



# Toronto History Museums Strategic Plan

Laying a New Foundation  
2020-2022

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# Overview

The Museums and Heritage Services Three-Year Strategic Plan comes at a time of change for the Toronto History Museums. This Strategic Plan positions us to create community-centred museums that support people and neighbourhoods. Over the next three years, we will work together to expand trust with communities, to share authority with communities and to create spaces where all are included.

This Strategic Plan is grounded in equity, anti-racism and anti-oppression. It strives to advance broad municipal and divisional priorities including the City of Toronto's [strategic plan](#) (2019), the Economic Development and Culture Division's [strategy](#) (2018-2022) and equity plan (2019), as well as the multi-year plans of the Indigenous Affairs Office and the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit. Please see Appendices 1-4 for further details.

To realize transformative change, all ten museums have been re-aligned under a new mission, vision, narrative, brand identity and goals, which are shared in this document.

All ten Toronto History Museums must re-imagine a new future for the historic house museums. We must re-evaluate the stories we share and the way they are shared. We must create space for communities to share knowledge. It is imperative that we champion a new path forward – one which is authentically inclusive to all.

# Toronto History Museums' New Mission, Vision & Narrative

## vision

- To be leading centres of experiences and critical dialogue about Toronto's past, present and future.

## mission

- To collect, preserve, research, interpret, exhibit and enhance the understanding of Toronto's diverse stories through engaging and exciting experiences.

## wiifm

- **What's in it for Me (wiifm)**  
To fall in love with Toronto and the people who shape this City.

## Narrative

Toronto's many pasts, presents and futures meet at Toronto History Museums.

The histories you'll experience here are not tales penned by a select few. They are stories written and told by the many who shape them. They are as diverse as the perspectives and experiences of our people - and we are many.

See amazing and appalling stuff. Taste sweet and bitter flavours. Hear laughter and lament. Touch the silky and the prickly edges of our history.

Meet us at the intersection of countless viewpoints.

Leave us inspired about this experiment we call Toronto.



