous representatives to participate in the documentation of Indigenous collections, and appropriately compensate them for their time. Go to them if possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Consult as expansively as possible in consultations and information sharing with Indigenous nations and communities to whom your collections could be connected and provide regular updates on repatriation, research, and consultation progress.	
<p>Document all additional information provided by community consultations.</p>	

Making Collections Accessible	Notes
<p>Ensure the documentation and collections information tell the full stories behind collection items, including instances of multiple possibilities of the provenance of the belongings and the history of the provenance research over time.</p>	<p>In some cases, this might require an explanation of the wider historical context, including how, why and by whom items were removed from individuals or countries/communities of origin, and what this reveals about the attitudes of those involved.</p>
<p>Digitize research material and collections images and provide web access to these to the extent that this does not conflict with cultural protocols or restrictions.</p>	
<p>Establish arrangements for visiting cultural belongings, including setting up spaces that allow for privacy, enabling smudging or other ceremonies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Allow for traditional care visits to occur before or after normal museum working hours or during weekends. ○ Consult delegations in advance of their visit to understand the protocols and restrictions related to enabling access to collections and consult in these areas with the communities associated with the collections. 	

REPATRIATION

<p>Identify if changes must be made to enable Indigenous communities to be proactive in repatriation efforts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Ask: If an Indigenous rights holder is looking for information on your collections, is that process onerous?	
<p>Review your repatriation policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Ask: If an Indigenous rights holder is looking to initiate a repatriation request, is there a clearly defined, public process for this?○ Reflect support for repatriation and accessibility in strategic and museum planning documents.	<p>Need help? See the Decolonize Your Repatriation Policies section of the More than Giving Back Toolkit.</p>
<p>Identify changes needed to enable museum staff to be proactive in repatriation efforts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Ask staff what roadblocks they see.	
<p>Publish your repatriation policy.</p>	

Case Study: Pemberton Museum's Road to Repatriation Readiness

This Pemberton Museum case study provides an example of how small museums can make the most of their resources to assist in the return of Indigenous cultural belongings to the Indigenous rights holders.

The Goal

Pemberton Museum sought to repatriate Indigenous belongings in their collection to their rights holders.

The trigger for the repatriation of these belongings was a general call out by Chief Dean Nelson for the return of all Lil'wat cultural belongings in 2019.

Background

In years prior, the museum had decided to prioritize the preparation of their collection for repatriation, which included the development of a repatriation policy and inclusion in the Museum Master Plan.

This began with discussions between the board and the museum curator in order to bring everyone to consensus on the reasons and need to prioritize these efforts. Conversations centred around questions related to why the museum needed to return belongings that had been formally donated and were officially "owned" by the museum? This brought about discussions around the significance of these belongings to communities for what they illustrate of the communities' past, as well as the ethical question of why would you deny the return of belongings of cultural significance to their home? The museum curator viewed repatriation as part of collections management and part of

the natural life or "in and out" of collections. The board agreed: repatriation and the accompanying activities would be prioritized.

Proper Policy

The first step was to put the proper policies in place to support any repatriation activities. The museum curator developed a repatriation policy as part of the broader collections management policy that states decisively: "If the country or group of peoples of an artifact's origin request repatriation, the Museum will make every effort to comply." https://www.pembertonmuseum.org/media/589600/repatriationpolicy_excerptofcollectionmanual.pdf

Good Governance

Museum staff recognized it was not enough to simply have a policy, but that these efforts must also be supported at the governance level. The board passed an official motion of support in 2018, and repatriation activities feature prominently throughout the 20-12 Pemberton Museum Master Plan, notably in the area of "Good Governance." Loans and MOU's, as well as future repatriations are referenced throughout the plan. https://www.pembertonmuseum.org/media/589585/pdmas_masterplan_revision_final-feb232022_fullreport.pdf

Research

As a museum supported by one full time employee and volunteers, the museum required additional support to conduct the research required to assess their collections.

The museum applied for and received funding from Young Canada Works through the Canadian Museums Association (CMA) to hire a summer student. The work of the student was to research into all the Indigenous belongings in the collection, determine their origins, create condition reports, and post them on the museum website. The summer student hired was Lukas Joe, a member of the Lil'wat Nation.

