



# Indigenous Engagement Policy

Name of museum: Hastings Museum & Art Gallery

Name of governing body: Hastings Borough Council

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Policy review procedure: This policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

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## 1. Introduction

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery is a community museum that aims to inspire people and connect communities. The museum aims to inform and inspire people's interest in the cultural and natural heritage of Hastings, and address relevant contemporary issues by:

- Collecting, preserving and interpreting material evidence of the past
- Enriching people's lives and creating a sense of place and identity
- Stimulating creativity, inspiration and enjoyment
- Engaging with the widest possible audience.

The museum has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its vision and aims. The museum's collections include a significant collection of Native American objects. This Indigenous Engagement Policy sets out the considerations for working with Indigenous collections and source communities.

This policy introduces guidelines for Hastings Museum & Art Gallery to use when working with Indigenous people and collections.<sup>1</sup> This includes, but is not limited to collections projects, storage, research, digital initiatives, commercial activities, major redevelopments, re-displays and exhibitions, significant funding bids, and educational programming. This policy provides a starting point from which members of staff should receive further training to support their work with Indigenous peoples and collections.

## 2. Principles

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery treats Indigenous people and collections with the utmost respect and dignity. We acknowledge that the museum acquired and continues to hold collections of material culture from Indigenous communities and nations and that this can create an imbalanced relationship between the museum and those collectives.

- We acknowledge that items now in the collections may have been acquired in situations of unequal relations of power related to colonial and imperial histories.
- We also acknowledge our responsibility to provide access to these collections for Indigenous communities and nations and to work with them to support their needs.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that the funding under which this policy was developed was from the Arts and Humanities Research Council via the *Beyond the Spectacle* research project. This funding was specifically entailed towards an examination of Native American interactions with the UK museum sector, and the recommendations which follow reflect that research focus. The document is however designed in such a way that its recommendations can with little adaptation be deployed to other collections and peoples from other continents.

- We acknowledge that the presence of items in museums can be traumatic for Indigenous visitors to encounter because of the difficult histories attached to them, and wish to support Indigenous visitors during engagements with them.

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery acknowledges the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to which the United Kingdom is a signatory, and this policy engages with Articles 11 and 12 of that Declaration:

#### *Article 11*

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to practise and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature.
2. States shall provide redress through effective mechanisms, which may include restitution, developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples, with respect to their cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs.

#### *Article 12*

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practise, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies; the right to maintain, protect, and have access in privacy to their religious and cultural sites; the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects; and the right to the repatriation of their human remains.
2. States shall seek to enable the access and/or repatriation of ceremonial objects and human remains in their possession through fair, transparent and effective mechanisms developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples concerned.

### **3. Definitions**

#### **3.1 Indigenous Peoples**

This museum recognises the UN Definition of Indigenous Peoples (2004)<sup>2</sup>:

“Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, “Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Voices – Factsheet,” [https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session\\_factsheet1.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf).

prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system.

This historical continuity may consist of the continuation, for an extended period reaching into the present of one or more of the following factors:

- a. Occupation of ancestral lands, or at least of part of them;
- b. Common ancestry with the original occupants of these lands;
- c. Culture in general, or in specific manifestations (such as religion, living under a tribal system, membership of an indigenous community, dress, means of livelihood, lifestyle, etc.);
- d. Language (whether used as the only language, as mother-tongue, as the habitual means of communication at home or in the family, or as the main, preferred, habitual, general or normal language);
- e. Residence on certain parts of the country, or in certain regions of the world;
- f. Other relevant factors.

On an individual basis, an indigenous person is one who belongs to these indigenous populations through self-identification as indigenous (group consciousness) and is recognized and accepted by these populations as one of its members (acceptance by the group).”

The museum acknowledges that Indigenous collections were obtained from living peoples, and that descendants of these communities still exist today for whom the objects have meaning. These collections include material recovered from archaeological contexts.

### **3.2 Knowledge and authority**

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery recognises that its staff expertise is limited regarding Indigenous collections. We seek to increase our understanding of these materials by working with members of communities of origin as well as with specialist scholars.

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery aspires to create an internal working group tasked with developing a plan, as funding and resource permit, to identify or confirm

identifications of Indigenous items in the collection. Where possible this will take place through collaboration with wider networks of museum and community experts, as a starting point for notifying communities of origin about the collections the museum holds.

