



NOVA SCOTIA
MUSEUM
THE FAMILY *of* PROVINCIAL MUSEUMS

Digital Content Guidelines

May 25, 2026

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Nova Scotia Museum

Digital Content Guidelines

These guidelines are a comprehensive resource for all staff involved in creating, publishing, and managing digital content for the Nova Scotia Museum's websites and social media channels.

Our aim is to ensure that all digital communication is consistent, engaging, accessible, and accurately reflects the Museum's mission and values.

The Purpose of the Nova Scotia Museum Websites

Our museum websites are the digital front doors to the Nova Scotia Museum family of 16 sites. They are designed to welcome the public, share accurate and engaging information, and reflect the professionalism, credibility and care of our institutions.

The websites serve a different purpose than our social media channels:

- **Websites are evergreen** - They provide reliable, long-lasting information about our museums, such as visiting hours, exhibits, research, stories, and events.
- **Social media is timely** - It's the place for reminders, quick updates, behind-the-scenes stories, and temporary announcements.

By keeping this balance, we ensure that our websites remain clean, accessible, and easy to use for visitors. When someone comes to a museum website, they should quickly find what they need to plan a visit, learn more about our work, or discover opportunities like events and job postings.

Each museum's website is part of the larger Nova Scotia Museum family. Collectively, they tell our communities' extraordinary stories. Together, our sites show that we are trusted stewards of our culture history, our natural history, and our heritage - and that our museums are welcoming places for all.



Our Content Strategy

Our content strategy is designed to share the province's stories through engaging and accessible content for our diverse audiences, including families, locals, and tourists. Our content should be relevant, informative, and inspiring. We focus on storytelling to bring our natural and cultural history, and collections to life and prioritize accessibility for all audiences. We also aim to showcase the behind-the-scenes work of our staff and transport our audience to our 16 sites.

General Content Principles

When creating content for our website and social media, remember these core principles. Every submission must be accurate, relevant, and engaging to our audience, while also being accessible and consistent with our brand. Use the power of storytelling to connect with visitors. Please ensure that all text and images are original or properly sourced and with all necessary approvals. A reminder: do not generate copy or images using AI.

Using Generative AI

We do not use AI to create content or for translation. Generative AI tools are to be used for AI-assisted brainstorming, planning, scheduling, and accessibility, and not a final product. When used responsibly, these tools can help streamline workflows and spark creativity. However, all AI-generated content must be treated as a draft and not a final product.

- **AI is a tool for efficiency and creativity, not a replacement for humans:** The core principle is to use generative AI for tasks like brainstorming, planning, and scheduling. It should enhance the work of museum staff, not replace their human expertise, curation, and storytelling.
- **Transparency is key:** Any use of AI in content creation must be disclosed. Content must be fact-checked and reflect the museum’s brand voice. The museum will not publish content created solely by AI, and will use human translators over AI for translation to ensure accuracy, cultural nuance, and community trust.
- **Validate and Verify:** Always treat the output from Public GenAI tools as a suggestion and never as an authoritative source. AI does not replace comprehensive research or expert advice.

“Entering information into a Public GenAI tool is the same as sharing it publicly, given the uncertainty surrounding the retention or further disclosure of data when using these tools. This includes uncertainty regarding where it could be stored, who could have access to it, and how it could be further shared and used. Inputting any sensitive, confidential, or personal information into a Public GenAI tool could result in a breach of data protection or privacy obligations... When using output from Public GenAI, the user assumes responsibility for the validity and accuracy of the generated information. Output generated by Public GenAI systems may not refer to original sources and can be misinformed or biased even when presented in a confident way. For this reason, generated output must be considered incorrect until it is validated and cross-referenced against an authoritative source.”

- Nova Scotia Government Public Generative AI Acceptable Use Guidelines, 2025, 2

Web Content Guidelines

The museum website is our primary hub for in-depth information and serves as the digital front door to the Nova Scotia Museum. They are designed to be an accessible, informative resource that inspires visitors to engage with our museums, share stories, and can encourage in-person visits.

Roles & Responsibilities

- Website Manager (Online Marketing Officer):**
- Sole administrator for all 17 websites.
 - Responsible for design consistency, accessibility, and final approval of content.
-

- Staff Contributors:**
- Provide stories, event details, job postings, and other relevant content in the correct format.
 - Ensure information is accurate, complete, and submitted by deadlines.

