

Course Plan

Course Topic

Inclusion and Museum Display: Strategies for Creating a Culturally Inclusive Visitor Experience

Workplace

Ontario Museum Association (OMA)

This will be an online e-learning course to be hosted on the association's website, as part of a new province-wide initiative undertaken by the OMA to take active steps toward introducing greater cultural inclusivity in the province's museums. The choice for an online course is guided in part by the requirements of the pandemic but will also have value as a flexible option for future educational or training purposes.

Audience

Museum curators who are members of the OMA and have access to the organization's website for the purpose of professional development and training. These are museum professionals at various stages of their careers: some have many years of experience in the sector, while others may be early career professionals with less experience. Each group (and individual) will bring their own set of biases and expectations to the content. For example, the more seasoned among them may be less familiar with the content and perhaps reticent to make changes to the status quo, while the less experienced (and often younger) ones may be more familiar with the subject matter and motivated to adopt the strategies proposed. The course content will need to account for this diversity of attitudes. Since the audience will be online rather than in person, the course will also need to find creative ways to sustain the learner's interest in the content. While the audience will have a number of characteristics generally in common (type and level of education, training and professional background, commitment to the field), individuals will be quite diverse in terms of personal characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, economic background, religion, physical ability). The course content will need to demonstrate awareness of and sensitivity toward the audience's own diversity and may use this (as appropriate) as an opportunity to build relatedness into the content (reflecting on or demonstrating the importance of inclusivity via the audience's own connections to the subject). As a course for an online audience, the content will also need to meet accessibility requirements (e.g., comply with WCAG and other accessibility guidelines; ensure clarity of content and colour relationships; be legible to screen readers, etc.). The course will be delivered in English, in which all audience members are expected to be proficient. As a course developed for Ontario there is no obligatory requirement for a French version, although this may be an option in the

future; the content will therefore ideally take into consideration a possible future need for translation into French or other languages.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Explain the significance of cultural inclusivity to the modern museum visitor's experience.
2. Recognize instances of cultural bias or barrier in current display practice.
3. Identify solutions to problematic forms of display that facilitate a variety of types of visitor engagement.
4. Apply the correct language and terminology to various display contexts and related content.
5. Identify strategies for addressing workplace conflicts, anxieties, or difficulties around cultivating cultural inclusivity in display practice.

Modules and Subtopics

Module 1. The Flexible Museum: The Importance of Cultural Inclusivity for Ontario's Museum Visitors

Subtopic 1: Introduction and Course Overview

Summary:

- welcome and introduction to the course
- overview of course content
- explanation of course structure, navigation, and what is expected of the learner (including short summaries at the end of each module, evaluations, and the course completion requirement)
- declaration of the course's purpose and learning outcomes (acknowledgement of the wider variety of possible types of inclusivity, beyond cultural; emphasis on the fact that this learning experience focuses on matters of cultural inclusivity)

Learning Outcomes:

- i. be familiar with the content and purpose of the course, and what is expected of the learner

Subtopic 2: The Culturally Inclusive Museum

Summary:

- defining cultural inclusivity within Ontario (the cultures and peoples in question)
- introduction to the various inclusivity initiatives taking place in the museum sector, in Ontario as well as throughout Canada and internationally (as directly relevant to the course content and its context)
- overview of the reasons why cultural inclusivity matters to museums; the impact that a lack of inclusivity can have in both the short and longer term
- outline of key considerations regarding cultural inclusivity that are directly relevant to Ontario's museums and their audiences

Learning Outcomes:

- i. explain the significance of cultural inclusivity to the museum, in broad strokes
- ii. identify the key inclusivity considerations relevant to Ontario's museums

Module 1 Summary and Evaluation:

A short bullet-point summary of key takeaways from Module 1, in preparation for the evaluation activity.

Self-Assessment Activity: one question (below) for the learner to respond to, in partial demonstration of their engagement with and comprehension of some of the module's content and achievement of the learning outcomes. The question is intended to prompt learners to reflect not only on the course content thus far but also their own nature and degree of thinking, proactivity, or contribution to the subject, and—if they feel these are inadequate—to start to think about what they might do (or want to do) to change this. This activity forms a bookend with the final evaluation activity, which asks the learner to reflect back on their original response through the lens of their experience of taking the course.

What do you think is the value of cultural inclusivity to Ontario's museums and their visitors? Take a moment to write down a few lines that sum up what you've done—or would like to do—to actively contribute toward the inclusive museum. Put your response to one side. You will need it again at the end of the course!

Module 2. Potential Barriers in Display Practice and Proposed Solutions

Subtopic 3: What are the Problems?

Summary:

- outline of the key issues, problems, biases, and barriers presented by current museum display practices regarding cultural inclusivity
- identification of various types of visitors and their specific needs and expectations
- examples of problematic display practices (relevant to cultural inclusivity)

- key threads of the current industry discussion around these problems

Learning Outcomes:

- i. identify some of the key problems in current museum display practice
- ii. recognize instances of bias or barrier in display practice

Subtopic 4: What are the Solutions?

