

# **Public Consultations on the PEI Museum System**

**March 2007**





Conceived by a small group of PEI scholars and community leaders in 1982 and brought into being at UPEI in 1985, the Institute of Island Studies has strived to fulfil its purpose: to improve the quality of life on Prince Edward Island through practical applications of the scholarly field of Island Studies.

With the generous support of the University of Prince Edward Island, the provincial government, federal agencies, private sponsors, and many, many Island volunteers who have served on the Advisory Council and its committees, the Institute works to fulfill its four-fold mandate:

- *To encourage a deep knowledge, understanding and cultural expression of Prince Edward Island;*
- *To serve as a bridge between the University and Island communities;*
- *To contribute to the formulation of progressive public policy on Prince Edward Island;*
- *To undertake comparative studies of Prince Edward Island and other islands.*

**Public Consultations  
on the PEI Museum System**

**March 2007**



# Public Consultations on the PEI Museum Systems, March 2007

## Introduction

### A Brief History of Museums on PEI

#### *1889 – 1969: The Early Years*

Prince Edward Islanders have been collecting specimens and artifacts in hopes of establishing a provincial museum since the founding of the PEI Natural History Society in 1889. In 1901, 131 prominent and influential Islanders signed a petition to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council that included a recommendation for the formation of a museum similar to those being established in the provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (Lord 1982). Periodically throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Prince Edward Islanders have expressed the need for an educational and cultural institution to accommodate exhibit and storage space, artifact conservation and interpretation, education/public activity, and research. However, the early twentieth century turned out to be characterized by “a continuing series of further missed opportunities” (Lord 1982:6) including an attempt to develop an art museum in the 1930s, and the demise and then revival (in 1953) of the Historical Society.

The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a flurry of activity, often attached to centennial projects. In 1956 the Island’s first museum, the Garden of the Gulf Museum, was established in Montague. The centennial of the Charlottetown Conference in 1964 brought the opening of the Confederation Centre of the Arts in Charlottetown. Although originally intended to house a museum, this facility has been and remains primarily an art gallery, library and theatre complex. At the community level there was a drive to establish local heritage institutions, for example the Musée Acadien in Miscouche, the Village Acadien at Mont Carmel, a privately run museum in Alberton and an O’Leary Museum (a Centennial project in 1967) among others. The vision of a centrally located museum of natural history was frequently proposed (Lord 1982, Martin 1983; Diomeda Consultants 1986; MacDonald 1987).

#### *1970: Consolidation of the Management of Historic Sites and Artifacts*

In light of this activity, the PEI Heritage Foundation was founded in 1970 and was given responsibility for a number of historic sites. In 1975 the government set in place a small grant program for the community museums that lay outside of this network. During this period, several new thematic museums were developed within the provincial system, for example the Fisheries Museum at Basin Head. Despite all efforts, by the end of the 1970s there remained a serious gap in the PEI system: there was no central, provincial museum to provide the overall context of the Island’s natural and cultural history. To this day (2007) we are the only province among all the provinces and territories of Canada that lacks a major, provincially representative museum that could provide core exhibitions, research, conservation, curatorial and educational services to support the Island’s natural and cultural heritage.

Since its inception the provincial museum system has accumulated a significant collection of artifacts. More than 30,000 are on display in the various historic sites, while an estimated 53,000 are held at the museum collection storage and research facility in Charlottetown known as “the Artifactory”. This collection includes fine and decorative arts; archaeological and natural history specimens, and cultural artifacts from the earliest Mi’kmaq inhabitants, early colonists (Acadian, Irish, English, and Scots) and many of the more recently arrived settlers. These artifacts relate to areas of Island history such as shipbuilding, fishing, farming, railroads, commerce, religion, domestic life and various professions. They have been gathered from concerned citizens on our

Island and beyond, who chose to contribute to the knowledge and quality of Island life for future generations. While not on public display, these artifacts are accessed by researchers and they form an important resource for scholars of history, biology, archaeology, cultural studies, commerce and fine arts, among others. The frequent interactions among professional staff (curators, conservators and exhibition designers), researchers and the collection is extremely important - indeed essential - for discovering the many stories and threads of evidence attached to each artifact. It is this collaborative effort that enriches our understanding of cultural and ecological history and builds the basis for interpretation and educational displays. Professional staff and researchers approach any one piece from different perspectives. Through a process of discovery, artifacts become not only indicators of past conditions but the means of connecting our development choices of the past to present issues and to future challenges and opportunities.

#### *1982: The Lord Report Critiques PEI's Museum System*

A 1982 report by museologist Barry Lord, *The Museums of PEI*, written for the Island Studies Committee at the University of Prince Edward Island, provided 75 recommendations that “present a coherent, integrated programme for the development of museums and heritage sites on PEI, aimed at achieving a genuinely decentralized system of sites with a central facility....”. Many of these recommendations remain relevant today.

The Lord report recognized the tremendous value of the small museums, whether in the PEI provincial system or run by community volunteers. But he noted that the provincial system was weak. Budget constraints and management decisions had undermined the functionality and local support base of individual sites. Moving to shorter open seasons to save money had eroded the educational role of the museums because teachers could no longer take classes to the sites in the fall. This also had resulted in reduced overall visitor numbers and made the system even less viable in financial terms.

Lord determined that a centrally located museum of culture and natural history was essential. It would be open year round for education purposes and could provide a focal point and support services to the rest of the system. He saw this museum as logically being placed in or to the west of Charlottetown so as to be central to the museum system, accessible to schools, close to the main population base of PEI and also close to museum professionals, researchers and students at UPEI, Holland College, the Provincial Archives and the Confederation Centre of the Arts.

#### *1982: The Issue of Storage for the Museum Collection*

In 1982, the PEI Heritage Foundation had recently purchased an industrial building which they named “the Artifactory” to serve as the storage, conservation, cataloguing and research facility for the museums system. This is where staff of the provincial museums and historic sites still come (in 2007) to borrow artifacts for their interpretive displays.

The storage of a museum collection differs fundamentally from commercial or domestic goods tucked away. Artifacts are irreplaceable and so require a controlled storage environment. A museum collection is also constantly in use for on-going study and exhibition purposes.

While recognizing the fundamental need for a such a facility, Lord critiqued the way in which the decision was made, noting that in the absence of a fully developed strategic plan for the system, “alternatives and implications were not fully considered” (Lord 1982:54). “Simply stated” he continued, “the opportunity was missed to put this amassed capital and operating resource towards the accomplishment of an even greater project than the Artifactory, a building that might have offered secure and environmentally controlled display space as well as storage and workshop facilities – in other words, the rudiments of a provincial museum. This would have

necessitated passing up the opportunity of the present Artifactory building, in the hope of finding another more appropriate for display; or else waiting to build". Furthermore, "the decision to buy and proceed with the Artifactory is a cardinal instance of the tendency to react to opportunity or crisis, rather than weighing all aspects of a decision as part of an on-going planning process, in light of a fully articulated Statement of Intent that clarifies priorities in relation to such difficult decision-making." Finally, Lord recognized "that the Artifactory is addressed to real needs, and that it does represent a net gain for the Island's museum community. If it can now be linked to a display facility to be known as the provincial museum of man and nature, its utility as storage space, preparation workshop and conservation laboratory will be fully realized".