The work began in summer of 2019, with the research phase lasting through the fall. The summer student not only helped to update reference list in collections (names of nations, communities, places etc.), but also helped better understand the collection and to help garner additional information from the communities.

At the conclusion of the research on the collection, a total of sixty-four registered items were identified as Indigenous, with seven connected to Lil'wat.

They also found seven additional items lacking clear provenance that have since been connected to Lil'wat with the assistance of Johnny Jones with the Lil'wat Lands and Resources office.

To see the online database of Indigenous items at the Pemberton Museum visit pembertonmuseum.org/collections/objects/.

The Repatriation

The museum responded by writing a letter to all the local Indigenous Nations informing them of the work identifying Indigenous belongings in their collection. The museum indicated they were in a position to effectively repatriate these items. A copy of the repatriation policy was included in the letter.

Chief Dean of Lil'wat requested return of the archaeological items and this was done via Johnny Jones.

The repatriations took place in November of 2019.

The Context

The museum credits the closeness of the communities and pre-existing relationships for ability to do this work.

Early initiatives at the museum brought Indigenous communities into the museum since the 1980s. In general, the Pemberton, Mt. Currie, Lil'wat and the Stl'alt'imx Nation had close community ties.

At the museum, relationship-building with First Peoples was a founding principle since the beginning. The museum's first curator wrote a community history book that included oral histories collected from local Indigenous Nations. The board saw this as carrying on these relationship-building initiatives.

Because the museum had developed relationships and information sharing with the Lil'wat and other nations, a relationship was developed between Lil'wat Cultural

REPATRIATION

Resource technician Johnny Jones and museum curator Niki Madigan, which led to easy exchange of information on both sides.

Johnny Jones also built a bridge to others within neighbouring Indigenous Nations to come to the museum, visit, and view the collection for their potential belongings.

Pemberton Museums sees itself as a small community museum focused on community engagement. Their work continues with Lil'wat on centring these perspectives in future museum exhibit content.

No Single Solution

While the end goal is to repatriate and give back items, there is not a direct route or single solution. For some, the desired end point may be the transfer of ownership back to the Indigenous nations while the museum remains co-stewards, as one example.

Key Learnings

- All roads begin with building the foundation of relationships and reciprocity.
- Repatriation must be guided by policies and supported at the governance level.
- Research must include continual collections assessment.

- You must have a willingness to be flexible and patient for the time it takes.
- Repatriation work requires that the work be prioritized by the institution at a financial level.

End Note

With town of Lytton, BC destroyed by wildfires in 2021, the town's museum collection was also devastated. Councillor John Haugen of the Lytton Nation spoke publicly about the total loss of basket collection and was saddened that the Lytton Nation youth would no longer be able to see these traditional arts.

A basket belonging to the Lytton Nation was found in the Pemberton Museum collection, and the curator reached out to them to know that this important cultural belonging was in the collection. John Haugen was able to provide new information on the provenance of the basket. Currently, the Pemberton Museum will remain steward while recognizing ownership of basket belongs to Lytton Nation. These activities were made possible because the museum had properly assessed and prepared their collections.

For the new information provided by Lytton Nation's John Haugen, see: <https://www.pembertonmuseum.org/collections/objects/collins-mrs-george/large-cedar-root-basket/>

Crowd Sourced Solutions

Taking Belongings on the Road

If you have Indigenous belongings in your collection, communities with ties to these belongings can provide information on these that you will not have access to as a museum.

In the effort to move beyond museum walls, museums take these belongings on the road to share their collections and gather information about them. Even if you do not need specific information on belongings, taking them out to communities makes them more accessible to Indigenous communities who would not typically be able to access museum collections in this way.

When requesting Indigenous communities to participate in the documentation of Indigenous collections, go to the communities as much as possible. Consider linking this activity to a planned gathering. Compensate all those who participate for their time.

Building Research Sharing Networks

If you have Indigenous belongings or ancestors in your collections without clear provenance, consider reaching out to other museums or research experts who may have knowledge of this area.

Some small museums are creating research networks to come together to assess their collections and share information.

Research networks can be built between GLAM and beyond. For example, seek out historians who are experts in the historical area, time period, or Indigenous Nations with possible connections to the collection. Archivists, librarians, archaeologists, historical societies or other heritage organizations are other great connections to suggest additional avenues for research.



