



HeritageBC



[heritagebc.ca](http://heritagebc.ca)

# Setting the Bar

A GUIDE TO ACHIEVE NEW STANDARDS FOR  
RECONCILIATION WITHIN THE HERITAGE SECTOR

## 1. HERITAGE AND RECONCILIATION PLEDGE

**ACTION:** In the spirit of redress and reconciliation and in acknowledging and accepting cultural diversity, adopt the Heritage and Reconciliation Pledge with a board motion.

## 2. Acknowledging Land and People

**ACTION:** Reflecting on the places where we reside and work and respecting all peoples and their experiences, prepare and implement a land acknowledgement so that your organization recognizes Indigenous traditions and ties to the land. This will help build understanding about our relationships and responsibilities to the Indigenous people and lands where we live and work.

## 3. Celebrating Days of Recognition and Commemoration

**ACTION:** Commit to incorporate National Indigenous Peoples Day, treaty days, cultural days, and other days of cultural significance into your programming and activities.

## 4. With a Commitment to Learn

**ACTION:** Recognizing that learning is life-long, and reconciliation is ongoing, commit to continuing education and training related to intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

## 5. Committing to Strategic Organizational Diversity

**ACTION:** Develop and implement an intentional strategy to diversify your staff, board of directors and volunteers. Seek to broaden this diversity at all levels of your organization.

## 6. A Mission: Making Room for Reconciliation

**ACTION:** Review your organization's mission, programs and activities to examine the unintended biases, oversights, and roadblocks.

## 7. Possession, Interpretation, Repatriation and Cultural Care

**ACTION:** Recognizing a responsibility to the cultures that are represented in collections, heritage organizations will reflect on and resolve issues of possession, interpretation and repatriation with a commitment to reconcile.

## 8. Shared Decision Making

**ACTION:** Work with Indigenous peoples in developing the cultural significance of the archaeological and/or historic site and incorporating intangible cultural heritage values and information; establish and enhance relational versus transactional connections through development and implementation of shared decision-making processes addressing intangible cultural heritage.

## 9. Statements of Significance and other heritage planning documents

### **ACTIONS:**

- We will work with Indigenous cultural experts when preparing a Statement of Significance and other heritage planning documents.
- We will re-write existing Statements of Significance and other heritage planning documents to include Indigenous perspectives, working with an Indigenous cultural expert.

## 10. Heritage Conservation Tools, Local Government Act

- We acknowledge that access to, protection of, and benefits from one's own heritage need to be recognized as basic human rights and we recognize heritage should be managed with or by the community.
- We recognize Western ways describing and recognizing heritage are not superior and can be improved upon and can be adapted to reflect a broader worldview.
- We recognize that the recognition and conservation of heritage should include shared decision-making, collaboration, delegation of authority and recognition of Indigenous worldviews. Indigenous ways of viewing the past, history and heritage are legitimate ways of seeing.
- We recognize the need for relationship building with Indigenous peoples at a local level, as well as the consultation with Indigenous cultural experts and knowledge keepers.

# Setting the Bar: A Guide to Achieve New Standards for Reconciliation within the Heritage Sector

Understanding heritage as the human imprint on the earth, Heritage BC recognizes that heritage professionals, volunteers and enthusiasts must fully commit to learning about and respecting the diversity and inclusivity of experiences and perspectives that form our local and provincial heritage.

Heritage BC recognizes that the heritage field has its roots in the Western, colonial systems of knowledge and practice, which have been imposed upon other cultures and peoples. Today, there is a movement to acknowledge with humility the harm that this has caused and to acknowledge the need for redress.

Heritage BC also recognizes reconciliation will not be achieved through a single process, but it requires an ongoing commitment to make things better, and to be accountable, through a range of actions that are carefully developed according to the needs and circumstances of each situation.

“Setting the Bar” offers a set of ten standards and calls to action to drive heritage organizations forward, beyond conversation, to take concrete, measurable action. This will prompt each one of us to act and to reframe the embedded systems and challenge the all-too-familiar contexts of our work. Each action can be easily achieved with a willingness to be open to ideas and perspectives, as well as a willingness for self-reflection and the resolve for quantifiable improvement.

## A note about “Setting the Bar”

Created in 2021 with the support of an extraordinary group of advisors, this document is part of Heritage BC’s commitment to support BC’s heritage sector’s efforts toward redress and reconciliation and expanded recognition of cultural heritage of Indigenous and culturally diverse peoples.

We recognize that reconciliation will not be accomplished through a single process and there are countless other actions and pathways. The 10 actions that make up “Setting the Bar” can be undertaken in any order.

This is a ‘living’ document that will be updated, improved and expanded through experience and advice.

Heritage BC is indebted to those who took time to share their expertise and advice.

- Janice Alpine: Ktunaxa Nation Council, Tourism Engagement/Business Development Officer
- Angie Bain, Researcher, Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs; Director, Heritage BC
- Marsha ‘K’wa’x’i’latl’ Dufresne: Director, Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark
- Sharanjit Kaur Sandhra: PhD Candidate, History, UBC; Co-Curator, Sikh Heritage Museum, National Historic Site Gur Sikh Temple
- Vincent Kwan: City of Vancouver (formerly with the Dr. Sun Yat Sen Classical Chinese Gardens); Director, Heritage BC
- Silvia Mangué: Founder and Manager, Kulea Culture; President, BC Black History Awareness Society
- Kamala Todd: Adjunct Professor, Urban Studies SFU and UBC SCARP; Community Planner; Filmmaker

Heritage BC also thanks BC Museums Association for its support and advice.

**The following are those actions that are well within the capabilities of all heritage organizations and that, collectively, will result in an impactful difference.**

**“Diversity is what makes us different, but inclusion is what makes us strong.”**

– ADVISOR TO THE PROJECT

# 1

## HERITAGE AND RECONCILIATION PLEDGE

**ACTION:** In the spirit of redress and reconciliation and in acknowledging and accepting cultural diversity, adopt the Heritage and Reconciliation Pledge with a board motion.

