



# Embracing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Collections Development: A Textile Museum of Canada Case Study

Roxane Shaughnessy, Julia Brucculieri,  
and Cara Krmpotich



# Acknowledgements:

The land on which the Textile Museum of Canada operates is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabe, the Ojibwe, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat. It is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Metis. Through our activities we seek to create a space for people to share, learn, and celebrate the textile practices of today and long ago in the spirit of peace, friendship and respect.

Thank you to everyone who accepted our invitations and joined our focus group sessions. Thank you also to those who supported (and continue to support!) our work at the Textile Museum of Canada, especially our Board of Trustees, present and past Director and CEO, fellow staff members, and peers. We also want to acknowledge the funding support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation.





# ABOUT US

## **ROXANE SHAUGHNESSY**

Senior Curator and Manager of  
Collection, Textile Museum of  
Canada



## **JULIA BRUCCULIERI**

Curatorial and Collection  
Assistant, Textile Museum of  
Canada



## **CARA KRMPOTICH**

Associate Professor, University of  
Toronto, Museum Studies



# About the Textile Museum of Canada

- Founded in 1975 as Canadian Museum of Carpets and Textiles
- Only museum in Canada delivering programs and exhibitions dedicated solely to textile arts

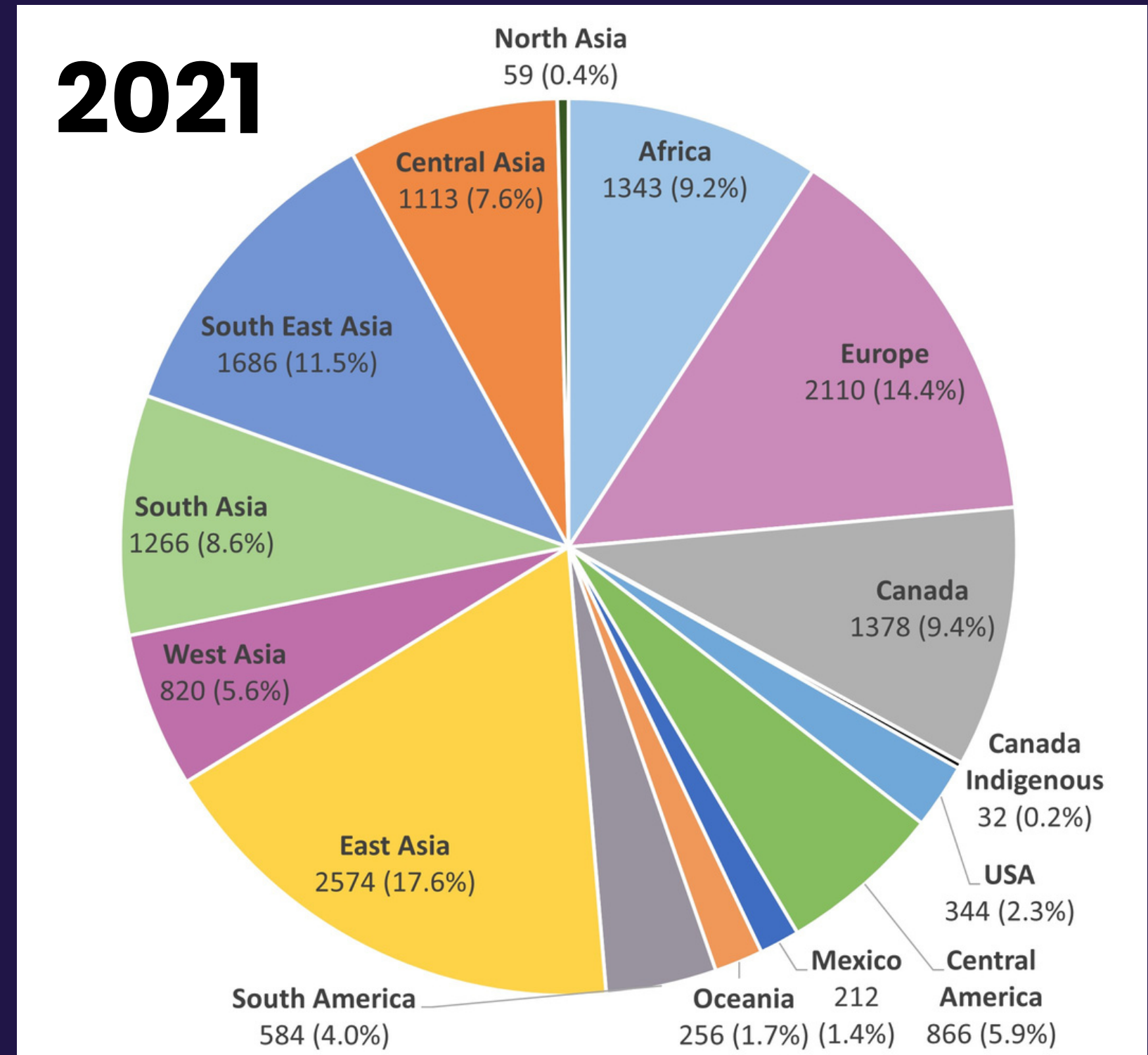


Photos, top and bottom: Installation view of Simone Elizabeth Saunders: *u.n.i.t.y.*;  
Installation view of Cɔᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭᑭ *Double Vision: Jessie Oonark, Janet Kigusiug, and  
Victoria Mamnguqsualuk*, both images by Darren Rigo



# Scope of the Collection

- 15,000+ belongings
- Over 200 global regions represented
- Collection available 24/7 through our digitized collection online





# Re-Examining Collecting

**2019-2020**

Socio-political circumstances +  
emerging new audiences prompt  
re-examination of collecting  
practices

**2018**

Collecting moratorium instituted

Work begins on Collections  
Development Plan

**2020**

Establishment of EDI Task Force and EDI Staff  
Working Group

Staff and Collections & Acquisition  
Committee identify need to move forward  
and adapt practices through the lens of EDI





# Re-Examining Collecting, cont.

**2021**

Research and interviews with  
committee members

Funds built into operating budget to  
start consultations and interviews

**2022**

Focus groups lead to recommendations  
for collections management

Drafting new collections management  
policies

**2021**

EDI Plan published, Nov. 2021

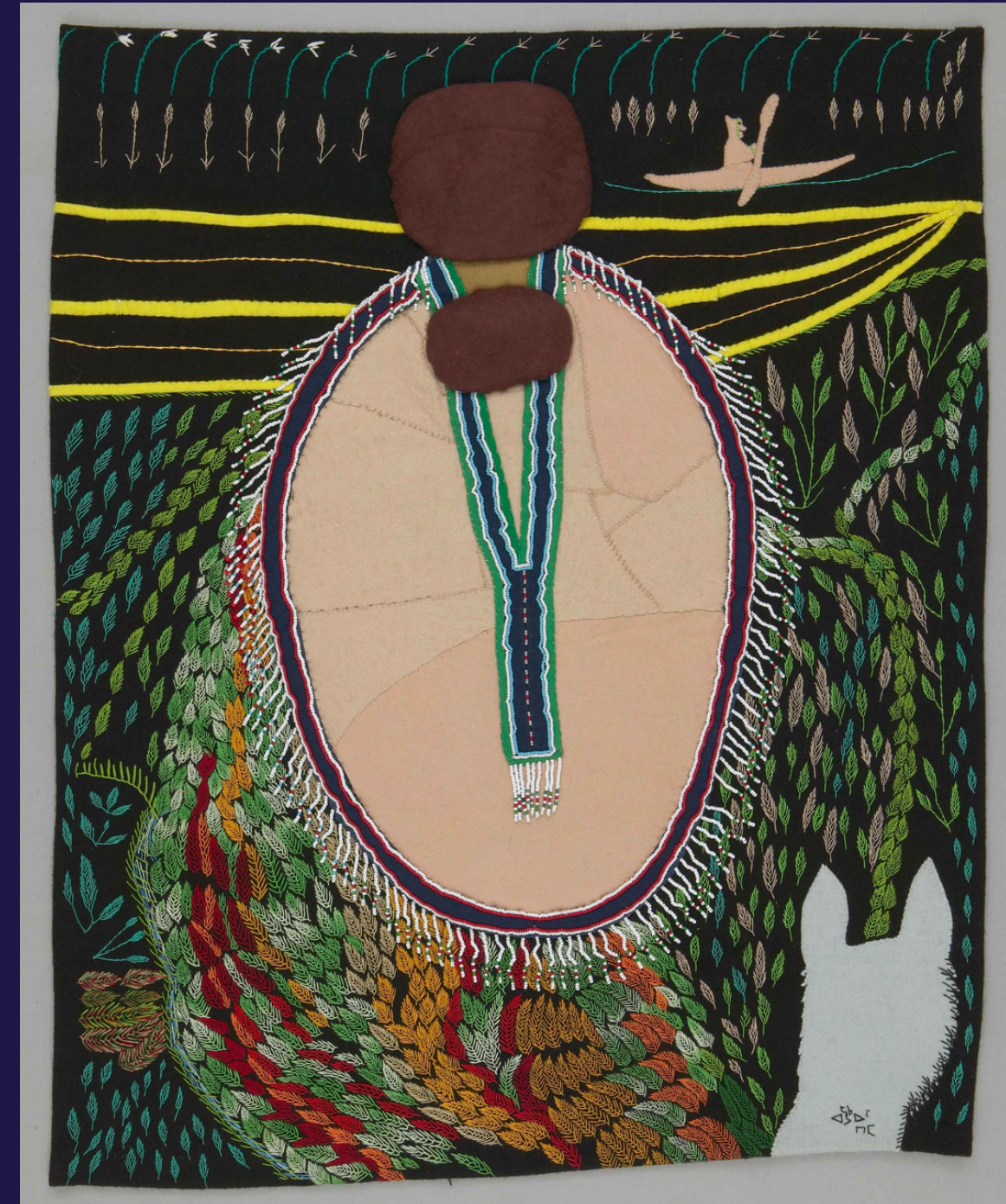
\$2,500 awarded through OTF Building  
Healthy Communities Fund