# Three-Year Strategic Plan

Museums & Heritage Services

2020-2022

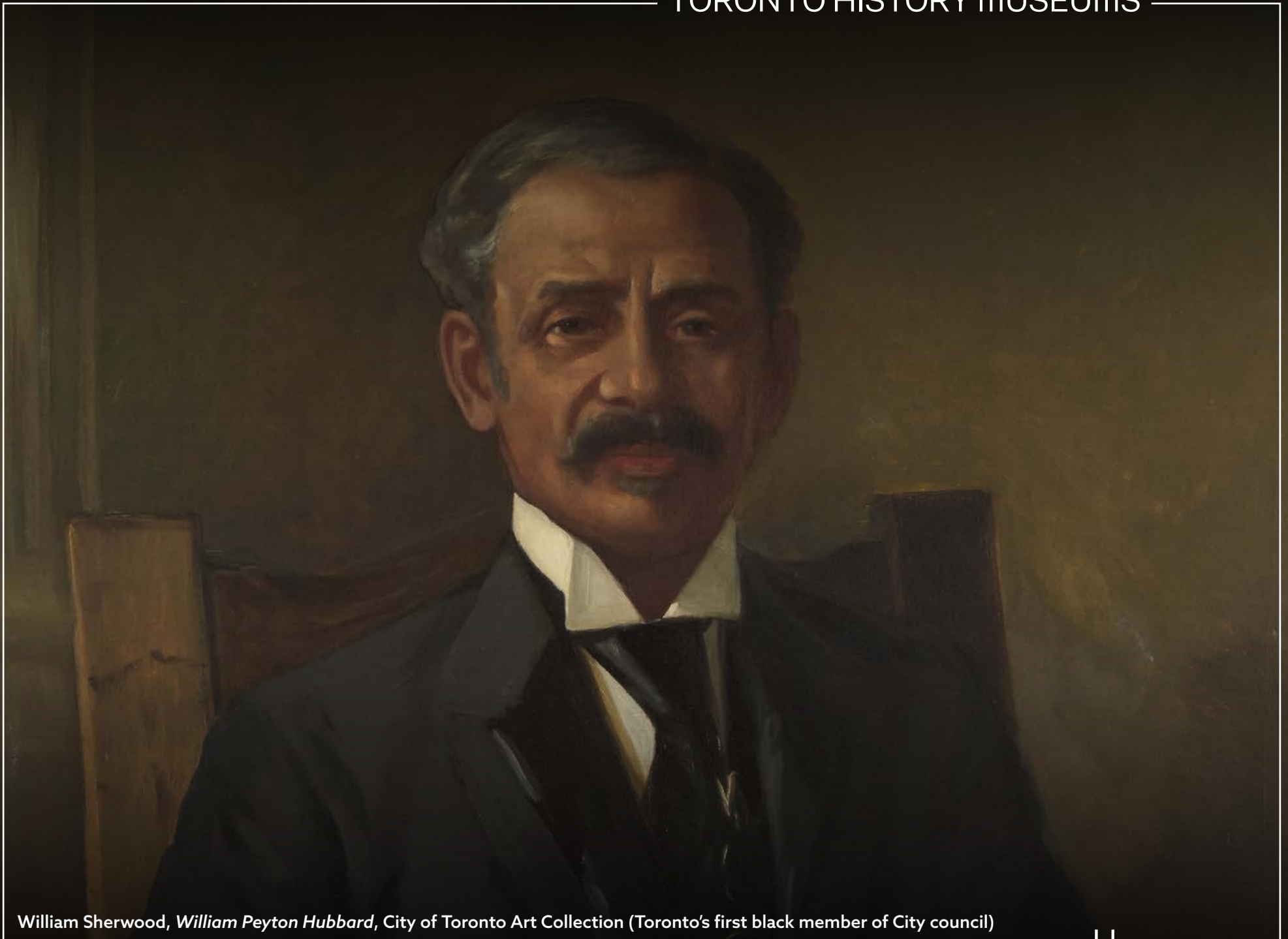
# Decolonizing Toronto History Museums

It is our responsibility to engage in acts of reconciliation through meaningful dialogue, partnerships, and consultation with Toronto's rich and diverse Indigenous Communities.

The Museums and Heritage Services (MHS) Strategic Plan has been developed to support decolonization in all aspects of service design, implementation, and delivery. MHS is committed to advancing Calls to Action from the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Report*, Calls for Justice from *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* as well as the UN's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. By collaborating, consulting and listening to the recommendations of Indigenous communities, by acknowledging and working to remove colonial elements, and by building capacity to pursue equitable and inclusive practices, MHS will embrace the principle of "Nothing about us without us."

In 2010, the City adopted the *Statement of Commitment to the Aboriginal Communities of Toronto*. In 2015, City Council, in consultation with the Aboriginal Affairs Committee, identified eight Calls to Action from the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Report* as priorities for implementation. MHS' approach to the decolonization process is informed by The City's *Statement of Commitment*, which identifies seven distinct goals to be achieved as part of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy/Framework.

To further strengthen the approach and process of decolonization, MHS will reference reports issued and created by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission such as *Honouring the Truth Reconciling for the Future* (2015), *We have Learned* (2015), *The Survivors Speak* (2015), *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action* (2015) and *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*.



William Sherwood, *William Peyton Hubbard*, City of Toronto Art Collection (Toronto's first black member of City council)

## Goal #1

# Decolonize Toronto History Museums to advance recommendations of Indigenous voices in Canada

### A Decolonizing Approach

"A decolonizing approach aims to resist and undo the forces of colonialism and to re-establish Indigenous Nationhood. It is rooted in Indigenous values, philosophies, and knowledge systems. It is a way of doing things differently that challenges the colonial influence we live under by making space for marginalized Indigenous perspectives. The National Inquiry's decolonizing approach also acknowledges the rightful power and place of Indigenous women and girls.

Decolonizing approaches involve recognizing inherent rights through the principle that Indigenous Peoples have the right to govern themselves in relation to matters that are internal to their communities; integral to their unique cultures, identities, traditions, languages, and institutions; and with respect to their special relationship to their resources, which many witnesses described as their relatives." (1)



## ACTION

Train staff with skills in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights and anti-racism.