### *1983: The Museums and Heritage Foundation*

Following the release of the Lord report, an organizational review was performed (L. Martin 1983), precipitating changes in the system, including the devolution of more control to a number of local boards attached to historic sites. The Heritage Foundation was rechristened the PEI Museums and Heritage Foundation (PEI MHF) when a new Museum Act was passed in 1983. The Museum Act states: "the purpose of the Museum shall be to study, collect, preserve, interpret, and protect the human and natural heritage of Prince Edward Island for the use, benefit and enjoyment of the people of the province". Unfortunately, this expanded mandate was not matched with the type of enhanced funding required to develop capacity for collection and interpretation of natural history specimens. Nor were there sufficient resources to develop inclusive cultural collections reflecting the increasing diversity of the Island's people. As of 2007, none of the provincial sites are dedicated to aboriginal culture or natural history, and most are open only from late May to early September.

Currently, the PEI Museums and Heritage Foundation oversees seven small museums and historical sites scattered across the Island. Each site deals with a particular aspect of our culture and history. The provincial government also provides a portion of the operating costs of the Community Museums Association which draws its membership from and offers limited services to many museums and interpretive sites across PEI that do not fall within either the provincial or federal government jurisdictions. This is an annual 'cap in hand' grant, meaning it must be specifically requested year in and year out.

### *2006: The Issue of Museum Collection Storage Re-emerges*

Since 1980, the PEI artifact collection has been "temporarily" warehoused in the Artifactory, a steel storage building located in the industrial park of West Royalty, Charlottetown. This building has environmental controls but it has on occasion been subject to insect infestation and dampness from leaks in bad weather. At this point the chief concern is that it is also seriously overcrowded. For many years the Museums and Heritage Foundation Board has requested action from the provincial government to develop a state of the art facility for storage and research, but the province has never seen fit to prioritize this need, nor has federal assistance been forthcoming. In the autumn of 2006, however, a proposal came forward from the Northumberland Community Development Corporation (NCDC). At the suggestion of the provincial government, the NCDC had applied to the regional economic development fund, ACOA (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency), to develop a new, expanded storage facility for the museums collection in the village of Murray River on the southeastern end of the Island. They also proposed adding rentable retail space to the front of the facility to provide a pleasing "streetscape" element for the village. Faced with the choice of moving the artifacts out of the capital and into Murray River or doing without a new facility, the Museum and Heritage Foundation Board accepted the proposal. This was made known to the Foundation membership by letter just prior to the Foundation's Annual General Meeting in mid-March 2007. As that letter from the Chairman of the Board explained:

“When the Province offered the Museum a purpose-built collection storage facility, the Board of Governors considered the proposal very carefully as certain factors were not negotiable. The building would be available only in Murray River through a project by the Northumberland Community Development Corporation.”

Through the winter months of 2006-07, the proposed move was a matter of debate in the Legislative Assembly, in an editorial in the Guardian newspaper, and in letters to editors of Island newspapers. These elements of public debate were collected by a private citizen and made available on a website, [peimuseum.blogspot.com](http://peimuseum.blogspot.com).

The mandate of the Institute of Island Studies at UPEI includes the facilitation of public discussion on topical matters of public policy. In response to public concerns expressed through its Advisory Council, the Institute let it be known in January 2007 that public meetings would be organized with the intent of gathering public opinion to forward to the relevant decision-makers. Letters inviting the collaboration of the province and the PEI Museums and Heritage Foundation were delivered to the Premier and the Minister of Community and Cultural Affairs as well as to the Chairman of the Board and in-coming Executive Director of the Foundation. A guest editorial written by the IIS Advisory Council’s Museum Committee was published in the Guardian newspaper outlining the reasons behind this initiative (Appendix 6).

## **The Public Consultations of March 2007**

### **Forum Intent, Logistics and Process**

In response to public concerns, three meetings (one per county) were called to provide members of the public with a forum where they could discuss PEI museums and heritage conservation (see schedule, Appendix 3). The Institute of Island Studies has no permanent staff other than the Director, Dr Irené Novaczek. For this initiative, the Director called on volunteers from the IIS Advisory Council (museum committee) and their colleagues in the broader museums and heritage community to act as facilitators and resource persons for the public meetings (see biographies, Appendix 3). The consultation planning came together very quickly through the month of February 2007. The IIS museum committee members agreed that public consultation was a matter of urgency, as it seemed that irrevocable commitments concerning the museums collection were imminent. Meeting dates in early March were set and advertised, and letters of invitation were sent to all PEI MLAs and MPs.

At the start of each meeting, participants were welcomed by the Director of IIS, who explained the role of the Institute as a facilitator for public engagement in policy issues. Participants were also informed that their input would be recorded and reported. They were invited to sign up to receive a final report from the IIS, and to pick up a two page backgrounder (Appendix 4). Following this introduction, the volunteer facilitator for the evening took over while Dr Novaczek moved into the position of recorder.

The facilitator introduced three panellists drawn from the PEI museums and heritage community who provided brief comments on the history of the museum system, how museums operate, and the value of museums to the local community. Then, working in groups of 6-8 people, participants responded to three questions:

1. *What do you want your provincial museum system to be?*
2. *How do we ensure public involvement and consultation when major decisions are made concerning PEI museums and heritage?*
3. *Do we need a moratorium on the proposed move of the museum storage facility?*

Each small group nominated a recorder to take notes. After a half-hour of discussion, each group reported back in a plenary session, focusing on their key points of consensus. Written notes from each group were collected up and individuals were invited to also submit their individual written answers to the questions if they felt that any important details were missed. After the small group reports concluded the facilitator opened up the floor for comments and general discussion. These were also recorded. Other input came in to the IIS by letter, email and telephone; all were duly recorded and are reflected in this report.

## **Attendance**

Attendance at the public meetings was strong: 83 in Charlottetown, 32 in Miscouche and 16 in St Peters (not counting panellists, facilitators or media). People came from all corners of the province. In Charlottetown for example, although the crowd was predominantly local, participants also came in from more than 8 different rural communities, as far away as Richmond in the west and Greenwich in the east. Thirty individuals sent in detailed responses to the forum questions, which were handed in at the meetings (14), mailed or faxed in (2), communicated by phone (1) or sent by email (12). The IIS also received two formal submissions from culture and heritage organisations: the PEI Multicultural Council (Appendix 1) and the PEI Scottish Settlers Historical Society (Appendix 2) and notice of a resolution by the DeSable Women's Institute to the District #7 Women's Institute Convention (Appendix 5).