The working group will meet at regular intervals to consider external funding options, discuss project possibilities and communicate with experts to offer preliminary identification of collections by region, culture and community, and to begin to link historic collections to contemporary communities. A key responsibility will be to obtain external funding support for consultation projects with community members in order to facilitate community access, develop educational programming, correct misinformation, and ensure best interpretation and care of collections. The working group will aspire to keep up to date with current events and heritage initiatives in the communities from which their collections originate.

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery staff are aware that Indigenous community members may have differing understandings of and views on heritage/cultural items in the collections and the museum will commit to incorporating these views into staff practice moving forwards. Staff will, with permission, record Indigenous views of the collections in the museum archives, under the understanding that such records are publicly accessible and that all sources of information are named as transparent practices of good scholarship around collections.

Where we are aware or are informed that objects have cultural or ceremonial significance, or problematic acquisition histories that makes their display or use potentially harmful to Indigenous visitors or communities, the museum will refrain from publicly displaying these items without adequate consultation and permission from the communities involved, and if displayed, with full contextualisation.

Where we have reason to believe that items in the collection are modern fakes, we will document our reasons for this in museum records and refrain from displaying these materials without full contextualisation. We acknowledge that display of faked material can be offensive to Indigenous visitors, and we will signal clearly in all documentation that items are in fact non-Indigenous replicas. We would exhibit such items only in ways which acknowledge their problematic status and address Indigenous concerns about their provenance, and seek advice from Indigenous collaborators as to the most appropriate way to proceed with such objects.

#### **4. Repatriation and Retention**

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery holds collections from Indigenous communities for display, research and educational purposes. The museum presents a clear rationale for how it uses collections and will provide a clear statement on request as to why and how these collections are being used or stored. The museum will provide an honest, clear and realistic intention of future usage of these collections, and ensure that as far as is possible, access and engagement with the collections are not impeded when not on public display.

It may be that an Indigenous community will request that objects be repatriated. In this circumstance, Hastings Museum & Art Gallery's collections working group will discuss the repatriation of requested parts of the collections back to their source communities. This will be long-term negotiated process, through which decisions concerning the formal transfer of objects from the collection to communities will take place.

All relevant staff should be aware of the Indigenous Repatriation Handbook, compiled by Indigenous Canadian curators and the Royal British Columbia Museum, and be fully conversant with the issues it raises and the best practice it recommends. It is available for download at

[https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/sites/default/files/indigenous\\_repatriation\\_handbook\\_rbcm\\_2019.pdf](https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/sites/default/files/indigenous_repatriation_handbook_rbcm_2019.pdf)

Should Hastings Museum & Art Gallery receive a repatriation request from a community or authorised intermediary, the working group should set out to establish the following information:

- A full history of the object(s) in question, including the circumstances of acquisition and its use within the museum since acquisition.
- An understanding of the importance of the object to the community making the repatriation request.
- A designated person or institution, appropriate to act as receiver of the requested object(s).

This process can be time-consuming and require significant staff engagement. The working group should establish and communicate a realistic timescale for this process, outlining clearly the stages required to the requester. Where required, the working group should identify external consultants qualified to review the claim, and prepare budgets and funding applications for the costs involved.

A report will be prepared outlining the findings of this research programme to be circulated to museum stakeholders and the makers of the repatriation request. This will outline clearly the contributory factors involved in deciding whether to proceed with the repatriation, and make a recommendation.

It is crucial that all outstanding claims on object(s) are settled before a decision is made. Communities who may have alternative claims should be consulted, and the process paused until all communities with a claim have reached an agreement on which of them should be the recipient of the object(s) in question. Any conditions which form part of this process on either side, such as photography or scientific study, will be agreed in writing at this stage.

Once a designated recipient has been determined, the claim will be assessed by senior museum management and the museum's governance body for approval. Decisions as to repatriation will be taken on a case by case basis, with the presumption that human ancestral remains, sacred or privileged artefacts, and acquisitions made under circumstances which would today be illegal will be prioritised for repatriation to their communities of origin.

The future use or care of object(s) by communities after repatriation will not be factor in this decision-making process, neither will it be contingent on any payment or payment-in-kind by the Indigenous community.