Engagement and Partnership

Where to Begin When There Is Only One

As stated in the *Moved to Action* Standards for Museums, engagement and partnerships with Indigenous Nations must centre and support the needs and interests of Indigenous communities as identified by those communities, while at the same time take the onus off Indigenous partners and communities. This means that in all areas of the institution, museums need to think beyond the simple engagement and consultation framework that has come to be the standard approach for these partnerships. Of course, this requires de-prioritizing institutional timelines and respecting the amount of time relationship building takes on the part of the community, as Indigenous community members are often tasked with labour involved in relationship building.

Remember, engagement is a starting point and not the end goal for building partnerships with Indigenous communities and Nations. For small museums who often lack resources and staff capacity, engagement and relationship building must be guided by a long-term plan to ensure these activities are properly resourced, institutionally anchored, and respectfully maintained. This will help ensure that requests for engagement come with adequate knowledge, resources, and are not simply “one-offs” or tokenistic.

The following guide is meant to help you begin to develop a long-term strategy for partnership engagement in instances where there’s only one or a handful of museum staff to do this work. It includes an engagement strategy development worksheet, tips for building partner and network supports, suggested next steps for strategic planning, as well as planning resources for summer student and volunteer support.



Is it Tokenism?

Does it only benefit the museum?

Is it to prevent criticism?

Is it a one-time request without a pre-existing relationship?

Do you want them to teach you something without taking steps to learn yourself?

Is it to look like a good ally or showcase the museums’ reconciliation activities?

Is it a pre-formulated plan or request?

Where to Begin Where There Is Only One Worksheet

Overview

Where to Begin Where There Is Only One Worksheet

This self-serve guide will help small museum professionals develop a whole-of-museum strategy for engagement and consultation with Indigenous communities.

Note that this worksheet is not meant to be completed in one sitting. We recommend completing each section over a longer period of time to give time for proper reflection and preparation.

Objectives

Develop an understanding of interconnections between engagement areas and ways these can be synthesized/connected.

Critical assessment of the full scope expectations and capacity to initiate Indigenous engagement.

Develop a community-centred engagement plan that considers how to acknowledge and protect Indigenous intellectual property, uses respectful terminology, considers protocols, develops a compensation plan and budgetary requirement and assesses the long-term partnership capacity of the museum.

Develop a list of whole-of-institution engagement needs and areas requiring pre-learning/preparation.

To Start

Reading

Towards Braiding resource by Elwood Jimmy, Vanessa Andreotti, Sharon Stein.

New Standards for Museums and the Engagement section of the Moved to Action report.

Reflections

- How can your museum conduct engagement and partnerships with Indigenous Peoples in a way that centres and supports them?
- How can your museum critically assess its intentions for the engagement?
- How can your museum ensure there is capacity and plan for the long term?
- How can your museum provide necessary resources to support and facilitate the work?

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p>FAMILIARIZE</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ List of engagement areas and ways these can be connected ○ Understanding of full scope of expectations for engagement requests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the areas in your museum that you think would benefit from Indigenous contributions or leadership? ○ How are these areas connected? Eg. through staff, physical spaces used, impact, etc. ○ Record a full list of these potential requests. 	

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p>REVIEW</p> <p>Define your expectations for ways Indigenous perspectives will inform the work you identified in the previous section.</p> <p>Outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Critical assessment of expectations and capacity to initiate Indigenous engagement 	<p>Review the <i>Towards Braiding</i> resource by Elwood Jimmy, Vanessa Andreotti, and Sharon Stein before commencing the session and make use of the additional prompts provided in the resources. https://decolonialfuturesnet.files.wordpress.com/2019/02/towards-braiding-handout-1.pdf</p> <p>Before continuing onto the next section, consider the following excerpt from the <i>Towards Braiding</i> resource:</p> <p><i>If you find yourself in a position to “include” Indigenous peoples and perspectives in your organization, then there are many practical, ethical, and educational dimensions and implications to consider before and while doing so. It is important to consider how your invitation might end up reproducing harmful patterns of relationship and representation, even if your intention is to do just the opposite. Think through your expectations, your intentions, and the impact of your choices. Think where your institutional structures must first change to support meaningful, long-term, nation-to-institution partnerships. (from Towards Braiding, link above).</i></p>	

