

Indigenous Heritage Circle

NOTES FROM THE FIRST IHC ROUNDTABLE OTTAWA, 23 NOVEMBER 2016

The Indigenous Heritage Circle (IHC) was incorporated in early 2016 as a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of Indigenous cultural heritage. The Circle is an inclusive, Indigenous-designed cultural heritage organization that aims to have value for reconciliation and strengthening cultural practices, places and knowledge. The IHC has embarked on a series of roundtables and teleconferences to listen to ideas and recommendations concerning the organization's mandate and priorities.

Participants

IHC and Facilitators

Karen Aird	Director, IHC / Co-Facilitator
Julie Harris	Director, IHC / Notes
Alain Fournier	Co-facilitator
Madeleine Redfern	Director, IHC / Morning Call-in
Don Bain	Director, IHC / Afternoon Call-in

Roundtable

Angela Bercier	First Nations Confederacy and Cultural Education Centre
Beth Hanna	CEO, Ontario Heritage Trust
Dawn Setford	Executive Director, Aboriginal Arts Collective of Canada
Dr. Daniel Millette	First Nations Land Advisory Board
Hillory Tenute	Assembly of First Nations
Ian Badgley	Archaeologist, National Capital Commission
Jaime Koebel	National Gallery of Canada; Indigenous Walks
Karihwakè:ron	Director of Language, Assembly of First Nations
Tim Thompson	
Keri Cheechoo	PhD candidate, University of Ottawa
Lee-Ann Van Buekenhout	Métis Nation of Ontario
Natalie Bull	Executive Director, National Trust for Canada
Natascha Morrison	Historian / IHC Volunteer
Nathalie Gagnon	Indigenous Affairs Branch, Parks Canada
Paula Whitlow	Museum Director, Woodland Cultural Centre
Philip Goldring	Historical Consultant
Rene Tenasco	Aboriginal Affairs Liaison Officer, National Capital Commission
Ron Bernard	Elected member of Council, Algonquins of Pikwàkanagàn First Nation
Sarah Pash	Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute
Susan Ross	Professor, Indigenous & Canadian Studies, Carleton University



Indigenous Heritage Circle



Indigenous Heritage Circle
Cercle du patrimoine autochtone

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First Voices From the Roundtable

“At Pikwàkanagàn we are proud of choosing our name. In honour of our ancestors, we welcome you.”

“While there are gaps in seeing how this organization will proceed, it does provide a sense of optimism.”

“We need to acknowledge why our Elders stopped explaining.”

“We need to undo colonialism.”

“What we need is time to breath, to talk among ourselves. Everything is moving fast. We lost so much, a part of who we are.”

“Heritage is a pathway to identity and wellness.”

“Heritage is knowledge, customs, places, performances, storytelling, hunting, harvesting; it is our relationship with the land and our relationship with others; it is our values, honour, pride, and courage”

“We determine our own culture and heritage; we are autonomous.”

“How and why Indigenous heritage is represented and celebrated is up to Indigenous people.”

“Long before my ancestors lived and governed this territory we were a rich and prosperous nation. Remnants of ancestral values continue within us. Young people are asserting themselves through expressing pride as Anishnabe people. They identify themselves in places within the National Capital Region. They will never give up.”

“Whose truth? Our truth. We know our history and our relationship to the land.”

“We need to breathe; we spend too much time on conflict, not with each other but in trying to explain to others (including granting agencies) why we need to do things a certain way.”

“Educating non-Indigenous staff [about Indigenous experiences and protocols] takes up a lot of time. Indigenous employees need resources to answer questions such as: Why do there need to be opening ceremonies? Why do we smudge? Why do we pay elders? What is the difference between an opening and a welcome? These employees need somewhere to go to find these answers, and to support Indigenous inclusion and initiatives in national organizations. One person in an organization can't do it all!”

“Let First Nations have time to talk amongst themselves first. Colonization has muddled ideas of who they are and how they are organized...need time to sort this out within Nations. We need to ask questions about what government and settlers have really taken? What have they done? What have they destroyed? Need these answers before solutions can be found. It is one thing for an organization to say that they support First Nations, and another to act on this support. Organizations need to consult and collaborate, not just say they support.”

“Legal fights and wins don't necessarily mean much – we still need to advocate about what they mean and how communities can use the wins.”

“Uses of the land, living on the land, pathways and waterways, portages and trails. This is traditional knowledge that is still used today. The knowledge is not contained within a tangible place, but rather in the process of knowing. It needs to be protected.”

