

Recommendations for Re-opening Your Museum

The province has said that certain business can open as early as May 4 – providing they follow provincial guidelines. [This includes museums, galleries and libraries.](#)

Take a deep breath, don't panic, you do not have to open that early. YOU HAVE TO BE ABLE TO OPEN SAFELY! You'll want to be able to prepare your space and your staff, (paid or volunteer) for what opening might entail. And you are going to need time to source supplies for your staff, possibly for your visitors, for cleaning, for signage, for physical distancing.

Below, you'll see the guidelines the province has provided for museums to reopen. After that, we'll provide some other things to think about, many of which are unique to museums. There are also lots of good suggestions in Jane Dalley's Conservator Hack (below).

Don't forget, we're all in this together. The AMM office will share as much as we can, but YOU are the Association of Manitoba Museums. So, let's start a conversation. Do you have ideas on how to time visitors to control numbers? Are you great at training staff? What are your go-to ideas? Do you have a line on suppliers of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or hand sanitizer? What are your cleaning tips? Or? Share your ideas with your fellow association members.

In the spirit of sharing, here is a draft re-open plan made by one of our members. Feel free to use it as a guideline or template for your re-opening plans.

How can you share? Send an email to the AMM at the address below, or leave a phone message at the office, and we'll share with others. Or you can use social media. Tweet and tag us @MuseumsManitoba and use the hashtag #MBMuseumsReopen. Post it on our [Facebook](#) page using the same hashtags. Or post it on Instagram and tag us at associationofmanitobamuseums and use the same hashtag #MBMuseumsReopen.

We've made a [special page](#) on our website. Send us the info when you are planning to be, or are, open and we'll share. Don't forget to log on to your membership page and change your status when you reopen.

Here is the information from the province:

MUSEUMS, GALLERIES AND LIBRARIES

Effective May 4, museums, galleries and libraries may reopen if the organization can maintain an occupancy level to allow staff and customers to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres, except for brief exchanges. All organizations will be required to limit occupancy to 50 per cent of normal business levels or one person per 10 square metres, whichever is lower. These requirements will be enforceable under public health orders.

Guidelines:

- High-touch displays must remain closed.
- Online ticket sales are used where possible.
- Staff and patrons use the self-screening tool before attending. <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/>
- Employees must stay home if ill with COVID-19 symptoms.
- Organizations must post external signs indicating COVID-19 physical distancing protocols.
- Staff are given information about physical distancing and floor markings are installed where service is offered or lines form.
- Entry into venues including lines are regulated to prevent congestion.
- Organizations must maintain a single point of entry.
- Hand sanitizer must be available at entrances and exits for public and staff use.
- Washrooms must have frequent sanitization and a regime for business sanitization is in place.
- Both staff and patrons may wear non-medical masks.
- Cashless or no-contact payment be used to the greatest extent possible.
- Sites can use outdoor space to allow for physical distancing.
- Sites may adjust to allow for self-guided tours or app-based self-guided tours instead of using shared headsets or live guides.

AMM GUIDELINES

1. Museums will adhere to all recommendations and guidelines issued by government authorities.
2. The needs and requirements of small museums are going to be different from those of the larger institutions.
3. Museums in general will have extra considerations that other organizations will not have.

Where you see the terms “staff” or “employee” that includes all paid, or non-paid, volunteer staff. Please read all the way through. If you have any questions, please contact us (contact info below).

If it makes it easier to visualize – 2 metres is just over 6 feet, and 10 square metres is just over 100 square feet (107.639 to be exact). In other words about the size of a 10 ft. by 10 ft. room. So you’ll need to know how big your building, or public space is, and plan accordingly.