Web Content Submission and Publication

- **Content Submission:** All staff members who wish to have content published on the websites (including events, job descriptions, and stories) must submit it to the Online Marketing Officer for review.
- **Content Publication:** Only the Online Marketing Officer has the final authority to publish content to the websites. This process ensures consistency, quality control, and a unified voice across all 17 websites.

Guidelines for Submitting Content

Events: Events are a primary reason visitors come to our websites.

- **Title:** Use a clear and descriptive title.
- **Description:** Write a short, engaging summary, followed by a more detailed description. Include what a visitor will experience, who the event is for, and what they need to bring.
- **Details:** Include the full date (e.g., Saturday, October 26, 2025) and start and end times (e.g., 10:00am to 2:00pm). Clearly state the cost and location.
- **Event Images:** Every event must have an image, not a graphic. If the image provided does not meet our NSM quality and branding criteria, a universal placeholder image will be used (this is not ideal).

Guidelines for Writing Event Descriptions

Essential Elements of an Event Description:

- **Compelling Title:**
 - » Use strong, active verbs and keywords related to the event.
 - » Keep it concise and easy to scan.
 - » Example: “Dino Dash: A Prehistoric Adventure for the Whole Family”

- **Clear Date and Time:**
 - » Use upper case for months (January, February)
 - » If only using month and year, don’t use a comma
 - » When space is an issue (tables, publication titles, etc.) you can use truncated months (Jan, Feb, Mar)
 - » Use “to” in date ranges instead of a dash or hyphen (January to March 2016). “To” is quicker to read than a dash, and it’s easier for screen readers
 - » Always explain what a date range represents
 - » When referring to “today” make sure you include the date as well (“Today at the museum (14 June 2026) that...”)

 - » Don’t use ordinal numbers (1st, 3rd, etc.)
 - » Use “to” in time ranges, not hyphens, en rules or em dashes: 10am to 11am
 - » Use lowercase without periods for “am” and “pm”
 - » Show time using a 12-hour clock: 5:30pm not 17:30hrs
 - » Use midnight, not 00:00
 - » 6 hours 30 minutes

- **Informative Description:**
 - » Highlight the main attraction or activity.
 - » Use vivid language to paint a picture of the experience.
 - » Emphasize family-friendly aspects and benefits.
 - » Include essential details like age appropriateness, ticket information, or any special requirements.
 - » Example: “Join us for an afternoon of history and learning. Explore the museum and discover the story of the house and its gardens. Afterwards, unwind in the gardens with a cold lemonade, a good book, or a sketchpad. The Victorian Games will be out for the young and the young at heart to try!”

- **Accurate Location:**
 - » Clearly state the event location.
 - » If it differs from the museum’s main address, provide specific directions or a map link.
 - » Example: “Dino Dash takes place in the Museum’s outdoor courtyard.”

Additional Tips

- **Use strong visuals:** Accompany your description with a hero image.
- **Highlight unique selling points:** What sets your event apart from others?
- **Create a sense of urgency:** Encourage early registration or ticket purchases.
- **Proofread carefully:** Errors can deter potential attendees.

SAMPLE EVENT DESCRIPTION

Celebrate Acadian Heritage Day!

Date: Tuesday, 18 August 2026

Time: 9am to 5pm

Location: The Historic Acadian Village of Nova Scotia

Immerse yourself in Acadian culture at our National Acadian Day celebration! Enjoy a day filled with family fun, live music, delicious food, and hands-on crafts.

Discover the rich history and traditions of the Acadian people through exhibits and demonstrations. Let the kids unleash their creativity with arts and crafts activities while you savor the tasty flavors of traditional Acadian cuisine, including the beloved fricot.

Don't miss this opportunity to connect with your community and experience the heart of Acadian heritage. Admission is by donation.

All ages welcome!

Job Descriptions

Submit job postings in a clear, standardized format. Job descriptions can be submitted as a Word document, text, or an accessible PDF. However, only accessible PDFs or in-page content will be published to the website.

Provide the job title, a bulleted list of responsibilities and qualifications, application instructions, and a contact name and email for questions.

Include the application deadline.

Stories

Stories are long-form content that can be in different digital media formats. They are not tied to specific dates and times and are meant to provide an in-depth look at museum life, collections, and history. Examples of story types include:

- **Written Essays:** Submit a well-written, proofread essay. The content should be informative and engaging, with a clear narrative arc and images.
- **Images/Photo Essays:** Provide a series of high-resolution images with accompanying captions that tell a story.
- **Videos/Animations:** Submit video content in a standard digital format (e.g., MP4). Videos must be high-quality, and you must include a full transcript for accessibility.
- **Illustrations:** Submit high-resolution digital files of drawings or comics that tell a story related to the museum. Each frame should have a descriptive caption for accessibility.



