

*Safeguarding*  
*Intangible Cultural Heritage*  
*in Canada*

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*Summary Report*

*A report prepared by* **Heritage Saskatchewan**  
*Commissioned by the* **Federal Provincial Territorial Culture and Heritage Table**  
**March 2022**

# Table of Contents

## What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Introduction                 | 3 |
| Domains & Safeguarding Goals | 5 |

## Why Safeguard Intangible Cultural Heritage in Canada?

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Summary of Findings                     | 7  |
| Needs, Challenges, and Opportunities    | 9  |
| Indigenous Intangible Cultural Heritage | 11 |

## Best Practice Case Studies

|             |    |
|-------------|----|
| Conclusions | 31 |
|-------------|----|

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This research was funded by the Federal Provincial Territorial Culture and Heritage Table, which includes a working group on intangible cultural heritage.

## *Definitions, Acronyms, and Abbreviations*

2003 Convention – refers to the 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

FPT – Federal Provincial Territorial

FPTCH – Federal Provincial Territorial Culture and Heritage Table

ICH – Intangible Cultural Heritage

Living Heritage – a term often used synonymously with intangible cultural heritage, it emphasizes holistic, active expressions of culture and heritage that provide a sense of identity and continuity in the contemporary context.

NGO – A non-governmental organization; also refers to non-profit organizations which operate separately from government.

Respondent – an individual who responded to our survey and questionnaires or who we interviewed directly.


Safeguarding – measures to document, strengthen, and reinforce intangible cultural heritage, and to ensure its continued evolution and transmission to future generations.

Supports – human, financial, and material resources provided by any kind of body – governments, institutions, organizations, working groups, communities.

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

UNDRIP – United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples



A photograph of a cultural festival or religious procession. In the foreground, a woman in a white dress and veil stands next to a woman in a yellow fringed dress. Behind them, a man in a white shirt with a red sash and a woman in a white dress are visible. In the background, there are large religious icons (shrine paintings) on poles, decorated with pink and yellow ribbons. A white flag with a red cross is also visible. The scene is set outdoors on a grassy area with trees in the background.

*“Canada is so rich in cultural diversity. Starting with the First Nations peoples, the founding peoples and all the immigrant communities from the oldest to the most recent, all these groups are entitled to support to preserve their intangible heritage.”- Respondent*

## Introduction

Since UNESCO’s adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) has emerged as an important arena of analysis and development in heritage theory, practice, and policy. This summary report captures the key findings from a longer technical report titled, *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Canada*, which assesses current ICH perspectives and practices across the country. It was produced for the Federal Provincial Territorial Culture and Heritage Table, which includes a working group on intangible cultural heritage. Federal, provincial, and territorial governments were seeking advice about what should be done regarding intangible cultural heritage safeguarding in Canada.

Our research involved a scoping study of ICH safeguarding in Canada today, examining work being undertaken across jurisdictions to identify, understand, and evaluate safeguarding approaches, recognize both best practices of and barriers to safeguarding, and consider next steps to support the development, recognition, and transmission of ICH within Canadian society. We completed a comprehensive jurisdictional scan of ICH activities; distributed a national, bilingual survey that generated over 600 responses; and conducted interviews and circulated questionnaires with 25 heritage practitioners, academics, and other experts in the field.

The results show that Canada has a lot of catching up to do in the heritage field. In the words of one of our respondents, “Canada’s heritage standards are 30 years behind the internationally accepted standards of UNESCO.” We identified several needs, gaps, and barriers in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage across Canada—foremost the lack of structural support. However, we also recognize that ground-breaking and internationally emulated ICH safeguarding work is already happening in Canada, particularly in Newfoundland and Labrador and Quebec. Communities of all kinds are also working hard at the grassroots level to safeguard what is most important to them. We highlight some of these best practices in this summary report.

Though there is much work to be done, we are confident that the expertise to broaden ICH safeguarding practice in Canada already exists. There is ample opportunity for governments, heritage organizations, and Indigenous, settler, and newcomer communities to work together to build positive social outcomes through ICH safeguarding. Documentation, recognition, transmission, and the development of intangible cultural heritage is vital to the sustainability of Canada’s diverse cultures and communities, to reconciliation, and to the enhancement of wellbeing.





# What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?

Intangible cultural heritage, also known as living heritage, refers to the dynamic cultural practices, expressions, knowledge and skills that all Canadians—Indigenous, settler, and newcomer—learn, practice, and transmit from one generation to the next.

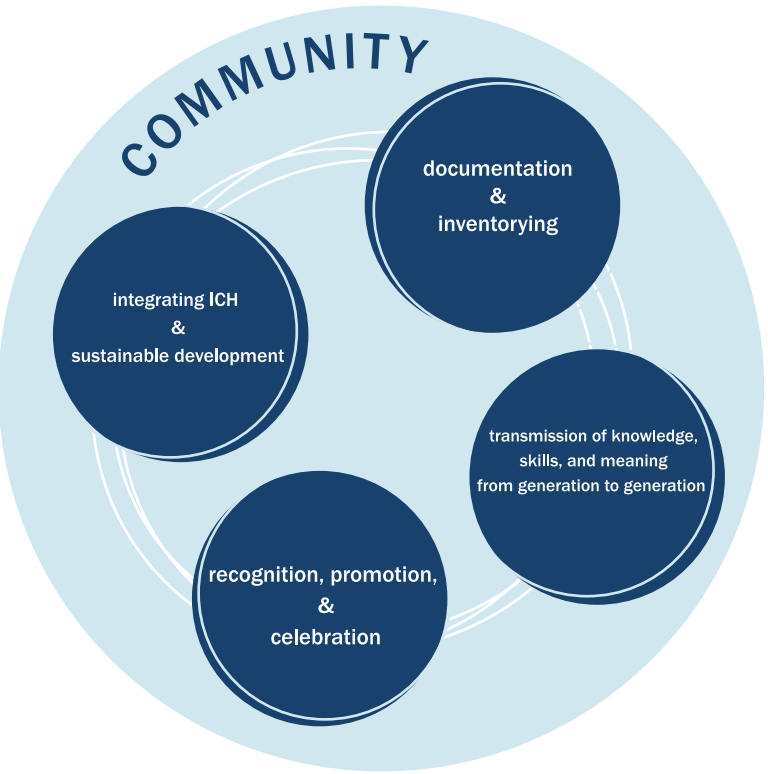
A Tłıchǫ youth checks traplines with his grandfather in what is today called the Northwest Territories. A rancher near Gladmar, Saskatchewan hangs her laundry based on customs learned from her mother. A wooden-boat builder in Winterton, Newfoundland fells a tree for his planned bay punt. A South Asian Hindu newcomer arranges the family’s home shrine on the top of the refrigerator in her small Brampton apartment, creatively adapting family belief systems to the constraints of North American domestic architecture. A team of seven men run their ice canoe over the floating ice packs of the Saint Lawrence during the Québec Winter Carnival, revitalizing this traditional means of winter transportation by transforming it into a competitive sporting event. These are a few examples of how ICH manifests in practice in everyday communities across Canada.

## Domains and Safeguarding Goals of Intangible Cultural Heritage

UNESCO’s 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage specifies five broad domains in which ICH is manifested and four goals or approaches for the safeguarding of ICH. Any safeguarding measure must be collaboratively developed and applied with the **consent and substantive involvement of the community**.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO considers language as a vehicle of ICH, but contends that because issues of language safeguarding are so complex and crucial, it warrants its own safeguarding approaches and provisions.

### UNESCO’s Four Goals of Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage



### UNESCO’s Five Domains of Intangible Cultural Heritage





Why Safeguard  
Intangible Cultural Heritage  
in Canada?

The maintenance and transmission of intangible cultural heritage in an era of rapid globalization, mass media, and environmental change creates problems for cultural conservation that call for strategies to safeguard elements of ICH at local, national, and global levels.