In addition to the recommendations from the province, here are some other possible safety protocols to implement:

- Signage
 - telling people not to touch, especially hard-to-clean surfaces
 - Asking people to self-distance, including possible floor signs.
 - Advising people who are sick and/or symptomatic to not enter premises.
- Having extra staff on to make sure visitors aren’t touching hard-to clean surfaces.
- Make sure there are washing facilities available for staff and visitors
- Provide disinfectants for staff
- Audio and other guides not handed out unless there is a way to thoroughly disinfect them
- Special hours or time slots for vulnerable visitors
- Masks available to all staff.
- Masks on request for visitors
- Stepped up/more frequent cleaning regimens
- Perhaps some parts of the museum might be closed to visitors due to the difficult nature of cleaning
- Plexi shields (only a possibility for very few that have an actual ticket booth)

Museums, because of their collections, and sometimes their buildings, have special needs. Artifacts can’t be cleaned like modern surfaces without potentially damaging the artifact. Historic buildings might also have surfaces that cannot be easily disinfected. The Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI) has issued some guidelines about [Caring for Heritage Collections during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

Over two-thirds of Manitoba museums are run solely by volunteers. ALL Manitoba museums rely very heavily on volunteer labour to open and operate their museums, especially with regard to visitor services. A lot of these volunteers typically fall into one of the higher risk groups – older adults. Many of these volunteers will not be willing or able to work at the museum. Perhaps your organization can hire a student. If you haven’t already applied for, or were successful in obtaining, or if you want more students, the Province recently announced its [Summer Student Recovery Plan](#) which provides a \$7:00 an hour subsidy.

Museum visitors fall into three broad categories: School groups, organized tours, and individual or small group walk-ups.

School groups probably won’t start up until at least the fall, if not later. School groups will present challenges with regards to group size, physical distancing, and not-touching protocols.

Museums might have to hold off from school groups until much later. They should limit the size of the groups according to recommended protocols. The schools should implement extra supervisors/chaperones and the museums might want to have extra staffing available to work with and supervise the groups.

Organized groups should be limited in size according to recommended protocols (currently 10, and don’t forget the 2 metre and 10 sq. metre rules) and the museums should probably have extra staffing available to work with and supervise the groups.

Museums will need to find a way to control walk-up traffic so they control the number of people accessing their facilities. One way is to use a pre-paid or pre-registered ticket system, possibly timed. ([Eventbrite](#) is one such program that allows people to register and it doesn’t cost the

organization providing they are not accepting payment on the system.) Individuals would pre-buy, or pre-register, and either print their ticket or have it on a smart phone, where it could be scanned by the museum. Small institutions will not have scanning equipment, and it is not worthwhile for them to purchase it, but they can read the phone or printed ticket.

In small institutions, people could make an appointment by phone or email, or the museum could control access at the door, or at the site entrance. In one example I've already seen, an historic house museum has determined the number of visitors they can accommodate on each floor, according to the province's mandate. They are allowing that number of people to start every half hour, figuring those people will then be on the next floor when a second group starts.

Finding supplies will be one of your biggest challenges. As well as the supermarkets, drugstores, and chain stores, don't forget farm supply stores and hardware stores. Many museums, either by themselves, or through their municipality should be able to access wholesales as well. We're doing our best to compile a list of possible suppliers and will share it in our Messenger and our website.

Contact your municipality. They might have supplies, you might be able to order through them, or they might have ideas where you can order. A number of Hutterite colonies are making reusable masks for various groups; they might be able to make some for you. Is a local seamstress or service group making masks? Check out sites like [Etsy](#), they have many options, at various price points. Get your own volunteers involved in making masks if they have that skill set.

One of the guidelines from the province says to take non-contact payments wherever possible. This might be a problem for some of our museums. If you don't already take non-cash payments, look into using a program like [Square](#). Unfortunately this solution only works if you have good cell reception and/or WIFI. You order a small device (for free) that plugs into a smartphone and you can accept credit cards for a reasonable fee. You can also buy a reader for about \$60 that will allow you to take debit cards as well. It too is "connected" to a designated smart phone. But be aware Square works better with WIFI, and the Debit card reader ONLY works with WIFI.