Hero Images, The Face of Your Brand

A hero image is a large, high-quality image prominently displayed at the top of a webpage. It's often the first visual element a visitor encounters, making it a crucial component of a website's design and marketing strategy.

Benefits of a Hero Image

- **Grabs Attention:** A striking hero image immediately captures visitors' eyes, preventing them from scrolling past without engaging with the content.
- **Conveys Brand Identity:** It visually communicates the essence of your brand, its values, and its aesthetic.
- **Sets the Tone:** The image creates the first impression, influencing how visitors perceive your museum.
- **Supports Value Proposition:** A well-chosen hero image can effectively highlight your unique selling points or product benefits.
- **Encourages Engagement:** By incorporating compelling visuals and clear calls to action, hero images can drive user interaction.
- **Improves User Experience:** A visually appealing hero image enhances overall website aesthetics and user satisfaction.

In essence, a hero image is a powerful tool for making a strong first impression, building brand recognition, and guiding visitors towards desired actions.

Creating an Effective Hero Image

A great hero image is more than just a pretty picture; it's a strategic element that can significantly impact your website's success. Let's dive into some key considerations:

Understand Your Target Audience:

- **Who are you trying to reach?** Knowing your target audience helps you choose an image that resonates with their interests and values.
- **What emotions do you want to evoke?** Your image should align with the desired emotional response.

Reflect Your Brand Identity:

- **Consistency is key.** The hero image should complement your museum brand's, visual style and messaging.
- **Tell a story.** Choose an image that conveys your museum brand's values and personality.

Prioritize High-Quality Imagery:

- **Resolution matters.** A blurry or pixelated image will detract from the overall impact.
- **File size:** Ensure the image loads quickly to avoid frustrating users.

Test and Optimize:

- **A/B testing.** Experiment with different images to see which one performs best.
- **Track metrics.** Monitor clicks, conversions, and engagement to measure the effectiveness of your hero image.

Additional Tips

- **Use relevant imagery.** The image should be directly related to your product or service.
- **Keep it simple.** Avoid overcrowding the image with text or graphic elements.
- **Mobile optimization.** Ensure the image looks good on different screen sizes.

Homepage and Navigation

The homepage should not be used as a bulletin board for every update. It will feature a feed of stories and events relevant to each specific museum. For quick, day-to-day updates, direct visitors to our official social media channels, as the website will not serve as a substitute for this function.

Homepage Content Policy

- **Purpose:** Showcase the museum's identity, key offerings, and visual appeal.
- **Restrictions:** No temporary announcements, clutter, or job postings.
- **Exceptions:** Major exhibitions or campaigns (with approval).

Review & Updates

- Staff should check their museum's pages regularly for accuracy.
- Notify the Website Manager immediately if information is outdated.
- Content older than 12 months may be archived or removed unless still relevant.

Advisories and Urgent Updates

A new advisory function allows for urgent, time-sensitive information to be displayed on a museum's website via a prominent red bar at the top of the page. This function is reserved for critical, last-minute updates that impact a visitor's ability to attend.

- **Appropriate Content:** Use this feature for information such as:
 - » Emergency closures (e.g., power outages, building issues)
 - » Inclement weather or storm updates
 - » Trail closures
 - » Unforeseen changes
- **Submission Process:** Due to the urgent nature of advisories, please contact the Website Manager (Online Marketing Officer) directly via phone or email for immediate publication. Do not wait for a regular content submission cycle.

Social Media Guidelines

Our social media presence is a vital extension of the Museum, fostering connection and conversation. We leverage these platforms to inform, engage, expand our reach, and promote the Museum.

Social Media Management

Individual museums or designated staff within those museums are responsible for managing their own social media channels. The following guidelines are provided to ensure a consistent and professional approach across all platforms.

Social Media Channel Strategy

Our approach varies by platform to reach key audiences where they are most active.

- **Facebook:** Our primary hub for broad community engagement, ideal for news, events, and longer-form content.
- **Instagram:** Our visual storyteller, perfect for showcasing artifacts, behind-the-scenes moments, and short form video.
- **Threads:** A platform for real-time, text-heavy updates and conversations.
- **Bluesky:** A platform for real-time, text-heavy updates and conversations, preferred by curatorial staff and the academic community.
- **YouTube:** Our go-to for in-depth visual content like virtual tours and long form video.
- **TikTok:** The use of the TikTok application is banned on government-issued mobile devices in Nova Scotia.

