Summary of Notes from the Break-out Workshop Discussions
Heritage Interpretation in Atlantic Canada
Dialogues between theory and practice
Intangible cultural heritage conference, Sydney, NS, 13-15 September 2019

Theme : How can we promote Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in Atlantic Canada?

Two sessions ran simultaneously: one on Academic Research moderated by Chris McDonald, who asked the group to consider the question "What should be the future priorities for researchers in ICH?"; and one on Heritage and the Public Sector moderated by Ronald Labelle who asked the group to consider the question "How can museums and heritage centres contribute to the advancement of ICH?" At the end of the sessions, Dale Jarvis moderated a joint presentation of results, and compiled a report and list of future actions, as follows.

What is ICH? Is this term useful for our groups?

"The term 'cultural heritage' has changed content considerably in recent decades, partially owing to the instruments developed by UNESCO. Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts."
- From https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003

Establishment of guiding principles

● Intangible Cultural Heritage is based in communities, and as such, the focus of future ICH work must be on community and local knowledge. See:
  https://ich.unesco.org/en/involvement-of-communities-00033
● Those working in ICH must be responsive to community groups, and aid in the sharing of community information
● ICH is a conversation not just about, but between and for communities.
● There is a need to follow a clear set of ethical guidelines for ICH work. See:
  https://ich.unesco.org/en/ethics-and-ich-00866

Sharing information about ICH

It was suggested that a great deal of excellent work is already being done in the field of ICH documentation and safeguarding, and that more could be done to share this work and make it better known. Suggestions included:

- Producing useful tools and resources for organizations interested in ICH
- Develop a series of case studies based on past events
- Recognize and reinforce the good work that is already happening
- Make institutions recognize they are already doing ICH
- Sharing of documentation/digital standards for ethnographic collections
- Compile a list of experts and share contact information
- Disseminate UNESCO capacity building materials
  https://ich.unesco.org/en/content-of-training-materials-00679

Skills and training

There is a need for a critical understanding of ICH, the 2003 UNESCO Convention, and proper methodologies for inventorying and safeguarding ICH. Suggestions included exploring best practices and taking advantage of existing ICH courses (UVic's Cultural Resource Management program, or UBC's Online Workshops on Intangible Cultural Heritage), or developing training opportunities for interested parties in the region.

Networking

A common thread of discussions was the need for increased networking and sharing of comparative work. Part of this could be accomplished through partnerships with existing organizations.   Networking could be take place at the **local** level through the further development of a NS Heritage Council, or more informally through online forums such as the Atlantic Canada Heritage Professionals facebook group -
https://www.facebook.com/groups/297823974104531/

At the **national** level, there has already been established a Canadian Network for ICH, which needs to be strengthened. It currently has a facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/ichpci/) and a LinkedIn group (https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8322356/). These online groups are underutilized currently, and depend on the participation of and posting by groups and individuals in order to be more effective. A Canadian Declaration for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted in Quebec City, Canada, May 20th 2016:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1s5vVFXukYJVDYEeMVATn856NNFlxVoo8/view

The importance of building strong **international** connections was also noted. Participants noted it is important to know what's going on elsewhere, both conceptually and concretely. Academics in particular can help facilitate this through various international academic connections.

Community Development, Sustainability, and Empowerment

It was felt that there is an important link that can be explored between ICH and economic/social development. As communities adapt to change, for example, can ICH help? One idea might be linking ICH safeguarding to UNESCO's Sustainable Development Goals
https://en.unesco.org/sdgs

A Call to Action

It was felt by the group that there is a clear need for action. Discussion and networking is important, yet groups need to be active and accomplish community projects in order to build grassroots support for ICH. It was suggested to "Stir the Pot" - act, don't just talk. There were a few possible goals in this regard suggested by the group.

Short Term Goals:

- Create an advisory group/NS ICH Network to share knowledge with organizations
- A Special Issue of Material Culture or other journal on current ICH initiatives/best practices
- A follow-up conference/workshop on ICH safeguarding measures

Long Term Goals:

- Relaunch plans for a MA in "Heritage and community development"
- ICH Policy/Strategy for Nova Scotia
- Formalize support services for organizations undertaking ICH work
- Funding for ICH safeguarding projects
- Lobbying government and political advocacy for the allocation of local/federal resources, and for the ratification of the 2003 UNESCO Convention on ICH.