Application to Elizabeth L. Gordon Arts  
Program



# Amplifying the Collection

- increase the impact of the permanent collection
- Seek funding for the development of Collection Development Strategic Plan
- Work with Dr. Krmpotich to create and implement 5-year strategic plan for development of the Museum's permanent collection
- Establish new models for growth, acquisition, exhibition, and interpretation



Janet Anautilik Nungnik, *Waiting for Husband*, art hanging, Baker Lake, Nunavut, 1992, felted and appliquéd wool, glass beads, embroidered. Gift of Enid Rae MacLachlan. T96.0059.



# Focus Groups

- January – February 2022
- 28 participants + 3 individual participants from across Canada and US
- Criteria:
  - connection to and experience with museum collections and collections management
  - connection to and experience working with textiles
  - connection to and experience with enacting EDI practices.



Panel, China, 1880–1930, embroidered, couched and brocaded silk, metal thread, silk floss. Gift of Fred Braid. T88.0220.



# Focus Groups, cont.

## How can the Museum...

...create a welcoming environment for individuals and groups working with the collections?

...convey respect in the language it uses for collections?

...adopt EDI-informed policies and practices for collections development and care?



# Collections Development

- Scope, size, and stewardship of the collection
- Strategies for intentional acquisitions, deaccessioning, repatriation, long-term loans and/or co-stewardship
- Active vs. passive collecting
- Prioritize engagement with communities and Museum's visitors



Cushion, Canada, Haudenosaunee, plain woven; beaded, stuffed, c. 1900. Gift of Regina Foliot. T2018.1.15.



# Collections Access

- Foster an “active collection” with opportunities for members of equity-deserving/equity-seeking groups to interact with the collection
- Position the collection as a resource for makers and artists developing their skills, techniques, designs
- Create welcoming, supportive collections experiences for BIPOC individuals visiting collections in storage
- Reduce barriers that prevent, or negatively impact, BIPOC interactions with collections



Hair ornament, Northern Afghanistan, 1930–1950, silk, cotton, glass beads, perle de verre, plastic beads, metal thread; plain woven wrapped, tasseled, hand-sewn, beaded. Gift of Max Allen. T2009.1.50.



# Collections Care + Presentation

- Collections-related concerns intersect with a wide-range of museum operations and contribute to EDI work
- Adopt emergent language that acknowledges on-going connections between communities, cultures and material culture
  - ex: transition from "artifact" to "belonging"
- Caring for collections entails caring for the individuals, families and cultures connected to them
- Prioritize the preservation of skills, knowledge, intangible heritage and language, alongside cultural belongings



Loom tool, Mindanao, Philippines, 1930–1970, bamboo.  
Gift of Dale Mearns. T90.0222b.





Yardage (R to L: full view and detail), *Gaspé*, design by Thor Hansen (1903–1974), Canada, 1970s, twill woven and printed. Gift of Libby Toews. T2012.26.2.

# Putting Recommendations into Action:

What steps can we take to  
ensure the Museum's  
collection management  
activities reflect EDI goals  
and principles?