Professional Use and Conduct

- **Permanent Record:** Remember that online comments and content are permanent and may be re-published in other media.
- **Legal Awareness:** Be aware that libel, defamation, copyright, and data protection laws apply to your online activity.
- **Official Capacity:** Do not disclose information, make commitments, or engage in activity on behalf of the Museum unless you are authorized to do so. This authority may be delegated or explicitly granted.
- **Personal Risk:** Be aware that participating online can attract media interest in you as an individual. Proceed with care whether you are participating in an official or personal capacity.
- **When in Doubt, Consult:** If you have any doubts about a post, consult your manager. If a member of the media contacts you, notify your manager so you can work with the communications team to determine the best course of action.
- **Be Prepared for Public Inquiries:** Social media activity can lead to an increase in public inquiries. Be prepared to answer questions about material that users share and ensure you are providing accurate information in your replies.

Please familiarize yourself with the following policies which apply when using NSM social media platforms:

- **Code of Conduct:**
 - » novascotia.ca/documents/code-conduct-employees-government-and-public-sector-bodies
- **Respectful Workplace Policy**
 - » support.novascotia.ca/services/psc-respectful-workplace-policy
- **Social Media Policy** (PDF 136 KB)
 - » novascotia.ca/treasuryboard/manuals/PDF/300/30609-03.pdf

Prohibited Content

- Do not post, transmit, or link to any inappropriate, profane, defamatory, obscene, indecent, or unlawful material or false statements.
- Do not defame, abuse, stalk, harass, or threaten others.
- Do not disclose confidential or internal matters that have not been approved for public disclosure, such as unpublished research, finances, or upcoming exhibition titles.

Copyright and Photography

- Always provide credits when required.
- Do not post photos of people who can be identified without a signed model release form.
- If you are posting a photo of a collection object, include the accession number to assist curatorial staff.
- Exercise caution with behind-the-scenes photography. Never share photos that include items not meant for public promotion or show secure areas.



Crisis Communication

In a crisis or emergency, a swift and coordinated response is critical. The following steps should be taken if a crisis (e.g., an incident, a negative news event, or a major visitor complaint) occurs.

- **Do Not Post:** Immediately stop all scheduled and new social media posts. The last thing you want is a cheerful, unrelated post appearing in the middle of a serious situation.
- **Alert Your Manager:** Contact your manager immediately to inform them of the situation. This is the first and most crucial step. Provide as much detail as you can.
- **Monitor the Conversation:** Begin monitoring social media for any public discussion about the crisis. Do not respond to any comments, questions, or posts at this time. Simply gather information.
- **Wait for Direction:** Wait for your manager and the communications team to provide a prepared statement or specific instructions on how to proceed. A unified, consistent message is essential.
- **Pre-Approved Messaging Only:** When you are given the go-ahead, only post and share content that has been pre-approved by the communications team. Do not deviate from the script or offer personal opinions.
- **Do Not Delete:** Unless a comment contains prohibited content (e.g., profanity, threats), do not delete any critical or negative comments. Deleting them can escalate the situation and make the museum appear less transparent.

Accessibility & Standards

- **Alt Text:** Provide meaningful descriptive alt text for all images for visually impaired users.
- **Text in Images:** Avoid using images with text, as screen readers cannot read this content.
- **Color Contrast:** Ensure sufficient contrast between text and background colors and avoid relying solely on color to convey information.
- **Captions/Transcripts:** Include captions and transcripts for all audio and video content.
- **Image Quality:** Use high-resolution, clear, and well-composed images and videos. Optimize images for fast loading speeds without compromising quality.

Platform-Specific Accessibility Features

Many social media platforms offer built-in accessibility features that should be used for every post.

- **Facebook & Instagram:**
 - » In-Platform Alt Text: Both platforms provide a specific space to add alt text. Use this to create a specific and descriptive alternative for your image.
 - » Captions for Reels and Stories: Use the caption feature for any video content to make it accessible to those who are Deaf or hard of hearing, and for users who watch with the sound off.
- **YouTube:**
 - » Automatic Captions: YouTube provides auto-generated captions for all videos. You must review and edit these captions to correct any errors, as they are not always accurate.
 - » Transcripts: Always upload a full transcript for your YouTube videos to provide an alternative for those who prefer to read.
- **BlueSky & Threads:**
 - » In-Platform Alt Text: Both platforms provide a specific space to add alt text. Use this to create a specific and descriptive alternative for your image.