The Heritage and Reconciliation Pledge is a fundamental way for your organization to declare its spirit of reconciliation with and acknowledgement of Indigenous and culturally diverse peoples and communities.

Individually and as an organization, reflect on the contents of this Pledge and consider the intentions of the statements and what they mean to your organization and to the heritage sector. Consider how the statements will positively influence your organization's relationship with and responsibility to your community and to the lands where you live and work.

All actions are based on the foundation of equitable relationships built on sincerity, truthfulness, openness, transparency, and reliability. The dynamics of relationships are delicate and constantly shifting, requiring us to be constantly monitoring, learning and modifying. Good relationship building never stops.

Seek out the support of staff at the Tribal council or Community Band/ Administration office in your area. Note, not all of these will be able to offer public information, as they may focus on providing services to their own members. A strong relationship can result from listening, conversing and showing respect.

If a statement poses challenges to your organization, use the Pledge as a starting point to talk with people in your area. With a willingness to listen, a curiosity to ask, and an openness to learn, this presents a great opportunity to understand other perspectives and experiences and to clarify your organization's values.

The Pledge's statements are intentionally broad so that they may serve a range of organizations and situations. To 'operationalize' the Pledge, it will be important to consider strategies - the actions - so that your organization is actively and measurably working toward reconciliation. The remainder of the *Setting the Bar: A Guide to Achieve New Standards for Reconciliation within the Heritage Sector* provides numerous ways for your organization to explore achievable and impactful strategies.

After a thoughtful discussion, the board of directors will approve the Pledge with a motion. You can then share this important step with your membership and community. Put the Pledge on your website, share it at meetings, and include it in operational reports.

Approving the Pledge also provides an opportunity to build relationships with your community by including Indigenous and cultural leaders to witness the signing of the Pledge. The cultural role of a witness should not be underestimated. It signals that you are accountable and want to start things off in the right way.

Keep in mind that the Pledge is not an end goal – it is the beginning of your important work.

Be proud of your first step and be a leader. This is important work towards more equitable future and stories about our society and lands.

### Heritage and Reconciliation Pledge

In the spirit of reconciliation and in acknowledging and accepting the cultural diversity of our community and Province, [your organization] pledges to:

- Recognize heritage as the representation of all people and cultures and practice heritage as “the tangible and intangible record of human imprint on the world.” (The State of Heritage)
- Establish and maintain mutually respectful, responsible and welcoming relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples – the foundation of reconciliation.
- Acknowledge the harm that has been inflicted on Indigenous and other marginalized communities and commit to action that will change behaviours and repair relations.
- Actively learn more about Indigenous Peoples, cultural diversity, Canada’s history of colonization, and to consider the influences, both positive and negative, our organization has on others as we work toward affirmative change.
- Ensure employment opportunities are open to Indigenous and culturally diverse candidates; ensure career development opportunities are equitably available to all staff members; commit to fair compensation for Indigenous and culturally diverse people.
- Create a working environment that is inclusive, welcoming and safe for Indigenous employees and people of all cultural backgrounds. The workplace environment will promote healing and recovery rather than continue practices and perpetuate conditions that inadvertently re-traumatize.
- Apply the principle “nothing about us, without us” as we involve people whose culture and stories we may wish to include in the development of our programs.
  - We will consider ways to best engage and communicate with others, respecting that Indigenous communities each have their own protocols and decision-making processes. Decisions are made through a shared process that involves providing capacity for all parties to participate from preplanning stages to the achievement of outcomes.

- We will be open to evaluating programs and collections to invite new interpretations, relationships, and contexts.
- We will work toward improving access to our programs and to our organization.
- We will move beyond consultation to decision-making roles.
- Commit to generating positive and lasting change as individuals for our organization and leaders for our community.
- Support and engage in public education and advocacy, and practice respect, responsibility, and reciprocity. We believe we should be accountable for our words and actions and we will be humble in our learning and listening.
- Make reconciliation and cultural equity part of our strategic direction, so that we will continue to seek new opportunities for training, education, networking and communication, and self-evaluation. Our goals and timelines will be transparent, taking into account the circumstances of those with whom we work and adjusting as needed.
- Ensure Indigenous Peoples and cultural group(s) are involved in the formation of strategies and programs that affect these groups.
- Recognize that the First Peoples of Canada are experts on their own histories and culture, that they have rich knowledge and heritage traditions, and they have rights to express and protect their heritage in their own ways.

We commit to ongoing positive and concrete steps as a catalyst for the increased awareness of the meaning and potential of reconciliation. We recognize we must be part of a collective effort to maintain momentum and we must continually reflect on the places where we reside and work, always respecting the diversity of cultures and experiences that form the richness of our provincial heritage.

The motion to accept the **Heritage and Reconciliation Pledge** as a guiding document of our vision, values and strategies was made on (date) \_\_\_\_\_ .

Signature of Chairperson \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Indigenous Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Sources:

[Bringing Reconciliation to Healthcare in Canada](#)

[Personal Pledge of Reconciliation \(Indigenous Corporate Training Inc.\)](#)

[Professional Pledge of Reconciliation \(Indigenous Corporate Training Inc.\)](#)

[A Reconciliation Framework for Canadian Archives](#)

[Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada](#)

[UBC Okanagan Commitments to TRC Calls To Action](#)



Photo: M. Hand

# 2

## Acknowledging Land and People

**ACTION:** Reflecting on the places where we reside and work and respecting all peoples and their experiences, prepare and implement a land acknowledgement so that your organization recognizes Indigenous traditions and ties to the land. This will help build understanding about our relationships and responsibilities to the Indigenous people and lands where we live and work.