## **Results of the Public Consultation**

### **Desired Shape of the PEI Museum System**

#### *The Hub and Spokes Model*

The overwhelming majority of participants supported a "Hub and Spokes" model for the future museum system. The "spokes" would be the seven PEI Museums and Heritage Foundation sites scattered across the Island, supported by a new, centrally located "hub" in the form of a provincial museum. Henceforth this hub shall be referred to as the Provincial Museum, whereas the hub plus spokes will be referred to as the PEI museums system.

Participants agreed that optimally, the hub will house storage and year-round display of our cultural and natural history collections; provide convenient access to artifacts; and offer conservation and curatorial services, research resources and publishing capacity. The Provincial Museum will serve and support the smaller historic sites and museums, including community museums, and it will be a site where ordinary Islanders can come for help with the conservation and understanding of their family heirlooms. With the exception of only two or three individuals, people felt that museum collection storage belongs with and is integral to the efficient and professional operation of such a Provincial Museum.



Perceived deficiencies in the current system which would be corrected by a Provincial Museum include the telling of the unique natural history of PEI; Mi'kmaq history; the stories of many early and more recent settler groups; and the many sweeping overviews of political, social and economic development that our small museums lack the capacity to tell. These themes are echoed in the submissions from the PEI Multicultural Council (Appendix 1) and the PEI Scottish Settlers Historical Society (Appendix 2).

Some members of one discussion group in Miscouche rejected the idea of a new Provincial Museum because they perceived this as an “either / or” proposition that would take resources away from the existing small museums. It was pointed out by several working groups that PEI's small museums are already under-resourced. The majority of participants in all three meetings called on the government to make appropriate investments in recognition of the importance of culture and heritage to the Island's education system, identity, civic pride, social capital, well-being and economy. People agreed that a Provincial Museum should not come at the expense of smaller sites and museums. Rather, the hub should direct business out to the spokes and facilitate their access to training, publications and the curatorial and conservation services that they need. It was pointed out that the British Columbia museum system is a good “hub and spokes” model.

#### *Economic Benefits*

Economic benefits of a Provincial Museum were seen to be linked to the expanding appetite for cultural tourism in North America. As one submission noted:

“According to the Travel Industry Association of America, visitors to historic and cultural attractions spend, on average, \$631 (USD) per trip compared to \$457 (USD) for all U.S. travelers, and they spend an average of 4.7 nights away from home as compared to 3.4 nights for all other travelers. But for these visitors to come money must actually be put into the "product" as was noted in Prince Edward Island's Strategy for Tourism Competitiveness. It is time to ask the people directly involved in our province's heritage preservation, what do you need? And to follow the old adage: sometimes you need to spend money to make money.” (Participant W1)

Having a core museum close to where tourists currently tend to congregate was also seen to be a positive contribution for revitalization of Charlottetown. A Provincial Museum could make the entire system more economically viable by directing visitors out to the many smaller museums across the Island. People envisaged a highly coordinated and mutually supportive system of sites, effectively packaged and promoted to schools and visitors as well as to its primary target – Island citizens.

#### *Loss and Invisibility of Island Heritage and Artifacts*

Concern over what has already been lost to off-Island collectors lent urgency to the discussion. Many participants felt that we are running out of time and opportunities to fill the gaps in the museum artifact collection. This is reflected well in the following submission:

“Because much of the Island's heritage has disappeared and little documentation exists for that which remains it is becoming more and more difficult to present a representative picture of the past. We need to act now to create a provincial museum that will take responsibility for the preservation, documentation, interpretation and diffusion of the Island's natural and cultural history.” (Participant W8)

Islanders consulted were very clear about what type of Provincial Museum they need, and why such an institution is critical to the future well-being of the province. In every meeting people spoke of the shame they have felt when they discovered that museums in other provinces have important Island artifacts and stories on display that are not available in this province. People also related their discomfort when having to explain to visitors that we have no Provincial Museum that can provide the big picture of natural and cultural history – what people often referred to as “the story of the land”. People were expressing a diminished sense of identity and citizenship within Canada. They described a certain alienation from their sense of place and history, as exemplified by the following submission:

“Last month I visited the Redpath Museum on the McGill campus in Montreal. There among the minerals, fossils and mummies was a fossil footprint of some unknown reptile - - *from Charlottetown!* It was an amazing moment. I didn't know we had fossils on the Island. I felt something like the Greeks must feel when they visit London to view the Elgin marbles.” (Participant W6)

Others expressed grave concern that the mandate of the Museums and Heritage Foundation was not being advanced, and that the wishes of donors to have their valuables displayed and used for research and education were not being honoured.

“I received a call at home from a woman I did not know. She was a 96 year old widow living in a nursing home. She could no longer read or write but had to have someone help her with these things. Her mind, on the other hand was as sharp as ever. It broke my heart when she started talking about how sad it made her that these artifacts are not on display. She said: ‘Over the years I have contributed many things to the PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation. These things were very precious to me and I am truly sad that our young people can not see them’ ”. (Participant W1)

#### *Education of Island School Children and University Students*

A paramount concern at all meetings was the evident limitations to the education and experience of Island students in the areas of cultural and natural history. The perceived need is for a state of the art Provincial Museum that would be open year round and centrally located to serve as a key resource for the education of young people.

“Our son recently had research to do for a Social Studies project which would have greatly benefited from additional local information. Since there was no museum, he was limited to the library and online, and did not get the Island perspective. He did a heritage project two years ago with a knowledgeable neighbour in his nineties. Now that neighbour has moved out of his house, and the family found it very difficult that there is no museum for his treasure trove of Island history. The small regional museums are fine. We have visited most of them, but they don't tell the whole story.” (Participant W5)

#### *Integration of Museum Functions with Community Needs*

Other benefits of a Provincial Museum that were suggested would stem from having a facility integrated with the community. As well as permanent and temporary museum exhibitions, a Provincial Museum could provide resources for schools, educational programs, meeting space, consulting services in artifact conservation, research infrastructure to support, for example, genealogical investigations, a gallery for the display of local art and exhibitions of artisanal crafts.

The vision of the Provincial Museum is that of a dynamic, welcoming, accessible, attractive, relevant and inclusive facility that will provide an overview of PEI's cultural and natural histories.

“The ideal museum is a secular establishment where civic issues can be broached and objects encountered by people interested in reflecting, while relaxing and socializing... The goal of such an institution is not to become another purveyor of nostalgia, but a safe theatre of conscience where the search for truth is an ongoing one. Supporters of a provincial museum describe it as an integrated, multi-functional, cross generational and cross cultural centre of engagement where visitors interact with different voices and experiences.”  
(Participant W8)

Year-round access for students was seen as particularly important. Convenient access by the majority of Island residents, reasonable proximity to well-visited tourist attractions, and accessibility for the very young, the very old and the disabled were also considered key for functionality and economic sustainability.