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
	<p>Reflect on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the intended outcomes of the engagement? <p>Reflect on the motivations behind the full list of your requests.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What do you expect Indigenous perspectives to do for you? ○ What are the possible impacts of your engagement proposal? ○ How might your engagement activities reproduce harmful patterns of relationship and representation? <p>For example, are you trying to “fix” or get sign-off on a pre-existing exhibit? Making the request to secure funding or fulfill a grant requirement? Is the request being made to showcase the decolonizing initiatives of the museum rather than acting on priorities identified by the Indigenous partners?</p>	

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p>EXPLORE</p> <p>Indigenous-Led & Community-Responsive</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Strategy for community-led engagement 	<p>Identify the extent to which the areas you have identified could fulfill community needs.</p> <p>Identify ways that community needs will be identified and prioritized.</p> <p>Identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What commitments can you make to the community to ensure their input will be meaningfully accommodated? ○ How capable is your museum to support or accommodate requests made by communities in your planned or proposed engagements? ○ Are you coming with a preformulated plan or allowing space for the community to meaningfully guide the work, including the option to say no? ○ What is your plan and response if the community is unresponsive or denies your request? <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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? 	

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p><i>Think Beyond Museum Walls</i></p> <p>Outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community-centred engagement plan 	<p>Once you have meaningfully considered the expectations and institutional operations that are driving and shaping your engagement plans, consider how engagement activities can occur outside of the museum.</p> <p>Identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are some opportunities for the museum to go out to the community in conjunction with other activities that answer community needs or in support of community events? 	

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p><i>Respecting Indigenous Authority and Intellectual Property</i></p> <p>Outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Plan to acknowledge and protect Indigenous intellectual property 	<p>Identify the ways your engagement plan and any outcomes and activities will acknowledge and respect Indigenous authority.</p> <p>Identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How will these perspectives be given priority in your museum? ○ How will your engagement plan and any outcomes and activities acknowledge, respect, recognize and protect Indigenous intellectual property? 	

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p><i>Respectful Terminology and Language</i></p> <p>Outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Plan to use respectful terminology 	<p>Identify what work needs to occur to ensure proper and respect use of Indigenous names and terminology throughout the museum, including research and consultation.</p> <p>Identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How have you put methods in place to ensure these are reflected at all levels of your museum? ○ Do you have a funded strategy for consulting on Indigenous language use and translation? <p>Begin by visiting the websites of the nations or communities you wish to engage with. Take note of how they refer to themselves and their territories. Read any historical information they provide.</p>	

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p><i>Honouring Protocols</i></p> <p>Outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Protocol Awareness 	<p>Identify any protocols that might be required in conducting your engagement activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Do you know the specific community protocols and practices related to engagement requests? ○ Are you aware of the governance structure of the Indigenous community (traditional and contemporary)? 	

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p>Re-Evaluating Compensation</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Development of compensation plan and budgetary requirements 	<p>Identify and review all costs involved in the long-term partnership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Are there hidden costs and labour involved in your invitation to engage? ○ How will the community be consulted on how they would like to be compensated for their participation, including fees/rates, timing for payment, and method of payment? ○ Are there opportunities to consolidate these engagement activities into a paid position (community coordinator or liaison)? 	

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p><i>Non-Extractive Partnerships</i></p> <p>Outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Assessment of long-term partnership capacity 	<p>Reflect on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Where must your institutional structures first change to support meaningful, long-term, nation-to-museum partnerships? <p>Identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is your museum’s ability to maintain a long-term nation-to-museum partnerships? ○ How will capacity be left in the Indigenous community through your engagement and partnership? ○ What measures can you put in place to ensure that your requests do not create additional burdens for Indigenous partners? ○ What systems can you put in place to ensure the partnerships are maintained beyond individual staff (ie. summer students & volunteers)? ○ What are some possible obstacles to achieving this? ○ Who will need to be involved in a supervisory and leadership role to ensure that the long term relationship are maintained? 	