Intangible cultural heritage matters not only for cultural identity and diversity, but for the ways it gives meaning to our daily lives and creates socially cohesive, healthy, and sustainable communities. When elements of ICH are lost or threatened, or their expression and transmission interrupted or restricted, it can have far-reaching health and social consequences for individuals, families, and communities. For example, Canada’s Indian residential school system willfully destroyed the living heritage of Indigenous individuals and communities, leading to devastating intergenerational effects. Intangible cultural heritage is a vital component of wellbeing, contributes to building resiliency in times of crisis and change, and is a tool for sustainable development. As such, safeguarding ICH aligns with the UN’s

17 Sustainable Development Goals for enhanced quality of life, which continue to gain traction internationally and in Canada.

As First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities strive to reclaim and revitalize their cultural heritage, supporting the recognition and inter-generational transmission of Indigenous ICH is a meaningful aspect of Canada’s commitment to reconciliation and the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Calls to Action, which both compel Canadian society to recognize and reaffirm the rights of Indigenous Peoples to control, protect, transmit, and develop their cultural heritage, and for governments and organizations to include Indigenous heritage values and priorities in their policies and practices.



Summary of Findings  
Canada and the 2003 Convention

Currently, the Government of Canada has not joined UNESCO’s 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Canadian Heritage initially showed interest in ratification, but by 2005 had abandoned efforts towards realizing that goal. They continue to recognize challenges in implementing the Convention in Canada, and acknowledge that while the Department offers programs that can be viewed as broadly supporting ICH, the term intangible cultural heritage is not widely used. As a result, it is our impression that Canadian Heritage has not been actively monitoring regional, national, or

global developments of ICH in the years since the Convention came into force, as the term now has widespread usage within international heritage circles.

Despite Canada not ratifying the 2003 Convention, Canadian organizations hold a strong presence on the UNESCO ICH NGO Forum. The Forum is a space for exchange and cooperation by NGOs accredited to provide advisory services to the 2003 Convention Intergovernmental Committee. As of this writing, there are nine accredited Canadian NGOs—more than any other nation in the Americas.

*“In Canada we [need to] find a way to think about valuing heritage for everything that it can bring us ... sustainable development, food security, employment, climate resiliency, many, many different things.”*

*“ICH is not an explicit priority in the mandate of federal or provincial ministers. ICH seems to fall into the cracks between departments that are primarily mandated to conserve heritage places and departments mandated to promote arts and culture.”*

*“Recognising and implementing UNESCO’s ... Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage would help to foster intercultural dialogue amongst the diverse cultures of Canada and respect for diversity and safeguarding of all cultures.”*



*“It’s about knowledge, know-how, and the policy solutions we can find going forward should come from that.”*

*“A lot of people misunderstand what ICH means. [They have] an understanding of it that doesn’t have to do with know-how.”*

### *Contested Definitions of Intangible Cultural Heritage*

Intangible cultural heritage is a concept that is misunderstood, misapplied, and/or under-utilized in the Canadian heritage sector. For some, ICH is an unwieldy term, and it misaligns with holistic Indigenous perspectives that do not separate heritage into tangible and intangible silos. For others, meanings of ICH expand beyond (or do not even include) UNESCO definitions. Commonly, intangible cultural heritage is inaccurately used to refer to oral history and memory, the “stories” behind objects, or the need for wider and deeper interpretation and contextualization of museum artifacts and built heritage. In contrast, UNESCO-definitions of ICH emphasize knowledge, know-how, and performances of expressive culture.

## *Jurisdictional Models for Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding*

While ICH safeguarding is happening in some capacity in all jurisdictions in Canada, often under diverse rubrics and with differing goals and outcomes, Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador are leaders both in Canada and internationally in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Their ICH infrastructure involves legislative or strategic frameworks; documentation and research; involvement of universities; productive relationships with UNESCO networks and forums; and significant, targeted, core operational funding from provincial governments to support two key NGOs working on-the-ground with communities: Heritage NL and Conseil québé-

cois du patrimoine vivant (CQPV). Both organizations emphasize community needs, partnerships, and relationship building in their approach to safeguarding, engaging in practices as diverse as research and policy development; promotion and recognition of ICH and its tradition bearers; and capacity building for communities including the development of resources, toolkits, and workshops.

In the past five years, Saskatchewan has also started to engage with ICH safeguarding and community relationship building through the work of the non-profit organization Heritage Saskatchewan.

**Heritage NL Case Study I on page 13**

**CQPV Case Study IV on page 21**

**Heritage Saskatchewan Case Study V on page 24**

## *Needs, Challenges, and Opportunities*


Our study identified several needs, challenges, and opportunities for intangible cultural heritage safeguarding in Canada:

Lack of funding for ICH safeguarding in Canada is a major challenge. FPT government supports for heritage can be viewed as broadly inclusive of ICH, yet few funds are clearly allocated for ICH safeguarding or emphasize ICH in eligibility criteria. There are opportunities for greater structural supports for ICH safeguarding within FPT and regional governments, including strategy and policy development and implementation; legislation; development of training opportunities, toolkits, and other resources; and awareness raising, recognition, and promotion—especially of tradition bearers and traditional and customary arts.

There is a need for more dedicated training programs for the documentation and management of ICH within Canada. Compared to other countries, including nations that have also not ratified the 2003 Convention, like the United States and Australia, Canada lacks applied training opportunities.

There are opportunities for greater understanding, inclusion, and prioritization of ICH safeguarding approaches within wider Canadian heritage theory and practice, including: museums, archives, heritage conservation planning, and heritage consulting. Archives have an especially important role to play in documentation and inventorying processes of ICH safeguarding.





*“Voices of those who already have space will overpower those who need their voice heard.”*

## *Indigenous Intangible Cultural Heritage*

Particular historical and contemporary policies—such as the Indian residential school system—impact the sustainability of Indigenous intangible cultural heritage, which is especially vulnerable in relation to intergenerational transmission and language survival. Indigenous self-representation, stewardship, and control in heritage decision-making processes should be prioritized in any ICH safeguarding and development approaches that engage with Indigenous communities. Further, the (re)production of Indigenous ICH may be done in contexts different from those of non-Indigenous practitioners, and according to a unique context, approach, and protocol, and this should be taken into consideration in any ICH safeguarding policies and programs that are implemented.

In many Indigenous communities, holistic approaches to heritage—which integrate the tangible and intangible—have long been understood and practiced. As a result, Indigenous governments, organizations, and communities are leading the way in ICH safeguarding

in Canada, although the term “intangible cultural heritage” is not often used. Traditional knowledge, cultural heritage, or simply “culture” are more common terms.

Indigenous-led organizations are employing innovative funding structures and managing ambitious projects for cultural revitalization at the community level that align with Indigenous ways of knowing and being. For example, the First Peoples’ Cultural Council (FPCC) in British Columbia has developed the Braided Knowledge grant that supports projects that “demonstrate and reflect the holistic and interconnected nature of Indigenous arts, language and cultural heritage.” Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq / Kitikmeot Heritage Society is working to ensure Inuinait cultural renewal and transmission through traditional arts workshops and an elders-in-residence program. See best practice case study III on page 18 to learn more about this non-profit’s advanced approaches to ICH safeguarding.