The origin of the land acknowledgement can be found in Nation-to-Nation tradition and protocol that has been used as a way “for guests to show their respect for and pay homage to the indigenous community with which they are visiting and engaging with.” (source: A Guide to Acknowledging First Peoples and Traditional Land)

Following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s final report, offering a land acknowledgement became a more common way to show respect and to recognize “the ties the descendants of those First Peoples have to the land - its importance to their culture, ceremonies, and traditions.” (source: First Nation Protocol on Traditional Territory) Making territorial acknowledgments should be part of the ongoing process of learning the histories of the Indigenous people and lands where you live and work.

When offering a land acknowledgement, you recognize Indigenous peoples’ relationship with the land that spans millennia. You pay respect to their ancestors, their culture, ceremonies, traditions and their ties to the land.

Land acknowledgements can falter because the statements lack appropriate intention in their delivery. When done well and spoken from the heart with the context in mind, an acknowledgement of land and people can be a meaningful step along the path of recognition.

Following are some suggestions to help you prepare a statement. Keep in mind, there is no one way to prepare a land acknowledgement and there is no single format. The harder work is in the self-reflection – understanding your organization’s values, recognizing the stories that stretch over millennia, acknowledging a long history of suppression and struggles, and considering the respectful relationship you wish to establish.

- Include staff, volunteers and directors in the development of a statement so that, as an organization, it is understood why the statement is being developed and when and how it should be used. Land acknowledgements are important, but they cannot be offered with sincerity without understanding your intentions and why it is important to your organization and to Indigenous relationships.
- Seek advice from more than one credible source. Elders are very important

members Indigenous communities who have earned the right to pass on knowledge, advice and guidance issues affecting their communities and nations.

- Don't rely upon outdated, colonial names for Indigenous people. Learn the preferred names and spellings of the specific Nations whose lands you are on. Indigenous communities have resources (websites, videos, publications, events, and other learning resources) to share and explain their cultural ties and continuity on their lands, which can help deepen understanding of the people and lands. Often the local Nations will also have information about protocols, including their preferred ways of referring to themselves (as opposed to Anglicized and colonial names) and how to acknowledge territory.
- Learn about the territory or territories on which you work and reside. Territories can be expansive and can include reserves. Without understanding extent of these territories, you may not understand a communities' connections to place. Visit <https://native-land.ca/> and <https://www.whose.land/en/> and <https://maps.fpcc.ca/> to explore territorial maps and download the Whose Land app. As well, visit the websites of Indigenous Nations, Friendship Centres and other organizations to learn about the people who have a long and significant history with the land.
- In BC, connections to the land can be complicated with overlapping territories and areas of shared interest. But this is not a reason to avoid a land



acknowledgement statement. In fact, this can be an opportunity for a heritage organization to show leadership and to illustrate heritage represents all people. Nevertheless, the development of your statement with respect to the conditions that are specific to your area needs to be well considered, informed and thorough.

- In most cases in BC, we recognize the land as unceded and the inclusion of Indigenous place names are becoming more common.
- A land acknowledgement can function as a living celebration of Indigenous communities and relationships, and appreciation for the rich history and culture of the lands where we live and work.
- Do not be afraid to ask questions and find out how to pronounce the Indigenous words. Respectfully ask someone from the Nation or from a local organization, such as a Friendship Centre or Indigenous Student Centre. Visit the Nation's website or call the Nation after hours and listen to the recorded message. Language speakers from communities can often help your organization get comfortable with pronunciation and spellings. Internet searches will often result in phonetic spellings and sound recordings. Look for language apps (such as [firstvoices.com](http://firstvoices.com)). Keep in mind that it is disrespectful to oversimplify simply because words are difficult to say or spell.
- Never underestimate the hidden meanings of your words. Be sure to involve and take direction from Indigenous staff in this work, or respectfully ask an Indigenous colleague if they are comfortable reviewing your statement before you make it public.
- Take time and give the process the 'space' it needs. Build it into your agenda and time schedules.
- Land acknowledgements can go beyond the recognition of traditional territory to include specific actions and commitments.

Before approving your statement, respectfully ask someone to review the statement before it is made public. Ideally, you have been working with Indigenous people, as part of the ongoing work of learning about the lands you are on, who are in paid positions and decision-making roles.

When your statement is finished and approved, you can use it at the beginning of in-person and online meetings, place it on your website and email signature, and add it to reports, signage and brochures. Provide instruction and direction to everyone in your organization by updating your communication policy.

Keep in mind – a single statement is not a 'one size fits all' solution and so it should be adapted to suit the situation and the people with whom you are interacting, and it needs to be part of ongoing reconciliation work. For larger events, it's appropriate

to contact the local First Nation(s) for a welcome. Each Nation has their own protocol process and can advise on how to have an Elder or other community member attend your event and welcome people to their lands. Don't make a request at the last minute.

Always provide an honorarium (minimum \$200 is recommended), and a gift is also fine in addition. Check with the Nation's protocol if possible before determining an amount for honoraria and gifts. When there are community members from the local territories at your events it's appropriate to ask them if they are comfortable providing a welcome, and it's ideal if you can provide them a gift and honoraria as well

One final thought: reconciliation with Indigenous People is a long journey and you will learn a lot. With new knowledge and experience, review your acknowledgment statement once a year to make sure it continues to reflect the values and relationships to which you aspire.