### *Staffing*

Another high priority issue was staffing. Those intimately familiar with the current museums system pointed to problems of limited staff and resources. One experienced PEI heritage professional noted that

“Over the past twenty five years essential positions have disappeared or were never created. Staff outreach to audiences is stretched thin; they are too caught up in administration and fundraising.... The collection is the reason a museum exists. It holds the stories but trained staff must bring the stories to life.... Museums must be seen as essential infrastructure, not just tourist venues.” (Participant W12)

The museum and heritage community members who attended the meetings are highly supportive of the mandate of the Museums and Heritage Foundation and especially proud of and grateful for the excellent work that is done by the Foundation's professional staff, especially considering their limited numbers and resources. It was a priority for participants that any new museum should be adequately staffed with specialists and trained professionals; that these staff have every opportunity to collaborate with researchers and others in their field; and that their workplace is safe, pleasant, supportive and progressive. The importance of the research function of a museum storage facility was underlined. There was concern over the fact that many Islanders, including decision-makers, may not clearly understand the many things that a fully functional, professional museum does. People spoke of the importance of the core support work that goes on behind the scenes, for example the curatorial work that is performed with collections in storage.

### *Planning and Sustainability*

Participants stressed the need to ensure the active support of the public for museums by involving them in planning and consultation, as well as the need to attract adequate and sustained financial support from all levels of government and from corporate sponsors. One discussion group promoted the idea that individual museums should be more business-like. Other groups were more cautious of burdening museums with ambitious fundraising targets, and recommended using a broad suite of indicators of success rather than simply counting visitor numbers and earnings. They pointed out the many public services that museums can perform given appropriate levels of core funding. This is one of many complex issues requiring further thought and discussion.

### *Location, Location, Location*

The optimal location of a Provincial Museum was discussed in each meeting, although it was not a focal point. People generally felt that a location should be selected through a transparent planning process, using criteria dictated by standard museum practice and the demographic and economic realities of PEI. All but a few individuals favoured a geographically central location in or near the capital city (e.g. Stratford to Cornwall area).

### *A Challenge That Can Unite Us*

Finally, whether they came from Charlottetown, Summerside, a village or a rural area, participants were insistent that the issue of a Provincial Museum is important for all Islanders. It was agreed that it is time for the Island's museum and heritage community members to work together for the benefit of the province as a whole. In all three counties the majority of participants firmly rejected attempts to frame the issue as a rural vs. urban contest.

## **Public Involvement in Decision-making for Museums and Heritage**

In discussing the question "How do we ensure public involvement and consultation when major decisions are made concerning PEI museums and heritage?" most discussion groups began by affirming the legitimate role of citizens in decision-making affecting heritage conservation and education. They viewed the provincial collection of artifacts and their attached histories as the common wealth and legacy of Islanders.

"The artifacts belong to the people – politicians should not be making decisions about them without broad public consultation." (Charlottetown plenary discussion)

People gained personal insights as they exchanged views during the consultations. They came up with advice on how to encourage and enable public involvement in the museums system. This advice was directed to their provincial government, to the Museums and Heritage Foundation Board and to fellow Islanders interested in culture and heritage. The key points that emerged are arranged in descending order according to the level of support from participants. All of these recommendations were stressed by at least 10 different people during the meetings, and some were brought up by as many as 40 persons.

### *Participants' advice to the provincial government*

1. Undertake a review of provincial museum policies and operations
2. Hold province-wide consultations on the provincial museum system to extend the IIS-sponsored consultations
3. Review the Museums Act and include a specific mandate for public consultation (e.g. as for the Heritage Places designation process)
4. Improve cultural and regional representation on the PEI Museums and Heritage Foundation Board
5. Hold public forums on important issues affecting PEI's natural and cultural heritage

In addition to these broadly endorsed recommendations, various individuals suggested increasing the size of the Board so that more community museums could be represented; changing from an appointed Museums Board to an elected one; keeping Board positions fully filled; and making the Board more publicly accountable. One individual cautioned that too much consultation could impede action. Others called for setting up a panel of heritage professionals to consider the potential and viability of a fully professional Provincial Museum.

### *Participants' advice to the Museums and Heritage Foundation Board*

1. Encourage debate and feedback and capture positive energy; Consult with members and other cultural and heritage organizations before making major decisions, so that decisions are more effective in the long term
2. Develop a larger & more empowered membership, and communicate better and more frequently with your members
3. Educate the public so that museums grow from the bottom up. Communicate more with the public around activities, and issues of concern. Use the media more effectively
4. Consult with the interested public before making key decisions. Be clear on the pros/cons of decisions, giving all the appropriate information so all are clear on their responsibilities and actions
5. Transcend politics; “be there” for Islanders; claim your power
6. Create a vision, develop a comprehensive plan and open it up for discussion
7. Ensure that museum professionals guide decisions, not politicians
8. Overhaul the Museum Board's governance model. (The Canadian Museums Association recommends the Carver Model of Board Governance – which would focus the board on the institution's mandate)

In addition to these broadly endorsed recommendations individuals also suggested that the Board should : be careful to ensure good relations with the professional staff; build capacity to see the big picture, beyond the parochial interests of the 30+ sites around the island; establish criteria for decision-making then stick with them; target youth with information, workshops etc and get their input; take a different approach to fundraising; make historic sites more accessible to schools, more relevant and more attractive to boost visitor numbers; and improve capacity for educational programming for schools. Participants in Charlottetown noted that a Provincial Museum would provide a concrete focal point for public engagement.

It was also pointed out that the Museum staff should be enabled to assess the provincial collection for its representational content and then work to fill the gaps through donations and purchases, before it is too late.

### *Participants' advice to the broader museums and heritage community*

1. Don't allow debate to fracture us into rural vs. urban – we need to set aside parochial interests and work together for a central, provincial institution
2. Build conduits to decision-makers; be more vocal; write letters; call your MLAs and let them know you care about museums and heritage and want a proper long range plan
3. Make this an election issue and let prospective MLAs hear about it at the door

Concerned Islanders were encouraged to stay committed to the museum system and to communicate more with the general public to foster interest and involvement in preservation and interpretation of heritage. Historic sites and small museums were encouraged to develop an active, inclusive means of sharing news, and facilitating informed discussion of ongoing issues. One means of sharing information that was suggested was by “blogging”, that is, using web-based sites for dialogue.

## **Proposed Development of a New Museum Storage Facility in Murray River**

In response to the question “Do we need a moratorium on the proposed move of the museum storage facility?”, only a small handful of participants said no. The vast majority of participants

called for a moratorium on the move, to provide the in-coming Executive Director of the Museums and Heritage Foundation time to assess the museum system, consult with the membership and other heritage organisations, and develop a strategic plan for the museum system.