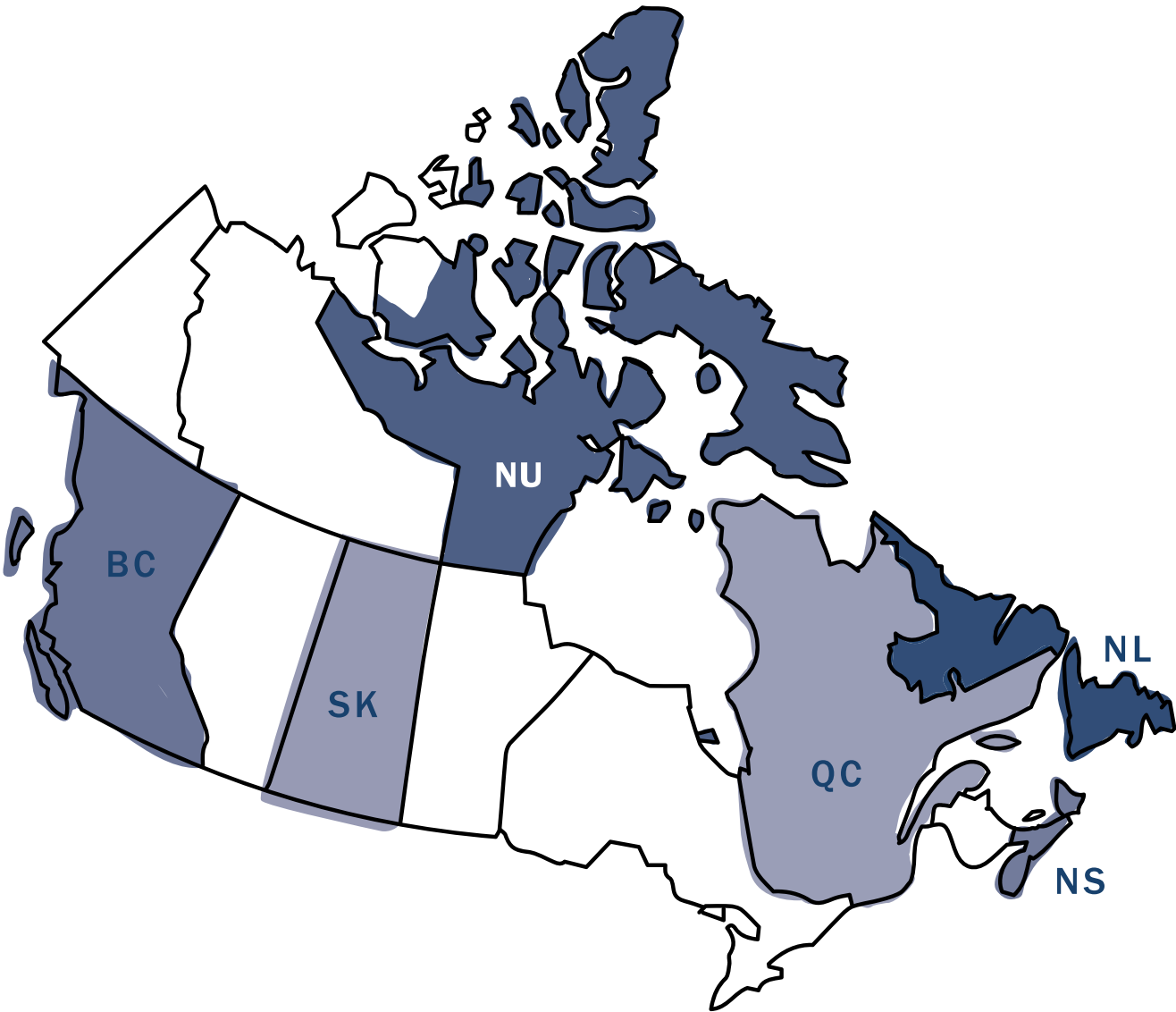
Indigenous-led organizations are highly motivated to safeguard intangible cultural heritage.

**Federal, provincial/territorial, and regional governments, NGOs, and academic institutions have much to learn from Indigenous communities about how to safeguard intangible cultural heritage from an inclusive, holistic perspective.**

*“Indigenous nations have cultural and linguistic rights – any serious effort at reconciliation will require that Indigenous rights via language, knowledge, and practices be respected, and that maintenance and revitalization efforts be supported.”*



*Best Practice Case Studies of  
Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding in Canada*



We identified several examples of intangible cultural heritage safeguarding best practices in communities across Canada. These projects support intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge and craft practices, recognition and support of tradition bearers, community-led documentation of ICH, and access and outreach practices for documented ICH. The case studies show how much expertise and capacity currently exists across Canada for this type of work, and provides inspiration for the kind of growth in ICH safeguarding that is possible.



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*Bridging the Tangible-Intangible Divide: Heritage NL’s Craft at Risk List and Mentor-Apprentice Program*

**Region:** Atlantic Canada  
**Organization Level:** NGO/Community  
**Best Practice Keywords:** recognizing and celebrating tradition bearers; knowledge transmission; documentation and inventorying; sustainable economic development  
**ICH Domains:** traditional craftsmanship

Trigger mitts and hooked mats, tea dolls and steamed birch snowshoes, rodneys, riddlin’ fences, and root cellars. Traditional arts like these define the material culture of Newfoundland and Labrador, yet the knowledge and know-how required to make such regionally specific craft is at risk of disappearing. Between 2019 and 2021, the Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador (Heritage NL) in partnership with the Craft Council of Newfoundland and Labrador (Craft Council), set out to document, inventory, and assess the state of vernacular craft in the province, identifying forms at risk of disappearing, developing ways to promote their continued transmission, and expanding opportunities for the sustainable economic development of ICH. With

\$433,500 in funds over two years from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador’s Labour Market Partnerships program through the Department of Immigration, Population Growth, and Skills, Heritage NL is piloting an innovative safeguarding program that bridges what many might consider to be a tangible-intangible heritage divide. The Craft at Risk List and the Mentor-Apprenticeship Program demonstrate how ICH safeguarding can complement more established arenas of heritage, such as built landscape, and suggests that integrative approaches to heritage conservation—where interventions address know-how, materiality, and economic development—have the potential to create outcomes where heritage can be strengthened, utilized



in diverse ways, and have wider value and reach across society. It also shows how ICH NGOs like Heritage NL are partnering with diverse groups to tap into unconventional government funding structures to support ICH safeguarding, and that heritage can intersect with, and positively impact, multiple social and political spheres.

The Heritage NL Craft at Risk List 2021 is a comprehensive assessment of the state of heritage craft in Newfoundland today. The report identifies 55 crafts representative of the occupational, architectural, and aesthetic traditions of the province over time. Ten crafts are identified as critically endangered, including birch broom making and grasswork; 32 crafts are listed as endangered, such as vernacular building construction and drystone walling; and only 12 crafts, such as hooked mat making and knitting, are listed as currently viable. Rope making is believed to have become extinct in the last generation. Heritage NL and Craft Council staff engaged in key stakeholder planning sessions to shape their study approach, developed and distributed a survey to gather perceptions and concerns around heritage crafts at risk, and travelled to different communities to lead in-person engagement sessions that helped inventory and assess what crafts Newfoundlanders and Labradorians felt were at risk, to what extent, and why.

The resulting report is considered a first step at identifying crafts at risk in the province so that Heritage NL can accordingly “plan for the future and track changes in levels of local knowledge” (Jarvis and Barrett 2021: 3). In addition to inventorying crafts at risk of disappearing, the report provides contextual information about the making of particular crafts, profiles active craft practitioners across the province, and analyzes the complex factors that affect the viability of heritage crafts in the province today—issues like lack of training opportunities, limited access to materials, globalization, and the devaluing of craft labour and skill in contemporary society. The report makes several recommendations for the public, policy-makers, and institutions to support the continued creation and expansion of traditional Newfoundland and Labrador craft.

UNESCO recognizes documentation and inventorying as foundational to ICH safeguarding best practices, but inventorying is meant to serve as a catalyst for further initiatives that develop and sustain ICH in the community. As Dale Jarvis, Executive Director of Heritage NL explains, “documentation is really important, but that can’t be where it ends. It always has to be followed up with community action in some way.” With the Heritage NL

Mentor-Apprentice program, the organization is hoping to regenerate vanishing craft skills in Newfoundland and Labrador, expand the heritage craft industry, and enhance the employability and profitability of provincial heritage craft and tradespeople. The pilot program, launched in Fall 2021, not only gives recognition to regional craft traditions and the expert knowledge of makers, but it also contributes to the sustainable development of a province that has long faced economic hardships. In some parts of rural Newfoundland, there is a growing demand for skilled heritage tradespeople as architectural restoration projects have exploded in regions such as Bonavista and Trinity.<sup>2</sup> By providing opportunities and incentives for young people to develop skills in trades like heritage carpentry and masonry, the program in turn helps support the conservation of the built landscape while providing opportunities for meaningful employment.