# Re-shaping Policies

## PHASE 1

Read and review existing policies to find areas for improvement to support EDI goals and principles

## PHASE 2

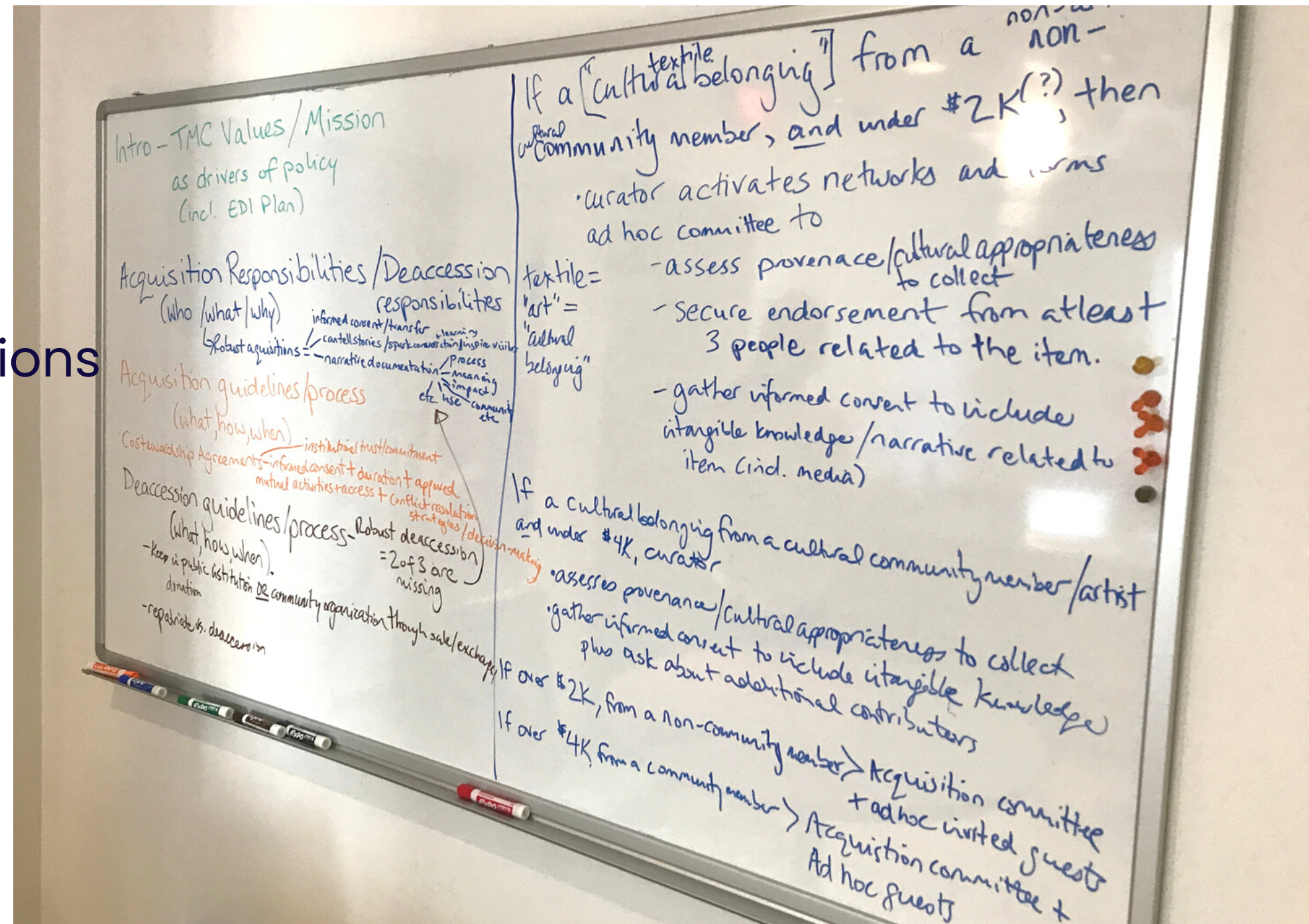
Review collections management policies of peer institutions to see how they address collections, access, and EDI

## PHASE 3

Draft new Collections Management policies to support EDI goals and principles

# A few challenges...

- Policy vs. practice
- A holistic approach to collections management
- What is the role of the Collections and Acquisitions policy?



Back to the whiteboard: a glimpse into a brainstorm session, working through Collections Management policy



# Next Steps:

- Finalize policies
- Present to Board and staff; publish policies online for transparency
- Continue putting recommendations in action

RIGHT: Installation view of ᑕᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ *Double Vision: Jessie Oonark, Janet Kigusiuq, and Victoria Mamnguqsualuk*. LEFT: ᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦᑲᑦ Jessie Oonark (1906 – 1985), Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake), *Untitled*, c. 1972–1973; wool felt on wool duffel; 129.5 x 85cm. Government of Nunavut Fine Art Collection. On long-term loan to the Winnipeg Art Gallery, 2.76.2. Both photos by Darren Rigo.







# Any questions? Let's discuss!

Plant fibre mat (detail), Philippines, Mindanao area, Zamboanga Peninsula - Basilan, 1975-1980, plaited and dyed leaf fibre. Gift of Simon Waegemaekers. T82.0015.