

Monday 4 April 2022

THEMUSEUM, Kitchener

# **Time is on My Side:** The New Context for Revisiting History Museums

**Museums / Musées Canada** Inaugural Summit

Presented by  
**Gail Lord**, President & Co-founder  
Lord Cultural Resources



**Lord Cultural Resources** is a  
global professional practice  
dedicated to **making the**  
**world a better place**  
through culture

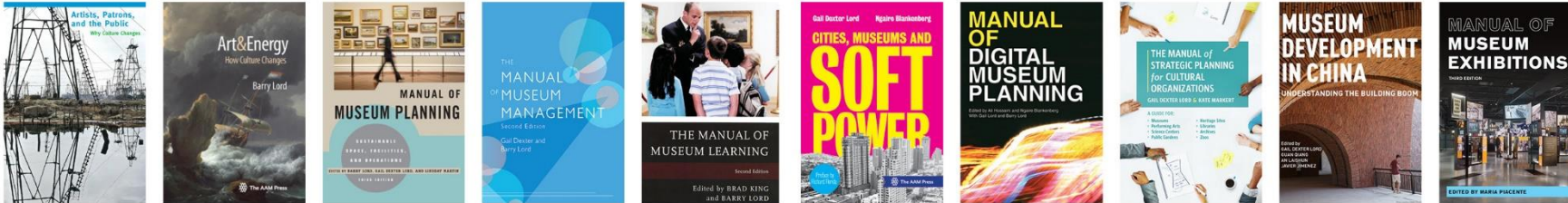
# ABOUT LORD CULTURAL RESOURCES



As the **leader in cultural consulting services**, Lord Cultural Resources relies on a global network of offices in Toronto, Los Angeles, New York, London, Madrid, Dubai, Mumbai and Beijing.

**We share our knowledge** in presentations, articles and publications.

**8 OFFICES**  
**2500+** PROJECTS  
**57 COUNTRIES**  
**450+** CITIES



# People Place Time

three **challenges**  
of history museums

- Who, where, when, why are contested
- Museums, monuments, memorials – What is the difference?
- Stories seem to be the solution – but whose stories?
- History books stay on the best-seller lists but not in schools or museums
- Are we afraid of history?

