



City of
Peterborough

To: Members of the Museum & Archives Advisory Committee

From: Susan Neale, Museum Director

Meeting Date: November 8, 2018

Subject: Report MAAC18-017
Peterborough Museum & Archives: Coalition of Museums for Climate Justice

Purpose

A report to advise Committee that the Museum Visitor Engagement Coordinator will make a presentation regarding the Peterborough Museum & Archives: Coalition of Museums for Climate Justice.

Recommendation

That the Museum & Archives Advisory Committee approve the recommendation outlined in Report MAAC18-017, dated November 8, 2018, of the Museum Director, as follows:

That the Committee receive the presentation by the Museum Visitor Engagement Coordinator for information.

Budget and Financial Implications

There are no immediate budget or financial implications associated with the recommendation.

Background

For three decades, prominent climate scientists have been warning of the dangerous effects of the continual emission of greenhouse gases into Earth's atmosphere. Scientists have been attempting to identify and to explain just what those effects are likely to be, and urge a variety of measures that might prevent some of the possible disasters. Anthropogenic global warming exists and is likely to raise the average temperature on the planet at least 2°C by the end of this century.

Cultural institutions, including museums, recognize the importance of reducing emissions to limit the global average temperature rise to well below 2°C, and to pursue efforts to limit the increase to 1.5°C. Museum professionals need to prepare for the effects of climate change, including extreme weather and rising seas.

Climate Justice

Climate justice is a term used for framing global warming as an ethical and political issue, rather than a purely environmental or physical issue. Climate justice relates the effects of climate change to concepts of justice, particularly environmental justice and social justice and examines issues such as equality, human rights, collective rights, and the historical responsibilities for climate change. A fundamental proposition of climate justice is that those who are least responsible for climate change suffer its gravest consequences.

According to Robert Janes (The Beam Magazine, 2018), museums are ably qualified to address climate justice due to their deep view of time, and also because:

1. museums are grounded in their communities and are expressions of locality;
2. museums are a bridge between science and culture;
3. museums bear witness by assembling evidence and knowledge, and making things known;
4. museums are seed banks of sustainable living practices that have guided our species for millennia;
5. museums are skilled at making learning accessible, engaging and fun;
6. museums are some of the most free and creative work environments in the world.

The Coalition of Museums for Climate Justice

In 2017, a new initiative was formed in Canada to help support museums that aim to address climate change: The Coalition of Museums for Climate Justice. The organization is guided by a group of museum leaders in Canada who believe that museums can play a vital role in mobilizing public understanding and action regarding climate justice.

The goals of The Coalition of Museums for Climate Justice are:

1. help build internal awareness of climate change responses within the museum community;
2. support museums in strengthening public awareness and mitigation of climate change;
3. mobilize museums as participants and activists in public discourse on climate change;
4. empower museums to lead by example by providing tools and resources to do so.

Further information is available on line:

<https://coalitionofmuseumsforclimatejustice.wordpress.com/>

Call to Action

The Coalition of Museums for Climate Justice is calling on museums across the globe to explore innovative ways to build community resilience in the face of the social, environmental and economic impacts of climate change. Museums have been challenged to:

1. form partnerships with environmental allies;
2. tell stories and educate.

The Peterborough Museum & Archives (PMA) joined the Coalition of Museums for Climate Justice in 2017. The PMA strives to consider climate justice in its operational decisions. The upcoming temporary exhibition, “Ice Age Mammals” (March to September 2019), demonstrates the PMA commitment to presenting contemporary climate research in an alternative learning environment (refer to MAAC18-011).

Summary

Museums, including the Peterborough Museum & Archives, are taking action to adapt to climate change with the goal of climate justice: to help protect the health, well-being, and prosperity of Canadians, and to help manage risks to communities, businesses, and ecosystems.

Submitted by,

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