Many participants expressed disappointment that the decision to move the museums collection out of Charlottetown had been made without consultation with the broader museum community. Others expressed disgust with what they saw as political interference in what should have been a decision based strictly on the long term well being of the museum system.

People feared that if the museum collections in storage went to Murray River this would make it difficult if not impossible to develop a Provincial Museum in a central location. They pointed out that routine and necessary collaboration of staff with museum professionals in related institutions and access for researchers based in Charlottetown would be at the very least, constrained. From the perspective of small museums in the western end of the island, having to access artifacts from Murray River represents a significant challenge in view of their limited staff time and financial resources. They pointed out that developing an exhibit is often a process requiring repeated trips into the storage facility and close collaboration with curators, conservators and collections management staff.

All those calling for a moratorium looked to the PEI Museums and Heritage Foundation to engage and consult the public in seeking some resolution that could enhance and not detract from a future Provincial Museum development. Some participants advised that if, after due consideration and consultation, the move to Murray River was deemed irrevocable, the Board should address the identified constraints and problems, and then focus on improving policy, process and planning. Others stated their conviction that it would be better to give up the current opportunity, address the maintenance needs of the existing Artifactory and wait until an integrated Provincial Museum development was possible.

Reasons given by those supporting the move to Murray River were twofold. Several individuals saw the move as a way to shore up the local economy of that village. Others voiced their scepticism that the move was already a done deal and was so politicized that it could not now be reversed. They argued that a new and enlarged storage facility was necessary, and this was the only option available, so people should give up and focus attention on development of a Provincial Museum, even if it had to be separate from the storage and research facility. It was pointed out by a heritage professional that a museum separated from its study and display collections in storage would not be a fully professional, working institution.

## **Conclusions**

Although a modest attempt at public consultation, these three meetings served to amply demonstrate the depth and breadth of concern among Islanders for museums and heritage. Attendance was large; discussion was thoughtful, sincere and at times impassioned. Many participants were paid up members of the Museums and Heritage Foundation; others were connected to community museums; some were new to the topic and were stimulated to purchase memberships in order to participate in the AGM of the Museum and Heritage Foundation, which followed closely on the consultation.

Discontent with the recent decision to move the museum storage to Murray River was strong and pervasive, as was the positive desire for a centrally located Provincial Museum that could fill critical gaps in the province's system. Participants expressed understanding and sympathy for

the Museums and Heritage Foundation Board because it was felt that the provincial government had placed them in a difficult position, having to choose between moving the storage facility out of Charlottetown or doing without a new facility. They also expressed deep regret that the Board had not turned to the membership for advice and support that might have placed them in a better position to argue for a more acceptable resolution to the storage problem.

At the AGM of the PEI Museums and Heritage Foundation on March 14, 2007 members voted in favour of a) placing a moratorium on the move of artifact storage to Murray River, and b) taking time to assess the PEI Museums and Heritage system, consult the membership and develop a comprehensive and strategic plan for the Island's museums. A third resolution recommended filling vacant places on the Board of Governors from a list of nominees proposed by members at each AGM.

### *Acknowledgements*

The Institute of Island Studies thanks the volunteers who made these consultations possible; the forum participants for sharing their views, concerns and creative ideas for improving provincial museums; the host communities for providing meeting venues; and the Museum and Heritage Foundation staff for their unflagging good will. It is our hope that this report will assist the process of developing a plan to move forward with sustainable improvements to the museum system that will protect and enhance the heritage that so many Islanders hold so dear.

### *Final Word*

We leave the last word to a forum participant:

“People want the province to be noble and courageous; to articulate a strong vision and commitment; to plan carefully, then move forward with a properly structured, mandated and funded Provincial Museum. To get this, the people will have to have a strong, united voice.” (Charlottetown forum general discussion)

## **References**

- Diomedea Consultants 1986. A Planning and Development Study for the PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation. PEI Museum & Heritage Foundation.
- Hennessey, C. 2007 (in progress). The Search for a Provincial Museum.
- Lord, B. 1982. The Museums of Prince Edward Island, a Programme for Development. A Report to the Island Studies Committee, UPEI, 198 pp.
- MacDonald, B. 1987. Recommendations on the Development of a Natural History Branch within the PEI Museum and Heritage System. Prepared for the Natural History Museum Advisory Committee.
- Martin, K. 1983. Inventory of Natural Science Specimens of PEI. UPEI Dept Extension and PEI Dept. Community and Cultural Affairs.
- Martin, L. 1983. Recommendations on the Structure, Function and Development of a PEI Provincial Museum. PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation.

## Appendix 1 Submission from the PEI Multicultural Council

---



### P.E.I. MULTICULTURAL COUNCIL

3 - 224 Queen Street, Charlottetown, PEI., Canada, C1A 4B6

*"Unity in Diversity"  
Sharing  
Fellowship  
Understanding*

President  
Dr. Wimal Rankaduwa  
T: 902 566 0487  
E: wrankaduwa@upepei.ca

Vice-President  
Dr. Najmul Chishti  
T: 902 368 2360  
E: naj@pei.sympatico.ca

Secretary  
Regina Oppon  
T: 902 367 2289  
E: regina\_oppon@yahoo.co.uk

Treasurer  
Aggi-Rose Reddin  
T: 902 675 3279  
E: aggirose@gmail.com

Dr. Irene Novaczek  
Director  
Institute of Island Studies  
University of Prince Edward Island  
550 University Ave.  
Charlottetown, PEI  
C1A 4P3  
March 14, 2007

Dear Irene,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the PEI Multicultural Council, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to express our views on the following questions regarding the provincial museum system on Prince Edward Island:

- 1. What do you want your provincial museum system to be?*
- 2. How do we ensure public involvement and consultation when major decisions are made concerning PEI museums and heritage?*
- 3. Do we need a moratorium on the proposed move of the museum storage facility?*

The PEIMCC supports the idea of a centralized provincial museum as a complement to the existing satellite facilities and various community museums. A provincial museum would provide year-round access which is not currently available. Year-round access is critical in order for our museum system to be an educational tool for our schoolchildren – our future community leaders.

A provincial museum should also provide an overview of the various aspects of Island life which are covered in more detail by the current satellite museums – shipbuilding at Green Park, fisheries at Basin Head, agriculture at Orwell Corner, etc. However, a provincial museum should also include those aspects of Island life which are not part of the mandate of any of the existing facilities: the natural, social and political history of Prince Edward Island.

The PEIMCC is the umbrella organization for the many ethno-cultural groups on Prince Edward Island so the telling of our social history – of the settlement of this beautiful Island by the many different ethnic communities which now call PEI home – is of paramount importance to us.