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What strategies must your museum develop to 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.) ○ What other museum supports must be put in place? <p><i>(ie. Strategic planning, building services to accommodate smudging, board support for budgetary matters)</i></p>	

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p>Self-reflection</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Plan for institutional learning 	<p>Reflect on the request for engagement that you hope to initiate. Is there knowledge you need to ensure this work is happening in a cultural safe and responsive manner?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Must your institutional structures first change to support meaningful, long-term, nation-to-museum partnerships? ○ What kind of learning and preparation does the museum need to do? <p>See <i>Pre-Engagement Learning Checklist</i> for assistance.</p>	

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p><i>Consolidating an Approach</i></p> <p>Outcome:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ List of whole-of-museum engagement needs and areas requiring pre-learning/preparation 	<p>Now that you understand your whole-of-museum scope for engagement requests and have reflected on the intentions regarding engagement, return to your list of engagement areas and activities.</p> <p>As a group, discuss how these can be refined and consolidated.</p> <p>See <i>Identifying Partners for an Associated Engagement Strategy</i> for additional support.</p>	
<p>ASSEMBLE</p>	<p>Now that you have considered and analyzed options for a museum-wide engagement strategy, assemble and review each area.</p> <p>See the <i>Pre-Engagement Plan Checklist</i> for a framework.</p>	

Crowd-Sourced Solutions

Building Engagement Networks

Indigenous communities field many requests for engagement and partnership, particularly those focused on showcasing the reconciliation efforts of institutions and organizations.

One way to reduce overlap in engagement requests made to communities is to first build partner engagement networks. These

networks can be comprised of other museums in your area or other organizations. We heard of examples where the local museum partnered with the town administration and others in the region to form a reconciliation network. This partner network has the goal to develop and synthesize partnership and engagement requests to the local

Indigenous nations. It also provides peer support within the network amongst the partner groups to facilitate information sharing and sharing of best practices to act as a means of holding each other accountable.





Governance

The Work of Individuals, Together

Supporting Indigenous self-determination at the governance level of your museum means establishing Indigenous advisory for your museum at the level of authoritative guidance. This means weaving together systems of governance to give Indigenous advisors clear and decisive decision-making power. This may take the form of having Indigenous board members or a separate advisory council. No matter what form this governance advisory takes, develop meaningful Indigenous governance with decision-making authority, not simply advisory bodies or one-time project committees, to make space for and involve Indigenous leadership in a manner that is appropriate for the museum. Recognizing that for small museums this may not be immediately achievable, developing authoritative Indigenous guidance must be part of a longer-term strategy.

Approaching governance in this way also means sharing authority. Leadership in this case is not about taking charge but requires setting an example and making space for those with authority and expertise in Indigenous governance to be heard. It requires taking cultural safety and allegations of harm seriously. It means not broadcasting or showcasing reconciliation and UNDRIP implementation work as “achievements,” but understanding that this is work that requires long-term commitment.

This workbook provides keys steps to take to reassess and ready your museum governance to make space for Indigenous governance and advisory.

Getting Your Board on Board

Museum executives and board members must take a leadership role in self-educating on Indigenous matters while recognizing the limits of their contribution. Preparing your museum board for the broader discussion on board reassessment to plan for UNDRIP implementation may require some initial communications and discussion on why this is important. Resources to assist in these communications are below.

- Moved to Action: New Standards for Implementing UNDRIP in Museums Briefing Document
- UNDRIP in Cultural Heritage Briefing Document
- Equity Indicators Framework

Reassessing Your Governance Worksheet

Overview

Reassessing Your Governance

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

Estimated time: Divided into approximately one-hour sessions, this workbook should take approximately six sessions to complete.

This workbook contains:

- Board Worksheets (DOCX)
- Printable Session Agenda (DOCX)
- Session Slides (PPT)
- Preparing Strategic Plans: Core Considerations (PDF)
- Recommended Resources (PDF)

Reassessing Your Governance: Board Workbook

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 the workbook

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: Standards, Historical Considerations and Governance Sections

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 a museum?
- What does activating Indigenous authority in museums look like to you?