If the claim is not approved, the report and a detailed explanation of the decision will be supplied to the requestor, with the right of appeal. If the claim is approved, the working group will supply the report and all relevant documentation to its governing body, processing the repatriation claim in accordance with ethical deaccession policy, as described by the Museum Association (which are available online at <https://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=11113>).

The governing body will, based on the recommendation of the working group, ratify the decision of the senior museum management, or if they do not, will present clear reasons why they have refused, with an invitation to resubmit once concerns have been addressed. Hastings Museum & Art Gallery Indigenous working group will take responsibility for packing the object(s) for repatriation, as well as obtaining UK export licences. Agreement on responsibility for of any fees resulting will form part of the repatriation agreement, with the understanding that external funding may have to be obtained as part of the process.

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery will also take responsibility for facilitating any ceremonial activities surrounding the repatriation, as required by Indigenous partners. All correspondence, reports and other documentation pertaining to the repatriation will remain on file at the museum for future reference, to establish process and authority over repatriation, should competing claims emerge in the future. Should a case arise in which Indigenous objects are no longer considered part of the museums core collections, and are deemed for whatever reason unsuitable for return to source communities (for example, if provenance cannot be established or the community does not want them returned), then Hastings Museum & Art Gallery will follow Museum Association guidelines on ethical disposal in accordance Hastings Museum & Art Gallery's Collection Development and Disposals policies.

## **5. Cultural Sensitivity**

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery is aware that its collections may contain items which are deemed sensitive, gendered, animate, or secret/sacred to Indigenous peoples. We will strive to learn more about these issues as we work with members of Indigenous communities, and add any information received to the Museum's records about specific items and their appropriate treatment.

We will endeavour to catalogue and describe all Indigenous collections clearly to provide warnings when items are deemed to be culturally sensitive by Indigenous communities. This will enable people to avoid encountering the object or photographs of it should they not wish to see it. This consideration particularly applies to human remains, material thought to have been removed from burial sites and objects with religious or spiritual power. The museum will make every effort to store, conserve, interpret and display collections in accordance with the cultural protocols of the source communities. We will seek guidance on culturally appropriate collections care issues from Indigenous consultants and in collaboration with specialist researchers and organisations, such as the Museum Ethnographers Group, who can share knowledge from Indigenous co-researchers.

The museum will make decisions regarding display, storage and access of collections on a case-by-case basis on objects that have cultural restrictions placed on them by source communities, based on advice from those communities. It will consider the feasibility, legal implications and health and safety regulations when making these decisions. Once decisions have been made Hastings Museum & Art Gallery is will make all parties, staff and Indigenous communities aware of the reasons for choosing the action it takes. This information will be added to the collections management system and also the object files.

## **6. Governance / Indigenous voice**

We recognize the importance of including Indigenous peoples in the care of Indigenous heritage items. As part of our plan to improve the care of Indigenous collections, we aspire to locate and build relationships with appropriate Indigenous advisors who can participate in meetings and provide guidance on a regular basis. We will build into future planning, research, storage and gallery projects appropriate budget lines to include advisors for particular Indigenous collections to advise the Museum on future care and display of these collections, including honoraria for advisors and appropriate travel funding. We will minute, archive and implement Indigenous advisors' advice as far as possible given resource limitations. We will communicate Indigenous advisors' guidance to the museum's governing stakeholders, and when appropriate, we will consider appointing Indigenous collaborators to governing bodies.

## **7. Guidelines**

The following sections each provided detailed guidance on how Hastings Museum & Art Gallery will appropriately handle engagement with Indigenous collections and the peoples from whom they came originally.

### **7.1 Opening communications with Indigenous communities**

Indigenous communities have the right to know where their material culture is kept in collections. The Museum acknowledges its responsibility to ensure collections are accurately identified and to maintain contact with communities of origin, as resource permits.

Once communities of origin are confirmed by the working group listed in Section 3 , the Museum will, as resource permits:

- Aspire to proactively contact tribal cultural centres or heritage officers where possible to inform them that Hastings Museum & Art Gallery may hold collections from their communities.
- Provide these correspondents a list of the objects within the collection, with images where possible, and include any information known about their circumstances of transfer to the Museum (including collector name)
- Ensure that the Indigenous community understands that they are welcome to nominate representatives to give advice to the working group on appropriate storage, display and interpretation of the objects, and to inform Museum staff how the Museum can most productively work with community members to support community access.