It is also important to note that Prince Edward Island is the only province which does not have a provincial museum. We have been part of this confederation since 1873 – surely it is time we had such a facility. Ideally, it would bring together all aspects of the Island's

---



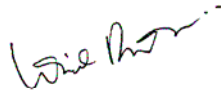
history in a way which would facilitate research and educational opportunities for all Islanders regardless of their age or income. In order for such a facility to be accessible to the greatest number of people, it should be located near the people. Given the many opportunities for joint research with the university, the presence of the Confederation Centre, the population base within the greater Charlottetown area, as well as the city's status as the capital city, Charlottetown does seem the most logical location.

There has been no review of PEI's heritage and cultural policies or the services provided by the provincial government or the Museum and Heritage Foundation, or the Act under which these activities are conducted, for approximately twenty-five years. We urge the provincial government to correct this oversight and begin consultations with the heritage and cultural communities as soon as possible. Islanders care passionately about their history – witness how many have donated family heirlooms and artifacts to the province with the express wish of sharing these with other Islanders. An examination of how many members of the Island community volunteer their time and energy to heritage and cultural activities again tells us Islanders care deeply.

The current situation regarding the building of an artifactory is indeed unfortunate and could likely have been avoided through consultation with the community in advance of government making its decision. Perhaps this can still be done before the current plans proceed. If the new building is intended only as a "place to put stuff" then location does not matter. However, if the intention is to finally show full respect to our ancestors by having these material components of our history available to all Islanders, either through display in a collection setting or just as importantly through an individual person's research, then location is critical. We respectfully submit that a moratorium on the current plans is appropriate.

Thank you once again, Irene, for giving the PEIMCC this opportunity to express our views on the Island's provincial museum system.

Sincerely,



Dr. Wimal Rankaduwa, President  
PEI Multicultural Council

## Appendix 2 Submission from the PEI Scottish Settlers Historical Society

---



The Prince Edward Island  
Scottish Settlers Historical Society  
P.O. Box 2162  
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island  
C1A 8B9

Dr Irene Novaczek  
Director, Institute of Island Studies  
University of Prince Edward Island  
550 University Ave.  
Charlottetown, PEI  
C1A 4P3  
March 16, 2007

Dear Irene,

Thank you for providing the PEI Scottish Settlers Historical Society this opportunity to express our position on the issue of a provincial museum for PEI. In April 2004 the PEISSHS wrote to the Premier expressing our concerns regarding the postponement of the replacement of the current artifactory.

We do not consider it contradictory, however, to now state that a moratorium on the proposed move to Murray River is appropriate, given the potential such as facility has in the way of addressing existing short-comings in our provincial museum system.

We are concerned to learn we are the only province in Canada that does not have a provincial museum. Surely after almost 134 years as a province in Canada, we should have such a facility.

Our Scottish ancestors arrived on Prince Edward Island in the third quarter of the 1700s and in the early 1800s. Many contributed to the social, cultural and political history of the Island, yet to date we have no organized facility through which to honour and celebrate these contributions. Many also have left us with material aspects of their lives; these in turn make up a significant part of the collection of artifacts currently under the care of Museum and Heritage Prince Edward Island.

When these artifacts were donated to the province, it was with the understanding they would be properly taken care of and would be made available for all Islanders, as part of an interpretative display or for research purposes. To date the province has not taken responsibility for properly honouring our ancestors' wishes, and we sincerely hope this will change.

The proposed storage facility does not, in our opinion, meet this objective. Yes, it will address the issues of environmental care and control, but will do nothing to enhance opportunities for public display, for the education of our schoolchildren regarding the history of Prince Edward Island, or for research undertaken either for personal or public knowledge.

---

In other words, if all the province is intending is to have a new place to put these artifacts, then current plans meet that goal; albeit in a less than efficient manor from either a human resource or transportation perspective. However, we certainly hope this is not the sole objective, and if not, then the current plans are seriously flawed.

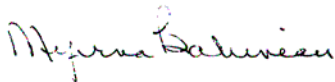
We feel it is extremely unfortunate that these plans have been developed without consultation with the very people who will be effected by them – those dedicated Islanders who devote a considerable amount of volunteer or professional time and energy to improve the public knowledge and understanding of Prince Edward Island’s history, in all its various forms – from natural history, to social, cultural, political, and individual aspects of Island life.

The membership of the PEI Scottish Settlers Historical Society is spread across the Island, yet we feel it is only appropriate a facility dedicated to honouring the history of the Island be located within easy access of the majority of Islanders, and near complementary facilities and services such as those provided by the University of Prince Edward Island and the Confederation Centre.

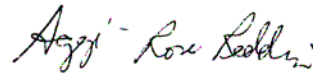
We also feel current plans do nothing to encourage the many educational opportunities the artifacts could and should provide for our schoolchildren to learn about the lives of their ancestors, or about what life was like in years gone by.

In summary, we sincerely hope the provincial government will reconsider their current plans and heed the advice of many who have said this is the time to conduct a long-overdue review of the policies and objectives regarding our responsibilities to our ancestors.

Sincerely,



Myrna Babineau, President



Aggi-Rose Reddin, Secretary

### Appendix 3: Forum Logistics and Resource Persons

#### The schedule for the public meetings was as follows:

Charlottetown March 7<sup>th</sup>, 7– 9pm  
Murphy Centre, 200 Richmond St.  
Moderator Diane Griffin  
Panellists Ann Howatt, Ian Scott, Andy Robb

Miscouche, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 7 – 9pm  
Musée Acadien  
Moderators Bruce Smith & Georges Arsenault (en français)  
Panellists Ann Howatt, Ian Scott, Fred Horne

St. Peters, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 7 – 9pm  
Dr. Roddie Community Centre  
Moderator Fred Horne  
Panellists Ann Howatt, Ian Scott, Daryl Guignon

#### Resource persons for public consultations were as follows:

Historian and folklorist **Georges Arsenault** (facilitator in Miscouche) was born in Abrams Village, Prince Edward Island. He holds a an M.A. degree in Folklore from Université Laval and has published extensively on the folklore and history of the Acadians of Prince Edward Island. Georges worked as a cultural officer for the Société Saint-Thomas-d’Aquin (Acadian and francophone Society of Prince Edward Island) and then became Visiting Professor in Acadian Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island. He is a former board member of the PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation and of the Association du Musée Acadien de l’Île-du-Prince-Édouard, and at one time also served on the Advisory Council to the Institute of Island Studies. He is presently president of the Sister Antoinette DesRoches Historical Committee and vice-president of the Government House Committee.

**Diane Griffin** (facilitator in Charlottetown), former Executive Director of the Island Nature Trust, served with the provincial government as Assistant Deputy Minister of the PEI Department of Fisheries, Aquaculture & Environment, and is currently a councillor for the municipality of Stratford. She is a long time advocate for the cultural and natural heritage of PEI and has served on numerous national and provincial boards including those of the Canadian Nature Federation and the Natural History Society of PEI.