**“As we are people of oral traditions what we hear is important and never forgotten. When names are mispronounced or incorrect this is what will carry through the entire event. With a good start the rest of the standards will flow nicely.”**

INDIGENOUS ADVISOR TO SETTING THE BAR





### Examples of Land Acknowledgement Statements

The lands we reside on as a country hold the stories and song of Indigenous Peoples from time immemorial. **Against the Grain Theatre**

As an organization of provincial scope, Heritage BC recognizes that its members, and the local history and heritage they seek to preserve, occupy the lands and territories of B.C.'s Indigenous peoples. Heritage BC asks its members to reflect on the places where they reside and work, and to respect the diversity of cultures and experiences that form the richness of our provincial heritage. **Heritage BC**

The Heritage Branch acknowledges it carries out its work on the traditional territories of Indigenous nations throughout British Columbia. We pay our respects to the Elders, past and present, descendants and custodians of these lands. We honour the knowledge keepers and the continuing relationships with Indigenous peoples in BC that develop through our work together. The Heritage Branch is grateful to the Lkwungen-speaking people, today known as the Esquimalt and Songhees First Nations, on whose traditional territories we operate our main offices. **Heritage Branch**

The BC Museums Association (BCMA) office is located on the traditional, unceded lands of the Lekwungen peoples (Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations). We respect past, present, and future Indigenous stewards and recognize that we are uninvited guests on this territory. As a reflection of the provincial scope of our membership and organization, we recognize that our affiliates occupy the ceded, unceded, and sovereign territories of Nations across what is referred to as British Columbia. **BC Museums Association**



Sources:

[Activism Skills: Land and Territory Acknowledgement](#)

[A Guide to Acknowledging First Peoples and Traditional Land](#)

[First Nation Protocol on Traditional Territory](#)

[A Guide to Acknowledging First Peoples & Traditional Territory](#)

[Indigenous Land Acknowledgement \(Native Governance Center\)](#)

[Want to learn whose Indigenous land you're on? There's an app for that \(CBC\)](#)

[6 steps to writing and sharing a land acknowledgement](#)

# 3

## Celebrating Days of Recognition and Commemoration

**ACTION:** Commit to incorporate National Indigenous Peoples Day, treaty days, cultural days, and other days of cultural significance into your programming and activities.

- Tamil Heritage Month: January
- Black History Month: February
- International Women’s Day: March 8
- Sikh Heritage Month: April
- International Francophonie Day, March 20 [here](#)
- Asian Heritage Month: May
- Canadian Jewish Heritage Month: May
- National Indigenous Peoples Day: June 21
- Canadian Multiculturalism Day: June 27
- National Indigenous History Month: June
- Italian Heritage Month: June
- Important and Commemorative Days, Government of Canada [here](#)

National Indigenous Peoples Day and days to recognize other peoples and cultures are important for all Canadians to observe. These are days to honour, remember and learn about the contributions and struggles of people who have long resided in BC and your communities.

These days can be commemorated in different ways to celebrate peoples, histories, traditions, diversities, stories, cultures and artists.

When we pause to recognize people and culture in this way, we honour the essence of heritage:

**“Stories of the past are our stories... to tell, sing, draw, write and record.... Everyone’s stories are important, and their contributions should be equally valued. For this to happen, everyone needs to be given a voice.”** (THE STATE OF HERITAGE)



Six Mile Mary (Mary Quaw), a Carrier woman, standing on the Fraser River circa 1910. Image provided by Heritage BC members; image credit: The Exploration Place

We offer the following list of activities as inspiration. But we urge you to go beyond our list as you consider the qualities of your site and organization to develop activities that are truly grounded in your community's unique stories. Of course, it must always be remembered that we do this work with others – not for others.

- Plan special activities to highlight relevant artefacts; invite elders and community leaders to talk about artefacts and what they mean to their cultures. Develop special materials, such as videos and handouts, to help the public understand the significance and history of the artefacts and what they mean to your community.
- Learn a greeting in a different language and add it to your communications.
- Develop a partnership with another business and invite them onto your site. Seek out culturally appropriate food trucks and support local businesses. Organize displays in main street windows and work with retailers to highlight cultural products.
- Highlight musicians and artists through performances, exhibitions, residencies and talks. Commission a new work, perhaps using something in your collection as a starting point.
- Screen films and videos. Invite directors and actors to speak about their work. The National Film Board has an extensive collection of films and documentaries (use these links to focus your search: [Indigenous](#), [Black](#), [Asian](#), [Japanese](#), [Chinese](#), and [Jewish](#)).
- Offer a curated list of books, films and music that is inspired by your collection and your work. Offer readings and book clubs on your site.
- Offer storytelling and crafting sessions with cultural artists. Involve youth so they grow up with positive and diverse cultural experiences.
- Share videos and other materials that are offered by Historica Canada ([Heritage Minutes](#)), Canadian Heritage, BC Museums Association, Heritage BC, First Peoples' Cultural Council and other organizations.
- Schedule a series of social media posts that will help your community learn about cultural histories and traditions. Promote the activities of other organizations.
- Invite cultural leaders to write blog entries that can be posted on your website and added to your emailers.
- Invite cultural leaders to board meetings and ask how your organization can improve its relationships and work with other community groups.
- Dedicate a board meeting to cultural sensitivity training. At another meeting, focus on the history of your collection: how did artefacts come to your site? How are they interpreted? Is the story that is being told appropriate and how do you know that? The make-up of organizations is constantly changing, so organizational education never ends.

- Explore BC's cultural historic places:
  - [Japanese Canadian Historic Places](#)
  - [South Asian Canadian Historic Places](#)
  - [Chinese Canadian Historic Places](#)
  - [Francophone Historic Map](#)
- Learn about Indigenous language groups and territories:  
<https://native-land.ca/> and <https://www.whose.land/>
- With a quick search, you will find an extensive range of materials to support your programming and activities. For example:
  - [Landscapes of Injustice](#)
  - [Landscapes for Injustice teacher resources](#)
  - [Black History Month: Facts and Resources](#) (BC Teachers Federation)
  - [Sikh Heritage Month BC](#)

Recognition of Indigenous Peoples and peoples of other cultures and groups should not be relegated to one day or one month and this type of recognition should be part of a much larger organizational effort. In the heritage sector, it is our responsibility to do this work every day.

Reflect on and learn about the diversity and cultural history of your area. Be intentional. Be a leader.



