

# Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Museum

## Strategic Plan (2023-2026)



Since 2016, the Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Museum has operated under the mission to engage the community and visitors with the history, culture and art of Nunavut and provide unique learning experiences through its exhibits.

In 2022, the Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Museum continues to provide services for the community. Including:

- Display the cultural collection
- Create and/or host temporary exhibitions
- Support local culture, discussion, and education through public events
- Provide tours for local and tourist groups
- Make space available for organizations' meetings, workshops, and events
- Operate gift store that showcases local artists

This work takes place through the efforts of a full-time Manager/Curator, part-time staff, and a volunteer board of directors. The Manager/Curator receives her direction from the board and oversees the work of volunteers and part-time staff members.

### **History**

The Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Society was incorporated in 1969 in response to a growing collection of objects and artworks sourced from Inuit artists in Iqaluit and other Qikiqtani communities as part of a federal economic development program. Recognizing the growing public appeal of Inuit arts, and the threat of local collections being removed to a territorial heritage centre in Yellowknife, a group of Iqaluit residents formed the Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Society to safeguard the collection. While the dream of a stand-alone museum would not be realized until more than a decade later, the society fulfilled its mission to “catalogue, photograph and register” the collection from temporary quarters in a former liquor store warehouse. In 1984, the society purchased the Hudson’s Bay Company warehouse in Niaqunnguq for \$1.00; this

was moved to the museum's current location, restored, and opened to the public in the following year. The building was renovated with an addition in 1993, and another significant round of renovations in 2016.

Throughout the 1990s, with a physical museum in place, the Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Museum assumed a more community and heritage-oriented focus, with the mission of operating “a heritage organization for the purposes of collecting, conserving, studying, interpreting and exhibiting, objects, specimens and activities which represent the local natural and cultural history.” The society became increasingly focused on serving its immediate community of Iqaluit/Niaqunnguq, although artwork, exhibits and interpretive material continue to be sourced from the broader Qikiqtani region.

## **Mission**

The Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Museum (the NSM) serves Iqaluit and the communities within the Qikiqtani. We engage the community and tourists with the history, culture and art of Nunavut and provide unique learning experiences through the NSM's, activities, and exhibits.

## **Vision**

We celebrate Inuit culture through dialogue guided by material culture and exploration of history. Our present actions hope to contribute to passing the Inuit legacy on for future cultural continuation.

## **Strategic Priorities**

### **Area: Administrative/Internal Activities**

1. Activate and Interpret Collections:
  - a. Determining the scope of collections and creating an electronic database to house this information
  - b. Interpreting collections through research to understand the relationship between the items within the NSM, and Iqaluit/Niaqunnguq  
*(Connecting what's in our collection, connect it to each other to see the relations and have a deeper understanding of the collection) how do we put it out there in the most meaningful and effective way) (how to display the materials that exist in the building)*
2. Increase full-time staff to include a Collection Curator and Operations Manager



3. Expand funding to accommodate increases in staffing, future building upgrades and any additional programming
4. Emphasize decolonizing activities within the museum field with a combination of immediate and ongoing actions (See Appendix 1)
5. Include Inuit Qaujimagatunqangit principles in the management of organization through consistent, concrete actions (See Appendix 2)
6. Increase the community's society involvement through membership benefits and outreach throughout the year
7. Focus the Board of Director's work towards developing policy for various aspects: including Finance, Human Resources, Programming, Advocacy and Communication
8. Develop plan for building upgrades including:
  - a. Professionally assessing the current state of the building
  - b. Researching upgrade options such as expansion, lighting in permanent gallery, lighting in upstairs displays, improved bathrooms and plumbing etc.

### **Area: Outreach/Public Experience**

1. Create a communications plan for internal use, and external outreach that is geared towards the local public and tourists. In addition, create strategy for online outreach to wider audience, which includes:
  - a. Clear communication through online (website & social media), in-person, brochures, radio, and other communication tools
  - b. Clear presentation of NSM services (i.e., hours of operation, space rental policies, artist engagement and support, research possibilities for object collection and archives, etc.)
  - c. Functions of NSM Board, staff and volunteers
2. Create fundraising/donations strategy targeting a global audience
3. Create more engagement with the Iqaluit/Niaqunnguq community:
  - a. Increasing Inuit involvement by using Inuktitut
  - b. Increasing partnerships with Iqaluit organizations

4. Enhance visitor experience with:
  - a. Clear labeling
  - b. Map of the floorplan
  - c. A variety of interactive styles (i.e., visual [images and writing], physical, audio, video, object, etc.)
  - d. A comfortable environment (i.e., temperature, accessibility, visible inclusive policies posted, languages and amenities on offer, etc.)
5. Support regional artists through consistent purchasing of work, providing information, artist- specific events, providing funding support letters, etc.
6. Programming that is drug and alcohol free, admission-free, and targeted to underserved audiences (i.e., 18+ events, accessible events etc.)
7. Providing context to exhibits that addresses cross-cultural gaps in knowledge and increases accessibility (i.e., labels that explain archaic term use, archeological descriptions, and cultural descriptions)
8. Create a long-term plan for exhibits at the NSM that includes general content and provides an introductory overview on fields/cultural directions and specific content that digs deeper into a specific field
9. Maintain an up-to-date gift shop which continues to draw in visitors.