**Daryl Guignon** (panellist in St Peters), professor of biology at UPEI, has had a long-standing, active commitment to preservation of natural heritage on Prince Edward Island. He was a founding member of the Morell and area land use steering committee, and has been actively involved as a volunteer in many community and national organizations including the Canadian Wildlife Federation, Morell River Co-op and the Island Nature Trust.

**Fred Horne** (facilitator for St Peters; panellist in Miscouche) has worked as a researcher with the PEI Museums and Heritage Foundation, has written a History of Prince Edward Island National Park and the Green Gables House for Parks Canada, served on the Board of the Basin Head Fisheries Museum and promoted land stewardship across PEI with the Island Nature Trust. Fred is a founding director of the Hillsborough River Association and of the Sir Andrew Macphail Homestead of Orwell, has authored a history of Summerside and currently works as an Archivist/Coordinator of Collections with the Wyatt Heritage Properties, City of Summerside. He volunteers with the Advisory Council of the Institute of Island Studies.

**Dr. Ann Howatt** (panellist for all meetings) is originally from Prince Edward Island. She specializes in museum and heritage practice, policy, research, and education, particularly as these relate to the conservation of cultural property. In addition to her private practice, she has held management and teaching positions in museums, universities, and conservation institutions throughout Canada and internationally. She has learned from practical experience across Canada how museums of many sizes work.

**Andy Robb** (panellist in Charlottetown), historian and Professor Emeritus of History (UPEI), is a former Chairman of the Board for the PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation and an active supporter of the PEI Genealogical Society.

**Ian Scott** (panellist for all meetings) is a former Executive Director of the Museums and Heritage Foundation and long term history aficionado with his own genealogical website *Homeport* (<http://www3.pei.sympatico.ca/scotts/index.html>).

**Bruce Smith** (facilitator in Miscouche) spent 12 years with PEI Provincial Parks, supervising interpretation and Parks planning and for 14 years was manager of the wildlife habitat improvement program supporting community initiatives to enhance PEI's natural environment. He has served on the Board and then as Executive Director of Island Nature Trust, as well as on the Board of the PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation and the Advisory Council for the Institute of Island Studies.

## Appendix 4: Forum Handout

### *Institute of Island Studies Public Meeting Concerning PEI's Heritage and Museums*

#### **A Bit of History...**

Prince Edward Islanders have been expressing a need for a provincial museum since 1901, when 131 prominent Islanders signed a museum petition to the Lieutenant Governor. The vision that has arisen repeatedly over time is of an educational and cultural institution to accommodate exhibit and storage space, conservation, interpretation, education/public activity, and research for the preservation of our history. In particular, the idea of a central museum of natural history has frequently been proposed by PEI's heritage and environmental communities.

A 1982 report by Barry Lord, *The Museums of PEI*, written for the Island Studies Committee, provided 75 recommendations that "present a coherent, integrated programme for the development of museums and heritage sites on PEI, aimed at achieving a genuinely decentralized system of sites with a central facility....". These recommendations still represent the most comprehensive blueprint available for museum development on PEI.

Currently, the government has a museum system overseen by the PEI Museums and Heritage Foundation, which includes seven sites scattered across the Island, each dealing with a particular aspect of our culture and history. In addition, various communities support small museums outside of this government-funded network. We are the only province of Canada that lacks a major provincial museum that could provide core exhibition, research, conservation and storage services to these smaller museums.

#### **What do Museums Do?**

A fully-operational, year-round museum, like that entrusted with a Canadian province's or territory's cultural and natural heritage is typically mandated, staffed and funded to do the following:

- To responsibly collect, document, record and manage its heritage collections and resources, according to its collection policy
- To conserve that collection according to current ethical standards
- To research collections in the service of all citizens
- To draw on its collection to develop and maintain long-term representative displays, and to regularly produce temporary, thematic exhibitions from its own collections in storage
- To invite and host visiting exhibitions, curators, and specialists in areas related to its collections
- To publish and communicate its work, and to make available educational resources for the public and for all levels of public education
- To promote local participation and research, and to train volunteers from the community
- To actively welcome visitors and students of all ages
- To assist and liaise with colleagues in public, community museums, and in related institutions
- The museum protects and enhances the cultural and natural heritage of all citizens within its area of jurisdiction, and strengthens that unique history within the global community

#### **The PEI Museums & Heritage Foundation**

The PEI Museums & Heritage Foundation, founded in 1970, operates our existing network of decentralized, thematically focused museums, under a mandate established by legislation. The Museum Act states: the purpose of the Museum shall be to study, collect, preserve, interpret, and protect the human and natural heritage of Prince Edward Island for the use, benefit and enjoyment of the people of the province.

#### **Join the Museum and Heritage Foundation!**

The Foundation has a public membership base (please see [www.gov.pe.ca/peimhf/](http://www.gov.pe.ca/peimhf/)). An individual membership costing \$25 also gets you a subscription to The Island Magazine. We encourage Islanders who care about

culture and heritage to join. The Museum and Heritage Foundation's annual meeting will take place at Beaconsfield on Wednesday March 14 at 7 PM. Phone: 902-368-6600 or E-mail [mhpei@gov.pe.ca](mailto:mhpei@gov.pe.ca)

### **Volunteer with the Institute of Island Studies!**

The IIS has one staffperson (the Director, Dr Irene Novaczek) and a very modest office budget, from which base we raise money to undertake research and programming. Our mandate is to bridge between UPEI and the wider Island public; to research and interpret the Island's history, culture, environment, politics, economy and society; to facilitate public involvement in development of progressive public policy; and to foster global comparative research that can help us to learn from the world experience of small islands. In dealing with PEI public policy issues the Director of IIS depends heavily on a volunteer Advisory Council drawn from UPEI faculty and Island citizens from various sectors of society. This Council reaches out to work with community organizations who share our interests. If you want to volunteer on a Council committee please get in touch and indicate your area of interest – we will be sure to call on you if we are launching an initiative that you might want to be involved with. Phone: 566-0386 or email [inovaczek@upei.ca](mailto:inovaczek@upei.ca)

### **Tonight's Discussion**

We will be focusing on PEI museums and heritage conservation, using the following questions as prompts to gain an understanding of and record public perspectives. The information gathered will be reported to the public and to our elected decision-makers. Please leave your name and contact information with us if you wish to receive a copy of the report.