Assess museum policies and practices for compliance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP).

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- 100% of staff trained
- 100% of policies and practices assessed and treated as living documents

## ACTION

Transform program and service delivery by collaborating with diverse Indigenous communities, including museum education and public programs, and collections management and exhibition development practices.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Indigenous Advisory Circle created with 100% of members self-identifying as belonging to Indigenous communities.
- 100% of programs and services assessed with decolonization lens

## ACTION

Advance the principles of Indigenous partnerships of research and education by embracing the 4R's in the MHS Strategic Plan, culture and practices.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

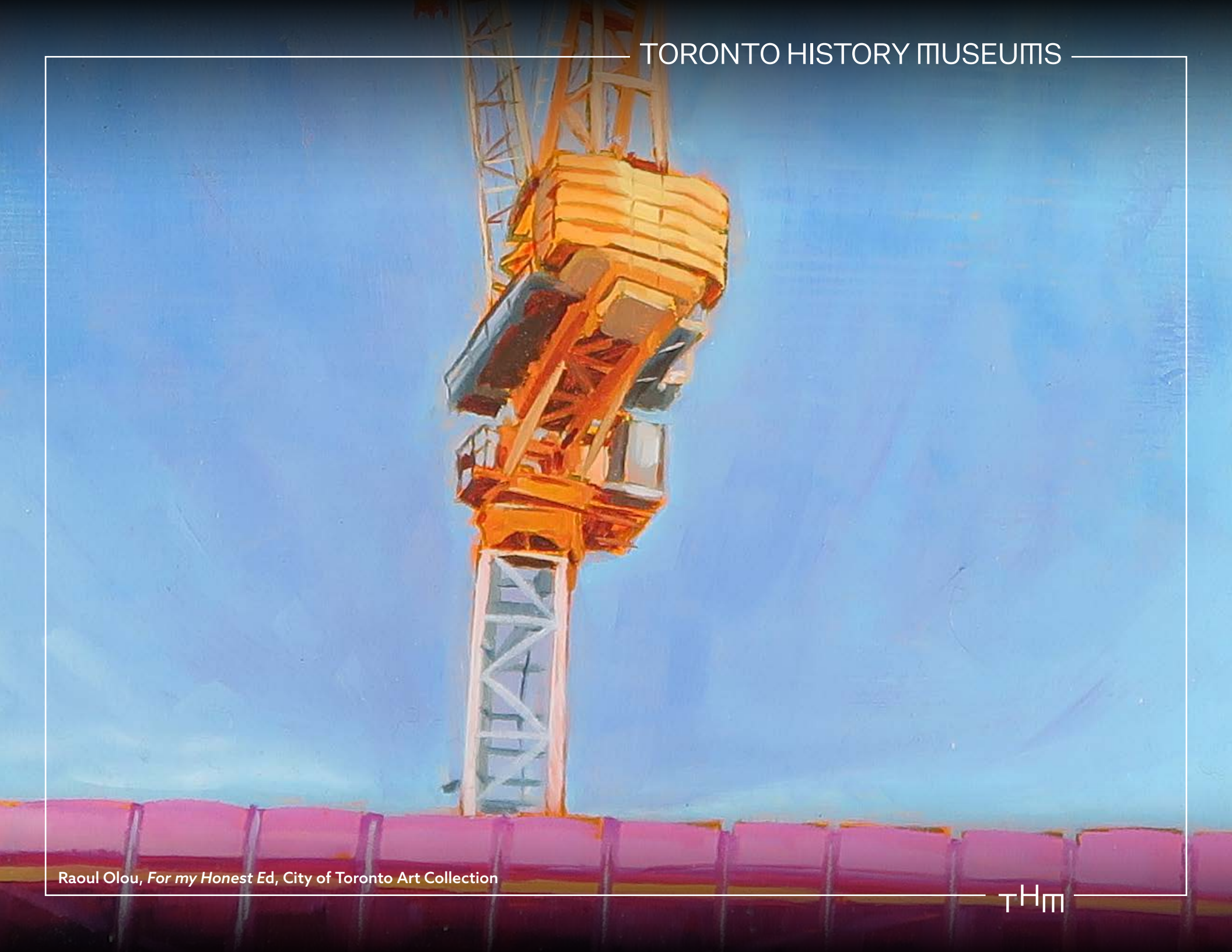
- # of partnerships developed and sustained
- Depth of partnerships as measured by facilitated sharing circles