The working group is aware that heritage officers, NAGPRA officers, cultural centres and other community contacts change over time, and will aspire to maintain contacts and if necessary locate other appropriate community advisors if initial contacts fail to respond. The Museum recognises that many Indigenous people live outside Indigenous communities, and aspires as resource permits to make images and information about the collections available publicly, where possible online.

When engaging in dialogue with Indigenous people Hastings Museum & Art Gallery will aspire to:

- make every effort to fulfil requests for images and information in a timely manner
- keep Indigenous correspondents honestly informed of resources and timescales, alterations based on their advice and limitations of what is possible
- ask Indigenous contributors if it is appropriate to record information and where that is the case, permanently archive, as far as is compliant with data-protection and GDPR laws, all communications with Indigenous communities or correspondents.
- Remember that community partners are often working voluntarily, and do not impose deadlines or conditions upon them, allowing them to define the pace of progression on any collaboration.
- Ensure that any professional work undertaken by Indigenous partners at the museum's behest is compensated appropriately, at industry rates.

## **8. Digital Access to collections by Indigenous peoples**

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery will endeavour where possible to make Indigenous collections accessible via the internet. The Museum aspires to include the following information where possible:

- digital images of the objects. These can include but are not limited to low and high resolution images, survey images of the reverse, underside, inside, and construction/decoration details
- place of collection
- date of collection
- who it was collected by

- A clearly defined process by which Indigenous correspondents can provide feedback on records, through correspondence with the museum.

Where possible materials connected to living and identifiable descendants should be prioritised for digitisations of Indigenous collections. For further information on photography refer to section 6.7.

The Museum acknowledges advantages to participating in digital portals such as GRASAC and UBC's Reciprocal Research Network in order to provide greatest digital access for Indigenous peoples. The working group will explore opportunities to collaborate with these networks, aspires to participate in principle, with the understanding that external funding and resources will likely be required to implement such participation.

### **9. Physical access to collections by Indigenous peoples**

We acknowledge that Indigenous researchers may have personal and cultural requirements for their engagement with collection items, and we will support these to the best of our ability. When planning visits by Indigenous peoples to visit Hastings Museum & Art Gallery will:

- Explain in the first instance the nature of the collections which are available
- Provide a range of dates on which the collections can be accessed
- Provide details of the physical and environmental nature of the space in which the encounter will take place
- Provide details of any regulations attached to the visit and discuss normal museum protocol for working with researchers (eg. visits are normally invigilated by staff; staff work with visitors to determine the limits of handling for especially fragile items; what happens with gifts and offerings; how smudging (the burning of sweetgrass as a blessing) or water cleansing are normally managed)
- Ask Indigenous visitors for any specific requirements they may have – these may include but may not be limited to a desire for privacy while working with collections, prayer, ceremony (including making offerings and smudging or cleansing with water) or performance in honour of the objects, a desire for handling or wearing of objects in question.
- Be open to serious discussion of issues such as authority over collections and repatriation, with reference to existing established policy and processes, and including key stakeholders.
- Hastings Museum & Art Gallery will try to facilitate access to as many objects as possible during visits by Indigenous groups. However, it will be honest about the

restrictions with Indigenous visitors, and will agree a list of objects to be viewed during the visit in advance to limit any disappointment.

- Agree who from the museum staff will be present during the meeting
- Ask for a list of the Indigenous groups delegation members
- Agree photography permissions for taking photographs of the visit by the museum for any use including for publicity or publications
- Make visitors aware of local refreshment options, agreeing catering and dietary requirements where possible.
- Offer the opportunity for the delegation to deliver engagement activities and/or staff training as part of their visit to the museum's visitors, but do not expect these services to be provided without compensation.
- Follow up requests for further information made during the visit in a timely manner

When supporting Indigenous visitors access to the collections on site Hastings Museum & Art Gallery staff will:

- Approach these interactions with an open mind and in a respectful manner.
- Acknowledge that the encounter may be deeply emotional and even distressing for Indigenous visitors, as well as inspiring, and seek to support visitors
- Verbally reconfirm permission for taking of photographs during the visit and discuss how images might be used by the museum. All photographs taken will be made available to the delegation for use without reservation or restrictions. Any museum uses of images should be reconfirmed for each use (e.g. social media, annual report, grant applications). Staff members also have the right to refuse to appear in photographs.
- Offer opportunities for educational programming or public speaking should visitors wish to engage with the public, and be open to discussion of commercial opportunities for visitors within the museum's commercial spaces.