Web Content Accessibility Checklist

This checklist is based on the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and should be used to review all content before submission.

Text and Readability

- **Clarity:** Is the language clear and easy to understand? Avoid complex jargon where possible.
- **Headings:** Are headings used correctly to create a logical hierarchy (H1, H2, H3, etc.)? Do not skip heading levels (e.g., jump from H2 to H4).
- **Lists:** Are bulleted and numbered lists used correctly to organize information?
- **Link Text:** Is every link's text descriptive of its destination? Avoid "click here," "read more," or "learn more."
- **Color Contrast:** Is there sufficient color contrast between text and its background? (A contrast checker tool can help with this).
- **Text Sizing:** Does the content remain readable and functional when the text size is increased to 200%?

Images and Visuals

- **Alt Text:** Does every image have descriptive alt text? Is the descriptive alt text useful?
- **Text in Images:** Is all important information conveyed in the body of the text, not just in an image?
- **Complex Images:** For complex images like charts or graphs, is there a long description provided either in the alt text or in the surrounding body text?
- **Flashing Content:** Does the content avoid flashing or blinking elements that could trigger seizures or cause discomfort?

Video and Audio

- **Captions:** Is there a synchronized, accurate text caption for all video content?
- **Transcripts:** Is a full text transcript provided for all audio and video content?
- **Audio Description:** For videos that have important visual information not available in the audio, is there a separate audio track or transcript that describes these visuals?
- **Audio Quality:** Is the audio clear and free of background noise or distortion?

Interactive Elements

- **Instructions:** Are clear instructions provided for how to complete forms?
- **Keyboard Navigation:** Can the entire form be completed and submitted using only a keyboard?

This checklist provides a strong foundation for your team to follow when creating content.

Social Media Accessibility Checklist

This checklist is designed to help social media managers ensure their content is accessible to a wide audience on platforms like Facebook and Instagram.

Text and Captions

- **Alt Text for Images:** Before posting, always add descriptive alt text to your images. Explain what the image shows, including important details like who is in the photo, what is happening, and the location.
- **Clear Language:** Write posts and captions using clear, concise language. Avoid complex jargon and acronyms.
- **CamelCase for Hashtags:** For multi-word hashtags, capitalize the first letter of each word (e.g., #NovaScotiaMuseums instead of #novascotiamuseums). This allows screen readers to read each word separately.
- **Emoji Use:** Use emojis sparingly and place them at the end of a sentence or post, not in the middle of a sentence. A screen reader will read the description of each emoji aloud.
- **Link Descriptions:** When sharing a link, use descriptive text instead of just pasting the URL. For example, “Read our latest blog post on the history of shipbuilding” is better than “Check out this link: <https://www.nsmuseum.com/blog...>”.

Visuals and Video

- **Captions/Subtitles:** All videos must have accurate captions or subtitles. Facebook and Instagram have built-in tools to generate these automatically, but you should always review and edit them for accuracy.
- **Audio Descriptions:** For videos where important visual information is not conveyed in the audio (e.g., a silent video of an artifact being handled), provide a text description in the post’s caption to explain the visual details.
- **Avoid Flashing Content:** Do not post videos or GIFs that contain rapid flashing lights or strobe effects, as these can be a health risk for individuals with photosensitive epilepsy.
- **Clear Visuals:** Ensure that videos and images are well-lit and not blurry. Text within images should be large, clear, and have high color contrast.

Engagement and Interaction

- **Accessible Live Streams:** If you do a live video, tell the audience that a full transcript will be available later. Ensure you provide it as soon as possible after the live event.
- **Reply Thoughtfully:** When responding to comments, don't just reply with an emoji. Write a full, descriptive response. This helps screen reader users follow the conversation.
- **Accessible Content in Stories:** When creating an Instagram or Facebook Story, use the platform's features to add a text overlay to explain the visual content for users who may not be able to see the image or video.

Platform-Specific Accessibility Features

Many social media platforms offer built-in accessibility features that should be used for every post.

- **Facebook & Instagram:**
 - » **In-Platform Alt Text:** Both platforms provide a specific space to add alt text. Use this to create a specific and descriptive alternative for your image.
 - » **Captions for Reels and Stories:** Use the caption feature for any video content to make it accessible to those who are Deaf or hard of hearing, and for users who watch with the sound off.
- **YouTube:**
 - » **Automatic Captions:** YouTube provides auto-generated captions for all videos. You must review and edit these captions to correct any errors, as they are not always accurate.
 - » **Transcripts:** Always upload a full transcript for your YouTube videos to provide an alternative for those who prefer to read.
- **BlueSky & Threads:**
 - » **In-Platform Alt Text:** Both platforms provide a specific space to add alt text. Use this to create a specific and descriptive alternative for your image.

