

Guide for Authors on Acknowledging Indigenous or Contested Cultural Heritage

Introduction

The American Institute for Conservation (AIC) and Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property (CAC-ACCR) created this guide for authors for the 2026 AIC-CAC Joint Meeting. As AIC and CAC join with our colleagues around the world to co-develop additional tools and resources to inform and empower presenters, abstract reviewers, and others involved in the conference process, we share this brief document to help inform your work as an author and practitioner. Our in-progress initiative seeks to ensure that our conferences move forward in ways that respect the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and align with ethical frameworks grounded in consent, harm reduction, and responsible research and knowledge sharing.

Considering Your Work

As you prepare your abstract, presentation, and/or poster, please be mindful of the types of cultural heritage your work may involve, even if the material you are presenting is technical in nature.

Indigenous cultural heritage may include Indigenous belongings, cultural knowledge, sacred and ceremonial objects, funerary objects, human and animal remains, landscapes, stories, music, and other materials and information connected to Indigenous Nations, Tribes, and communities.

Contested cultural heritage refers to objects, sites, or narratives whose custody, interpretation, or display is disputed due to histories of colonialism, conflict, displacement, or other inequities. Examples may include cultural heritage removed during foreign occupation (e.g., the Parthenon Marbles), artworks displaced during World War II, human remains, or materials connected to historical or ongoing conflicts and territorial disputes.

If your presentation includes materials that may have a harmful impact on the viewer—**such as images or discussions of human remains, funerary objects, or other culturally sensitive content**—we ask that you consider whether it is necessary to display these materials visually and whether alternative approaches may be more appropriate.

If any such content is included, please provide a content advisory at the beginning of your presentation so that audience members are aware and can make informed decisions about their participation. Abstracts in the program include your answer to the question regarding contested materials. You may update your abstract to change your answer to this question.

We kindly ask all presenters to review the following resources:

- [Moved to Action: Activating UNDRIP in Canadian Museums](#)
- [CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance](#)
- [The First Nations principles of OCAP®](#)

- [United States Indigenous Data Sovereignty Network Principles of Indigenous Data Governance](#)

Questions for Reflection

In preparation for your presentation, we encourage you to reflect on the following questions:

1. Have I obtained the appropriate permissions to share any sensitive, culturally specific, or community-held knowledge included in my presentation?
2. Do I have the authority to share this information, images, or case studies publicly?
3. Have I consulted with, or considered the perspectives of, the relevant Indigenous Peoples, communities, knowledge holders, and—where appropriate—diaspora communities with cultural, historical, or ancestral ties to the communities concerned?

If not, we encourage you to indicate that the work was not conducted in consultation. You may choose to use this suggested phrasing or other similar text to explain further: “This work was conducted without consultation with relevant communities and stakeholders. By including this statement, I acknowledge this limitation and express my commitment to follow a “Nothing About Us Without Us” approach in future projects.” For more on this approach, see page 66 of the [CMA Moved To Action report](#).

4. Does my presentation include images or discussion of human remains, funerary objects, sacred belongings, or other culturally sensitive materials, and if so, is it appropriate to share them in this context?
5. Have I appropriately credited all individuals, communities, and knowledge holders who contributed to this work? Have I given co-authorship to all relevant parties?
6. Could any aspect of my presentation cause individual or community-based harm, distress, or misrepresentation?
7. Have I reflected on whether Treaty provisions, land claim or self-government agreements, or relevant legislation (such as NAGPRA in the United States or the UNDRIP Act in Canada) establish guidance, responsibilities, or restrictions regarding the care, representation, or discussion of belongings, ancestral remains, or cultural heritage included in your presentation?
8. If discussing conservation treatments or research involving Indigenous belongings, have community perspectives, values, or protocols been respected?
9. Am I sharing only information that I have permission to share, while respecting community ownership and stewardship of knowledge?
10. If presenting scientific analysis, were the development of research approaches discussed in collaboration with the communities concerned? If samples were collected, have I included any pertinent discussion about how sampling was approved and whether the process involved cultural protocols? If samples were not taken but other scientific analyses were conducted (e.g., XRF, X-ray imaging), have I included any pertinent

discussion of how these steps were approached and approved, and whether the process involved cultural protocols?

Thank you for taking the time to review these materials and reflect on these questions as you prepare your presentation. Your care and consideration help ensure that our conference remains a respectful and responsible space for sharing knowledge. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to reach out to meetings@culturalheritage.org and we will forward to the relevant committee or person.

Developed by:

AIC Equity and Inclusion Committee

CAC-ACCR Reconciliation Working Group

Abed Haddad, AIC Vice President, 2025-2028

Kyna Biggs, 2026 CAC Program Co-Chair

Guide created as a letter to 2026 AIC-CAC Joint Meeting authors, March 26, 2026.

Guide edited for posting online, July 28, 2026, by Bonnie Naugle