The Museum and the Community

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Should the museum contribute to community learning? Should the museum reflect the community experience? How can the museum's exhibits and programs support the sustainability of the community? For a small city, where there is often only one museum, community relevance of the exhibits and programs is a critical issue. However, many of the usual indicators of success – number of museum visitors, successful grant applications, size of the collection – do not necessarily measure community relevance or impact. In partnership with the University College of the Cariboo, the Kamloops Museum and Archives is involved in community-based research. Each of the research projects involves a high level of community participation, provoking us to consider the role of the museum in the community.

The Working Group on Museums and Sustainability is a collaborative formed to engage "the museum community in Canada in a process of awareness, reflection, learning, sharing of knowledge and experience, capacity-building and action related to their role in creating a culture of sustainability" (Dumouchel, et al 2). They are surveying relevant literature in order to develop a broad definition of what makes a community sustainable. Their definition, a work in progress, references a community with a strong sense of place, one which nurtures and builds on relationships – physically and biophysically, socially, healthfully, psycho-spiritually, culturally, and economically. They are also interested in developing qualitative assessment tools less influenced by the quantitative or economic indicators of success than those usually applied to museum projects. Their Critical Assessment Framework (CAF) is being developed to encourage museum staff to think about projects or programs in relationship to the community. The community-based research projects in Kamloops are collecting and preserving memories of the community experience, creating opportunities for new ways to explore local heritage. Although each project interacts with the community in different ways, the CAF can be used to describe and assess the relevance of the research activity to the individual participants, the community, and the museum itself.

Community Based Research

The Cultural Future of Small Cities is a five-year research program initiated by the Kamloops Art Gallery and the University College of the Cariboo in Kamloops. The program is supported by a Community-University Research Alliances (CURA) research grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). Using Kamloops as a case study for small cities, the research group is exploring notions of social capital and community asset building: in this context, visual and verbal representation, home, community, and the need to define a local sense of place have emerged as important themes. As part of the CURA Small Cities Research Program, the

Kamloops Museum and Archives (KMA) is partnering with the University College of the Cariboo (UCC) on three community based research projects.
[insert visual #1 about here]
Neighbourhoods 2000 Project
The KMA began research on the Neighbourhoods 2000 Project in late 1999/2000. This project is now part of the CURA research program, and closely relates to the community story maps described in the Representing Kamloops Project. There is a twofold purpose to the Neighbourhoods 2000 Project, which will eventually result in a book. First, it is to produce a series of maps, which will track the physical growth of the city from independent villages and rural settlements into the city we have today. Secondly, long term residents who grew up in specific neighbourhoods are being interviewed for their unique perceptions of life in their own neighbourhood and their relationship with the people and culture of other neighbourhoods.

Kamloops is a new city. It was incorporated in 1893 and included the small town lying on the south bank of the Thompson River. Nearby settlements just across the river on the north side or farther upstream were not included in the original incorporation. This meant that groups of families in those areas turned to each other for support and place identity. This scattering of neighbours gradually melded to form neighbourhoods. Some of these eventually became villages and towns in their own right.

As a result of this growth pattern, the land area now forming the City of Kamloops was made up of independent neighbourhoods which were, in some cases, separated only by a street or a field or a dirt lane of a few kilometres in length. Physically, these settlements were neighbours and there was a steady exchange of people and commerce between them. Yet distinctive identities were jealously guarded and nurtured.

Neighbourhoods were distinguished by their ethnic mix, the predominate occupation of the residents, family income, shared history, and family connections. Certain neighbourhoods were more welcoming of strangers and people of diverse cultures. Rural, isolated neighbourhoods attracted people who liked space and ready access to the land. People with social aspirations and pretensions to status preferred to live in the original incorporated city. Hence, neighbourhoods which were separated spatially also assumed a social separation.

