



# THINKING through the MUSEUM

## *Re-thinking the Museum through Collaboration and Community-Based Curatorial Practices*

An invitational workshop

April 24-26, 2017

Halifax, Nova Scotia

This two-and-a-half day invitational workshop brings together scholars, artists, curators, and museum professionals to discuss how collaboration and community-based curatorial practices might help us re-think the capacity for museums to grapple with “difficult knowledge.” Educational theorists Alice Pitt and Deborah Britzman describe difficult knowledge as encounters with representations of historical traumas and/or their ongoing effects that move people out of their comfort zones into unfamiliar, sometimes painful experiences of learning. Working through these experiences are nonetheless worthwhile precisely for their potential to unsettle taken-for-granted and hegemonic interpretations of the past, making room for marginalized histories and new, nuanced approaches to understanding the world and our places within it. How might collaboration and community-based curatorial practices be uniquely suited to working through difficult knowledge? What might museums and their publics gain from engaging difficult knowledge through collaboration and community-based exhibitions?

Halifax, Nova Scotia, located on unceded Mi’kmaq territory, provides us a unique opportunity to explore these issues. Alongside visits to local museums, public artworks and walking tours featuring diverse histories of immigration, colonial settlement, and resistance, we invite multi-directional conversations that implicate these histories in one another, and in present-day relationships. We aim to learn about the ways collaborative and community-based curatorial practices inform and are informed by decolonizing efforts, anti-racist activism and refugee solidarities today. We are also particularly interested in how museums and local exhibits incorporate the voices of Black and Mi’kmaq communities, Syrian newcomers, LGBTQ and Two-Spirit people, and other historically marginalized groups.

In the most practical terms, the purpose of this workshop is fourfold: (1) to connect with local researchers, artists, curators and museum professionals in the Halifax area; (2) to learn from museums and exhibits that utilize collaborations and community-based curatorial practices; (3) to discuss strategies and tools for collaborating with museums and communities on difficult knowledge; and (4) to explore possibilities for future research partnerships.