Traditional arts are a “body of knowledge that occupies its own space,” and do not fall into “neat funding categories,” according to Jarvis. “There’s a bit of a disconnect between organizations that fund professional art, and people who are engaged in everyday, living activities that, although have artistic elements, are not seen within the purview of professional art and craft organizations.” The Mentor-Apprentice program therefore provides funding of up to \$10,000 to support the teaching and transmission of endangered heritage craft skills throughout the province. A knowledgeable craft or tradesperson serves as a mentor to an apprentice, providing an immersive, one-on-one opportunity to learn craft skills that are designated as endangered on the Heritage NL Craft at Risk List. “Part of keeping traditions alive is being able to give the tradition bearer ... the opportunity to practice their skills and craft within the community.”

The funding prioritizes living craft forms with few remaining practitioners so that vulnerable crafts have a fighting chance at survival. The program also incentivizes and reproduces informal learning opportunities and master-apprentice partnerships, which is the way craft has been traditionally learned around the world. “Without programs like ours that can pay for that, those skills would just never get transmitted ... There isn’t a program that exists that funds that kind of intensive traditional skills training.” The first round of projects was approved for funding in January 2022, and include traditions such as Labrador cossack (dickie) making.

The Heritage NL team works with the mentor and apprentice to help facilitate and focus the teaching and learning process, and they also document the craft-making for future archiving. As well, Heritage NL has

increased its in-person and online training offerings, partnering with expert tradition bearers to lead shorter workshops in window repair and restoration, clapboard siding installation, wriggle fence making, bread making, and drystone walling.

For Heritage NL, the skills of tradition bearers and tra-

ditional artists are “equal to, or greater than, the skills of professional artists,” says Jarvis. The organization wants wider society to understand the amount of labour, time, and energy that has gone into learning traditional skills. “Then, perhaps, people will start to understand a bit more why traditional arts are important.”

## Further Reading & Viewing

Heritage NL. The ICH Blog. Heritage Newfoundland Craft at Risk. 28 October 2011. <http://www.ichblog.ca/2021/10/heritage-nl-craft-at-risk.html>

Jarvis, Dale Gilbert and Terra Barrett, eds. 2021. *Heritage NL Craft at Risk List* 2021. <https://heritagenl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Craft-at-Risk-List-2021.pdf>

Heritage NL Craft at Risk. Heritage NL. YouTube video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63NxpPqBN60>

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Department of Immigration, Population Growth, and Skills. New Training to Support Heritage Preservation and Conservation Efforts. 15 January 2021. <https://www.gov.nl.ca/releases/2021/isl/0115n06/>

<sup>2</sup> For example, Bonavista Living is a company which has acquired more than 50 of Bonavista’s residential heritage properties to restore for rent or resale—often to mainland millennials looking to relocate to rural Newfoundland. See <https://www.bonavistaliving.com/> [accessed 15 March 2022].



## Case Study II



© Nova Scotia Archives, 1975-317/52160-140

### *From Collector to Archive to Community: Preserving and Making Accessible the Helen Creighton Folklore Collection at the Nova Scotia Archives*

**Region:** Atlantic Canada

**Organization Level:** Provincial government

**Best Practice Keywords:** recognizing and celebrating tradition bearers; community engagement and outreach; sustainable economic development; safeguarding documented / inventoried ICH

**ICH Domains:** oral traditions and expressions; performing arts

Helen Creighton was a prolific collector of the intangible cultural heritage of Canada's Maritime provinces. Between 1928 and 1975, she recorded thousands of folk songs and narratives traditionally performed and transmitted by the diversity of ethnic groups that have historically made up the region, including the Mi'kmaq, Acadians, British, African Nova Scotians, Germans, and Gaels. The majority of her unique field recordings are held at the Nova Scotia Archives (NSA), and, with the correspondence and other materials that were part of her wider work, make up the largest private sector holding within

the repository.

Facing the deterioration of her original field recordings, the equipment to access these formats, and recognizing the value and representativeness of what she collected, the NSA has made the institutional investment to digitize all of Creighton's sound and moving image recordings. "We see the importance and value of that material," says Patti Bannister, Nova Scotia's Provincial Archivist. "In not digitizing and making more accessible the recordings, we were not honouring the life of the material."<sup>3</sup>

The initiative has been an urgent act not only of preservation, but also of community outreach. "Our role as an archives is preservation, but also access," explains Bannister. "The materials had never been truly accessed, explored, and experienced by the public." Acknowledging this documented ICH as a legacy for the people of Nova Scotia, the NSA has been working since 2020 to digitize the recordings and make them available online in compressed formats, effectively returning the materials to their source communities. Understanding the value of totality, the NSA will make the entirety of the Helen Creighton Collection freely accessible to the people of Nova Scotia and beyond through a searchable internet database once the web resource launches. Archives users will be able to access the digitized recordings not only by physical format and genre, but they may also search recordings by community of origin and by tradition bearer name, linking forms of cultural heritage to the specificity of place and the expert knowledge of individuals.

The NSA has also worked collaboratively with stakeholders, such as the Helen Creighton Folklore Society and Family Trustees to address stakeholder needs and concerns with the end goal of increased community accessibility. The digital initiative is scheduled to be launched online in Spring 2022.

As ICH is understood to be living and dynamic, efforts to document it might appear contradictory, as documentation creates fixed forms. Archives and museums then accession and preserve those fixed forms, interring captured traditions in perpetuity in cold storage vaults or on terabytes of servers. As Bannister observes, "the culture becomes tangible when the intangible goes to the institution of the archives." She acknowledges that acquisition by an archive is often seen as the end of a community or individual's relationship to their cultural heritage. "It's a decree of death. It's seen as the end of something as opposed to the start of a new life." Yet the NSA envisions the creative possibilities of wider public accessibility to fixed forms of ICH, and the power of connecting source communities to earlier recordings of their oral culture. Although the ICH Creighton documented throughout the Maritimes may have been captured on film and tape, Bannister suggests that archives with ICH holdings can encourage those fixed forms to become more organic and living in nature. It is through active use that a further

life can be lived for the songs, stories, and legends that Creighton recorded from so many Maritime communities. "We want to try to keep that intangible nature in what is the very tangible work of archiving."

The Nova Scotia Archives recognize that Creighton's collecting took place in a very different era, especially with regard to cultural awareness and ethics. For example, the language captured in Creighton's work is the language of the time these recordings were made. The NSA is mindful of the fact that in contemporary contexts some of this material can be interpreted as inappropriate or offensive. "As archivists the core of our work is providing access to the materials that we preserve without the overlay of interpretation," says Bannister. "It is our hope that this improved access will lead to a re-examination of Creighton's work and spark new work by current scholars and practitioners."

By widely sharing Creighton's field recordings, there may be a renewed interest in the ICH of the Maritime provinces, and that oral traditions can be re-ignited. "We want people to explore, to look at what of this is still part of living tradition and what can be revitalized, picked up, and began [sic] again in local communities," notes Bannister. For example, she envisions opportunities for educators to use the traditional music Creighton recorded in formal education settings as an avenue for transmission.

Creighton's holdings at the Nova Scotia Archives are already taking on new lives. In addition to community groups using stories from her collection to develop ghost tours and festivals, Halifax musician and producer, Dylan Jewers, has been releasing Creighton's digitized field recordings on compilation albums through his Big Turnip record label. Not only is Jewers using ICH to contribute to sustainable economic development through participation in the creative economy, but he is also exposing a new generation of young Maritimers to the dynamics of the region's vernacular song tradition. *Songs from the Helen Creighton Collection of Folklore* (2020) and *Folksongs and Broadides from the Helen Creighton Collection* (2021), re-arranged and performed by Blue Lobelia, are the most recent releases.

