



*Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion*¹

Oppression is woven throughout the history of the land now known as Concord. The colonists who lived here did so, in part, to escape the religious persecution they faced in England. They, in turn, oppressed the Indigenous communities who had lived in this area once called Musketaquid. A century and a half after colonization, the “shot heard round the world” was fired to oppose the oppression the heirs to Concord’s first colonial settlers experienced at the hands of King George and his Parliament. Yet while fighting a war for their own liberty, many revolutionary households were, incongruously, enslaving Africans. Although slavery was abolished in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1783, the debate concerning the abolition of slavery throughout the rest of the country would become one of the dominant issues that defined life in Concord in the 19th century. In more contemporary times, Concord continues to confront the mistreatment of marginalized groups in our midst and in our world. Our exhibitions and programming endeavor to unite us in terms of our shared history and inform debates over how, in the future, we can “build a more perfect union.”

The Concord Museum is committed to preserving the artifacts that recount all sides of this complex narrative and, through our exhibitions and programming, to sharing an inclusive story about our past and ongoing efforts to counter oppression. Those values are reflected in our commitment to building and sustaining a diverse and welcoming community, including addressing barriers to full inclusion of historically underrepresented groups. In that spirit, we are committed to recruiting and hiring a more diverse staff and diversifying the membership of our board and volunteer leadership. Recognizing that multiple voices and perspectives enrich our work, we embrace a broad definition of diversity and are dedicated to ensuring an environment where differences are valued and respected and where all members of our community are fully engaged participants in our mission. We commit to offering educational programs that shine a light on once-hidden histories and that serve a wide range of students, adults, and families, including those from ethnically and socioeconomically diverse communities. Our nation’s founding ideals of “liberty and justice for all” are represented eloquently by chapters in Concord’s history, but that history also includes moments when these ideals went

¹ The Museum chose the words “diversity, equity, access, and inclusion” purposely as they are in keeping with the standards and protocols established by the *American Alliance of Museums*, our accrediting body.

unachieved. As a community, we remain steadfast in our embrace of these ideals, which remain at the core of the Museum's mission.

This statement (and accompanying history and action plan) was adopted by the Concord Museum Board of Governors on December 8, 2021. The Board recognizes that this is just a first step but one that formally underscores our commitment to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion as a central part of our mission into the future.

Background and History

The Concord Museum intends to reassess its mission statement as part of a larger strategic planning effort. That said, our current mission reads:

The Concord Museum educates visitors of all ages about the history of Concord and its continuing influence on American political, literary and cultural life. The Museum's nationally significant collection serves as a catalyst for changing exhibitions, extended classroom learning, dynamic programs and publications relevant to an ever-changing world. Founded in 1886, the Museum is a center of cultural enjoyment for the region and a gateway to the town of Concord for visitors from around the world.

The Museum has just completed a strategic plan that envisioned a whole new museum experience which, before the pandemic, served approximately 50,000 visitors and 10,000 students and teachers each year. The Museum staff consists of 15 full-time staff members and approximately 30 part-time hourly educators and interpreters.

Recent Progress and Ongoing Efforts

The Concord Museum recently undertook a major redesign of its permanent galleries. Central to that effort was outreach to historians and activists whose work sheds new light on forgotten portions of this area's rich history, beginning with the Indigenous people who first lived and thrived in this region and continue to do so today.

Our land acknowledgment statement is displayed prominently in two places in our new permanent galleries and includes these words:

For over 12,000 years the land upon which the Concord Museum now rests has been inhabited and cared for by Indigenous people. The Museum acknowledges that the land we are on today is the original homelands of the Nipmuc, Massachusetts and Pawtucket tribal nations. We honor and respect the many diverse Indigenous people still connected to this land and we commit, through our exhibitions and programs, to working with scholars, tribal leaders, activists, and educators to re-examine this complex history.

In 2018, through a grant from the *Institute for Library and Museum Studies*, we began a focused process of reflecting on how to make the history we chronicle more accurate and inclusive. We engaged in a critical re-examination of the ways in which the Museum presents and represents non-Western cultures, including working with leaders of local tribal communities whose voices are featured prominently in our new *People of Musketaquid* gallery.

We also focused, as never before, on the roles women have played throughout Concord's history and the discrimination and mistreatment women have endured.

In terms of Concord's African and African American history, we have one new gallery that focuses specifically on issues of slavery and anti-slavery and two galleries that focus on both prominent and representative African American families who lived and worked in town. We also shine a spotlight on those individuals who were enslaved in Concord, and the topic of slavery is carefully woven throughout the galleries.

In the past few years, we have increased the number of self-identified Black, Indigenous, and Persons of Color in areas where they have historically been unrepresented, including on our Board of Governors and the Board of Trustees, and as members of our staff. All of our front-line staff who interact with the public and who provide interpretation of our galleries attend extensive training to be aware of unconscious bias and are educated in the appropriate use of language and terminology related to conveying this history. As part of the construction of our new Education Center and renovated permanent galleries, we have, as a community, addressed institutional issues such as accessibility for all visitors and making our "new museum experience" welcoming to all.

Over the last five years, the Museum's Education Department has reevaluated and overhauled all school programs to reflect the feedback from our Indigenous advisors. Working closely with our Concord Public School partner, we developed two new school programs to better interpret African American history in Concord. Concord second graders participate in a Museum program that focuses on 19th-century free African American families as part of their local history unit. A traveling trunk was developed with the Middle School team to highlight the anti-slavery movement, including African American abolitionists and slavery's legacy in the North.