Sources

[National Indigenous Peoples Day: 10 ways to celebrate](#)

[11 Ways to Virtually Celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day](#)

[Five Ideas for Celebrating Indigenous Peoples' Day 2020](#)

[Celebrate National Indigenous Peoples Day](#)

[National Indigenous Peoples Day](#)

[Government of Canada, About National Indigenous Peoples Day](#)

[Government of Canada, Black History Month](#)

[About Black History Month](#)

[Government of Canada: Asian Heritage Month](#)

[Radio Canada International: Asian Heritage Month](#)



# 4

## With a Commitment to Learn

**ACTION:** recognizing that learning is life-long, and reconciliation is ongoing, commit to continuing education and training related to intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism, and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Action #92 of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's calls to action states (in part):

“Provide education for management and staff on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.”

Our action item is a simple and easily accomplished request for your organization to commit to annual training and education. The benefits are plentiful by:

- Raising awareness of concepts related to diversity and inclusion
- Exploring your community and appreciating the diversity of cultures and experiences
- Allowing room for diverse perspectives within your organization
- Engaging directors and staff around common goals and values
- Instilling a succession of values as directors and staff change
- Advancing collaboration within the workplace
- Teambuilding and networking within the organization and community
- Developing inclusive thinking and actions
- Promoting workplace sensitivity
- Supporting hiring, placements and retention
- Diversifying training and improving job/work satisfaction and work engagement

The opportunities for education and training are almost limitless and they are often free. Of course, there are many opportunities that come with a price tag (say, \$15 for a webinar and a couple of hundred for a conference), so it is helpful to plan these activities in your annual budgeting process.

Here are some suggestions of activities and resources for staff, committee and boards. Many more can be found on the internet and new resources are continually being developed. Tip: if you are planning to hire someone, plan in advance as people are very busy.

- Listen to live and listen recorded webinars
- Listen to podcasts (such as the New York Times *1619 Project* and *Black History for White People*)
- Circulate blogs posts in board packages before a meeting; discuss the posts at the next meeting.
- Watch videos and recorded conference sessions
- Enroll in professional development, such as a conference or course, and attend meetings and share learnings with others.
- Invite a speaker to a board meeting or arrange a community meeting
- Take a course in trauma-informed practice to gain a strengths-based framework grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma.
- Learn about culture care practices, such as the spiritual side of artefacts, smudging and drumming.

**Heritage BC has numerous resources available on its website:**

- Taking Action webinar [link](#)
- The Reality of Inclusion when Collaborating and Partnering with Indigenous Neighbours webinar [link](#)
- Mapping Heritage: Uncovering Community webinar [link](#)
- Indigenous Cultural Heritage: a curated list of resources [link](#)
- Taking Action: resources of diversity and inclusion [link](#)
- Racism: Do not let the forgetting prevail [link](#)

**There are numerous other resources available to you:**

BC Museums Association: Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion [link](#)

BC Black History Awareness Society: learning centre [link](#)

Black Strathcona society: videos [link](#)

Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion: podcasts [link](#)

Bakau Consulting [link](#)

Cultural Human Resources council: Respectful Workplaces in the Arts [link](#)

Government of Canada: First Nations Communications Toolkit [link](#)

Inclusion BC: includes virtual learning series [link](#)

Indigenous Awareness Canada: Online Indigenous awareness training [link](#)

Indigenous Relations Academy: free resource [link](#)

Indigenous Relations Academy: self-guided training [link](#)

Mosaic Engage: Intercultural, Diversity & Inclusion Training [link](#)

Qmunity: LGBT2SAI+ Diversity Training [link](#)

Rick Hansen Foundation: Learn about barriers you do not know about [link](#)

Please note: Heritage BC offers these resources as information only. While these sources are reputable, we do not specifically endorse the provided opinions. We also encourage you to look within your community for more resources.

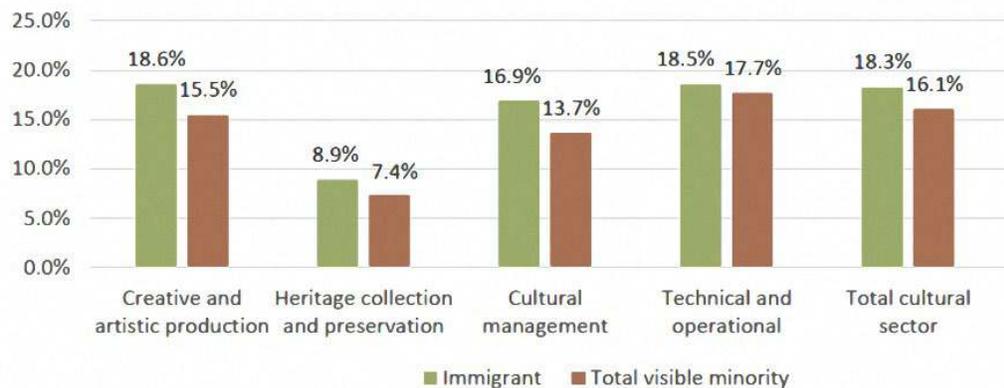
# 5

## Committing to Strategic Organizational Diversity

**ACTION:** develop and implement an intentional strategy to diversify your staff, board of directors and volunteers. Seek to broaden this diversity at all levels of your organization.

Through meetings and interviews with 500 individuals, we learned that BC heritage sector strongly believes heritage must equitably represent all people and all stories. This pan-cultural view, unfortunately, is in contrast to the make-up of our sector's workforce, which includes only 7.4% visible minorities ([source](#)).

In fact, diversity in "heritage collection and preservation occupations" is lower than any other cultural job segmentation and less than half of the national average.



([source](#))

The same survey offers a number of issues, trends and realities that could be contributing factors:

- The "poverty mentality" in the cultural sector (e.g., we cannot afford to pay people or increase our staffing)
- Lack of training (e.g., lack of time, knowledge, funds)
- Ageism (stereotyping and discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of their age.) and ableism (the lack of supports available for people of diverse abilities)
- Racism, sexism, and tokenism
- Indigenous workers are not hired proportionately
- Lack of transparency around "equity-seeking" programs

Interns, summer youth placements, new positions on boards of directors, and advisory committees have long been common ways to increase organizational diversity. Yet, as previously noted, the evidence suggests these efforts are not leading to permanence of diversity.