Reassessing Your Governance

Board Workbook Session #1

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p>SET THE TONE</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>Understanding of participant expectations for the session.</p>	<p>Introductions Review agenda What do participants hope to gain or contribute? Review the intended objectives for this session.</p> <p>Check:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How is the discussion being recorded? ○ Participants have reviewed the Standards, Historical Considerations and the Governance Section of the Moved to Action report. 	
<p>FAMILIARIZE</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>Identify the expectations and goals for decolonization and Indigenous governance in your museum.</p>	<p>Individually, as someone who represents an institution, reflect on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are your intentions for including Indigenous governance in your museum? ○ What are the ways you envision this being successful? <p>As a group, discuss your answers to the above prompts.</p> <p>Following this, answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are your overall goals for reconciliation, decolonizing, and supporting Indigenous-led self-determination as an institution? <p>List these together as a group.</p>	

Reassessing Your Governance

Board Workbook Session #2

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p>REVIEW</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>Define your and expectations for ways Indigenous perspectives will inform the governance of your institution.</p> <p>Critical assessment of expectations and capacity to initiate Indigenous advisory and governance.</p>	<p>Individually, reflect on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the intended outcomes of making space for Indigenous governance? ○ Are these different from the decolonial goals identified earlier? Why or why not? <p>Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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? <p>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?</p>	

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p>EXPLORE</p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>Internal reflection on how colonial power systems are replicated in museum leadership and governance.</p>	<p>Individually, identify the underlying assumptions of your museum’s goals and expectations for Indigenous governance.</p> <p>For example, to what extent has your discussion focused on fulfilling museum needs or are defined by institutional expectations (timelines, governance structure, etc.)</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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? <p>As a group, discuss ways that these ideas or requests will be identified and prioritized.</p> <p>Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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? 	

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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? <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 10px; padding: 10px; margin-top: 20px;"> <p>Review the <i>Towards Braiding</i> resource by Elwood Jimmy, Vanessa Andreotti, Sharon Stein for additional guidance on reproducing harmful patterns of relationship and representation.</p> <p>https://decolonialfuturesnet.files.wordpress.com/2019/02/towards-braiding-handout-1.pdf</p> </div>	

Reassessing Your Governance

Board Workbook Session #3

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p><i>Reassessing Authority & Humility</i></p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>Learn why committing to humility is central to making space for meaningful Indigenous governance.</p>	<p>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 <i>Moved to Action</i> report: “We are working toward a future of humbleness and restraint.”</p> <p>As a group, discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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? 	
<p><i>Defining Institutional Accountability</i></p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>Critical reflection on assumptions, biases, and systemic barriers in your museum governance structures.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>As a group, discuss your initial responses to the “Institutional Accountability” section of the toolkit.</p>	

Reassessing Your Governance

Board Workbook Session #4

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p><i>Institutional investment</i></p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>Common understanding that museums must relinquish colonial privilege and accept that Indigenous communities and nations have the expertise and the <i>right</i> to lead and define governance processes, priorities and outcomes in museums.</p>	<p>As a group, identify the ways your institution will invest in making space for Indigenous authority.</p> <p>Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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 the 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 a 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? 	

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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-by-step 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? <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; border-radius: 15px; background-color: #f0f0f0; padding: 10px; margin-top: 20px;"> <p>*Note that this is PLURAL—meaningful governance means the incorporation of multiple Indigenous voices and perspectives at the table.</p> </div>	

Reassessing Your Governance

Board Workbook Session #5

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p><i>Re-Evaluating Compensation</i></p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>Development of compensation plan and budgetary requirements</p>	<p>As a group, identify and review all costs involved in the long-term partnership.</p> <p>Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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? 	
<p><i>Honouring Protocols</i></p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>Nation-specific protocol awareness</p>	<p>As a group, discuss any protocols that might be required in conducting your governance activities.</p> <p>Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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)? 	

Reassessing Your Governance

Board Workbook Session #6

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes
<p><i>Institution Self-reflection</i></p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>As a group, further reflect on the institutional barriers that may inhibit this work from happening in a cultural safe and anti-colonial manner.</p> <p>As a group, discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What steps need to be taken to ensure anti-oppressive 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 anti-colonial policies, protocols or practices? ○ What additional learning needs to happen to identify or break down colonial barriers? 	
<p><i>Consolidating an Approach</i></p> <p>Outcome:</p> <p>Build common understanding of what we mean by shared authority and authoritative governance.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>As a group, discuss how these goals have changed based on this session.</p>	

Description and Desired Outcomes	Reflections and Questions	Your notes	
ASSEMBLE	Now that you have considered and analyzed options for approaches for making space for Indigenous governance, discuss how these may be assembled into strategic planning processes.		