"This is the right thing to do," says Bannister on safeguarding documented ICH for future generations of Nova Scotians. "To make the totality of this body accessible."

### *Further Reading & Viewing*

Nova Scotia Archives. <https://archives.novascotia.ca/>

Nova Scotia Archives. Helen Creighton Virtual Exhibit. <https://archives.novascotia.ca/creighton/>

Big Turnip Records. <https://bigturnips.bandcamp.com/>

Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. Helen Creighton (1899-1989) National Historic Person Backgrounder. [https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/culture/clmhc-hsmbc/res/information-backgrounder/Helen\\_Creighton](https://www.pc.gc.ca/en/culture/clmhc-hsmbc/res/information-backgrounder/Helen_Creighton)

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Patti Bannister. Zoom. 24 August 2021.





## Case Study III

© Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq / Kitikmeot Heritage Society

### *Inuinnaït Knowledge Renewal and Transfer in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut*

**Region:** Canadian Arctic

**Organization Level:** Non-profit/Community

**Best Practice Keywords:** knowledge transmission; recognizing and celebrating tradition bearers; community engagement and outreach; Indigenous cultural revitalization and reclamation; documentation and inventorying

**ICH Domains:** traditional craftsmanship; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; oral traditions and expressions

Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq / The Kitikmeot Heritage Society (PI/KHS) is an Inuit-led charitable organization with a mission to “preserve and renew Inuinnaït knowledge, language, and culture for the benefit of all Inuit.”<sup>4</sup> The organization is based in the May Hakongak Community Library and Cultural Centre in Cambridge Bay / Iqaluk-tuttiaq, Nunavut, which supports a wide range of community and cultural services. The Centre, which is also

located within Cambridge Bay’s high school, is a social hub for the community of around 1700 people, bringing elders and youth together in a culturally safe and supportive environment through traditional knowledge renewal and transfer activities. “Everything we do as a cultural centre is to transfer [knowledge] to the learner,” explains PI/KHS Executive Director Emily Angulalik.<sup>5</sup>

The Kitikmeot Heritage Society began in 1996 through

the dedicated efforts of a small group of local leaders with an interest in documenting and safeguarding Inuinnaït history and cultural traditions. Employing a holistic approach to heritage safeguarding that considers both tangible and intangible dimensions, the organization undertakes cultural and historical research, documentation, conservation, and the development of digital and in-person programming related to knowledge spheres such as language, archaeology, regional toponymy, and intangible cultural heritage—especially oral traditions and expressions, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship. “Southerners have to realize that there is more than material stuff that’s heritage. We’ve been working on [ICH] since day one,” explains Darren Keith, Senior Researcher. “For us, it’s all knowledge.”

#### **Elders-in-Residence Program**

The PI/KHS Elders-in-Residence Program, among the first of its kind in Nunavut, is one innovative way the organization is supporting cultural transmission between generations. Funded by the Nunavut Government’s Department of Culture and Heritage Elders and Youth Division, community elders gather at the centre to socialize with each other and with youth, all while sharing a range of cultural practices—from sewing to drumming to Inuit *Qaujimaqatuqangit* (social values). The program enhances opportunities for elders to share their stories, language, artistry, knowledge, and know-how. “The elders come in, discuss the issues of the day, and then they’ll start working, sewing, and at the same time passing it on to people who come into the cultural centre, whether that’s through a formal program or informally,” Kim Crockatt, Chief Finance and Operations Officer, explains. Having an elders-in-residence program has also made coordinating and networking with knowledge holders for targeted safeguarding projects, programs, and activities a lot easier. “The [elders] have a diverse skill set and are all so willing to share. And if they don’t know something, they know exactly who we need to contact.”

#### **Traditional Arts Workshops**

In 2019-2020, the PI/KHS received a Canada Council for the Arts Creating, Knowing, and Sharing Grant, which supports Indigenous contemporary and customary arts. The grant, although not explicitly stated as such, recognizes elements of ICH and provides support for the “retention, maintenance, innovation and transmission of cultural knowledge and creative practice,” including initiatives that “seek to pass cultural knowledge to younger generations through artistic practice, and the renewal and maintenance of customary art practices.”<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> <https://canadacouncil.ca/funding/grants/creating-knowing-sharing> [accessed 15 March 2022].

<sup>7</sup> Kitikmeot Heritage Society. “Making the Kiihimajuq Kammak.” <https://www.kitikmeotheritage.ca/kiihimajuqkammak> [accessed 15 March 2022].

The PI/ KHS used their Canada Council funds to develop the *Kiihimajuq kammak* (crimped sole boots) Workshop in December 2019, bringing elders Mary Kudlak and Mary Akoakhion from Ulukhaktok, Northwest Territories to the cultural centre to teach local apprentice artisans traditional kammak making techniques. Kammak making is an endangered knowledge form in Nunavut, and the tradition was no longer actively practiced in Cambridge Bay. The workshop was developed with the intention to facilitate inter-community exchange of artisan knowledge and reclaim and revitalize Inuit clothing traditions. In February 2020, women who learned from the Ulukhaktok elders led another workshop to mentor a second group of apprentices, thereby building increased capacity for cultural renewal in Cambridge Bay, and “strengthening the revival of this knowledge among Inuinnaït.”<sup>7</sup>

Kammak are soft boots made from seal or caribou skin. In planning the workshop it was important that the right materials were used according to Inuit custom and ways of doing. As Emily Angulalik explains, much preparatory work is involved in kammak making—from hunting the animal to processing the hide. The seasons also play a major role in the art form. “You can’t make a crimped shoe in a really hot summer,” Angulalik relates. “You have to go by the seasons, like our ancestors did. That’s what we try to follow, how our ancestors have worked and survived over the years ... the traditional way of preparing.” Over ten days in December, students learned how to work the hide from beginning to end—scraping, softening the hide, cutting patterns, fitting the boots, sewing them together, and learning clothing patterns and styles that are unique to Inuit material culture and responsive to the local environment.

Pitquhirnikkut Ilihautiniq / The Kitikmeot Heritage Society also carefully documented the kammak workshop and knowledge transmission process, sharing photographs and a documentary video on their website and social media pages with an aim to raise awareness of kammak making among Northern communities and the wider public. However, as Darren Keith explains, documentation is not just about sharing the safeguarding successes of the society. “We also use technology for transmission itself.” For example, short film clips of craft techniques are frequently posted on the PI/KHS Facebook page. Other successful clothing knowledge renewal and transfer workshops include an *atigi* / parka making workshop in November 2021, supported by the Canadian Women’s Foundation.

PI/KHS staff reason that the success of their holistic heritage safeguarding practices should be measured by

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.kitikmeotheritage.ca/> [accessed 15 March 2022]

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Emily Angulalik, Kim Crockatt, and Darren Keith. Zoom. 16 November 2021.



the community itself — by the reactions, feedback, and ongoing support of elders and program participants. “We get feedback from the elders,” says Darren Keith. “They let us know that we are doing important work.” Artisan apprentices have indicated a sense of pride and accomplishment in their finished work, and a stronger sense of Inuinnait identity. In their commitment to seeing a traditional arts project through to completion, participants are empowered. They build confidence in their individual abilities, but also increase competency in their own culture.

“People have suffered with residential schools particularly in our area, and they’ve been knocked down and things are moving so fast,” says Keith. “It’s important that [community members] have access to that knowledge to

decide who they are going to be in the future.” According to Emily Angulalik, PI/KHS safeguarding practices help community members take pride in their cultural heritage and intertwine it with daily life, and the organization recognizes that safeguarding ICH is about prioritizing social wellbeing, and that cultural heritage renewal impacts overall community health, vitality, and sustainability.

“I think [Inuit] are living heritage, practicing it,” observes Angulalik. “We are doing. As an Inuinnait, I believe heritage is so important for the future generation. It’s important for me to carry this, because it’s my identity. It’s who I am. As an Inuinnait individual, as a human being, it is so important to continue practicing, teaching, transferring the knowledge to our future generation.”