QR codes

Using QR codes in social media graphics is generally not a good practice, especially from an accessibility standpoint.

Here's a breakdown of the key issues:

- **Accessibility:** QR codes are not accessible to users who are visually impaired or use screen readers. The code itself is a visual element that cannot be read aloud or described effectively by assistive technology.
- **Usability:** A user has to take a screenshot, open a QR reader app, and scan the image. This breaks the flow of a seamless user experience. It's much simpler to provide a direct link in the caption or the post itself.
- **Analytics:** It's difficult to track the performance and engagement of a QR code on a social media platform, whereas a direct link can be easily tracked and analyzed.
- **Audience:** A significant portion of your audience will be viewing content on their mobile devices, making it cumbersome to scan a QR code from the same screen.



Resources

- **Government of Nova Scotia's Web Strategy - Online Writing Guide V.2 (2016):** The Nova Scotia Museum is part of the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage. As such, the NSM follows the Government of Nova Scotia's Online Writing Guide.
 - » <https://ns-museums.cloud.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/2026-03/Online%20Writing%20Guide%20v2.pdf>
- **Tourism Nova Scotia Webinar Series:** Offers practical information to help you adapt to the evolving tourism environment.
 - » <https://tourismns.ca/tourism-business-tools-resources/tourism-nova-scotia-webinar-series>
- **BC Museums Association:** Features a collection of learning resources developed by - and for - their members.
 - » <https://museum.bc.ca/tools-and-resources/>
- **LinkedIn Learning:** Provides access to over 16,000 online courses, including content creation and social media marketing.
 - » <https://www.linkedin.com/learning-login/go/halifaxca>
- **HubSpot Academy:** The worldwide leader in free online training for inbound marketing and sales.
 - » <https://academy.hubspot.com/what-is-hubspot-academy>
- **Museum Learning Hub:** Offers resources and training programs on a range of topics for small museums.
 - » <https://museum-hub.org/>
- **Sprout Social:** Provides guides on social media for museums.
 - » <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-for-museums/>
- **MuseumNext:** A network for museum professionals with articles on various topics.
 - » <https://www.museumnext.com/articles/>
- **Creator Resources:** Check out guides from Instagram's Creator Lab, Meta Blueprint, and YouTube's Creator tips for advice on growing your channels.
- **Canva - Design School:** Learn how to design with Canva.
 - » <https://www.canva.com/design-school/>

Appendix A: Social Media Strategy & Operations

This document outlines the strategic objectives for the Nova Scotia Museum’s social media channels in 2026. This strategy applies to our central “parent” accounts: @novascotiamuseum on Instagram, Facebook, Threads, Bluesky, and our YouTube channel.

- **Parent Channels:** The central, corporate-level social media accounts for the Nova Scotia Museum family.
- **Individual Museum Channels:** The social media accounts managed by individual museum sites.

Goal

Our goal is to use the Nova Scotia Museum’s parent channels to motivate and encourage audiences to experience our sites, collections, and content. We will tell the story of Nova Scotia by directing visitors to our individual museum websites and social media channels, where each site tells an important part of the story.

Where We’re Going

In 2026, our focus is on building a robust, long-term content plan that strengthens our role as a community-building tool. We will work to help people understand what the Nova Scotia Museum is and navigate to our individual sites. We will achieve this through the following strategic objectives:

- **Objective 1: Establish a Unified Content Calendar.** Develop a shared content calendar and a clear communication channel for submissions. This will ensure all stakeholders are aligned and that our content is planned well in advance.
- **Objective 2: Launch a Proactive Storytelling Strategy.** Go beyond reactive, day-to-day posts to tell compelling, long-term stories that engage audiences and promote our sites.
- **Objective 3: Implement Community Management and Crisis Protocols.** Establish clear policies for community engagement and a formal process for responding to emergencies and negative feedback.
- **Objective 4: Develop an Advertising Strategy.** Create and distribute comprehensive social media advertising guidelines that include standards for content, channels, and a clear approval process.
- **Objective 5: Empower Individual Museum Channels.** Guide all individual museum channels by establishing shared standards and processes. We will provide consistent visual templates and best practices for content creation while respecting each site’s unique identity.
- **Objective 6: Define Analytics and Reporting.** Establish a consistent process for tracking and analyzing key social media metrics, ensuring we can measure our progress toward our strategic goals.