Approved Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Chair: \_\_\_\_\_

Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 1

### List of Actions on Decolonizing

1. Written land acknowledgement both online and in building

*DRAFT: Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Museum is on Inuit land. Land where Inuit have always lived.*

2. Written building history acknowledgement both online and in building

*DRAFT: Hudson's Bay Company is a colonial entity, and this former warehouse building has that haunting association.*

3. Acknowledgement of the harm it has created in writing both online and in building

*DRAFT: Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Museum harmed Inuit by participating in the separation of their belongings and cultural practices in service to the Museum's goals of preservation and education. We recognise that we were part of the erasure of histories of genocide against Inuit by not naming it when exhibiting belongings, we collected and hold today. We recognise that we contributed to structures of racism. We recognise that, in many cases, our organization has acquired the belongings of Inuit in ways that were legal but not just or equitable. And we recognise that we rarely included Inuit voices and perspectives in decisions made about, and the presentation of, their belongings. (Similar words as Museum of Us, Colonial Pathways Policy)*

4. Museum history acknowledgement in general with Canadian context written for both online and in building

*DRAFT: Museums are colonial tools and the discussion on the empowering of Indigenous voice within museums have been going on for a long time.*

*Inuit and museum history include many damaging incidents. Such as individuals being kidnapped and displayed in faraway places, often to die away from their homes. Gravesites were disturbed and remains, and items gathered. The motivating perspective was that Inuit were dying out and that the culture needed to be documented before it went extinct.*

*In 1988, Glenbow Museum in Calgary, Alberta held an exhibition called "The Spirit Sings" as part of Olympics Arts Festival. This was boycotted by Lubicon Lake Cree and gained a lot of public attention questioning the role and relationship of Indigenous cultures and museums in Canada. This led to meetings of Canadian Museum Association and Assembly of First Nations and the Task Force on Museums and the First Peoples.*

*Bruce Trigger "Museum are not merely the custodians of objects but have a sacred responsibility to ensure that they are not used in ways that are seen as harmful or prejudicial to any group whose heritage is in their custody" "if the treasures of the past mean so much to museum, the welfare of their creators living descendants should mean*



---

*no less...There is no way in the modern world that a museum can claim immunity as a cultural institution from the political implications of its policy decisions."*

*Barbara Winter "If we simply apply traditionally successful southern methods in the north we will relegate our museums to irrelevancy as relics of colonialism."*

*Within Nunavut, museums have a patchwork history. Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre in Yellowknife, was central to museum matters as a government department. Centres in many communities have been founded with various approaches, priorities, and outcomes. Examples like Inuit Cultural Institute in Arviat, Angmarlik Centre in Pangnirtung, Inuit Heritage Centre in Baker Lake, and Kitikmeot Heritage Society in Cambridge Bay. As Nunavut was founded, the Inuit Heritage Trust was created with the task of preservation, care, and study of Inuit heritage. There is currently no territorial museum and this diffusion of collections and a lack of local places to see Inuit cultural examples, leads to many individuals visiting their own cultural material objects in other national regions or internationally. A documentary called "Inuit Piqutingit: What Belongs to Inuit" from 2009 follows one group of Inuit visiting several museum collections.*

*Bernadette Dean "I think they would feel a great sense of pride to realize, 'This is where I come from.' I think it's really important to know our past if we are going to look into the future."*

*Rhoda Karetak "There are so many Inuit who have lost their identity. These things will bring understanding to people of where they come from – that would be a good thing."*

*Nunatta Sunakkutaangit Museum serves Iqaluit and the communities within Qikiqtani. We celebrate Inuit culture through dialogue guided by material culture and exploration of history. Our present actions hope to contribute to passing the Inuit legacy on for future cultural continuation.*

5. Intentionally review and pick words used in promotional material and exhibition writings that recognize and avoid colonial perspective, such as:

- Inuit cultural belonging vs. artifact
- location names like Kinngait, Iqaluit, Niaqunnguq

6. Decision making involves those impacted by Museum activities, including internal and external individuals, organizations and opposing viewpoints

7. An organizational goal is to reconnect belongings and people to build trust with Museum: community outreach in Iqaluit and regionally, Inuktitut language use, training in the field for Nunavut Inuit, etc.

8. Collecting program highlights resilience in past and present with larger and smaller communities, frame collection pathways truthfully



---

9. Allyship to welcome diverse backgrounds through Cultural Etiquette poster both online and in building

10. Ensure decolonizing actions are continued through a policy that covers all aspects of actions and has resource support



---

## APPENDIX 2

### Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit 8 Principles: How they are applied within the Museum

#### 1. Respect and care for people

- Pay staff above minimum wage, pay during national/territorial holidays
- Prioritize wages over other potential expenses when making budget decisions
- Be open every day (not holidays)
- Building environment that is comfortable for people
- Shoe cover option for those that don't want to remove shoes
- Purchase price set by artists

#### 2. Welcoming and inclusive

- Choice of options in person guide (visitor attendant) or self-guided by signs
- Language use in written Inuktitut, written/spoken English
- Free admission so there is no barrier for those interested in visiting
- Lunch hour and after work hours to be considerate of those with 9-5 jobs
- Wheelchair accessible

#### 3. Serving community

- Clearly communicate services as exhibits, gift shop, collection access
- High service standards
- Artist Appreciation Day series to serve artists

#### 4. Decisions through discussion

- Iqaluit resident volunteer board meetings every month
- Transparent with activities as shared online, in building
- Encourage feedback, evaluation for improving all services

#### 5. Skills Development

- Varied work for staff
- Learn through exhibitions that includes reading, visual, objects, video

#### 6. Work Together

- Internal structure is simple: Society Members, Board, Manager/Curator, Visitor Attendants
- Partnerships with organizations and individuals

#### 7. Resourceful

- Gift shop packing supplies from the public
- Use supplies already in building for exhibitions, events





## 8. Land care

- Reduce use of plastic
- Shop local
- Do not use electricity when spaces not in use
- Do not use disposable plates, mugs, glasses