## **10. Facilitating ceremonies by Indigenous visitors**

Ceremonies in relation to object collections are common, and range from prayers in Indigenous languages through dances honouring historic ancestors, burning of food stuffs or other materials and smudging ceremonies. Hastings Museum & Art Gallery will honour requests from Indigenous peoples for ceremonies as far as possible by:

- Providing clear guidance for visitors on accessibility and capability via the museum's website.

- Honest communication in the initial stages of the visit can allow for respectful negotiation on these issues in advance
- Working with Indigenous researchers to understand what kind of space is needed and with colleagues to provide suitable spaces for ceremonies within the building, the Museum grounds, or identifying and securing appropriate permissions for suitable alternative nearby locations for the ceremonies (e.g. public parks).
- Clarify in advance whether the ceremony is public or private. If public then the museum should make patrons aware that it is to take place, the serious nature of the event and the importance of respectful observation.
- Clarify in advance whether museum staff are welcome to participate or to witness and what is not appropriate for staff to do.
- Determine whether smoke detectors can be turned off for ceremonies involving smoke, and if not, explain to Indigenous visitors and offer outdoor spaces. Ceremonial participants may be asked to work with staff to facilitate such ceremonies indoors by limiting the amount of material burned so as not to set off smoke detectors; fire personnel may be appropriately involved as witnesses; or staff may choose to move collections outdoors so they can be smudged.
- Agree a timetable and include time for quiet reflection after the ceremony.

The space in which an interaction between Indigenous peoples and collections takes place should be prepared in advance of the visit. Hastings Museum & Art Gallery will make sure that:

- The room is uncluttered and with space for the visitors to move about. Care should be taken that there are no materials in the room which might cause offence. Where a choice of rooms is possible, the room should be situated so that inappropriate environmental conditions, such as excessive noise, do not intrude
- Suitable lighting is provided if there is limited or no natural light
- The room is accessible for all visitors; Indigenous groups often include elders who may have mobility difficulties
- Only staff essential to the visit and approved in advance are in the room

## **11. Staff briefing and approach**

The museum will nominate a manager to coordinate the visit, who will:

- Ensure staff interacting directly with supporting Indigenous visitors are aware of supporting material to fulfil the encounter in a respectful manner and support collaborative engagement.

- Make all museum staff aware, whether or not they are specifically involved in co-ordinating the visit, that Indigenous people will be visiting the museum and ensure that visitors receive a warm welcome. Respectful protocol for engaging with visitors, including modes of address, should be established in advance and circulated to all staff, and where staff are aware that Indigenous engagements with collection items may require specific ceremonies, all colleagues should be briefed on what to expect and how to behave.
- All staff and volunteers directly facilitating the visit should be briefed regarding the nature/cultural affiliation(s) of the visitors, the nature of the collections to be worked with the agreed timetable, and any known requirements on space and noise and any potential disruption to the museum's standard operations.
- Ensure that the visit is integrated with the museum's environment. For example, quiet contemplative visits or engagements with ancestral remains/sensitive materials should not be disturbed by noisy school groups or routine maintenance. Visitor services/front of house staff should also be supported in any potentially emotionally charged conversations with visitors or ceremonial activity in the public areas of the museum.
- Museum staff must recognise that Indigenous visitors can come to the museum as learners rather than as experts, and that even Indigenous visitors who know about items may not wish or be able to comment on them. Terms under which information is shared should be agreed in advance, and staff should refrain from directly questioning Indigenous visitors during the visit about the collections they are working with outside these agreements. After a visit it may be appropriate for staff to ask if the visitor has information they wish the Museum to add to the records, making it clear that such records are publicly available and online. Information volunteered by the Indigenous visitors should be recorded and placed directly into the catalogue records for the object in question with permission and full attribution.

## **12. Handling**

In order to facilitate culturally appropriate forms of engagement with historic collections, and reconnection with items long held away from communities, Hastings Museum & Gallery will endeavour to support handling access to Indigenous collections during visits – even if this goes against normal procedures and practice. Handling will only not be permitted when the collections pose a risk to health or are too fragile to be touched, and will be clearly explained to visitors in such cases. Where possible staff should work across departments (conservation, curatorial, technical services) to support handling and use.