Protocol for Handling Negative Feedback Online

It's an undeniable truth of being online: Negative feedback happens. No matter how careful, inclusive, or engaging your content is, at some point, you will encounter criticism, complaints, or even outright negativity on your social media channels. It's an inevitable part of operating in a public, interactive digital space.

This can feel disheartening, or even alarming, especially for institutions like museums that value trust and positive public perception. However, it's crucial to shift our perspective:

- **Don't see it as a failure, see it as a signal.** Negative comments can highlight areas for improvement, reveal misunderstandings, or even just be a sign that people care enough to voice an opinion.
- **It's an opportunity, not just a problem.** How your museum responds to negative feedback can actually strengthen your reputation and build greater trust with your audience. A well-handled complaint can turn a critic into a supporter or at least demonstrate your professionalism and commitment to listening.

Since we know negative feedback is inevitable, the best defense is a good offense, meaning, a clear, pre-defined protocol for how your museum will handle it. This takes the guesswork and panic out of the moment.

In a crisis or emergency, contact your manager for assistance.

Create a protocol

A solid protocol answers three critical questions:

1. Who Responds?

- » Is it one dedicated person, like a social media manager?
- » Is it a small team?
- » Do certain types of comments (e.g., about collections, visitor services) get escalated to specific departments or individuals?

Clearly define roles and responsibilities, so no comment is missed, and no one is left wondering whose job it is.

2. When Do We Respond?

- » Establish clear response time expectations. Is it within an hour, within 24 hours, or by the next business day?
- » Promptness is often appreciated, but rushing can lead to mistakes. It's about being timely, not instantaneous, especially for complex issues.
- » Consider your museum's capacity and set realistic goals.

3. How Do We Respond?

This is about your communication guidelines. What's your museum's overall tone? Empathetic? Factual? Formal?

- » Do you have pre-approved responses or templates for common issues? (e.g., 'Thank you for your feedback, we're looking into this.')
- » When do you take a conversation offline (e.g., asking them to email a specific address)?
- » When is it appropriate to hide or delete comments? This needs to be clearly defined and consistent.

Having this protocol in place means your team can react calmly and consistently, ensuring every interaction reflects positively on your museum, even in challenging situations.

Responding with Empathy and Professionalism

Once you have your protocol in place, the 'how' of responding becomes key. It's not just about what you say, but how you say it. Our goal is always to respond with empathy and professionalism.

Think of every public comment as a conversation happening in your museum's lobby. You wouldn't ignore someone or argue with them, right? The same applies online.

- **Lead with Empathy:** Start by acknowledging their feelings or concerns. Phrases like:
 - » 'We understand your frustration...'
 - » 'We appreciate you bringing this to our attention...'
 - » 'We're sorry to hear you had this experience...'

This shows you're listening, even if you don't agree with every point.

- **Maintain a Professional Tone:** Keep your replies calm, respectful, and factual. Avoid getting defensive or emotional. Remember, your response is visible to everyone, not just the original commenter.
- **Use clear, concise language.**
- **Avoid jargon or overly formal language that might alienate users.**
- **Practice Active Listening (Digitally):**
 - » Read the comment carefully to understand the core issue. Don't jump to conclusions.
 - » If you need more information, politely ask for it.
 - » Focus on the specific problem, not on the tone of the comment.
- **Offer Solutions or Clarification:** If there's a misunderstanding, clarify it politely. If there's a legitimate issue, explain what steps you're taking or how they can find help.

By consistently responding with empathy and professionalism, you not only address the immediate comment but also reinforce your museum's commitment to its community, building trust and a positive online reputation.

Moderating Comments

This is often one of the trickiest parts of social media management: knowing when to moderate comments. We want to foster open dialogue, but we also have a responsibility to maintain a safe and respectful online environment for everyone.

The key is to have clear, publicly stated guidelines and boundaries for your social media channels. This helps distinguish between legitimate criticism and content that needs to be addressed or removed.