We are addressing the need to build diversity in the museum profession through two new internships for undergraduate and graduate students. In the summer of 2021, we hired as our inaugural *Thomas Dugan Curatorial Intern*, in collaboration with the Robbins House, an undergraduate student from Brown University who self-identifies as Haitian-American. She managed a special initiative for the Robbins House and edited a new training guide for both the Museum and the Robbins House on Concord's African and African American history. Additionally, we hired a Nipmuc tribal member and UMass Boston graduate student to serve as our first *Shirley Blancke Indigenous History Intern* and to undertake the first phase in a multi-phase effort to inventory our Indigenous archaeological collection. Ideally, over time, and if

funding permits, we would like to convert these paid summer internships to one- or two-year grant-funded positions.

One of the initiatives that is most important to the Museum's mission and identity is its *Paul Revere's Ride* program, which provides free bus rides and field trips to students from underserved communities – especially from the Lowell Public Schools. At present, we work with all the third- and fifth-grade students in Lowell, but we have ambitions to expand the reach of this program.

We have also made a conscious effort to provide most of our family programs free of charge to encourage and support attendance by a wide range of individuals and communities, including those who might not otherwise visit.

We have worked hard to address past imbalances and will continue to do so, through trial and error, into the future. Most importantly we will continue to consult with others, listen to their concerns, and do our best to respond to them.

Action Plan

We recognize that while some progress has been made – it is not enough and there is much more that can be done. We fully expect our goals to change over time but will continue to follow best practices that we hope will help us to achieve the following commitments:

Governing Boards

We commit to ensuring that the Boards of Governors and Trustees are representative of our increasingly diverse community and that board-level discussions and debates are facilitated to ensure that a diversity of opinions are welcomed and respected. It will remain a top priority of the Nominating Committee to recruit diverse slates of candidates for the Board of Governors and Board of Trustees. At a minimum, each slate should include one person (and possibly more) who self-identifies as Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color who will bring a more diverse perspective to our deliberations.

Human Capital

We commit to making extensive efforts to recruit, hire, and sustain a more diverse staff in all areas of our work. Fundraising efforts will continue to support the *Thomas Dugan Curatorial Internship* and the *Shirley Blancke Indigenous History Internship* with hopes that those can become year-long positions. Senior leadership will also continue to create a positive and welcoming workplace that supports all staff and encourages a diversity of opinions.

Key Stakeholders

We commit to working collaboratively with key stakeholders, especially in the Indigenous and African American communities, locally, statewide, and nationally as well as scholars who focus on women's history to ensure that the history we chronicle is accurate and inclusive.

Exhibitions and Educational Programs

We commit to curating exhibitions that shine a light on voices often left in history's shadows and to develop programs for the public and schools that include speakers and family programs that celebrate and examine our diversity and relay untold stories from our shared history.

We commit to creating and providing inspiring educational programs that are inclusive and offer differing historical perspectives and points of view and that are accessible and affordable for all, including diverse and underserved communities. We commit to training our educators to encourage diverse ways to engage with the multitude of students who pass through our galleries, all with their own personal histories and learning styles.

Accessibility

We commit to providing equitable access to our Museum and to our programming, including through full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as ensuring that all visitors feel welcomed, respected, and well-treated.

Process

Our *Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Access, and Inclusion* was developed by the Museum's executive leadership with input from the staff as well as a working group of Governors. The working group also discussed best practices and its discussions were informed by the members' individual experiences working with other nonprofits, museums, and corporate entities.

We also benefited from the counsel of an experienced DEAI consultant, Cecile Shellman, who, among other qualifications, served on the *American Alliance of Museums' Working Group on Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion*. Ms. Shellman met with the Museum's Executive Director and its DEAI working group in the fall of 2021. She will continue to be a resource for the Museum on an as-needed basis.

Knowledge and Accountability

Responsibility for the enactment of these commitments rests squarely with the Museum's executive leadership team. Results will be overseen by the Board of Governors, and particularly its Executive Committee. At each Executive Committee meeting, one consistent agenda item will be a report from the Executive Director on the progress that has been made related to items in the DEAI Action Plan, and there will also be at least one discussion annually of the DEAI Action Plan by the full Board of Governors.

Definitions ^[1]

By diversity, we mean racial background, country of origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, age, veteran status, language, socioeconomic status, and the full range of other factors that shape an individual's experiences, values, and perspectives. In different contexts and to address different challenges, we have focused on different dimensions of diversity, for example focusing on groups that have been historically underrepresented in the museums, as defined by the American Alliance of Museums, or on persons of color as a way of thinking more broadly about racial and ethnic groups. Moving forward, we will consider how best to collect, track, and analyze our data on diversity more effectively and in ways that are consistent with our goals.

By inclusion, we mean the ongoing and deliberate effort to ensure that differences are welcomed, different perspectives are heard, individuals and groups feel respected and valued, and that leadership and staff are involved and engaged in the Museum's work.

By access, we mean giving equitable access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience. Accessibility encompasses the broader meanings of compliance and refers to how the Museum makes space for the characteristics that each person brings.

We strive to advance equity both within the Museum workplace and more broadly in society. By equity in the workplace, we mean fair treatment, appropriate access to information and resources, and opportunities for advancement as we identify and work to eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Our efforts to promote equity more broadly focus on access to the Museum and its educational opportunities and resources for underserved and underrepresented groups, with a focus on individuals and communities from neighboring cities such as Lowell, Lawrence, Haverhill, Worcester, and Boston.

^[1] These definitions were replicated (with permission) from the *American Museum of Natural History* in New York City.