Hastings Museum & Gallery will ensure standard collections care assessment practices are followed when assessing the suitability of collections for handling during these visits. Where it is not possible to touch the collections this will be communicated in advance to the delegation and full and proper reasons given for this decision.

The museum will aspire to ensure that requests for more elaborate forms of contact with collections are met where possible. These may include requests to wear clothing or even to dance in it, to play musical implements or to experiment with weapons and equipment handling. These should be considered on a case by case basis, and where harm to the object and visitor can be minimised and where doing so would have a significant beneficial effect for the visitor it should be permitted.

Staff are encouraged to work with Indigenous visitors to seek creative solutions in order to support Indigenous engagements. Staff should not view physical alterations to items as a result of handling as damage to the object, but as marks of the item's ongoing biography and interaction with the Indigenous communities from which it came.

### **13. Privacy**

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery will honour requests for Indigenous visitors to spend time alone with the objects. Where it is imperative that staff do remain in the room, those staff should make every effort to remain inconspicuous and provide the visitors with privacy in the space. Ensure phones are off or silent, avoid typing or other intrusive activity and do not take photographs unless explicitly invited to do so. Do not interrupt unless safety is imperilled.

### **14. Children**

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery welcomes children as part of Indigenous delegations. We recognise the critical opportunities for education and exploration that these experiences offer for children of Indigenous communities. Children will be permitted in the research space and other secure areas of the museum, and provided with appropriate health and safety and safeguarding procedures are followed.

### **15. Photography**

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery will provide existing digital images of collections to Indigenous people for free and without any restrictions on copyright or use. Low- or high-resolution images should be supplied as required and available and accessible. New images should be available for commission at cost.

## **16. Catering**

For some Indigenous visitors, particularly those who live in very different conditions to the UK, diet can be highly problematic (many Indigenous visitors may be diabetic, lactose-intolerant etc.). will acknowledge any catering and dietary requirements in advance of the visit, and attempt to provide local options for visitors as possible.

## **17. Gifts**

Gifts are a common part of many Indigenous encounters with museum collections, and are usually reflective of a mutual respect and collaboration. Museum staff should prepare to receive gifts at the end of a visit, and should prepare to reciprocate with an appropriate gift. This could be a guidebook to the museum or local community. Institutional gifts of substantial value should be accessioned into the museum's collection as a respectful legacy of the exchange. Gifts of token value may be kept by staff, based on personal and management discretion.

## **18. Collections care and management**

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery welcomes maintains its collections management and care practice in line with Accreditation and sector best-practice standards.

### **18.1 Documentation**

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery will, where possible, update collections documentation to include Indigenous terminologies and taxonomies. The museum is mindful that traditional categorisations used by UK museums may be inaccurate and can be offensive to Indigenous visitors, and in such cases staff will endeavour to consult directly on appropriate terminology, replace offensive terms where possible and provide content warnings where not (i.e. historical document archives).

### **18.1 Storage**

- Access to the collections stores is strictly controlled, to ensure that untrained or unauthorised persons are unable to interact with the collections in ways which might potentially be disrespectful.
- Storage of collections adheres to best practice guidelines for the sector but can be modified to meet cultural protocols. Indigenous visitors should be granted access to any storage areas housing material culture from their communities, supervised for their safety, to see how materials are stored.
- If the museum uses plastic wrap, Tyvek or other forms of non-organic protective covering, particularly if these materials will still be present during a visit to the collection, then the reasons for this should be clearly articulated within the museum's own policy document, explaining the hazards they mitigate, the materials from which they are made, and the methods by which they are attached.

## **19. Display and interpretation**

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery will follow these guidelines to ensure that all displays which feature Indigenous material culture or history are respectful and appropriate. Many Indigenous visitors will visit [museum name] without prior announcement, and the museum should aspire to ensure that all such visitors are accommodated in the museum space without prior individual arrangement.

### **19.1 Consultancy**

For new projects involving Indigenous collections, including redisplay, Hastings Museum & Art Gallery will aim to include Indigenous voices in the process. This will be achieved through using Indigenous consultancy determined through collaboration with communities of origin and incorporated into funding applications to support this work where there is no core budget available. Indigenous consultants will be incorporated into the decision-making process via a clear working agreement, and involved in developing the schedule to ensure that community decision making, via workshops and presentations, is made possible. Feedback should be documented and incorporated whenever possible, and when it is not clear rationale for its omission based on time, resource and institutional policy should be given to the Indigenous consultant in writing and preserved for the record.