In 1967, the two largest neighbourhoods, North and South Kamloops, voted to amalgamate. The vote was very close and to this day there is a significant minority which rues the day the two towns merged. In 1973, the provincial government legislated the amalgamation of the remaining villages and settlements. The City of Kamloops became a patchwork of disparate and disgruntled neighbourhoods forced to function as one. The transformation is by no means complete nor has it been easy. Even today, neighbourhood voices are raised in protest against city hall claiming that one area always receives preferential treatment over another. Kamloops is a blended family, but the children do not always get along.

The "official" history of Kamloops and the "official" image of the city has been closely aligned with the original south shore city. This tradition of "preferred" history continues to this day. However, the Neighbourhoods 2000 project, which is beginning to incorporate a personal mapping experience, has the potential for significant community impact. Neighbours become more aware of and sensitive to the experiences and realities of neighbours. Memories of notable events vary from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, and it is good to know how and what those differences are. People who don't normally talk together or who are unaware of their shared history find themselves challenging their own interpretation of life in Kamloops when they hear of others' experiences. It can be both a troubling and a liberating situation. It is also a chance for the neighbourhoods of Kamloops to unite. The community's history is being rewritten by the community, and this time everyone is being included.

The mapping activity is a delightful and provocative way of encouraging individuals to look at their neighbourhood and their town in new, intensely personal ways. When individuals share their maps and accompanying stories with other people, it broadens everyone's awareness of and tolerance for the complex diversity of their town. The variety of experiences and interpretations of local places and events is remarkable. It cannot help but cause local historians and museums to re-evaluate previously accepted interpretations about the community and the individual's place within it. A whole new way of looking at local history is opened up.

Children's Museum Project
The Children's Museum Project is interested in developing exhibits, educational programs and materials which will allow children (and adults) to have interactive learning experiences about the local community. This research project explores how a small city museum can educate children about issues of local significance, and reflect (exhibit) the children's experiences back to the community. The development of activities and exhibits reflects educational philosophies including constructivism (Piaget – the learner must be actively engaged in order to construct their own knowledge) and multiple intelligences theory (Gardner – activities must be varied in order to individualize the learning experience). Visual and verbal representations influence the educational activities and the ethnographic protocols used to document the research process. To date, we have developed and tested the following educational materials and workshops, using the city as the educational venue.

Studying the City: Architecture
During the first year of the Children's Museum Project, the Kamloops Museum and Archives staged an exhibit entitled "Jewellery for Buildings." The exhibit, situated in an area undergoing renovations at the time, provided a fine example of visible storage – allowing visitor access to a growing collection of artifacts, even though interpretive information has not yet been developed. **[insert visual #2 about here]** With very little didactic information, this exhibit involved items – doors, windows, railings, doorknobs - from buildings in the local area. Observations of a short introductory workshop to this exhibit demonstrated strong interest in architecture by children. The research group felt that an educational program on this topic would increase awareness of local heritage

buildings, something many cities, including Kamloops, are fighting to preserve as new development initiatives threaten existing, older structures.

In order to develop educational materials for this program, we asked a UCC student artist to create architectural drawings of the artifacts on display. He also developed two drawing activities allowing children to create some of their own "jewellery for buildings." These drawings, along with photographs of local buildings, were used to create an activity booklet encouraging both visual and verbal literacy while celebrating Kamloops architecture. Student artists were also used to produce a series of puzzles featuring local heritage buildings. The artists used liquid light to transfer photos directly onto wood, creating puzzles that resemble old, sepia photographs.

The Jewellery for Buildings educational program demonstrates a number of key educational strategies that can be used to develop workshops about the city. The children had opportunities to use many visual elements to support the development of observation and representation skills. Photos of buildings and architectural features were an integral part of the educational materials – activity booklets, puzzles, interpretive signs, and overhead slides. Photos were also an aspect of the educational process – Polaroid photos of architectural elements became visual references for the children's drawings. There were artifacts available in the room which influenced the children when they were developing "jewellery" for their own buildings. Drawings helped identify certain architectural elements, and the children had many opportunities to draw visual representations of their own ideas. **[insert visual #3about here]** The children also had opportunities for verbal representations – writing and telling stories, conversations with peers and adults. Although the presence of architectural artifacts supports the educational program, an exhibit at the museum is not a requirement. As a celebration of local heritage, Jewellery for Buildings embraces the city of Kamloops itself as its research venue.