Perhaps this is because many of the structures are inherently impermanent. A recent document to guide diversification of the visual arts sector strongly proposes a moratorium on Indigenous advisory committees. In its place, it recommends to “integrate diverse Indigenous peoples and knowledges throughout corporate structures, on both the creative and business side of organizations, and not just in moments of increased fiscal attachment to monetized identity politics.”

While the issues related to diversity and equity can be challenging, we will offer some examples for your consideration:

- Lack of organizational diversity can perpetuate a lack of diversity (e.g., a person of colour may be reluctant to join an organization that lacks diversity)
- Job descriptions, postings and timelines that follow familiar patterns, giving the impression the search may not be ‘diversity friendly’
- Lack of training and education that supports a strong labour pool of qualified individuals
- Colleagues from some cultures may be less likely to let their voices be heard
- Poor integration in the face of prejudice or negative cultural stereotypes
- Differences in communication styles across languages and cultures
- Different understandings of professional etiquette
- Interviewers are not diverse or have not been trained to keep diversity and inclusion in mind when hiring
- Managers do not see the value in diversity and inclusion workforce
- Consider individual and organizational unconscious biases, such as unconscious beliefs about social groups and tendencies to categorize and identify groups and people. Unconscious biases are often incompatible with conscious values and can be difficult to identify. Promote self-awareness, invite conversations, and learn from people with differing experiences.
- Organizational diversity is tied to successful grant funding, suggesting diversity is not an institutional value and strategy (e.g., a ‘diversity’ position is only possible with an annual or project grant)
- ([source](#) and [source](#))

There are many advocates for establishing structures such as advisory panels, including the Indigenous Corporate Training Inc., which says “advisory committees can be invaluable to the success of a business, organization, or social enterprise.” ([source](#))

On building successful Indigenous advisory committees, Collaborative NSW (Australia, [link](#)) says “Aboriginal Advisory/Consultative committees offer a proactive and collaborative method of facilitating genuine and meaningful participation in council decision-making by local Aboriginal communities. To operate successfully, they should be based on two key principles:

### **Dignity and Respect**

It is critical to ensure that Aboriginal people are treated with dignity and respect. Tangible recognition of Aboriginal history, heritage, culture and protocols is paramount. The guidelines provide some baseline advice, but it is important for individual councils to have a good understanding of their communities at the local level. Respect also includes an acknowledgment of committee members’ time, which could otherwise be spent on other community initiatives.

### **Focus**

Positive engagement requires mutual understanding and shared objectives. To make sure all participants are on the same page, it is recommended that all issues, including priorities, limitations and benefits to the community, are clearly articulated. Care needs to be taken to cross check that all participants have understood these issues. Similarly, any limitations and constraints on outcomes need to be clearly articulated. There may be legal, financial or policy restraints that will limit what is practically achievable.

Essential to these and other recommendations are intentional, longer-term strategies or activities to establish systems for success.

This action is not about eliminating advisory committees and grant-funded hires, but it is about framing these entities in longer-term strategies so that diversity and equity are no longer sidebar conveniences, but instead are entrenched organizational commitments.

Ultimately, we want safe and welcoming workplaces that understand, anticipate and welcome cultural differences. (And most people in the heritage sector will agree we need to improve the poor representation of visible minorities in our workforce.)

For this to happen, you need to turn your organization's good intentions into strategic actions by formalizing organizational commitments to reconciliation, diversity and equity.

To support this work, there is an extensive range of materials that have been developed for the heritage sector:

- Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion, BC Museums Association [link](#)
- Taking Action: Diversity and Inclusion, Heritage BC [link](#)
- Racism: Do not let the forgetting prevail, Heritage BC [link](#)
- Indigenous Cultural Heritage, Heritage BC [link](#)

Here is a set of questions to consider as you begin to develop the organizational strategies:

- Do you have an HR policy that intentionally supports people of differing backgrounds and abilities?
- Do you have equitable compensation and benefits packages and policies?
- Do you have a code of conduct? Do you have an anti-discriminatory policy?
- What are the job roles and responsibilities? Are diverse positions embedded in the organization's structure?
- Do you have a recruitment process that will reach candidates of diverse backgrounds and abilities for your next staff or board opening? How will you encourage volunteer and staff retention?
- What are your organizational structures, policies and procedures that will ensure your organization is compatible and open to people with different experiences?
- Have you considered differing cultural traditions when setting meeting times and locations?
- How will you know the decision-making processes will be transparent?
- Has the board and staff taken sensitivity training? How will this be managed when new directors, volunteers and staff join the organization?
- How will you foster diverse thinking and accommodate differing talking/ participation styles at meetings?
- What is the language you use? For example, do your organization's documents use gender-neutral words?
- What is the organizational culture, and does it evolve?
- How does our organization define diverse, equality, and inclusion?
- How does your organizations define heritage? Are your values and mission aligned?
- Do you have any lessons-learned in hiring Indigenous and minority individuals?

A final note: In order to successfully fulfill this standard for organizational diversity, we, as a sector, need to commit to training and education in order to expand the labour pool.



# 6

## Mission: Making Room for Reconciliation

**ACTION:** review your organization's mission, programs and activities to examine the unintended biases, oversights, and roadblocks.

We will illustrate this reconciliation action with a true story about a meeting of museum workers, artists, and businesspeople, who had come together to discuss heritage in their rural community.

As part of the introductory comments, a manager of a small museum described the concisely defined mission: to tell the story of white labourers in a local industry. It happened the meeting and the museum were located on land that is widely celebrated for its deep Indigenous traditions and heritage and so this mission seemed to be unaware of the museum's context. Yet the group, which included Indigenous people, seemed to understand and respect the chosen direction and nothing was said.