“Many organizations have developed their own protocols for dealing with heritage objects, and have brought in Elders to do so. Communicating our needs about the way we do the work we envision is difficult because it doesn't fit within methods and protocols in place already with organizations like the government or federal institutions.”

Key Notes About the IHC

Having a national institution will help to ensure the right information is shared, and work is done right. The IHC should be an opportunity for creating a voice; a community of action.

IHC should address three overlapping streams of interest: culture, heritage and language.

The IHC should write its mission/mandate as the external view (how others look at us) and the vision as the internal view (how we look at ourselves.)

Definitions are important; not for ourselves but for others. The language around the definitions is important too.

The IHC should host an event where the meaning of heritage is discussed in Indigenous languages. From there, the IHC can share concepts through translation into English and French.

IHC role should be to support structures and inherent rights of Indigenous peoples and communities, whether it is speaking about funding; setting up facilities to hold artifacts; supporting people working with museums; or advising on how people might begin to educate museums and organizations.

The IHC should work with Indigenous peoples to address natural heritage issues.

The IHC should put more emphasis on Indigenous languages – all of the elements discussed in the definition of heritage relate to language (e.g. knowledge, practices, etc.)

A national Indigenous heritage organization could open up definitions of heritage and allow us to do what needs to be done.

The IHC should be a working partnership and friendship for the protection of sacred places and for shifting the dialogue on our shared heritage.

Indigenous heritage includes records created by, or about, indigenous peoples, that illuminate their history. Elements of indigenous information, whether created by indigenous people or written down by others, contribute to wider society goals as well as to indigenous people themselves.

The IHC could help with practical solutions to common problems by consulting and networking to find options, provide training and contribute to the sharing of solutions and information.

Serving as a clearinghouse for information has value in itself.

The IHC should consider adapting the model of a Reciprocal Research Network and develop its own protocols for handling ideas and knowledge.

The IHC needs to address youth. We need to train young people to carry on the work being done by adults and Elders now.



More Ideas

It is important to be prepared to introduce our culture and heritage to newcomers to Canada.

Education is advocacy.

Organizations such as the IHC should apply the principles of UNDRIP.

Recognize and build respect for oral knowledge, laws and culture.

Cultural competency, not just cultural awareness, is important.

The natural world is implicit in a discussion of Indigenous heritage, but it likely needs to be mentioned in definitions.

Language is a process connected with all elements of heritage

Special needs for off-reserve Indigenous people should be recognized in the development and planning of Indigenous heritage projects.

Cultural employment is a pressing need; many Indigenous youth are graduating from post-secondary programs and want to work in the heritage sector.

There should be a good balance between English, French, and Indigenous languages in IHC communications.

There needs to be a strong voice nationally, not just within nations. Indigenous nations already have their own cultural heritage mandates and initiatives, so the IHC should support these but also provide a voice on common issues.

When organizations become too big, they start forgetting people and communities, start speaking on behalf of others, and stop consulting them. The IHC should check back with communities continuously to see how they're doing, if needs are being met, and what new needs have arisen.

The experience of provincial organizations has shown that it takes time to build networks and

trusts; working nationally will be a very challenging.

There are other national organizations doing different pieces of this overarching mandate that IHC is trying to claim. IHC should involve them more directly. [Examples would include the First Nations Land Management Resource Centre, and the First Nations Confederacy of Cultural and Education Centres.]

Advocacy as a goal can be fraught with problems. It's more effective to be a resource centre where people can go for information.

Be cautious not to take voice away from the nations involved in cultural issues.

First Nations Land Management Resource Centre has on their website a list of other land laws and protocols; anyone can access them and do what they want with them. Permission obtained first, but then can be shared.

Heritage is about knowledge and shared memories; they are connected but not the same.

In Calgary, Elders spoke about the importance of memory; society is an 'adaptation' of the intricate sets of knowledge that create the relationships between natural and cultural worlds.

Working with people who are not Indigenous (and sometimes who are) requires education; this takes time and resources away from our main jobs.

Indigenous science/spiritualism is carried by those who are gifted with that responsibility, namely, the cultural resource keepers.

Topic of funding is important.

IHC could have a role in making funding sources for heritage projects more accessible to Indigenous groups.

What is the role of non-Indigenous heritage conservation scholars in this group? Maybe they shouldn't have a role or maybe they should. The IHC should articulate the reason why it is inclusive of non-Indigenous members.

Our next Roundtable is scheduled for 31 January 2017 in Vancouver.

Kinanâskomitinâwâw / Snachailya/ Miikwecc, / Marcee / Qujannamiik / Thank you / Merci

Karen Aird, Don Bain, Dr. Yvonne Boyer, Julie Harris & Madeleine Redfern, IHC Directors