Here's how to think about it:

- **Legitimate Criticism (Respond, Don't Delete):** This is feedback that is critical but constructive, even if it's strongly worded. It might point out a real issue, a perceived problem with an exhibit, or a suggestion for improvement.
 - » ACTION: Respond professionally and empathetically, offer solutions, or take the conversation offline. Do not delete these comments, as it can appear you're silencing dissent and erode trust.
- **Spam & Off-Topic Content (Delete/Hide):** Comments that are clearly advertisements, irrelevant to your post, or repetitive junk.
 - » ACTION: These can typically be hidden or deleted without much consequence, as they don't contribute to genuine discussion.
- **Abusive, Hateful, or Threatening Content (Delete/Report):** This includes personal attacks, hate speech, discriminatory language, threats, harassment, or content that violates platform terms of service.
 - » ACTION: Delete immediately. Report to the platform if it's severe. This protects your community and maintains a safe space.

The Golden Rule

If you wouldn't allow it in your physical museum, you likely shouldn't allow it on your digital platforms. Having clear, consistent guidelines that are communicated to your audience helps manage expectations and empowers you to act decisively when necessary.

Appendix B: NSM Generative AI Guidelines

These guidelines outline the responsible exploration of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) for content creation on the websites and social media of our 16 museums.

Definitions

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** the ability of machines to perform tasks that are typically associated with human intelligence, such as learning and problem solving.
- **Generative AI (GenAI):** a subset of artificial intelligence where a system creates new content or data, such as text, images, video, audio, or code, in response to a prompt or question.

Goal

Our primary goal is to leverage AI as a brainstorming and planning tool to enhance the efficiency and creativity of our museum staff. AI will not replace human expertise or authorship in content development.

Transparency

We are committed to transparency with our audience. We will not publish content solely generated by AI. We will clearly disclose when AI tools assist with content creation, highlighting the human role in curation and storytelling.

Content Types

- **AI-Assisted Brainstorming:** We encourage staff to utilize AI tools for generating content ideas, outlines, and engaging titles. However, human curatorial and interpretive expertise must shape the final content.
- **AI for Planning & Scheduling:** Museums can explore AI to analyze past content performance and visitor demographics to create content calendars and optimize posting times.
- **AI for Accessibility:** AI-generated alternative text descriptions for images can improve accessibility for visually impaired visitors.

Brand Voice & Fact-Checking

Currently, we do not accept AI-generated content related to the museum's collections and mandates. However, content like event descriptions may be acceptable if generated by AI.

All content created with the assistance of AI must be thoroughly fact-checked by staff to maintain the Nova Scotia Museum's credibility and accuracy. All content must also reflect our friendly, playful, and interactive brand voice.

Attribution & Copyright

- We will only use images taken by our museum photographer, staff or those with explicit permission for use.
- We will continue our practice of crediting any outside sources used in content creation (e.g. Nova Scotia Archives).

Training & Monitoring

- We will provide basic training for museum staff to utilize AI tools effectively in content ideation and planning.
- We will monitor the performance of content (with and without AI assistance) to assess its impact on audience engagement and adjust strategies accordingly.

Translation

The Nova Scotia Museum will prioritize professional translators from the provincial government over generative AI for translations:

Accuracy and Nuance

- **Generative AI:** While AI translation is constantly improving, it can struggle with accuracy, especially for complex languages, historical terms, and cultural references. Museums deal with nuanced information that can be misinterpreted by AI, potentially misleading visitors.
- **Professional Translators:** Human translators understand the subtle differences in language and possess cultural expertise. They can ensure translations are accurate, capturing the intended meaning and tone of the original text.

Preserving Cultural Heritage

- **Generative AI:** AI might struggle with translating historical documents or artifacts within the museum's collection. Accuracy in conveying the cultural and historical context is crucial.
- **Professional Translators:** Human translators familiar with the province's cultural heritage can accurately translate historical materials and signage, ensuring visitors understand the stories and significance of the museum's collection.

Building Trust and Community

- **Generative AI:** Relying solely on AI could create a sense of detachment for visitors, especially those within the provincial community.
- **Professional Translators:** Utilizing translators from the provincial government demonstrates a commitment to fostering cultural understanding and inclusivity within the community the museum serves.

Government Resources

- **Provincial Translators:** Many provincial governments offer translation services. Museums can leverage these resources, potentially reducing translation costs compared to hiring private translators.

Collaboration and Expertise

- **Professional Translators:** Human translators can collaborate with museum staff, ensuring translations resonate with the museum's voice and effectively communicate the intended message.

Generative AI presents exciting possibilities to enhance museum content creation. However, we prioritize transparent, reliable, and authentic communication with our audience. These guidelines, in addition to the *Nova Scotia Government Public Generative AI Acceptable Use Guidelines*, ensure AI serves as a valuable tool while safeguarding the Nova Scotia Museum's brand trust and credibility.