Change  
is **constant**

**MUSEUMS  
WERE  
vs.  
MUSEUMS  
WILL BE**

**PAST**

Top-down

Fear culture

Colonial white privilege

Trophy collection

Siloed

Accountable to management

Secretive

Viewers

Marketing and PR

Quantitative

**FUTURE**

Collaborative

Caring culture

Anti-racist

Relevant collection

Cross-functional

Accountable to the institution

Transparent

Participants

Accountability

Qualitative

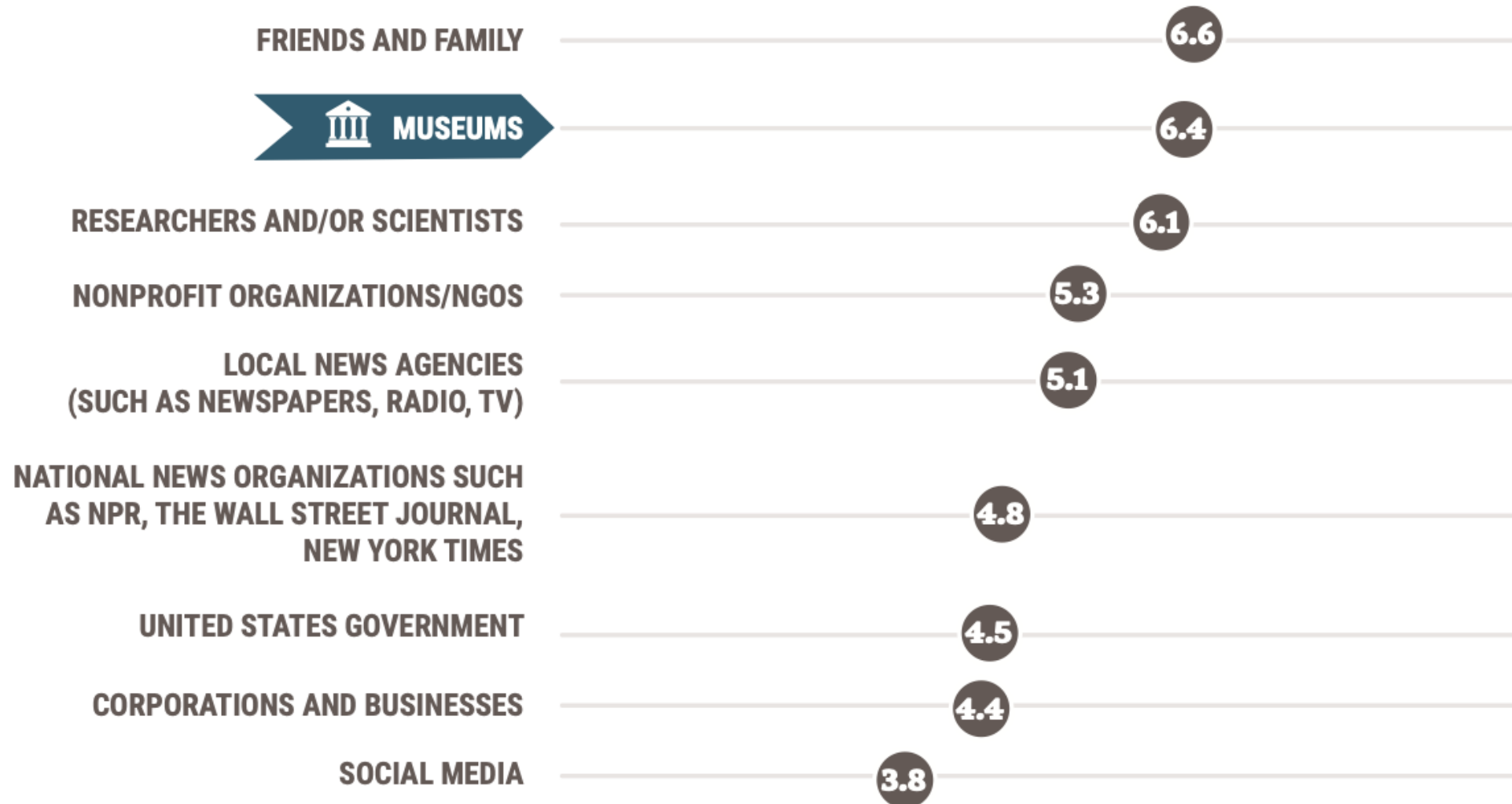


# Should History Museums **express** a point of view?

- Social Justice
- Diversity Equity Inclusion
- Truth and Reconciliation
- Sir John A Macdonald