Operations

Personal Readiness is Museum Readiness

Supporting Indigenous self-determination in small museum operations means all staff must take on responsibility for implementing these principles into your museum. This includes ensuring that there are integrated governance and structural plans in place to ensure this work carries through all levels of the museum operations, no matter who is working at the museum.

At the small museums level, we cannot rely on others to fill in knowledge gaps required to create spaces for Indigenous collaborators, partners, and visitors. Small museums cannot hire specific staff to take on the responsibilities of implementing UNDRIP. UNDRIP competencies and additional knowledge on anti-racism, anti-bias training, and awareness of the histories and cultures of the Indigenous Nations in your region fall to everyone.

We have heard this work is often relegated to short term employees or those in positions of high turn-over. As a result, when the person responsible for supporting Indigenous self-determination in the museum is gone, the work ends with them. Therefore, operations and governance areas must both uphold these responsibilities together to ensure their longevity, even with staff changes.

Creating spaces for Indigenous collaborators, partners, and visitors means everyone in small museums must take on the responsibility of personal and institutional preparation and readiness.



our Indigenous partners say 'nothing about us without us'

Nothing About Us Without Us

"Nothing about us without us" is a slogan that has long stood for calls for self-governance, with origins going back to the development of Central European democracy in the 16th century. It was popularized by disability rights activists and academics in the 1990s.

The term is meant to assert the right of people to be directly involved in decision making processes that represent them. This term has been adopted by Indigenous people often in reference to asserting their right to authority and control over their cultural heritage, including cultural objects, intangible heritage, intellectual property, and representations and interpretations of their history, culture, and traditional knowledge. It was frequently shared throughout engagement sessions for the

CMA Reconciliation Program.

"Nothing About Us Without Us" applies to all areas of museum operations and governance in relation to making space for Indigenous self-determination.

Building Museum Readiness Worksheet

This worksheet will guide you through some key considerations for building museum readiness in the area of Operations. It is by no means comprehensive but is meant to assist you in understanding where to begin. Please note this intersects with the governance section in the areas of assessing institutional readiness.

Activity	Notes
<p>Has your institution adopted or are you in the process of adopting the Truth and Reconciliation's Calls to Action and UNDRIP?</p> <p>Define where your operational supports for Indigenous self-determination and UNDRIP are reflected in your policies.</p>	
<p>Identify how your museum supports your local Indigenous communities. For example, through outreach programs, employment opportunities, waving entrance fees, etc.</p>	
<p>Define how space for Indigenous youth and Elders can be made museum operations.</p>	
<p>Define how will you ensure this identifies and prioritizes their needs as part of these initiatives? (For example, 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, compensating youth and Elders).</p>	

OPERATIONS

Activity	Notes
Define how you have created appropriate feedback channels for critique, feedback and accountability.	
Identify where and how anti-racism and anti-bias training will be made available to all staff.	
Identify how museum programming with Indigenous content has been defined in consultation with relevant Indigenous communities.	
Identify safer spaces planning for programming that includes culturally sensitive Indigenous content, including access to counselling services as appropriate.	
Define how you will ensure that museum fundraising initiatives will not be counter to the priorities and concerns of Indigenous partners and communities in your area.	
Define the ways that responsibilities for establishing and maintaining the long-term partnerships required to make spaces for Indigenous collaborators, partners, and visitors rest with museum management and governance?	

Activity	Notes
<p>Identify how have you ensured summer students and volunteers are not charged with the responsibility of providing the direction on implementing UNDRIP in museums?</p> <p>See the Indigenous Projects Checklist below for additional guidance.</p>	
<p>If you are seeking to hire Indigenous staff, what considerations have to given to ensure the position is non-tokenising and not asking people to repeat their trauma, but is empowering and providing ownership and long-term capacity building for the individual?</p>	
<p>Define how you will keep records of all initiatives to ensure their institutional memory lives beyond your position.</p>	

Indigenous Projects Checklist

Knowing that many small museums rely on summer staff to conduct work supporting Indigenous initiatives in museums, use this checklist to guide planning for Indigenous initiatives in your museum.