Studying the City: Cemeteries
The KMA wants to develop educational programs using local cemeteries as the venue. The research partnership between the KMA and UCC provides the means to research and develop this new program, and also an opportunity to support an undergraduate student's educational experience. Through its Comprehensive University Enhancement Fund (CUEF), UCC provides deserving students an opportunity to engage in faculty-supported research learning courses. Student researcher Jennifer Cotter's proposal to develop educational programs in cemeteries was judged to be a worthwhile learning experience with an obvious outcome: a curriculum guide for the museum educator and local teachers. Using the same principles as the successful Jewellery for Buildings, the student researched educational programs in cemeteries and together with the museum educator, field tested an activity guide for one of our local cemeteries. The educational materials developed for this program can be easily reproduced by the museum educator or the teacher, and like the Jewellery for Buildings program, activities can be used separately, or as part of a longer learning experience over several days or weeks.

Apart from the field trip to the cemetery, the follow up activities will not require the children to come to the museum. The museum educator wants this program to be adaptable to the children's own educational environment so that she, or the teachers, can continue the activities in the classroom. This implies a program that will fit within the learning goals of the standardized curriculum. With this in mind, the research group is working with the classroom teacher involved in the pilot project to determine how these educational activities support learning in social studies, language and visual arts, math and science. **[insert visual #4 about here]**

Studying the City: Maps and Stories

Working with the Representing Kamloops Project, the Children's Museum Project has recently begun to collect and preserve the maps and stories of children in Kamloops. Children are asked to draw a map of a significant place, and then tell the story of the map. The children's visual and verbal representations will form part of a large museum exhibit of community maps and stories. Based on the mapping experiences with school age children so far, we have found that visual representations are an important vehicle for children to properly communicate concepts and ideas about the city. They tend to focus on elements that have strong emotional connections – many of the maps are about homes or neighbourhoods. School age children also draw maps and share stories about favourite places to visit. These places are often associated with recreational or after school activities. **[insert visual #5 about here]**

The children's maps and stories are influenced by the geography of Kamloops. The mountainous terrain has forced the urban landscape to stretch out into "long sinuous fingers" (Alexander 24) which extend into the natural landscape. This connection to the city's boundaries, or edges - grasslands, ranches, or wilderness parks - is evident in the visual and verbal narratives of the children. Told from their own perspectives, the children's stories verify that easy access to the natural environment provides the types of experiences that make their life in the city *memorable*. Our observations demonstrate that mapping experiences allow children to express their opinions about the city in an active way. The mapping activity prompts the verbal narrative, emphasizing the connection between place and self.

Representing Kamloops Project

This community arts project involves local citizens in the creation of personal maps and stories about significant places in the city. Participants are asked to construct a story map detailing local attachment to personal landmarks: "These visual representations [in turn] form the 'pretext' for oral narratives, opportunities to tell the story or stories of belonging and alienation" (Dubinsky and Garrett-Petts 344). "Memory mapping [or story mapping] is one way to augment our linguistic understanding of personal experience," says researcher W.F. Garrett-Petts. "Moving from image to verbal allows us to know our subject differently, to explore and validate that which cannot be fully expressed in words" (in Yourk 16). The Representing Kamloops Project plans to use the visual representations, or maps, drawn by the adults, and the verbal narratives, or stories, associated with the maps to develop a museum exhibit of local interest and significance.

The researchers involved in the community mapping project have observed an "intertwining of place and self: sense of place anchors the sense of self, offers a way of disclosing the self, giving shape to 'where I'm from' and 'what I care about *here*'" (Garrett-Petts 7). As part of the researchers' in-process notes, *Maps & Storytelling* (attached) outlines the theoretical principles influencing the development of this project.