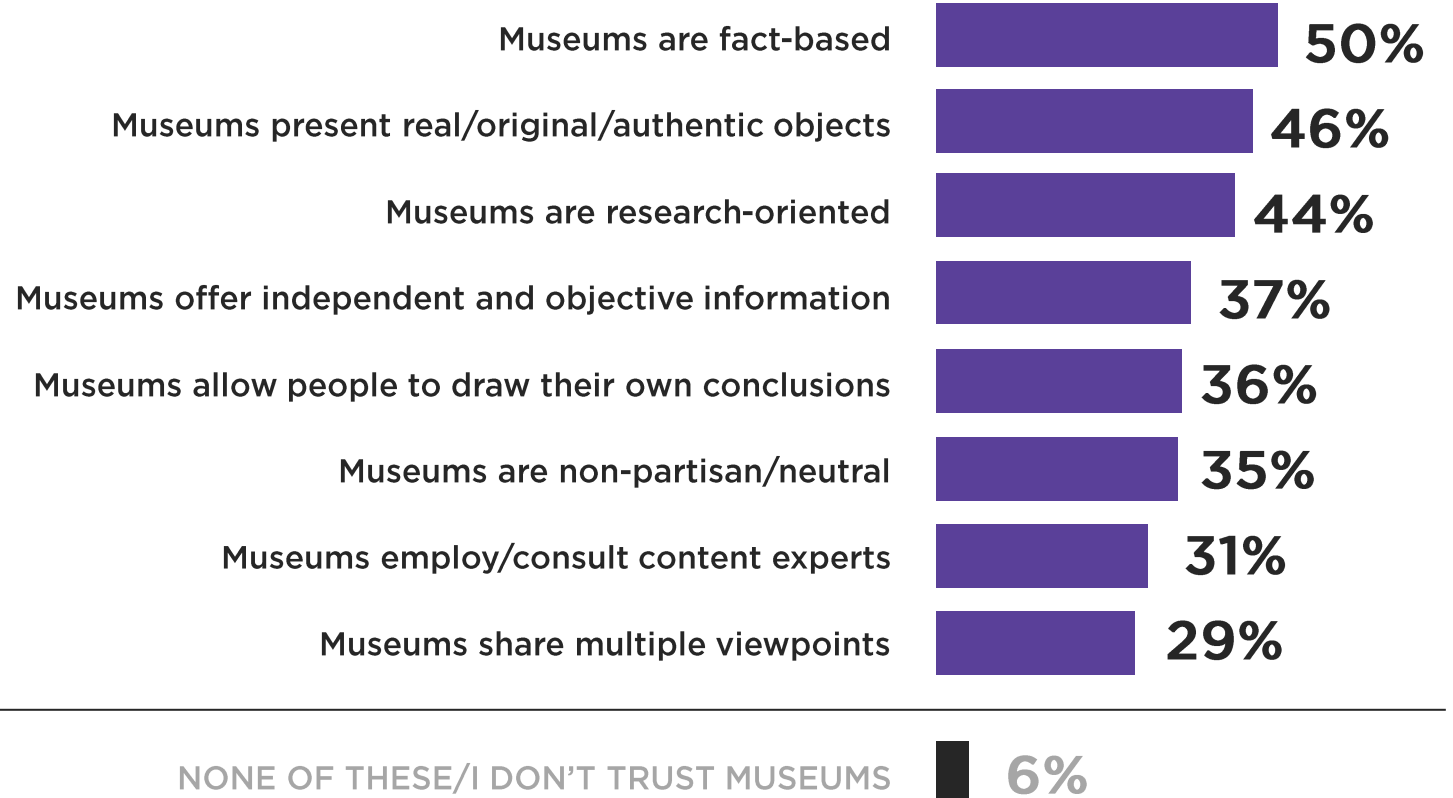
## ***How trustworthy do you find ...*** (respondents indicated on a scale of 0 to 10; average scores presented)





