

Glossary of Terms

Accessibility

The design of products, devices, services, or environments for people who experience disabilities. Accessibility means ensuring there are as few barriers as possible for those who have a variety of disabilities.

Advisory Board

“...a body that exists primarily to provide advice or counsel to an organization or to study a situation and make recommendations for action. Typically advisory board members have no legal responsibilities, are usually appointed rather than elected, and sometimes serve at the pleasure of a higher authority. Advisory boards may give direction to staff but typically have no formal authority over them”. (MacDonald, 2017)

App

Any online program that can be downloaded by a user onto a mobile device or computer, and can be used to enhance their museum experience in some way.

Colonial language/bias

Any language or actions that do not take into account Indigenous/non-colonial perspectives, or acts primarily based on colonial perspectives.

- Simply acknowledging Indigenous/non-colonial stories is not enough to combat colonial bias (see “Decolonization”).

Decolonization

The process of moving away from narratives based solely around the colonial thought process, and working to centrally incorporate Indigenous voices and perspectives into operations.

- Must be more than just a token effort, but must represent a genuine attempt to bring the Indigenous perspective and understanding to the forefront.

Disability communities

A group of people with similar disabilities who come together to advocate for changes that improve accessibility for anyone with similar needs.

Diversity

The practice of including a wide variety of people of various different Equity Deserving Groups in decision making and projects.

EDIA (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility)

The act of ensuring that all programs and processes are fair and impartial, and that no groups are excluded from participating regardless of possible barriers, and are given equal opportunity to have their voice heard and perspective considered.

Equity

“The principle of considering people's unique experiences and differing situations, and ensuring they have access to the resources and opportunities that are necessary for them to attain just outcomes”. (Government of Canada, 2023)

Equity-deserving groups

Communities that experience significant collective barriers in participating in society. This can include any type of barrier based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation, transgender status or any other protected status.

- Equity-deserving also specifies that these groups do not have to ask for or demand equal treatment, but should be provided it as a matter of course.

“Green” operations

The process of ensuring that your organization's operations have as little impact on the environment as possible. This can include the use of reusable materials in exhibits and collections, among other things.

Inclusion

“The practice of using proactive measures to create an environment where people feel welcomed, respected and valued, and to foster a sense of belonging and engagement”. (Government of Canada, 2023)

Inclusive language

“A means of communication that is used to treat people with respect, and that involves using words and expressions that are not considered discriminatory or offensive, and that do not imply the exclusion or stereotyping of particular groups of people”. (Government of Canada, 2023)

Intangible heritage

The practices, expressions, knowledge and skills that communities, groups and sometimes individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.

- These are not “objects” that can be held in a museum’s collections, but might still be knowledge that can be preserved or promoted by your organization, and should be treated with the same respect as any cultural item.

Mandate

A mandate is a written, public statement that “establishes [the museum’s] legal, non-profit status, its purpose, and objectives”. (Canadian Museums Association, 2006)

Museum workers

Any person who works for a museum or cultural organization, whether in a paid or unpaid position. This includes not just collections or cultural workers, but maintenance workers, security and others vital to the operation of a museum.

Policy (Carver Model) Board

“...a template for governance that focuses the board’s attention on organizational outcomes (ends) and external relationships (linkages with members or owners). Board oversight of staff activity is accomplished solely through the determination and monitoring of ‘executive limitations’ (a specific kind of policy). A distinguishing feature of a policy governance board is the absence of board committees (nominating or board recruitment committee excepted)”. (MacDonald, 2017)

Purpose statement

A statement that defines the reason(s) why your museum exists and who it is for.

- We are using the term “purpose statement” in lieu of “mission statement” in an effort to further the decolonization of the museum industry.

Repatriation

The process or act of returning stolen cultural property to the country, group or person it originally belonged to, or their heirs.

- Note: repatriation should also be proactive by museums, rather than needing to be demanded by these groups.

Sustainability

The act of ensuring that your organization can meet its own needs without compromising the needs of future generations.

- Museums being sustainable implies that they are not using more resources than needed, and if possible are even creating new resources.

Under-represented group

“A group of people whose representation within a given subgroup of society is lower than its representation in the general population.” (Government of Canada, 2023)

Working Board

“...boards of directors that are involved in setting policy and the day-to-day running of their organizations... Organizations that do not employ staff are generally considered ‘working boards’. They not only provide high-level leadership but also often are the ‘hands and legs’ of the organization. The connotation associated with the term ‘working board’ is that the board’s role is more than a deliberative or decision-making one”.
(MacDonald, 2017)

Working group/committees

Any group of museum workers or outside stakeholders brought together to discuss and make decisions on specific projects, meet a specific goal or provide advice and support on a general topic.

- Working groups are generally short-term, limited to a specific project, and will disband after completing their mandate. Committees will usually be more long-term, and are meant to provide consistent advice and support to organizations in specific areas of concern (such as governance or EDIA).

References

Canadian Museums Association. (2006). *Ethics Guidelines 1999*.

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