## ACTION

Embrace the principle of “nothing about us without us” by including Indigenous self-determination and participatory approaches for the development of reconciliation and anti-oppression practices, strategies, communications, policies and programs.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- All approaches/ frameworks treated as living documents that embody Indigenous principles
- 100% of Indigenous-focused programs meet required criteria



Raoul Olou, *For my Honest Ed*, City of Toronto Art Collection

## Goal #2

# Create community spaces that are inclusive to all

"Museums are meaning-making institutions. They play a crucial role in shaping the understanding of the world, communities they surround and build relationships through the knowledges they share and stories they tell. While best efforts are made to engage diverse audiences, the stories told and how they are shared are heavily influenced by an institution's 'status quo'. These explicit and implicit standards of practice are often rooted in legacies of power and oppression that persist within our institutions. These legacies tend to privilege the white male experience and ultimately reinforce Euro-centric ableist narratives of patriarchy, exploitation, colonization, and heteronormativity. Unconscious bias and a lack of cultural competence further perpetuate these narratives within our institutions." (2)

As museum professionals, it is essential that we share authority with communities to dismantle inequitable systems and build new ones with diverse communities in Toronto.

## ACTION

Democratize programs, exhibitions and collections development practices to engage voices that represent Toronto’s diversity.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Advisory Committees established with 70% self-identifying as belonging to Indigenous and equity seeking communities
- Equity-focused multi-year strategies created for Exhibitions, Education Programs, Public Programs, and Collections Development

## ACTION

Share space and authority with community partners to co-create and co-develop programs, exhibitions and experiences to better serve Indigenous and equity-seeking communities.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Partnerships established with internal and external stakeholders and service providers that aim to serve priority communities
- Final deliverables are shared back with partners

## ACTION

Expand access to museums, collections and programs to ensure full participation in cultural heritage, regardless of need or ability.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Accessibility in Museums Advisory Committee established with 100% of members who self-identify as living with a disability and/or who work with disability communities
- Multi-year Accessibility plan completed with annual actions determined

## ACTION

Increase workforce diversity and ensure equitable access to career advancing opportunities for current and future employees, particularly for people from Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC) and other equity-seeking communities.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Talent Action Plan developed, including 1 project-based development opportunity created for staff annually
- Job titles and job descriptions reviewed with People and Equity

**EDUCATION  
EMPOWERS**

Provincial Freeman.  
ISSUED BY ANTI-SLAVERY, TORTURE, AND SEXUAL ABUSE.

**MARY ANN  
SHADD  
DESERVES  
MORE  
THAN A  
LANEWAY**

Provincial Freeman.  
ISSUED BY ANTI-SLAVERY, TORTURE, AND SEXUAL ABUSE.

**CELEBRATE  
US!**

## Goal #3

# Share relevant stories from multiple perspectives to support an equitable society

"Ultimately, institutions need to acknowledge the power structures that exist throughout their organizations. Acknowledgement is a difficult but necessary step towards making the changes that will help to dismantle exclusionary practices and power structures. By reckoning with their own legacies of oppression, museums have the potential to positively disrupt dominant social narratives and spark discussion on issues of access, diversity, inclusion and equity - extending their impact far beyond their physical space. As institutions realize their potential reach, the moral imperative of embodying diversity and inclusion becomes all the more clear. That is, as leaders making a positive impact on the lives of communities and individuals, museums have the power to create empathy, foster dialogue and cross-cultural learning, reduce social and economic barriers that negatively affect well-being, promote understanding and respect, and meet local needs in a way that builds stronger communities." (3)

As museum professionals it is essential to share authority with Toronto's diverse communities in all aspects of program design and delivery to inspire belonging, individual expression, empathy, and community.