Community Relevance

At this point, it would be difficult to evaluate the research projects in Kamloops based on traditional indicators of success for museums. Pilot projects for the educational programs, and some educational materials have been developed. Participation in the community mapping experiences has been high, but the maps and stories are still being collected, and the final exhibit is under construction. The Critical Assessment Framework (CAF) presents a useful tool for evaluation of these research projects using non-traditional indictors of performance. Although the Working Group on Museums and Sustainable Communities would contend that the CAF continues to be a work in progress, they are developing qualitative criteria to evaluate museum projects based on how they "reflect and reflect upon the values at play within our society" (Dumouchel, et al 8). At this point, they have identified three main areas to assess a project's performance: the personal (member of a community) level, the community level and the museum (employee and institutional) level.

Using the CAF's criteria, the research activity in Kamloops performs well in a number of areas (see attached criteria). From the point of view of an individual community member, or the personal level, our observations would indicate that the pilot projects for the educational programs have captured the participants' imagination, stimulating curiosity and enhancing the ability to think critically and creatively. Learning about your own community through a wide variety of memorable experiences supports the development of stronger community attachment and increases the possibility of responsible action. The neighbourhood stories and community mapping experiences encourage personal reflection – affirming and/or challenging the relationship between 'self' and 'place.' It is possible that the opportunity to learn about, and reflect upon, one's own community will support the individual's development of a stronger sense of place, a necessity for a sustainable community. **[insert visual #6 about here]**

The research projects also perform well on the CAF at the community level. The educational programs encourage social interactions among participants, and address relevant needs or community issues such as the preservation of heritage buildings. These programs also represent the museum's efforts to de-centralize – distributing venues throughout the city and into schools, downtown streets, and even cemeteries. The neighbourhood and community mapping projects are collecting the maps and stories of children and adults from various cultural and socio-economic backgrounds – giving voice to a diverse public, and enhancing the credibility of all involved. The research process itself has a tangible impact in the community, and will eventually result in ongoing exhibits and programs at the KMA.

These research projects reflect the role museums can take in community learning. Guided by clearly articulated goals and objectives, the research activities create a community of learning not only within the museum staff, but with the university researchers and the community participants. By including multiple perspectives, and engaging different learning styles, these research projects integrate the scientific knowledge of the researchers and the museum staff with the local, traditional knowledge of the community members. The exhibits and programs developed from this research will draw upon vernacular experiences – the voices, images and experiences of the community's residents. In effect, the exhibits will be a form of "visible listening" (Rinaldi 7); the museum is actively reflecting the community opinions and beliefs about itself.

The CAF suggests that the museum should act as a catalyst for partnering community organizations with one another. The partnership between UCC and the KMA (supported by the Community-University Research Alliances program) is providing opportunities for cultural organizations like museums to collaborate in the development of new knowledge. This partnership presents certain advantages for the KMA. Researchers are able to support the collection, preservation, and interpretation of the data from each of these projects. The research program is also supporting the development of new exhibits and educational activities. Educational materials such as puzzles and activity booklets, and the exhibit for the community maps and stories are experimental and costly to develop. The presence of the university partner and the research funding supports research and development of these new materials – students, researchers and community partners are able to produce locally developed resources that disseminate new knowledge to the general public. The KMA/UCC partnership also supports connection to other community groups: local schools are involved with testing educational programs, and a wide variety of cultural groups are involved with the community mapping project.

A partnership with the university may mean that museum staff and researchers, like their university counterparts, must step outside their usual way of thinking and working. The community-based research projects in Kamloops involve researchers from a variety of disciplines – education, sociology, visual arts, English – and the research projects are investigating such things as: the intersection of visual and verbal literacies, the role of the small city museum in the community, the connection between 'self' and 'place.' Because CURA grants are intended to develop new knowledge, researchers must also disseminate results from this collaboration beyond the local community. Researchers associated with the Small Cities CURA have already begun to publish in academic journals, conferences, and books. In this way, the museum is reaching beyond its own professional community, contributing to new ways of thinking in other disciplines.

For UCC, the partnership with the KMA also has many advantages. Students' educational experiences are supported by new research learning courses and research assistant positions. The practical nature and community connections make this learning meaningful and memorable. For the researchers themselves, the partnership provides an opportunity to test new ways of thinking in the community, and forces ingenuity as ideas must have practical application.