The AMM Guidelines are a work in practice. Send us your comments and ideas. We'll continue to refine these guidelines as new knowledge is gained. Till then stay safe and stay connected.

How to contact us

Email	newsletter@museumsmanitoba.com
Phone	204-947-1782 (message only)
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/Museums.Manitoba/
Twitter	@MuseumsManitoba
Instagram	associationofmanitobamuseums
Hashtag	#MBMuseumsReopen

Conservator Hack for April 30, 2020

Jane Dalley, CSP Conservator

I hope that everyone is staying safe and keeping healthy in these difficult times. There are discussions on return to normal but it is quite possible that a full return to normal will not be possible until a vaccine is available, currently estimated at 12-18 months. This means that we are looking at several stages of progressively relaxed restrictions, based on the incidence and frequency of reported cases. Any plans made for recovery should take this into account.

Many of you are already working together to develop procedures for the return to normal. Questions to ask yourself could include whether to open all facilities, allow all previous activities, and adjust hours and days of opening. The same staff and volunteers may not be available. Extra procedures may be required, such as phasing in increases in the number of visitors per tour, restricting visitor interaction with artifacts (e.g. no touching), and providing sanitization and PPE for visitors and staff. If you plan to introduce a new method of visitor experience, test it out first using staff/volunteers so you can work the bugs out before the public arrives!

Suggestions for mitigating the effects of the pandemic on museums have already been provided by the [Alberta Museums Association](#) and the [Canadian Conservation Institute](#). Here are a few more suggestions to assist you in doing this. Please contact me directly if you have specific questions or would like any assistance.

Do you need a framework to help organize your plan? Continuity Innovations is offering a free downloadable plan to facilitate your workflow and resources:

<https://continuityinnovations.com/pandemicplanningtool/>. Although it is called a **Pandemic Response Plan**, it is suitable for organizing critical functions, key staff, resources and action items for all types of disaster events.

The document [COVID-19 Recovery: Preparing Your Organization and Volunteer Program](#) by Galaxy Digital is an excellent resource that covers the different steps that a non-profit, volunteer-supported organization needs to take in order to return to operational status following the Pandemic. There are sections on financial recovery, re-engaging volunteers and logistics.

Dexibit sells software for visitor analytics that has an excellent COVID-19 information section offering free webcasts, downloads and resources. In particular, they are offering a free download of a Scenario Simulation that aligns visitor prediction, costs and operations to come up with best and worst case situations: <https://dexibit.com/home/tour/tour-simulation/>

If your museum is closed, are you interested in a cellphone/tablet app that could provide a historic walking tour of your site, town or city, thereby combining virtual engagement and social distancing? Canadian company [On This Spot](#) combines modern and historical photographs with a storyline to create self-guided historic walking tours for visitors. Content is accessible from anywhere, so visitors can take virtual walking tours of your town or site without leaving home.

You may need to have maintenance technicians come in to service HVAC equipment, plumbing systems, etc. Larger museums may want to obtain confirmation that staff have not been ill or recently exposed to infection. Let maintenance technicians know in advance if you will provide PPE and hand sanitizer, or if they must bring their own.

Drains in buildings that are no longer in regular use may run dry. Ask staff/volunteers to check and flush the toilets and run the taps during their regular weekly or daily visits. Since unused buildings can experience an increase in pest activity, ask staff/volunteers to check the bathrooms for insect activity. Remove all foodstuffs and snacks from the building or store them in securely closed, hard-bodied containers. The CSP can provide sticky pest traps for any museum that wants to increase monitoring.

Are you in need of a pleasant, museum-related diversion? The online educational provider EdX is currently offering a free course that will help you “gain an understanding of history, museum studies, and curation by looking at, organizing, and interpreting art, artifacts, scientific curiosities, and the stuff of everyday life”: [Tangible Things: Discovering History Through Artworks, Artifacts, Scientific Specimens, and the Stuff Around You](#)