

Museum Queeries and Curatorial Dreams

June 2-4, 2017

University of Winnipeg

Workshop Description

Museum Queeries is a new interdisciplinary, collaborative research project based at the University of Winnipeg (UWinnipeg) that involves academics, activists, curators, artists, community stakeholders, and students locally and internationally. As institutional spaces, museums are often closely linked to national identities and histories and also, tacitly, to heteronormative and cisnormative representations of the polity and public culture. Museum Queeries prioritizes Indigenous Two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, and queer (2S+LGBTQT) contributions and interventions into museums and museum studies as a means of addressing structural exclusions and opening new modes of productive inquiry and activism. The idea of "queering" the museum in this case is not only about addressing the museum's representation of gender and sexuality; it is also about challenging normative formations including white privilege, racism and settler colonialism, among other systems of oppression, as they operate alongside homophobia and transphobia. In other words, we use an intersectional approach to think through ways in which gender, sexuality, race, class, ability, religion, ethnicity, and national identities are inter-implicated in museums and in museumgoers' points of contact with museums.

The inaugural event of this project is a workshop on "Museum Queeries and Curatorial Dreaming" to be hosted at UWinnipeg in June 2017 to coincide with Winnipeg's Pride Week. It will be facilitated by our collaborator Dr. Shelley Ruth Butler (McGill), and will provide an opportunity for members of our Museum Queeries research network to connect in person for the first time as we hail from across Canada, the United States, and Australia. The overall goal of the proposed workshop is to connect members of our newly formed Museum Queeries research network, and translate specific objectives into tangible strategies for engaging museums on 2S+LGBTQT issues. The following key questions will frame this work:

- *How are museums implicated in the ongoing struggle for 2S+LGBTQT rights?
- *How have 2S+LGBTQT issues been integrated within the curatorial and programming mandates of museums?
- *What kinds of alliances might be formed at the nexus of queer and indigenous/decolonial activism in relation to museums?
- *What kinds of productive exchanges might occur at the intersection of queer and antiracist activism in the context of museums?
- *How might we, as academics, activists, curators, artists, community stakeholders, and students, work collaboratively with museums to (re)conceive of them as queer spaces?

The workshop also includes a field trip to the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR). The CMHR is a catalyst for Museum Queeries and an ideal research site given our proximity to the museum here in Winnipeg. Having already established a relationship to this museum through the work of UWinnipeg's Cultural Studies Research Group and Failler's SSHRC Partnership Development Grant project, CMHR staff have confirmed their participation. Our intent is thus not simply to critique museums, but rather to engage and potentially collaborate with them by proposing ways in which they might more effectively address 2S+LGBTQT issues.