Partnerships between museums and universities are not without challenges, however. For museums, the research aspect may be above and beyond their usual mandate. Although it may be highly engaging and interesting, it may also be difficult for staff to devote the time required to be a full participant. Museum staff may also feel that they are not getting as much out of the research as they might like. The research process takes a long time, and researchers are interested in creating new knowledge, which may or may not translate into something valued by museums. CURA grants are for five years. This period of time provides both university researchers and museum staff many opportunities to construct new ways of thinking and working together.

Our experience in Kamloops would lead us to believe that it is important for the museum to educate community members about their own city in order to promote a better understanding of, and connection to, the local experience. A stronger personal connection is fundamental for increasing responsible action at the community level. The maps and stories we are collecting also make it clear that museums have an important role in reflecting the lived experience of the individual community members. These experiences will form the basis for museum exhibits that validate the opinions and beliefs of the community, enhancing community self-awareness and understanding. As part of their mandate, museums must create partnerships, programs and exhibits relevant to the community. In doing so, they are encouraged to forego the more immediate, traditional indicators of success in lieu of a long-term vision that embraces and supports a sustainability community,

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For information about The Cultural Future of Small Cities Research Program:
www.cariboo.bc.ca/smallcities

The Role of Museums in Community Learning

Overview of Community Based Research Projects in Kamloops
As part of a Community-University Research Alliances (CURA) research grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Kamloops Museum and Archives is partnering with the University College of the Cariboo on three community based research projects. The *Children's Museum Project* is interested in developing exhibits, educational programs and materials which will allow children and adults to have interactive learning experiences about the local community. This research project is exploring how a small city museum can educate children about issues of local significance, and reflect (exhibit) the children's experiences back to the community. The development of activities and exhibits reflects educational philosophies such as: constructivism (Piaget – the learner must be actively engaged in order to construct their own knowledge) and multiple intelligences theory (Gardner – activities must be varied in order to individualize the learning experience). Visual and verbal representations influence the educational activities and the ethnographic protocols used to document the research process. To date, we have developed and tested educational materials and workshops which focus on local architecture and history.

Another CURA project, *Representing Kamloops*, is a community arts project involving local citizens in the creation of personal maps and stories about significant places in the city. These maps and stories, which will eventually become an exhibit at the museum, enable the researchers to explore the connection between self and place. Researchers from the Representing Kamloops Project have worked with researchers from the Children's Museums Project, to develop a workshop that would involve children in this mapping and storytelling experience.

The Kamloops Museum and Archives began research on the *Neighbourhoods 2000* project in late 1999/2000. This initiative is now one of the CURA research projects, and closely relates to the community story maps. There is a twofold purpose to the Neighbourhoods 2000 project which will eventually result in a book. First, it is to produce a series of maps which will track the physical growth of the city from independent villages and rural settlements into the city we have today. Secondly, long term residents who grew up in specific neighbourhoods are being interviewed for their unique perceptions of life in their own neighbourhood and their relationship with the people and culture of other neighbourhoods.

Presentation:
A Case Study: Personal Maps and Stories
The mapping activity is a delightful and provocative way of encouraging individuals to look at their neighbourhood and their town in new, intensely personal ways. When individuals share their maps and accompanying stories with other people, it broadens everyone's awareness of and tolerance for the complex diversity of their town. The variety of experiences and interpretations of local places and events is remarkable. It cannot help but cause local historians and museums to re-evaluate previously accepted

interpretations about the community and the individual's place within it. A whole new way of looking at local history is opened up.

- Brief Introduction/Overview to the Research Program/Projects
- Short Mapping Activity – Participants draw their own personal map
- Description/Observations of the Maps and Stories Research (including examples)
  - significance at the personal level – deepens identity, development of a sense of place
  - significance at the community level – providing a 'voice' for diverse groups
- Role of the Small City Museum in Community Learning
  - promoting community involvement
  - collecting, preserving, projecting the community experience

Audio Visual Requirements:
Overhead Projector and Screen