Summary:

- introduction to best practices and various strategies proposed and/or adopted, within current museum practice, as solutions to the problems outlined above
- consideration of the relative efficacy of these solutions (some more successful, some less so); how their success has been measured, and what the results of these analyses tell us for future practice

Learning Outcomes:

- i. identify some of the best practices and specific strategies to adopt in order to address problems in display practice and facilitate a greater variety of types of visitor engagement
- ii. distinguish between and evaluate the relative usefulness of alternative strategies and solutions

Subtopic 5: Case Study

Summary:

- case study: brief analysis of one example of a problematic display and the strategies adopted to address/solve it
- outcome and impact of this case study, and what we can learn from it

Learning Outcomes:

- i. be able to extrapolate and apply information (problem identification and solution-strategy proposal) to a specific, concrete example of museum display

Module 2 Summary and Evaluation:

A short bullet point summary of key takeaways from Module 2, in preparation for the evaluation activity.

Suggestion Box Response Activity: ask learners to provide at least two possible solutions to a sample complaint from a museum “suggestion box” (below), oriented around a specific cultural inclusivity topic. The complaint specifically addresses a problematic museum display scenario (this could be a written response on the learner’s part, or a multiple-choice question that asks them to choose the appropriate response from various options).

“I visited your museum today because I was really excited to see exhibition X but was shocked to find that it included racially offensive dolls. I don’t understand how this was allowed. What are you going to do about this?”

Module 3. Inclusive Language and its Place in Cultural and Historical Interpretation

Subtopic 6: Words Matter! Inclusive Language in Museum Display

Summary:

- overview of inclusive language guidelines adopted within Ontario museums (as relevant to various types of museum display content/materials/formats, including print and digital iterations)
- introduction to key terminology and examples of usage
- identification of various types of visitor audiences and their needs and expectations

Learning Outcomes:

- i. specify the inclusive language guidelines specific to the Ontario museum sector
- ii. be familiar with a wide variety of inclusive terms and vocabulary, and understand the display contexts in which they can or should be adopted

Subtopic 7: Strategies for Using Inclusive Language, with Examples

Summary:

- outline specific strategies for incorporating inclusive language into display materials
- strategies for incorporating inclusive language within historical interpretation; advice on navigating potential conflicts (real or perceived) between inclusive language and historical content/interpretation
- one short case study that provides a concrete example of this practice

Learning Outcomes:

- i. identify strategies for using inclusive language in display practice
- ii. apply inclusive language to concrete examples of display practice
- iii. recognize opportunities to appropriately incorporate inclusive language within historical interpretation content

Module 3 Summary and Evaluation:

A short bullet point summary of key takeaways from Module 3, in preparation for the evaluation activity.

Vocabulary Activity: learners actively demonstrate their knowledge of, and ability to make appropriate use of, culturally inclusive language, in two specific contexts of usage that relate to the Ontario museum sector's guidelines. Learners are also asked to think about inclusive language in relation to historical interpretation. This could be a "drag-and-drop" activity (in which the learner drags the correct term into the correct box) or a "mix-and-match" activity (which asks the learner to pair up the correct term with the correct context). (*This activity will also specifically address Course Learning Outcome 4: "Apply the correct language and terminology to various display contexts and related content," as well as the learning outcomes under Subtopics 6 and 7, above).

Module 4. Taking Action: Collaboration and Communication

Subtopic 8: Collaboration vs. Conflict

Summary:

- outline of principles and practices to adopt that encourage and promote inclusivity on a broader workplace scale and cultivate a supportive workplace inclusivity initiative
- strategies for addressing potential conflicts or disagreements regarding the introduction of new practices

Learning Outcomes:

- i. identify principles and practices that promote inclusivity in the workplace
- ii. name some useful tools to adopt for conflict resolution

Subtopic 9: Communicating Inclusivity to Your Audiences

Summary:

- a consideration of when, how, and what to communicate about your institution's inclusivity initiative to your various audiences (public visitors, staff, board members); examples of what to say
- outline of active steps to take, going forward: e.g., soliciting public and SME input and feedback, coordinating with other institutions, collaborating with colleagues, etc.
- strategies for anticipating and addressing visitor queries, complaints, suggestions

Learning Outcomes:

- i. demonstrate how, when, and what to communicate about cultural inclusivity to a specific stakeholder audience
- ii. identify some of the specific next steps to take, at both individual and institutional levels

Module 4 Summary and Evaluation:

A short bullet point summary of key takeaways from Module 4, in preparation for the evaluation activity.

Short Quiz: a multiple-choice quiz with 4 questions that ask learners to demonstrate their understanding of this section's content (questions address specific communication steps to take, variable contexts and audiences, and strategies for conflict resolution).

Final Course Evaluation:

Self-Reflection Activity: learners are prompted to return to the question from the initial Self-Assessment Activity and asked to reflect on how the course may have influenced or changed their response:

Take another look at your response to the Self-Assessment question you were asked at the start of the course. Have your ideas changed? What do you think is the value of cultural inclusivity to Ontario's museums and their visitors? What steps will you take to contribute to this inclusivity?

Share your responses with your colleagues and use them as a starting point for learning, conversation, and action.

Conclusion

Message of encouragement and prompt for continued learning, and list of resources for future reference (final slide)

Congratulations on completing the course! You've taken the first important step toward making meaningful change for your visitors. Here are some resources to help you and your visitors thrive on your journey toward creating a culturally inclusive museum!

Evaluations

4 short evaluation activities at the end of each module, and 1 at the end of the entire course.

These evaluations address the content of each respective module, and (in the case of the final evaluation activity) ask the learner to reflect back over the content of the entire course.

The learner will pass the course if they complete each activity (completion is the only requirement to pass the course).

Learners will also have the opportunity to navigate back through the course and re-do/re-read the evaluations if they want to.