Activity	Notes
<p>Job Overview</p> <p>Job Title: Is there a justification for the entire project in the description or does the application simply insert “Indigenous” in the title?</p>	
<p>Project and Objectives</p> <p>Are the project and job objectives linked to the institution’s strategic plan and related policies?</p> <p>Are the project objectives linked to those of an Indigenous community, with whom current relationships exist and are demonstrated?</p> <p>Are the objectives linked to the principles of UNDRIP and the TRC Calls to Action?</p> <p>Are the objectives are linked to a specific community or Indigenous nation?</p> <p>Proper recruitment: demonstrate relationships to communities for candidates and overall project.</p>	

Activity	Notes
<p>Define how will you ensure this identifies and prioritizes their needs as part of these initiatives? (For example, 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, compensating youth and Elders)</p>	
<p>Measurable outcomes</p> <p>If the outcomes are related to decolonization, is the intern solely responsible for these activities?</p> <p>Does the applicant describe the outcomes in sufficient detail?</p> <p>Does the applicant demonstrate how the Indigenous initiatives will be supported within the institution, both short and long-term?</p>	
<p>Description of tasks</p> <p>Is there an indication of an existing community relationship?</p> <p>If the tasks reference Elder, knowledge keeper, or community advisory, are there indications in the budget that honorariums will be provided?</p> <p>Is the intern being relied upon to start relationships, initiate new projects, or develop new policies?</p> <p>Is the intern being relied upon to provide content or ensure accuracy of Indigenous content without the support of an Advisory group or broader engagement with a partner Indigenous community?</p>	

Activity	Notes
<p>Has the institution indicated that there are future capacity plans to support these tasks in longer term projects and outcomes?</p>	
<p>Work plan</p> <p>Are the timelines for the activities considered community-directed or developed in consultation with Indigenous partners?</p>	
<p>Employability skills to be gained (marketable skills)</p> <p>If the skills reference Indigenous knowledge capacity (ie. Language skills, working with Elders, oral history), are the resources to gain these skills provided through the duration of this application?</p>	
<p>Candidate profile</p> <p>If seeking an Indigenous candidate, are there specific community connections, experience, knowledge that they are seeking to have in the candidate?</p> <p>Is there an indication of flexibility in equivalencies for community relationships, Indigenous knowledge, etc (ie. Will they consider a combination of experience and education)?</p>	

Activity	Notes
<p>Are the skills defined over-prescribed in the case of applications seeking Indigenous candidates?</p> <p>Refer to the CMA's Becoming Better Employers toolkit</p>	
<p>Orientation and training</p> <p>Does the training component of the work plan include training for Indigenous-specific cultural awareness, including bias awareness, anti-racism training?</p> <p>Are required training funded by the employer? (ie. Criminal records checks, First Aid, etc)</p>	
<p>Supervision</p> <p>Are there adequate supports at a leadership level for cultural sensitivity, cultural safety, protocols, anti-racism, bias training to avoid this being placed on the intern?</p> <p>Is there an indication of HR processes outside of the direct supervisor for interns to voice concerns over tokenism, racism, and other structural barriers that may impact their role?</p> <p>Has the employer identified an individual with the necessary skillset and similar lived experience to help mentor and support an emerging Indigenous professional?</p>	

Activity	Notes
<p>If an Indigenous candidate is hired for their cultural competencies, how will they be supported in the workplace?</p>	
<p>Job Poster</p> <p>Does the equity statement reference supporting Indigenous applicants and supported through other areas?</p> <p>Does the job description go beyond simply including the word “Indigenous” in the job title?</p> <p>Do references to Indigenous knowledge and community relationships go beyond referencing these as “additional competencies”?</p> <p>For postings that are meant to attract Indigenous candidates, is this language woven throughout the job description to include all expanded equivalencies in relation to education (formal and through other modes of learning) and experience?</p> <p>Are the applicants specific about what type of qualifications they are looking for, be this traditional knowledge from a specific Indigenous Nation, community connections, capacity to maintain long-term relationships, language skills, or Indigenous museology, to name a few?</p>	