1. *What do you want your provincial museum system to be?*
2. *How do we ensure public involvement and consultation when major decisions are made concerning PEI museums and heritage?*
3. *Do we need a moratorium on the proposed move of the museum storage facility?*

**If you want to add to the input you have had tonight** please contribute to the PEI Museum blog: <http://peimuseum.blogspot.com> or write directly to the Institute of Island Studies at [ourheritage@upei.ca](mailto:ourheritage@upei.ca)

## **Appendix 5: Resolution of the DeSable Women's Institute**

### **RESOLUTION**

**Presented by DESABLE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE**

**To District Area #7 Women's Institute Convention  
South Shore United Church, Tryon  
March 26, 2007**

**WHEREAS** Prince Edward Islanders have a strong appreciation for their heritage;

**AND WHEREAS** thousands of donated artifacts are currently in storage, unavailable for public viewing and interpretation;

**AND WHEREAS** Prince Edward Island does not have a year-round museum which documents the social and natural history of the Island;

**AND WHEREAS** every other province in Canada has a provincial museum;

**AND WHEREAS** the seven small seasonal provincial museums throughout Prince Edward Island would benefit from the operation of a central, year round provincial museum;

**AND WHEREAS** such a provincial museum would be a legacy for generations to come, serving as a focal point in our education system and providing measurable economic benefits with regards to tourism;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Prince Edward Island Women's Institute urge the provincial government to place a moratorium on the construction of an artifactory until the development of a long term plan which includes both an artifactory and a provincial museum;



## Appendix 6 Letter to the Editor , Guardian Newspaper, PEI, 17 January 2007

### Do you know where your history is going and why?

In 1901, 131 prominent and influential Islanders signed a petition to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council that included recommendation for the formation of a museum. Since that time, Prince Edward Islanders have been expressing a need for an educational and cultural institution to accommodate exhibit and storage space, conservation, interpretation, education/public activity, and research for the preservation of our history. The PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation oversees museum collections for the Province of PEI: its facilities include a building for artifacts storage (the Artifactory) and seven decentralized, theme-based museum sites. None of these are dedicated to aboriginal artifacts or natural history.

Of this total collection of more than 80,000 artifacts, an estimated two-thirds or 53,300 are in the Artifactory. This collection includes fine and decorative arts, and archaeological, natural history, and anthropological specimens from the earliest inhabitants, such as the Mi'kmaq, Acadian, Irish, English, and Scottish settlers, and others. These artifacts relate to areas of Island history such as shipbuilding, fishing, farming, railroads, domestic, professional, and commercial life. They have been gathered from concerned citizens on our Island and beyond. Our museum collection represents shared, collective memories—the qualities of Island life—and was always meant to be a primary education resource for our citizens.

What is at issue? Since about 1981, the Artifactory collection has been “temporarily” warehoused in a steel building in West Royalty. Unfortunately, this building has been vulnerable to draughts, mold, insects, and ongoing leaks. A move is underway to build a new storage facility in a community in the country. This has been discussed in the Legislative Assembly, in an editorial in the Guardian, and in many letters to the editor. It is good that this potential and real disintegration of our history is finally of concern publicly and politically. The next logical step is for consultation to take place (through all stages of planning, design, construction, and installation) with those museum professionals and citizens, who are best able to determine *what* is needed to safely preserve, maintain, and develop the collection, and to determine *where* this might be best achieved.

Nationwide, collections of cultural and natural history are stored within a central museum complex, or located close to one. This ensures the proximity of museum professionals and related services to properly treat and maintain collections, and brings exhibits and staff closer to the public, for education, enjoyment, and support. Optimally, on PEI, museum professionals and technical support (archivists, curators, conservators, cataloguers, Museum and Heritage Foundation staff) would work in the same community to share expertise, facilities, and to support collections. We are fortunate in the professionals we have. But, if storage is not centrally located, controlled access for students and researchers, including history scholars from UPEI, will be essentially cut off, and restricted recruitment options for technical and professional staff will potentially put the collection at risk.

Appropriate emergency and disaster resources are required *relative to the size and type of collection and museum storage facility*: for example, a full-time fire and police department, emergency supplies, temporary facilities for mass-drying and first-aid to materials if damaged by smoke and water. Day-to-day security issues must be addressed. This planning for new storage must recognize issues of public trust, public accountability, and liability. Modern, best-practices standards for care of the collection must be part of any proposed new storage design and construction, including, but not limited to: climate control, proper lighting, sufficient water supply for fire suppression, and a reliable power

supply to operate all essential environmental systems. Finally, storage must be located so that handling, shipping and transportation are minimized, reducing stress to artifacts.

In short, a provincial collection of this magnitude needs professional management and care. Museum professionals must be seriously consulted in all stages of decisions including location, design, and construction of the storage facility, before building contracts are issued, in order to avoid budget overruns (additional costs to taxpayers), and to ensure collection safety.

The Provincial Government is responsible to its citizens for making it administratively and financially possible to preserve, interpret, and research our material culture. A strategic plan is required to manage these educational and cultural assets, which are non-renewable, unique, and beyond price. IIS is unaware, at the time of writing, of any such detailed, publicly-available documents specifying architectural and environmental engineering plans, or integration strategies with existing heritage and current museum needs. Will the PEI heritage collection become part of a broader museum policy—a policy that allows for public display, research, and progress towards more contemporary, inclusive, and interactive forms of museology?

The PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation Board was founded in 1970, “to study, collect, preserve, interpret, and protect the human and natural heritage of Prince Edward Island for the use, benefit and enjoyment of the people of the province.” Ostensibly, the Board feels it must choose between leaving the collection in the poor situation that exists in West Royalty, or having a storage facility built in Murray River. Neither choice is optimal. The legacy and learning of all Islanders will be impacted if there is a rush for a storage solution without a long-term, provincial strategy.

The Institute of Island Studies is always concerned with, and committed to the needs of Islanders. One of our mandates is to perform research and promote progressive public policy, including the intelligent stewardship of Island heritage and the management of existing resources for future sustainability. Apart from the Lemieux and John Eldon Green (DPA Group) reports on the question of a Provincial Museum, in 1982, the Island Studies Committee commissioned Barry Lord to write, *The Museums of Prince Edward Island, A Programme for Development*. He recommends, “...a coherent, integrated programme for the development of museums and heritage sites on PEI, aimed at achieving a genuinely decentralized system of sites with a central facility that would provide a thematic focus on the Island’s story in ecological and historical terms...”

The Institute of Island Studies is interested in facilitating public discourse on the issues of a central museum for PEI heritage, and the proposed re-location of the heritage collection. The Museum Sub-Committee of the Institute of Island Studies Advisory Board invites members of the public to guide the IIS in drawing up plans for discussion forums to be held in each County. Please e-mail your ideas to [ourheritage@upei.ca](mailto:ourheritage@upei.ca)

Island Heritage concerns all Islanders. Decisions concerning our heritage collection should be made carefully and publicly, on the basis of the greatest public good.

Sincerely,

Yvette Doucette, Chair of the Institute of Island Studies Advisory Board & Member of the IIS Advisory Board Museum Committee

Dr. Irené Novaczek, Director of the Institute of Island Studies, Institute of Island Studies, University of Prince Edward Island, 550 University Avenue, Charlottetown PE, C1A 4P3