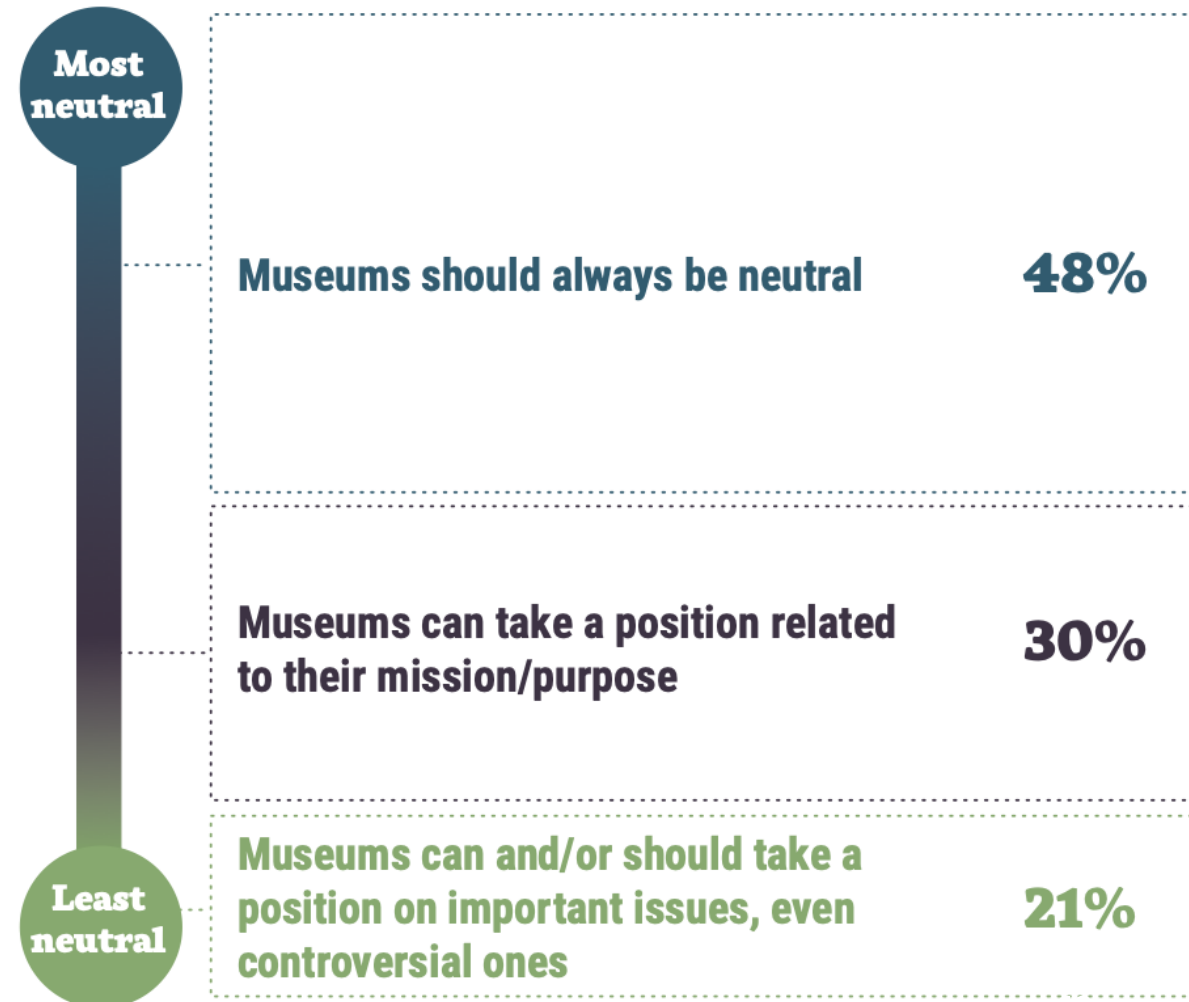
# Museum trust

## REASONS PEOPLE GAVE FOR **THEIR TRUST** IN MUSEUMS



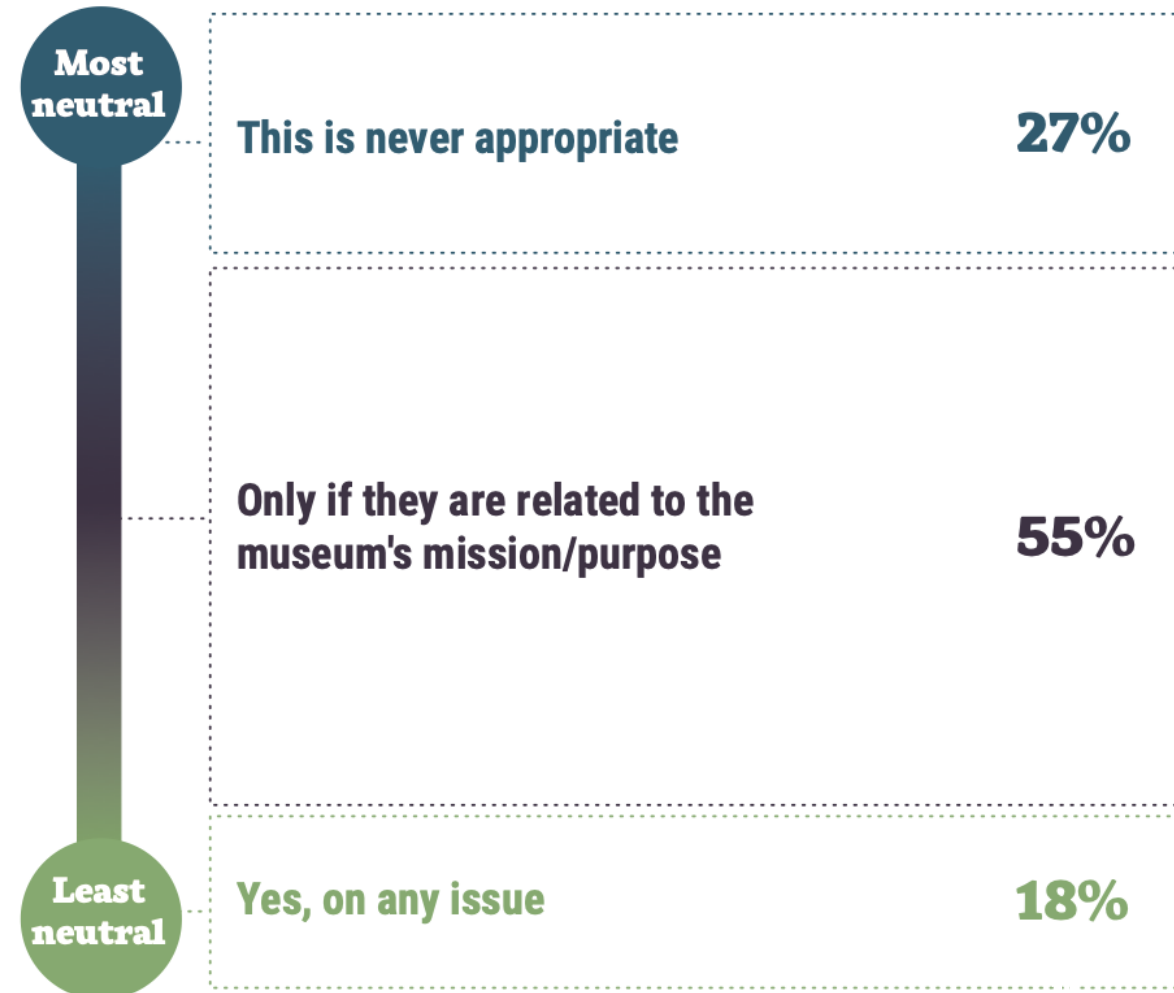


## ***Do you think museums should be neutral, or can they take a position?***





## *Is it appropriate for museums to suggest or recommend behaviors or actions to the public?*



# The extent of activism

is a complex issue  