Further Reading & Viewing

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Government of Nunavut Culture and Heritage Programs & Services. <https://www.gov.nu.ca/programs/culture-and-heritage>



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Embodying Intangible Cultural Heritage as a Safeguarding Practice: The Conseil québécois du patrimoine vivant’s Masters of Living Traditions Program

**Region:** Central Canada  
**Organization Level:** NGO/Community  
**Best Practice Keywords:** knowledge transmission; recognizing and celebrating tradition bearers  
**ICH Domains:** traditional craftsmanship; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; oral traditions and expressions; social practices, rituals, and festive events; performing arts

The Conseil québécois du patrimoine vivant (CQPV)’s Masters of Living Traditions/ *Maîtres de traditions vivantes* program is one of the organization’s most recent initiatives to support the safeguarding of ICH in Quebec. Modelled on the global “Living Human Treasures” system pioneered by Japan in 1950 and adopted and codified by UNESCO in 1993,<sup>8</sup> CQPV is working to ensure that tradition bearers are recognized, supported, and encouraged to flourish in their respective fields of expertise.

A Living Human Treasure—sometimes called by other names such as “National Living Treasure” or “Master of Art”—is a person who retains the expert knowledge, skills, and know-how required for performing and transmitting an element of intangible cultural heritage, espe-

cially those with significant historical, cultural, or artistic value to their society (UNESCO n.d.). These knowledge keepers are financially and socially supported by their national governments so they can continue to develop their expertise and share their experiences with others, thereby mentoring the next generation of tradition bearers and ensuring that ICH is recognized, reproduced, and revitalized in society. An embodied form of heritage safeguarding, Living Human Treasures are exemplary bearers of cultural traditions. According to UNESCO, the goal of establishing a Living Human Treasures system is to “ensure the transmission of knowledge and skills which these bearers master and to thus ensure the perpetuity of the expression of the intangible cultural heritage

<sup>8</sup> The Living Human Treasures program was officially discontinued and absorbed into the 2003 ICH Convention when it entered into force. See <https://ich.unesco.org/en/living-human-treasures> [accessed 15 March 2022].



concerned” (UNESCO n.d.: 8).

Much of the work of CQPV and wider ICH safeguarding practices in Quebec prioritizes UNESCO principles, values, and approaches. In adopting UNESCO’s global model of “Living Human Treasures,” CQPV is demonstrating the ways that UNESCO’s safeguarding mechanisms can be effectively adapted for the Canadian context despite the Convention remaining unratified. Following UNESCO guidelines, CQPV assembles an independent jury of relevant peers and heritage practitioners who select up to five tradition bearers for special recognition from a group of nominees. Knowledge holders are chosen for participation in the program not only on the basis of their accomplishments and the at-risk nature of the particular ICH element that they practice, but also their willingness to convey knowledge and skills to others by developing a training program or other forms of experiential engagement.

“We decided to implement it as a tool, in conjunction with other tools we have,” explains Antoine Gauthier, CQPV Executive Director. “Not only for recognition—although we do want to recognize people—but with a focus mainly on trying to use the work of the person to safeguard the practice. The focus is on the people, but also on the practice.”<sup>9</sup>

Selected tradition bearers receive the distinction of Master of Living Traditions at a special ceremony along with an honorarium (currently \$5000) in recognition of their accomplishments. The tradition bearer also receives further financial support to plan, develop, and implement a project in the community that enriches traditional practices and facilitates the transfer of knowledge to a younger generation. This includes a fee for the work the Master performs throughout the program. CQPV covers any transportation and subsistence costs related to implementing the program, and the Masters are supported by CQPV staff in the development and management of their project. Since first piloting the initiative in 2020, thanks to a \$300,000 budget over three years from Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec (MCC) as well as additional support from corporate sponsors, ten Masters have been selected and funded so far, including: a Mi’kmaq traditional basket maker, an Innu storyteller, a diatonic accordion player, and a heritage carpenter. While the program is still new, and therefore impacts are still being measured, the response for the program has been positive so far.

9 Interview with Antoine Gauthier. Zoom. 21 September 2021.

However, a common critique of the Living Human Treasures model is that it may create hierarchies among tradition bearers or between differing ICH practices. To mitigate these concerns, CQPV ensures the jury considers the gender, cultural, and regional backgrounds of nominees, as well as the ICH element practiced, to better ensure that selection is representative and equitable across all domains of ICH, and reflects the multiplicity of Quebec society. According to Gauthier, “the message that CQPV wants to send is not “here are the best in their category,” but “here are outstanding conveyers of experience who will help us for a year or two to showcase their discipline and their peers” (2021:59). Each cohort of Masters, drawn from diverse communities, is meant to serve as cultural ambassadors and teachers.

CQPV’s Masters of Living Traditions Program helps address some of the inequities that ICH knowledge keepers face in contemporary society. Not only does the tradition bearer receive public recognition, respect, and remuneration for their competencies, but they are given the financial and creative freedom to actively practice and transmit their knowledge. The Masters program creates a generative environment where exchange, dialogue, learning, and innovation can happen, ensuring that cultural traditions remain dynamic and living. Within Quebec and wider Canadian society, recognition for people who practice traditional and customary arts, or hold traditional forms of knowledge, is limited. There are generally fewer opportunities for traditional artists to receive the same kinds of resources and recognition that contemporary visual artists, filmmakers, popular musicians, and educators that work in media, cultural industries, or academia tend to enjoy. Traditional arts and traditional knowledges are also underrepresented in educational offerings (CQPV 2021: 3). As CQPV advises in its *Intangible Heritage for Local Cultural Vitality: A Guide for Municipal Action*, “in the spirit of democratizing culture, the bearers of intangible heritage should benefit from equal access to public resources” (2019: 8). The Masters of Living Traditions challenges us to accept that the community can be a legitimate source for education, and that traditional artists are deserving of wider societal recognition and supports.

CQPV’s Masters of Living Traditions Program is a transformative way to foster cultural transmission—one that could be modelled in all provinces and territories. “We do this as a legacy for now and in the future,” reflects Gauthier. “It all helps to develop and transmit [ICH].”

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## Case Study V

© Heritage Saskatchewan

### *gee meeyo pimawtshinaawn/It Was a Good Life: Heritage Saskatchewan's Collaborative Community-based Living Heritage Projects*

**Region:** Western Canada

**Organization level:** Non-profit/Academic

**Best Practice Keywords:** recognizing and celebrating tradition bearers; recognition and promotion of ICH; community engagement and outreach; Indigenous cultural revitalization and reclamation; documentation and inventorying

**ICH Domains:** knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; oral traditions; social rituals and festive events

Heritage Saskatchewan has collaborated with a number of communities and organizations on living heritage projects which involve intensive community engagement and a commitment to training youth to do cultural documentation. The goal is to introduce concepts of intangible cultural heritage to Saskatchewan communities, create op-

portunities for knowledge transmission, document at-risk living heritage in Saskatchewan, provide project management skills and capacity-building in cultural documentation, and generally raise the profile of living heritage and tradition bearers in the province. To date, the organization has completed four projects, and this case study

will focus on *gee meeyo pimawtshinaawn/It was a Good Life: Saskatchewan Métis Road Allowance Memories* as an example of the process and outcomes of these projects.

Métis in Saskatchewan, some of whom are also known as Michif, after their language, were marginalized and persecuted following the 1885 resistance efforts and subsequent settlement of the prairies by Euro-Canadians. In the century since, Métis communities found ways to continue to practice their culture and traditions, with several informal communities established on unused “road allowances”—sections of Crown lands that were set aside for potential infrastructure development. Métis families built homes and raised families on these marginalized areas of land for decades. This was despite state-sponsored persecution and a lack of basic rights—for example, most Métis children could not attend school until the 1940s due to an exclusionary law reserving these rights for only the children of tax paying landowners. Further, Métis were not recognized within the Canadian Constitution until 1982. This history is not well-known to Canadian society at large, and Métis heritage is also under-recognized in Saskatchewan.