Throughout the day-long meeting, people spoke about the many challenges they face, and much time was given to describing a hopeful future of heritage that will equitably include all people and all stories.

At the close of the meeting, when the attendees summarized the meeting, the museum manager offered the realization that it is possible to honour the museum's mission while expanding it to include the stories of other settlers and Indigenous people.

It was a significant shift in thinking – transitioning from what is known to what can be. And for any organization, this is an important step toward reconciliation.

Like a lot of other aspects of reconciliation, achievement comes from an openness to different ideas and perspectives and a resolution for self-reflection. The work can be challenging as you look beyond what is familiar and you examine what is comfortable.

This action is not a direction to rewrite your mission statement and we are not suggesting your programming is deficient. This is about contemplation, with clarity and honesty, of your mission and your work in the community.

Do you know why you tell the stories that you do? How were those stories chosen? How were they created and who informed the stories? Have the stories evolved? Do you have permission to tell the stories?

Whose stories are missing and why? Have stories been told from the appropriate

perspectives? How does your organization define heritage? Is your mission and work aligned with that definition? Where are the gaps in organizational practice?”

In the context of reconciliation, it is important to understand whose stories are being told and for whom they are told. It is not possible for one organization to tell every story, but it is possible for an organization to tell one story with diversity, respect and integrity.

Tackling these issues can be daunting and time consuming, so it can be helpful break things down into manageable pieces. For example, start analyzing a program/exhibition:

- Why does this program/exhibition exist?
- Whom does it serve? How do we serve this audience? Do we know we meet expectations? Why are people intentionally or unintentionally excluded?
- What needs to change so that the program is more accessible? What are the cost/benefits to make changes?
- If our organization holds reconciliation as a value, how is the programming advancing this value and how it is hindering?
- Does your organization imbed practices/interpretations that contribute to the marginalization (especially unconsciously)?

“Group think” and “confirmation bias” can be problematic when, for example, a group of individuals share similar perspectives and experiences and use these to validate each other’s opinions. It is important to invite differing perspectives and experiences into the conversation. Without judgement, listen, consider the differences, and look for the misunderstandings, misinterpretations and gaps. You might be surprised with what you learn.

This action is about organizational and personal self-examination and tackling change with a commitment to imbed reconciliation into your mission, programs and activities. Keep in mind, this work is ongoing and requires an ongoing commitment.

# 7

## Possession, Interpretation, Repatriation and Cultural Care

**ACTION:** Recognizing a responsibility to the cultures that are represented in collections, heritage organizations will reflect on and resolve issues of possession, interpretation and repatriation with a commitment to reconcile.

In 2019, the First Peoples' Cultural Council issued a policy paper with the goal "to address the immediate need to revitalize, manage, and protect Indigenous cultural heritage (ICH) in meaningful and substantive ways." The need for such a document rises from the recognition that "while many people acknowledge and

celebrate Canada's rich and diverse cultural heritage, this diversity, as it relates to Indigenous Peoples, is under threat."

This document, "Recognizing and Including Indigenous Cultural Heritage in B.C.", therefore sets out a goal to end the threat to cultural heritage – a goal that should be equally shared by all participants in the heritage sector.

Issues of possession, interpretation and repatriation are among the threats that are particular to organizations with collections. The "Indigenous Repatriation Handbook", prepared by the Royal BC Museum and the Haida Gwaii Museum at Kay Llnagaay, provides an excellent historical context and notes that "there have been significant changes [for the better] over the years." Yet, the handbook still needed to be written as "there is a long way to go in working with museums to Indigenize their institutions", and "there are still tremendous challenges in building more respectful and balanced relationships."

While it is not within Heritage BC's mandate to establish policy for collections-based organizations, it is well within its scope to strongly encourage everyone in BC's heritage sector to seriously consider the advice and direction found in "Recognizing and Including Indigenous Cultural Heritage in B.C.", and other essential documents, such as the "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" (UNDRIP, 2007), and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 calls to action.

Focussing on possession, interpretation and repatriation, this Heritage and Reconciliation action is rooted in the belief that "all cultural groups in Canada, including Indigenous Peoples, have a right to identify their cultural heritage, interpret its meaning and determine its disposition." (source)

The rights of possession, the approaches to interpretation, and the complexities of repatriation are significant and cannot be properly tackled here. Nevertheless, the issues are far too important not to address with guidance and a call to action.

This starts with a commitment:

Heritage organizations have a responsibility to the cultures that are represented by artefacts, and Indigenous and cultural representatives have a role in determining issues that relate to possession and interpretation.<sup>1</sup>

It is the responsibility of each organization to reflect on and reconcile issues of possession, interpretation and care. The following is offered as guidance:

- Seek out of the advice and resources of the BC Museums Association and other similar organizations; BCMA's The BCMA's "[Naknakim Declaration](#)" will be relevant.
- Seek out the advice and resources of the Royal BC Museum; consult the "Indigenous Repatriation Handbook" (link) (note: this handbook is written to support Indigenous communities in the repatriation process);
- Seek out advice from the First Peoples' Cultural Council and cultural organizations in your area; contact lists of Indigenous Band Council and staff can also be found on CivicInfo BC;
- Understand the policies found in the First Peoples' Cultural Council's paper, "Recognizing and Including Indigenous Cultural Heritage in B.C." (here);
- Understand the intent and direction of the "United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" (UNDRIP, here);
- Investigate and understand the origin and history of cultural artefacts in your collection;
- Consider the context, research and interpretations of artefacts; consider who did and did not participate in the interpretations;
- Consult community organizations and leaders who have cultural connections to the artefacts;
- Ensure all records, archives, artefacts are fully accessible;
- Learn from colleagues who have put into place memorandums of understanding with Indigenous organizations (The Nanaimo Museum and Exploration Place are two examples); Put into place similar agreements of understanding and responsibility;
- Enter into collaborations that are mutually beneficial to all partners;
- Seek opportunities to have members of culturally diverse groups assist your organization in its care and documentation of collections.