## ACTION

Confront, discuss and bring to the forefront communities' histories that have been left out of many modern day history books and museums.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- % of spaces re-aligned and re-interpreted
- % staff re-trained
- # of partners activated in training program development

## ACTION

Develop, design and present programs, exhibitions and collections that increase communities' feelings that they belong by reflecting Toronto's diverse community stories, past, present and future.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- % of programs and exhibitions that reflect diverse perspectives and experiences
- # of partners leveraged in development

## ACTION

Expand Free Admission programs to museums for residents of underserved areas including Neighbourhood Improvement Areas, Indigenous and equity-seeking communities to ensure all people have the opportunity to participate in cultural heritage.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- # of people reached through Free Admission Programs
- # of partners engaged in Free Admission Programs





## Goal #4

# Revitalize the visitor experience to ensure equitable access to services and a sustainable financial future

Museums and Heritage Services will use the City of Toronto Equity Lens Toolkit to identify disparities. Equity in programming ensures the fair treatment of individuals through access to resources, full participation within city spaces, and equitable opportunities for participation for underserved and underrepresented individuals and groups. Equity in programming acknowledges that biases and advantages can cause disparities. Museums and Heritage Services will use the City of Toronto Equity Lens Toolkit to identify inequalities to ensure the fair treatment of individuals through access to resources, full participation within city spaces, and equitable educational opportunities for equity-seeking groups (persons with disabilities, women, racialized group(s), LGBTQ2S+, undocumented workers, immigrants and refugees, persons with low income, and youth) and vulnerable populations (seniors, victims of violence, persons with low literacy, persons who are homeless or under-housed, and residents in Neighbourhood Improvement Areas ) as defined by the City of Toronto.

"A City of Toronto Corporate Priority, Financial Sustainability is the effective management of financial resources to foster operational resilience, long-term prosperity, and ensuring the continuation of the accessibility and affordability of programs. We recognize the barriers presented by discrimination and the disadvantages faced by equity-seeking groups and vulnerable populations. The City strives to create and sustain equity in government, including how we measure our impact, our financial decisions, and deliver services. In everything we do, we work towards realizing equitable outcomes for our residents." (4)

## ACTION

Modernize the visitor experience to enhance participation in cultural heritage and safeguard collections for the future.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Customer Experience Strategy created
- % visitor satisfaction
- % collections migrated to Minisis

## ACTION

Plan for change by implementing actions of service review and assigning resources to achieve recommendations.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Change management plan developed
- Actions of Service Review communicated and implemented

## ACTION

Embed equity in MHS programs and services, from development to delivery, to ensure diversity and inclusion flourish in MHS.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Three (3) priorities from EDC's Equity Plan advanced annually
- 100% of new programs and services planned with equity lens

## ACTION

Review revenue-generating activities to support a strong Financial future.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Sales Strategies completed for Group Sales, Tourism and Education

## ACTION

Present a modern and cohesive brand/identity that reflects Toronto’s peoples.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Brand launched with communications plan
- # of brand impressions
- # of visitors

## ACTION

Implement the STEPs Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Readiness assessed and next steps defined

## ACTION

Listen to the community and promote belonging by continuously responding to feedback.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Evaluation strategy developed and implemented



## Goal #5

# Build capacity to promote Sustainable Development Goals, which help all communities thrive

"Museums are closely linked to some of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), notably around protecting and safeguarding cultural and natural heritage, supporting education for sustainable development, and supporting research and cultural participation... The SDGs...help us think about the challenges and opportunities in the various contexts of our work - locally, nationally and globally - and they help us connect the problems and opportunities in different sectors together to create more public value. They help us focus our activity to help address poverty and inequality, marginalization of communities and groups, climate change, use of energy and waste production, conservation of species and habitats, all through a collaborative, far-sighted agenda." (5)

## ACTION

Create a plan to define priorities and empower Toronto History Museums (THMs), museum workers, stakeholders, visitors and volunteers to contribute to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Plan created and operationalized

## ACTION

Build internal capacity to advance SDGs through information sharing, education and training to enable the MHS workforce to deliver museum programs and services that nurture people's wellness and a healthy planet.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- % of staff trained on SDGs
- # of targeted partnerships established

## ACTION

Promote shared prosperity, environmental empowerment and cultural participation for all today and in the future through programs that prioritize 'people first' via informal learning and skills development, ultimately advancing poverty reduction over the long-term.