The project began in September 2018 with Kristin Catherswood, Heritage Saskatchewan's Intangible Cultural Heritage Development Officer, facilitating a workshop on ICH safeguarding principles and best practices in cultural documentation to students in the Métis Culture & History course in the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program (SUNTEP) at the University of Regina, taught by Russell Fayant. Over six weeks, students conducted ethnographic interviews with Métis community members (known as Michif Old Ones) and wrote corresponding narratives that contextualized the interviews. Students in Brenna Pacholko's Introduction to Arts Education course then produced art pieces related to the narratives.

For the SUNTEP program coordinators, the motivation to collaborate with Heritage Saskatchewan and learn cultural documentation methods was a desire to “model for our students how to reconnect with Old Ones and their stories in a respectful and ethical way. Increasingly, urbanized Indigenous youth struggle to connect with their traditional stories and values, and this project allowed us to bridge the gap.”<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, they “wanted to encourage our Old Ones to see themselves as important holders of knowledge and culture [...] and see the importance of the heritage they conserve.” The written narratives and corresponding art pieces, which documented, recognized, and celebrated elements of Métis intangible cultural heritage, with a focus on safeguarding Michif oral and

cultural traditions, were combined to create a small book, published by the Gabriel Dumont Institute.

The publication was released on April 5, 2019 with a community celebration of Michif Old Ones, students, and community members at a community centre in a historically Métis neighbourhood of Regina. The booklet is available in print and online, and media interest was generated in the project. Fayant and Pacholko feel the project was very successful, and that “the Old Ones felt their stories were valued and well taken care of. It has helped to spur increased interest amongst our students and community members in uncovering more of these stories.”

Measures of success include: documentation of at-risk and marginalized living heritage; recognition and celebration of ICH at a widely attended launch event which included the preparation and sharing of traditional Métis foods, Métis dance, and the sharing of Michif stories and traditions; and the development of a mutually respectful and beneficial organizational relationship between Heritage Saskatchewan and the Gabriel Dumont Institute. In the midst of completing this project, other spin-off projects were undertaken at SUNTEP, including building one wall of a traditional Métis home (an example of prairie vernacular architecture) which was displayed in the SUNTEP library along with examples of traditional Métis material culture, like woven sashes, beadwork, moccasins, and traditional tools used in the construction of Métis houses.

Since the project's completion, Fayant and Pacholko have “observed an increased desire of our Old Ones to work with our students.” They believe this is both a reflection of the “appropriateness of our engagement with them, but also a reflection of their newly acquired understanding that their memories, experiences, and knowledge are important.” It has also helped them as instructors to “fully see the value of multi-year collaborative projects... This helps our students to understand and build upon notions of holistic learning outside traditional learning silos.”

This, and other Heritage Saskatchewan living heritage projects, have instilled in community members the understanding that their knowledge and know-how, their intangible cultural heritage, is valued and important. Through documentation, celebration and recognition, and the creation of opportunities for cultural transmission to occur, Heritage Saskatchewan's collaborations with Saskatchewan communities has raised the profile of living heritage in the province and modeled a process that communities can use to begin the work of safeguarding their intangible cultural heritage.

<sup>10</sup> Written interview with Russell Fayant and Brenna Pacholko, 10 January 2022.



Further Reading & Viewing

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*“In the suburb of Prince George we tanned a hide”: Experiential Learning Through ICH Safeguarding at the University of Northern British Columbia*

**Region:** Northern Canada  
**Organization Level:** Academic  
**Best Practice Keywords:** recognition and promotion of ICH; community engagement and outreach; Indigenous cultural revitalization and reclamation; knowledge transmission; documentation and inventorying  
**ICH Domains:** knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe

Dr. Agnieszka Pawlowska-Mainville is an Associate Professor in the Department of First Nations Studies at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC). Her research explores the intangible cultural heritage of land-based practices, and she’s worked with Indigenous communities across Canada on projects as diverse as the processes of UNESCO World Heritage site designation and the impacts of resource extractive industries on the ICH of local peoples. In Poland, she has studied tree bee-keeping which contributed to the practice being inscribed in 2020 on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. She also serves as an expert member on UNESCO’s International Com-

mittee on Intangible Cultural Heritage, and is currently working with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO to plan a national conference on ICH safeguarding research. As a university, UNBC fosters opportunities for experiential and service-based learning and Pawlowska-Mainville has developed several field-based course components for her students that integrate ICH elements into curriculum and learning outcomes. Her courses are designed with the intention to draw awareness to endangered cultural practices and the need to safeguard them, but to also encourage the transmission of cultural and traditional knowledge and know-how among students. Whether learning about plants and medicines or camping on the



land and sharing stories of Indigenous cosmology under the night stars, “I try to integrate as much as I can ICH practice and learning through ICH ...learning *through* ICH, I think, is better than learning *about* ICH ...The experiential learning element is the basis of ICH.”<sup>11</sup>

Pawlowska-Mainville partners with local elders and knowledge-holders to bring Indigenous and cultural ways of knowing and doing into the university environment. This is innovative, because many universities consider publicly engaged work to involve the university “expert” going to the community to offer their authorized or institutional forms of knowledge to solve problems. In contrast, Agnieszka recognizes tradition bearers and their know-how as equally legitimate sources of knowledge, and that traditional knowledge transmission processes can teach students fundamental methodologies that are applicable to academic and occupational scenarios—lessons like project planning, observation and deduction, repetition and attention to detail, listening, creativity and expression, determination and time-management, and cooperation.

ICH custodians share their place-based knowledge with the students, answering questions, and guiding their learning in a hands-on way. Students, many of whom are Indigenous and are seeking to learn more about their culture, come away from the courses with not only a greater understanding of traditional knowledge, but a better sense of the ways ICH adapts to changing times and can have a role in their day-to-day lives. “All the students come into the class with romanticized notions of TEK [traditional ecological knowledge] and knowledge holders,” Pawlowska-Mainville explains. But students are soon shocked to find out that most knowledge holders also integrate and adapt modern technologies into their work – like using an air compressor to skin an animal. “I have always thought this was a valuable experience at showing TEK and heritage as living and today and not stuck in the past.”

In May 2016, Pawlowska-Mainville offered “First Nations Cultural Heritage through Moose Hide Tanning,” an intensive, three-week experiential learning course that partnered students with two Dakelh elders, Yvonne Pierrero and Mildred Martin. Both women hold expertise in traditional tanning methods and want to see Dakelh knowledge and the Carrier language circulate among the next generation. Today, many people use commercial tanneries to process hides for craftwork, and the skills associated with traditional tanning are in decline in Northern British Columbia. While students explored critical concepts and issues related to Indigenous cultural heritage such as recovery, protection, and revitalization, they simultaneously

engaged in the experiential process of tanning hides.

“The goal of that course [was] to teach students about heritage, their own heritage and Indigenous heritage, and to learn about heritage through an actual heritage activity ... So there was a very multi-layered element to the course. We weren’t going to sit in class and read books about how to maintain heritage. We were actually going to get to experience, really, the toughness of what it takes to maintain heritage. Often people forget that it takes work and persistence to maintain something like a language or a practice,” Pawlowska-Mainville explains.

Working in Yvonne’s backyard in suburban Prince George, students washed, soaked, scraped, stretched, and greased moose hides. They also learned Carrier language terms for the parts of the moose and the hide tanning process itself. The course structure allowed the tanning experience to be seamlessly integrated with more academic approaches to learning so that when the hide was soaking or absorbing grease, students were in the classroom assessing critical heritage scholarship through lectures, readings, and discussions. Overall, students gained a deeper respect for Dakelh embodied and land-based knowledge forms, recognized the continued uses and applicability of traditional skills in contemporary contexts, and came to understand that ICH safeguarding is the responsibility of everyone. The tanning process was also filmed and has been made available on YouTube as an instructional video for others.