requiring museums to  
take multiple factors into  
account:

Different degrees  
of activism are  
possible



Mission Statement



Location



Funding



Board Members



Types of Audience

# A Path Forward for History Museums

Democracy:  
People Taking  
Ownership of  
their Culture

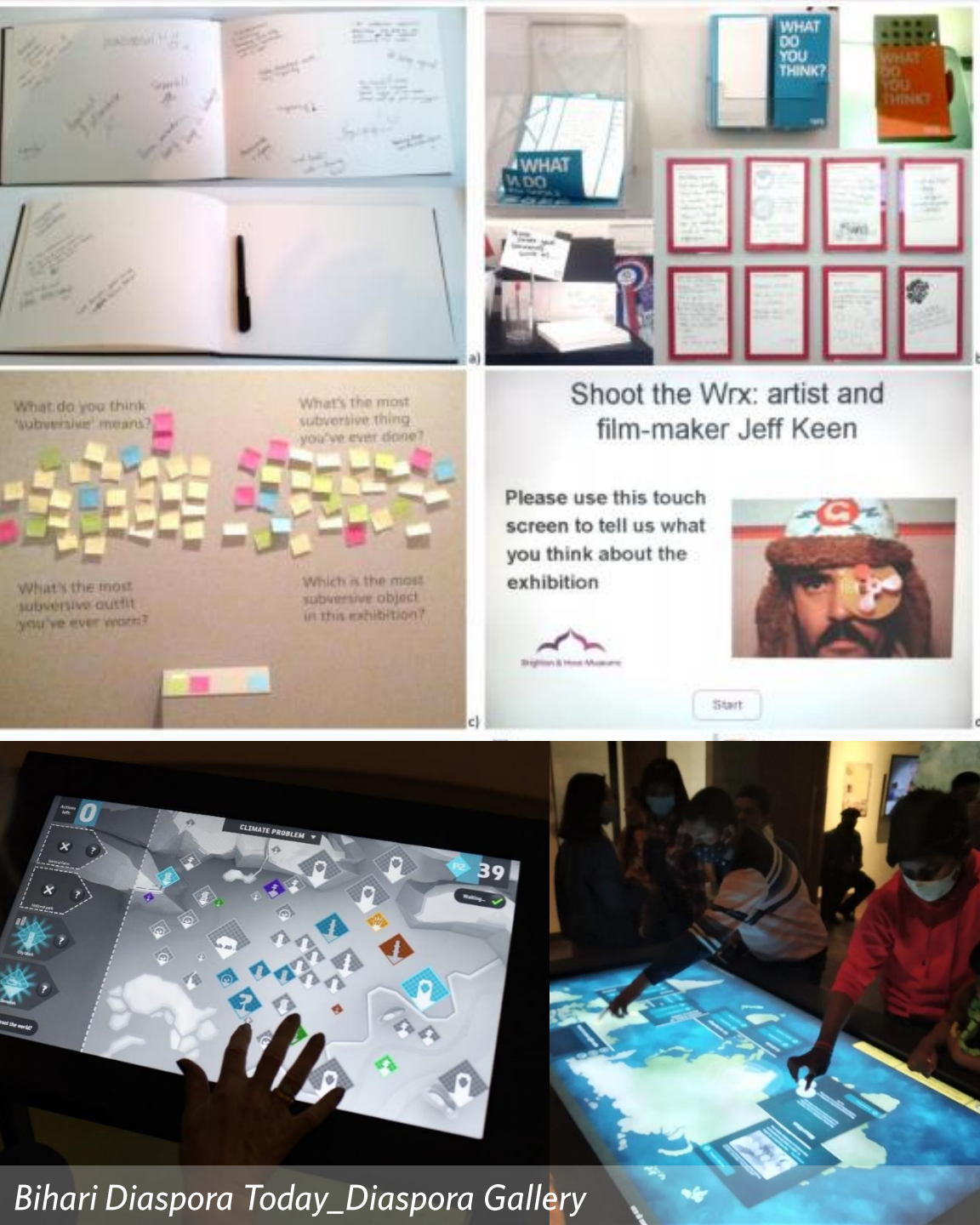
Science:  
Repatriation,  
Decolonization &  
Collection sharing

