

May 31, 2023

The Honourable Pablo Rodríguez, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Canadian Heritage
15 Eddy Street, 12th Floor
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0M5

Re: Canadian Museum Policy renewal

Sent via email: politiquemuseale-museumpolicy@pch.gc.ca

Dear Minister Rodríguez,

I am writing on behalf of the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL) which represents Canada's largest national and academic research libraries. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to this consultation as we believe it is important that the Government of Canada modernize the policy to be more reflective and inclusive of current practices in the acquisition, preservation, and access to Canada's heritage.

Research libraries are committed to developing, providing access to and preserving Canadian documentary heritage. Libraries include archives, special collections and museums within their portfolios. They hold significant and substantial heritage collections including: legal deposit collections of Canadian and Quebec imprints (LAC and BAnQ); rare books (e.g. Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto); special collections (e.g. historical maps, artefacts), archives (which may private archives or university archives or both), e.g. the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation Archives at the University of Manitoba); Canadian media collections (e.g. EMI Collection at the University of Calgary); Canadian web archives (which many Canadian academic libraries collaborate to capture); repositories of Canadian scholarly publications; and, collections of Canadiana (e.g. CRKN Heritage Collections).

Given the critical and robust heritage collections held by the Canadian research library community and our commitment to providing broad access to benefit the public good, we recommend that the government change the name of the policy to the Canadian Heritage Policy. This would acknowledge libraries as cultural heritage institutions and the critical role we play in the access and preservation of Canadian cultural heritage materials.

Digitization is important for the long-term preservation and access of our documentary heritage. It affords greater accessibility to these invaluable materials. Certainly, digital access to our national heritage has a positive impact on research and education, and furthers our cultural production, national pride and unity. Preservation through digitization is not only critical to remain relevant and sustainable but is critically important in saving collections that are at risk.

Heritage institutions need to be able to address systemic issues and colonial structures within their own structures, practices and collections. This includes but is not limited to reviewing and removing biases in the description of collections and spaces. Libraries have begun work to develop respectful terminologies and amendments to subject headings and names used in our access systems, and we are committed to continuing these efforts. Partnerships between Indigenous people and heritage institutions are fundamental in the development of national standards for describing heritage collections. Federal funding programs that support these partnerships would facilitate this collaborative work and ensure sensitivity to local dialects and orthography and the proper use of terminology, including names for Nations, communities, clans, families, and place names. There is also the need to review, amend, and control access to sensitive Indigenous materials through the labelling of access rights.

In addition, developing a funding mechanism to recruit new professionals as well as to train existing heritage and cultural professionals would support the goals of "Moved to Action: Activating UNDRIP in Canadian Museums" Furthermore, enriched expertise and additional education would raise self-awareness and develop internal policies to overcome inherited racism and biases among GLAM professionals. Additional support in this area would enhance and expand collaboration with Indigenous communities, ensuring these communities control the interpretation of knowledge, representation of and access to Indigenous culture.

Heritage institutions must facilitate barrier-free access for underprivileged communities. Commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion should be demonstrated through free access to heritage collections, online access for remote communities and ensuring physical spaces reflect the diversity of Canadians.

To address this inequality, heritage institutions need to develop our community of practitioners to be more inclusive and reflective of the communities our collections represent, to create a more comprehensive record of our diverse history. It would provide communities the authority to represent their own heritage, offer innovative and respectful ways to share cultural heritage (both physically and online).

Addressing the needs for people with print disabilities, libraries have begun work in developing standards on descriptive metadata and other standards to aid in the finding of materials without barriers, but much more needs to be done. The disparity between access to materials between sighted users and those with print disabilities is hugely unbalanced (less than 10% of the world's material is available in a format for those with print disabilities) and this needs to be addressed aggressively and quickly if there is any hope to move toward equality.

Finally, research libraries are collectors of fonds – collections that are donated to research libraries not only for their long-term preservation, but also to contribute to the richness of primary source materials used by researchers in their scholarly activities. The Cultural Property Export and Import Act was created to protect Canada's national heritage by putting in place controls on the export of, and tax incentives for, objects of historical, scientific, and

cultural significance. Recent changes to the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board's Guide to Monetary Appraisals, have had a significant impact on the ability to acquire fonds of national and historical significance as the way in which CCPERB interprets "fair market value," no longer recognizes long standing appraisal processes and is creating a culture for limiting Indigenous peoples, Black and racialized Canadians, immigrants, persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQI+ populations to benefit from tax incentives for donating their cultural property. Canada's diverse history will be lost.

Preservation and access are a core mandate of heritage institutions and our collective work must not only continue but expand, while better recognizing the perspectives and access requirements of Indigenous and marginalized communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this consultation and we look forward to participating in future consultations to engage more fully in this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Haigh".

Susan Haigh
Executive Director

cc. Susan Parker, Chair, CARL Policy and Advocacy Committee