### **19.2 Key priorities**

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery accepts that Indigenous priorities within a gallery space are not necessarily the same as British priorities, and these potential competitors must be reconciled as part of the development process.

Key Indigenous priorities to enable this process include:

Recognition of cultural difference. European-imposed categories rarely apply effectively across Indigenous collections for Indigenous peoples. Indigenous collections come from specific peoples and places, and where known these original owners should be acknowledged in displays, along with Indigenous ways of understanding the objects.

Recognition of continuity. Although it is common for European collections to have been obtained in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, displays should ensure that they extend beyond this period in depiction – ensure that Indigenous communities are portrayed as living peoples, with evolving traditions, not fixed in time or authenticity due to the short-comings of collections. Acquire contemporary art where possible, and portray and discuss contemporary Indigenous life

Acknowledge in displays the harm which European governance and collecting practices has caused to Indigenous communities, as a first step to mitigating or even starting the healing process

Indigenous objects are not art in a classical European sense. Even contemporary Indigenous art does not exist without context, historic Indigenous art is nothing but context. Focusing on aesthetics to the exclusion of this context primitivises and misappropriates the object. Indigenous objects are not curiosities. They have meaning and significance which is often difficult for non-Indigenous audiences to grasp

Provide clear information on how visitors can provide feedback on the display, and review feedback regularly. Any feedback from Indigenous visitors will be specifically reviewed by the working group, who will assess the feasibility of affecting changes. Recognising that Indigenous objects require motion and voice to be properly understood is essential. Work with Indigenous consultancies to incorporate physicality and movement to the displays. Show how objects moved and interacted in their original contexts, for insight into their original roles in Indigenous material culture.

## **20. Educational programming**

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery provides educational resources to assist visitors, particularly school children, in interpreting the collections, and delivers educational programs to elementary, secondary and higher/further education students.

Such materials should be developed based on or in association with Indigenous consultancy, and should operate under the same consideration as the digital and physical gallery space listed in the previous section.

Activities should be respectful of Indigenous sensitivities, and avoid simplifying or objectifying objects or cultures, particularly those held to be sacred or socially reserved. Mimicry, which can be easily interpreted as mockery, such as non-Indigenous staff or visitors performing Indigenous songs or ceremonies, dressing-up or re-enacting exercises, should be avoided entirely unless specifically designed and permitted by an Indigenous partner.

Educational materials should emphasise continuity of Indigenous life, and direct students towards digital resources created by Indigenous people which highlight in particular Indigenous music, dance and other art forms not represented in the gallery space.

All educational material developed by specialist museum educators should be developed jointly by educational and curatorial teams, and double-checked by curatorial teams before publication to ensure errors have not occurred in the editorial process.

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery welcomes requests from Indigenous visitors to present on some aspect of their culture or art practice to our visitors. The museum will make all possible efforts to facilitate this opportunity, dependent on notice, space and scheduling. Hastings Museum & Art Gallery will not edit or censor these engagements, even when the visitor is critiquing or criticising the museum as part of the event. The museum will accept the criticism as constructive advice and try to act to resolve the issues raised.

## **21. Commercial opportunities**

If a museum is displaying Indigenous artworks, either historic or contemporary, it is important to recognise that the continued viability of commercial Indigenous art plays a vital role in the continuance of Indigenous artistic traditions.

Museums should therefore offer Indigenous artists from collaborating communities the opportunity to sell products, including but not limited to books, textiles, souvenirs, small-scale mass-produced artworks and large-scale commercial art, in the museum's shop, on terms mutually agreed under contract (such as sale-or-return, or on commission).

Non-Indigenous commercial designers, makers and other artists who wish to access Indigenous collections to develop commercial applications should be referred to appropriate Indigenous communities in the first instance, and only then to speak to the museum. This will ensure that there is no cultural appropriation of collections for commercial gain.

## **22. Publicity**

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery should promote and acknowledge the important Indigenous collections in their galleries through promotional literature and advertisements, but in doing so should follow the guidelines above to ensure that exploitation and stereotype are avoided and that such materials are sensitive and positive in their portrayal of Indigenous cultures.