Although hides are typically tanned in the fall over several months, Agnieszka and her Dakelh co-instructors had to make compromises so that the course could be taught in the condensed spring semester, when immersive options are more feasible for universities. Unfortunately, an intersession offering prohibited some Indigenous students from enrolling in the class, as funding is typically distributed only for students registered with a full course load each semester; many students also have summer jobs and other responsibilities to prioritize during the spring and summer. Further, Agnieszka had to apply for additional funding to offer her co-instructors an appropriate honorarium for their work. While an experiential learning opportunity in ICH might be the capstone of a student’s university experience, there are many logistical and financial issues to contend with, and Pawlowska-Mainville encourages universities to think about ways to better support the learning journey for students so that such experiential opportunities can be possible for all.

Pawlowska-Mainville’s approach to an experiential learning process that foregrounds Indigenous ICH is in keeping with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Calls to Action, which compel post-secondary

educational institutions to play an active role in Indigenous culture and language revitalization projects. Many Indigenous students feel homesick and disconnected from their culture when they move away from home for the first time to attend university. By integrating Indigenous knowledges into the curriculum, students have the opportunity to maintain closer ties to their culture and language. There is space in Canada for more community-university partnerships around ICH safeguarding that can contribute to the decolonization of the university and its pedagogy. Pawlowska-Mainville’s course shows how

instructors can weave academic and Indigenous knowledge systems together to help transmit cultural heritage.

“I think it’s valuable to have [ICH] components embedded into the classroom to see that bridge between academic and other ways of learning, and that it can be merged,” she offers. “People often see traditional knowledge and academic knowledge as divided, and that they’re very different from each other. There’s the Indigenous ways of knowing and then there’s the Western. I actually think the ways we learn are very similar and I think ICH helps to bridge that.”

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11 Interview with Agnieszka Pawlowska-Mainville. Zoom. 10 November 2021.



*“The mental work, communication skills, sensitivity and soft skills involved in identifying and preserving intangible cultural heritage is not insignificant. This requires identifying the right people with appropriate skills.”*



## *Conclusions*

Definitions of heritage have progressed within Canada and internationally to now include intangible dimensions. However, there is a demonstrable gap between heritage theory and practice in the safeguarding of ICH in Canada. Our research indicates there are two broad challenges for intangible cultural heritage in Canada today:

- 1) lack of sustainable supports and strategies for ICH development from federal and provincial/territorial governments; and
- 2) the need for improved coordination, communication, and collaboration to build awareness, training, and capacity in ICH safeguarding.

A strategic and sustained effort is therefore required to move the ICH agenda forward in Canada, and there are many safeguarding models to draw on from the nations that have ratified the 2003 Convention, as well as UNESCO-alternative approaches. There is also a continued need for governments, academics, and heritage practitioners to decolonize heritage discourse and practice in Canada, and to break down bureaucratic and structural barriers that separate heritage into silos of tangible and intangible which do not accurately reflect the realities of living heritage as it manifests on-the-ground in Canadian communities.

Ultimately, it is important that all levels—federal, provincial/territorial, community, and academic—work together to approach ICH in a comprehensive and strategic way. There is a need to support the current and long-term development of intangible cultural heritage in Canada so that it can be actively transmitted to future generations and continue to foster wellbeing, reconciliation, cultural diversity, and sustainable development for the benefit of all Canadians. More targeted ICH safeguarding will provide a framework for enhanced quality of life through the lens of cultural heritage.



*“The biggest challenge to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage is sufficient, sustainable funding, and long-term institutional/political support. Piecemeal support is not enough.”*



*“ICH is unique and irreplaceable – once lost it cannot be regained or restored. Canada should prioritize the preservation of ICH, with consultation and support from stakeholder communities, and take every necessary measure to protect and conserve it.”*



## Final Thoughts

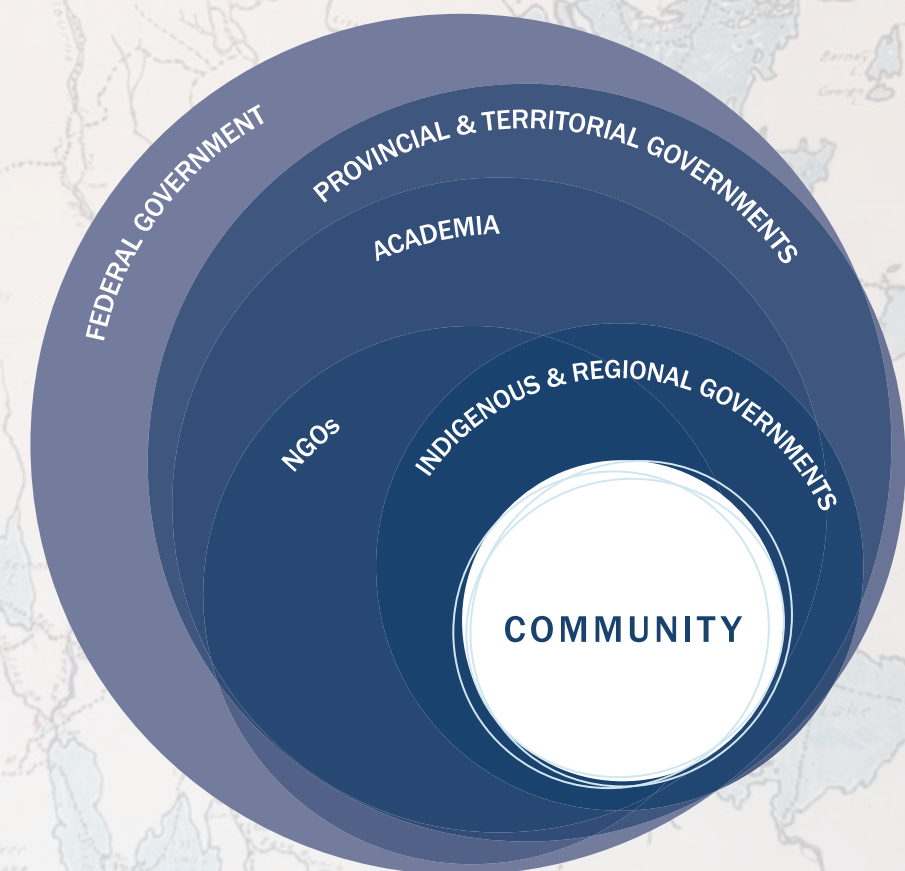
It is important that all levels—federal, provincial/territorial, community, and academic—work together to approach intangible cultural heritage in a comprehensive and strategic way.

There are many passionate heritage scholars and practitioners as well as community members across the country who are working tirelessly to safeguard ICH. These individuals and organizations are the greatest resource to begin the challenging and meaningful work of strategizing and implementing ICH safeguarding. They need supports to continue their work, and yet have shown what can be achieved even with minimal funding. With some dollars, some political will, and some concerted effort, the field of ICH in Canada would no doubt quickly catch up to our international peers, and more importantly, safeguard the endangered expressions of ICH in Canada. There are thousands of tradition bearers, knowledge keepers, and elders working in obscurity who deserve to be recognized and celebrated, provided with supports to enable transmission of their expert knowledge and know-how, and have it be acknowledged that what they possess in their minds and in the work of their hands holds immense meaning and value.

*“Federal leadership is important in [helping] provinces implement UNESCO’s Convention on Intangible Heritage.”*

*“Intangible Cultural Heritage protects the stories, songs, and other oral histories of Indigenous Peoples. The signing of this Convention would help further UNDRIP and TRC recommendations. Canada is a multicultural country – and diversity and inclusion are important to its people. By signing the 2003 UNESCO Convention, we are supporting these values.”*

*“Intangible heritage is a resource for forming cultural identities and forging and maintaining connections to one’s community – past and present. Intangible heritage is a resource that communities can draw on to plan for a healthy, culturally-rich future.”*



**Community is at the heart of all efforts to safeguard intangible cultural heritage in Canada. All jurisdictions must work together to ensure that the knowledge, know-how, and traditions held by communities are protected and encouraged to thrive.**





# HERITAGE

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