Community:  
Caring,  
Access &  
Inclusion

Imagination !

# Democracy: Visitor Voice and Co- Curation

- Gives visitors a voice and enhance engagement with exhibitions and the museum generally
- Guest books, comment cards, feedback boards and screens, and website and social media comments.
- Visitors are also encouraged to participate in art through interactives and user-generated content
- More audience-focused and accessible, supports informal learning, and enriches exhibitions with visitors' experiences and reactions.
- During COVID-19, museums have increasingly moved visitor feedback and participation to online environments including museum websites, mobile applications, and social media







# Democracy: Redress Systemic Inequalities of Wealth and Power

- Opportunities for museums to be leaders by applying social justice values to their own work and practices
- Using their own status in the community to increase the power and authority of others
- Partnering with organizations to develop content, services and meet needs

# Science: Repatriation and Restitution



- Growing pressure to confront issues around the rightful ownership of art and artifacts
- Historians, Indigenous leaders and social justice advocates seek to address the historical wrongs that led to misappropriation

Annapurna Statue returned to India  
from the Mackenzie Art Gallery (Canada)



# Science: Decolonization and Reconciliation

- Recognizing uncomfortable truths in interpretation and exhibition narratives
- Reinstalling galleries to integrate Indigenous art throughout the narrative, not treated as “past”
- Provide Indigenous communities with a voice and vehicle to tell their own stories
- Multi-lingual labels and interpretation



Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina

# Science: Collection Sharing



*Kore from the Acropolis Museum, Athens*



*Black Figure Vase from the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto*



- Opportunity to share resources, expertise and connections
- Includes joint acquisitions
- Builds cultural understanding
- Provides access to new audiences
- Creates new ways of seeing and interdisciplinary connections
- Partnerships with national, international and other local cultural organizations





# Science: Combatting Climate Change

- Becoming more environmentally sustainable amidst the threat of climate change
- Seeking flexibility in spatial program
- Need for healthy buildings
- Creating more opportunities for outdoor programming and experiences

Grand Rapids Art Museum – first art museum in the world to receive gold LEED certification



# Community: Caring

- Increasingly serving as sites of gathering, community, and debate
- More responsive to community needs, sociopolitical events, and reflects diverse populations
- Be more reflective of community's cultural identities
- Community to have a sense of ownership
- Helping with needs like health, vaccinations, elder care

Community gathering at the





Asher Moses Nathan and Son, the pastel dates to ca. 1845, by Jules Lion

# Whose history: consultation

## FREE PEOPLE OF COLOUR MUSEUM



## MUSEUM OF JEWISH LIFE





# Imagination: Future Thinking

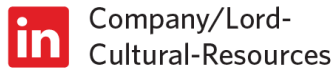
- Museums need to prove they are not only about the past
- They are platforms for future thinking
- They can't be such platforms if they adhere to old colonial, hegemonic ways of presenting
- Proposing three basic principles to help release imaginative future thinking:
  - Democracy
  - Science
  - Community



Museum of the future, Dubai

# THANK YOU.

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