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<sup>1</sup> "Possession" and "interpretation" are to be interpreted broadly. Possession refers to issues such as the conditions under which the artefact was originally acquired and subsequently retained. Interpretation refers to issues such as the context and conditions in which artefacts are displayed and stored and the research and commentary that accompanies the artefacts. For more information, please refer to "Naknakim Declaration and Simkin, Naknakim" in Roundup, issue 266. [link](#)

- Indigenous community members are also part of their local communities and share an interest in and are part of broader narratives. What was it like for them to work at a local mine? What were their roles in the local forest industry? What was the role of non-white labourers in the local industry or what was the relationship between this industry and indigenous communities?
- Consider your obligation to care for things in a culturally appropriate way. For example, how do you handle and interact with sacred and spiritual items?
- Don't be afraid to reach out to Indigenous communities about repatriation for fear of items being removed from your collection.

Organizational preparedness for reconciliation also includes the adaptation of collection policies and collection management procedures to include measures for the culturally appropriate acceptance, documentation, conservation and storage of artifacts and archival material. This work will address not only established collections, but also future donations and collection decisions.

This Heritage and Reconciliation action is one of reflection and intent, and a commitment to reconcile. It takes courage to ask the difficult questions and hard work to find the answers. However, the rewards will be significant for your organization and your community, and the entire heritage sector will be strengthened as we collectively and appropriately acknowledge and celebrate our rich and diverse cultural heritage.

# 8

## Shared Decision Making

**ACTION:** work with Indigenous peoples in developing the cultural significance of the archaeological and/or historic site and incorporating intangible cultural heritage values and information; establish and enhance relational versus transactional connections through development and implementation of shared decision-making processes addressing intangible cultural heritage.

There are numerous theories and approaches to collaboration and decision making but, in practice, failure is common due to inadequate intent, improper implementation, and an inequitable balance of influence (to name just a few of the reasons for failure).

The First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC) proposes a "shared decision-making" approach, which requires the parties to approach decision-making with equal authority and influence. Going beyond consultation, the parties enter into the decision-making process as equals.

The balance of influence has long rested with governments and 'traditional' heritage organizations, but that is changing, and, in the heritage sector, we recognize Indigenous peoples' rights and abilities to care for their own cultural heritage. Between these two autonomies of influence is "collaborative management and shared decision-making over the use and management of land and resources" (as expressed by FPCC).

Detailing collaboration and decision-making are beyond the scope of this document, but we can set out standards as essential guiding principles and intentions for your work.

### Standards:

Site managers and caretakers will work with Indigenous peoples in developing the cultural significance of the archaeological and/or historic site and incorporating intangible cultural heritage values and information, along with that of any other associated cultural groups, in presenting the site to visitors. This approach will include issues of cultural care, storage, and exhibition.

Site managers and caretakers will establish and enhance relational versus transactional connections through development and implementation of shared decision-making processes addressing intangible cultural heritage. Decisions are made through a shared process that involves providing capacity for all parties to participate from preplanning stages to the achievement of outcomes. No one has more authority than another.

Site managers and caretakers recognize intangible cultural heritage is best managed with or by the community. All people need to have access to, and make decisions about, their own intangible cultural heritage in whatever form it exists.

This section is directly drawn from "Recommendations for Decolonizing British Columbia's Heritage-Related Processes and Legislation", published by First Peoples' Cultural Council in 2020.



# 9

## Statements of Significance and other heritage planning documents

### ACTIONS:

We will work with Indigenous cultural experts when preparing a Statement of Significance and other heritage planning documents.

We will re-write existing Statements of Significance and other heritage planning documents to include Indigenous perspectives, working with an Indigenous cultural expert.

Long used to describe tangible heritage, Statements of Significance and other heritage planning documents need to evolve so that the Indigenous perspective is normalized in the research and writing phases. Adopting the “not about us, without us” principle, the Indigenous perspective must be welcomed and appropriately informed.

Acknowledging challenges exist in incorporating Indigenous worldviews within cultural heritage management and decision-making processes, the First Peoples’ Cultural Council reminds us “the millennia-long occupation and use of land of indigenous people should be the fundamental context and starting point for historic places recognition.”

This section is directly drawn from “Recommendations for Decolonizing British Columbia’s Heritage-Related Processes and Legislation”, published by First Peoples’ Cultural Council in 2020.

# 10

## Heritage Conservation Tools, Local Government Act

### ACTIONS:

We acknowledge that access to, protection of, and benefits from one's own heritage need to be recognized as basic human rights and we recognize heritage should be managed with or by the community.

We recognize Western ways describing and recognizing heritage are not superior and can be improved upon and can be adapted to reflect a broader worldview.

We recognize that the recognition and conservation of heritage should include shared decision-making, collaboration, delegation of authority and recognition of Indigenous worldviews. Indigenous ways of viewing the past, history and heritage are legitimate ways of seeing.

We recognize the need for relationship building with Indigenous peoples at a local level, as well as the consultation with Indigenous cultural experts and knowledge keepers.

The Local Government Act offers a broad framework of heritage conservation tools that can be adopted by local and regional governments. Since the legislation came into force in 1996, the definition and practice of heritage has changed considerably, while the Act endures, it should not be a reason to exclude Indigenous cultural heritage and other concepts of cultural heritage or not to recognize living heritage.

Fortunately, the legislation is not prescriptive and increasingly local government staff, commissions and councils are exploring new boundaries in order to include other elements of heritage, including Indigenous cultural heritage (where appropriate and welcomed, of course).

Recognition and protection of an expanded range of heritage begins at the local level and new approaches at the local and regional levels will eventually influence provincial and federal legislation.

This section is directly drawn from "Recommendations for Decolonizing British Columbia's Heritage-Related Processes and Legislation", published by First Peoples' Cultural Council in 2020.

Note: All hyperlinks in this document were valid at time of publication (May 2021).

# HeritageBC



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