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- # of recreation programs delivered
- # of youth engaged in online programs
- # of BIPOC artists mentored



Goal #6

# Champion the creation of a Museum of Toronto that serves as a hub to the existing Toronto History Museums and celebrates Toronto's cultural heritage

## ACTION

Create a plan to define priorities and empower Toronto History Museums (THMs), museum workers, stakeholders, visitors and volunteers to contribute to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## PERFORMANCE MEASURES

- Plan created and operationalized



# Appendices

# Appendix 1:

# Credits

P. 1 Image credits: Indigenous Arts Festival, Fort York National Historic Site; Awakenings program photo, Toronto History Museums; Big Draw event, Toronto History Museums

P. 5 Image credit: Big Draw event, Toronto History Museums

## Goal #1

**Decolonize Toronto History Museums to advance recommendations of Indigenous voices in Canada.**

P. 7 Image Credit: William Sherwood, Portrait of William Peyton Hubbard, City of Toronto Art Collection

P. 8 (1) Source: Reclaiming Power and Place: the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, vol. 1b (Canada: MMIWG, 2019), 170-171. [https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2019/06/Final\\_Report\\_Vol\\_1b.pdf](https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_Vol_1b.pdf)

## Goal #2

**Create community spaces that are inclusive to all.**

P. 10 Image Credit: Raoul Olou, Former Honest Ed, City of Toronto Art Collection

P. 11 (2) Source: "Inclusion 2025: Inclusion as a Lens," Ontario Museum Association, 2018, <https://members.museumsontario.ca/inclusion2025/inclusionasalens>

Museums & Heritage Services Strategic Plan

[museumsontario.ca/inclusion2025/inclusionasalens](https://members.museumsontario.ca/inclusion2025/inclusionasalens)

### **Goal #3**

**Share relevant stories from multiple perspectives to support an equitable society.**

P. 13 Image Credit: Awakenings Program photo – photographer consent and caption requested

P. 14 (3) Source: "Inclusion 2025: Inclusion as a Lens," Ontario Museum Association, 2018, <https://members.museumsontario.ca/inclusion2025/inclusionasalens>

[museumsontario.ca/inclusion2025/inclusionasalens](https://members.museumsontario.ca/inclusion2025/inclusionasalens)

### **Goal #4**

**Revitalize the visitor experience to ensure equitable access to services and a sustainable financial future**

Revitalize the visitor experience to ensure equitable access to services and a sustainable financial future

P. 16 Image Credit: Acknowledgment, 2020. A film by Jonathan Elliott. Behind the scene photo by Andrew Williamson

P. 17 (4) Sources: City of Toronto, Economic Development and Culture Divisional Strategy, 2018-2022 & Corporate Strategic Plan

**Goal #5****Build capacity to promote Sustainable Development Goals, which help all communities thrive.**

Build capacity to promote Sustainable Development Goals, which help all communities thrive.

P. 20 Image Credit: Big Draw event, Toronto History Museums

P. 21 (5) SOURCE: Henry McGhie. "The Sustainable Development Goals: Helping Transform our World through Museums," International Council of Museums, published January 21, 2020, <https://icom.museum/en/news/the-sustainable-development-goals-helping-transform-our-world-through-museums/>.

Museums & Heritage Services Strategic Plan

**Goal #6****Champion the creation of a Museum of Toronto that serves as a hub to the existing Toronto History Museums and celebrates Toronto's cultural heritage**

P. 23 Image Credit: Gatsby event, Toronto History Museums

**Appendices**

P. 25 Image Credit: Finding Freedom, Montgomery's Inn

# Appendix 2: Corporate Strategic Plan

## Corporate Priorities

Our Corporate Priorities are what the City will focus on to improve the performance of our organization. Success in these priorities will result in a more resilient, effective and efficient organization, able to face challenges and seize opportunities.



### ● Financial sustainability

We will work and partner to ensure value and affordability for taxpayers, adequately fund municipal services and infrastructure, make needed investments in the city, and improve our financial health. We will make informed financial decisions and effectively manage resources for Toronto's future.



### ● A well-run City

We will have a committed, engaged and diverse workforce. We will improve the lives of residents, businesses, and visitors by providing simple, reliable and connected services that anticipate changing customer needs. We will build trust and confidence in local government.

## City of Toronto's Strategic Priorities

Our Strategic Priorities are what we will focus on to improve quality of life for Torontonians. Success in these priorities will result in a more liveable, healthy, safe, prosperous, affordable and resilient Toronto.



### ● **Maintain and create housing that's affordable**

We are committed to a city where families and individuals live in safe, stable and affordable housing with respect and dignity.



### ● **Invest in people and neighbourhoods**

We are committed to a city that protects and improves quality of life for all, including safety, health, social and economic wellbeing and inclusion.



### ● **Keep Toronto moving**

We are committed to a city with safe, affordable and accessible transportation choices for people and goods.



### ● **Tackle climate change and build resilience**

We are committed to fighting climate change and preparing our city government, our economy, our ecosystems, and our communities, especially the most vulnerable communities, for a changing climate.

## Appendix 3:

# Economic Development & Culture (EDC) Strategic Plan

The Economic Development and Culture Division strives to make Toronto a place where business and culture thrive. Our objectives are to advance Toronto's prosperity, opportunity and liveability by fostering employment and investment opportunities, encouraging Toronto's cultural vibrancy through more and enhanced cultural experiences, and by engaging partners in the planning and development of the City's economic and cultural resources.

### Setting Priorities

Toronto's culture and business communities are at the heart of what makes the city one of the world's most desirable places to live, work and invest. Together, business and culture create a foundation for Toronto's long-term prosperity, opportunity and liveability.

At the same time, we recognize that there is work to be done to ensure that all Torontonians can share the benefits of a vibrant economy and culture, and to help business and culture partners succeed amid transformation and change. To this end, we have developed the 2018-2022 Economic Development and Culture Divisional Strategy to guide our programs and services over the next five years.

## TORONTO HISTORY MUSEUMS

The Economic Development and Culture Divisional Strategy has been developed through a robust consultation process with residents and industry partners and with expert advice from our leaders' panel chaired by Councillor Michael Thompson.

The Divisional Strategy also builds on two foundational strategies approved by Council – Creative Capital Gains (2011) and Collaborating for Competitiveness (2013) – which will continue to inform the programs, initiatives and services delivered by the Division.

The Divisional Strategy includes strategic goals and actions focused on four key areas:



We are committed to working collaboratively with residents and industry partners to achieve these strategic objectives, and to support the growth of a vibrant, creative and prosperous Toronto.



## Appendix 4:

# EDC Equity Plan

In 2019, the Economic Development and Culture (EDC) Division produced an Equity Plan in recognition that a proactive approach was required to ensure equitable access to the division's programs, services and facilities. The strategies, objectives and actions identified in the Equity Plan are intended to promote both transformational and incremental change. They focus on developing a broadly shared culture of equity and diversity, embedded in all of EDC's activities and decision-making, while identifying modest, practical steps that the division can take towards greater equity, accessibility and transparency.

The equity-seeking groups addressed in the report are those defined by the City of Toronto's People, Equity and Human Rights (PEHR) Division: Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ2S+ communities, immigrants and refugees, people with low income, undocumented Torontonians, women, and vulnerable persons and youth.

The Equity Action & Implementation Plan is structured around seven strategic goals. The rationale for each goal is based on the analysis of the evidence produced by research, which identified the needs of priority groups, and gaps in EDC policies and practices. The seven strategic goals are:

**Strategic Goal #1:** Increase diversity in EDC's workforce, advisory bodies and suppliers

**Strategic Goal #2:** Foster a divisional culture committed to equity

**Strategic Goal #3:** Integrate equity and diversity into EDC spaces and programming

**Strategic Goal #4:** Use partnerships, grants and competitive programs to advance equity

**Strategic Goal #5:** Play a leadership and convening role in promoting equity

**Strategic Goal #6:** Reach and engage Indigenous and equity-seeking communities and underserved neighbourhoods

**Strategic Goal #7:** Ensure progress and continuous improvement in advancing equity

