



A Note from Us to You



August 11, 2023

To Participants in the “Centering Indigenous Practices in Museums” Conference:

We are grateful that you have agreed to participate in this conference and are very much looking forward to a great two days of formal plenaries, workshops, and informal network opportunities. Our primary objective is to provide a welcoming space that invites open discussion about challenges we face as we move forward with Indigenizing our institutions. We look forward to the sharing of the innovative practices and methodologies that we are implementing. The Center for Native American and Indigenous Research (CNAIR) and the Block Museum of Art (both at Northwestern University) have been equal partners with the Field Museum in the planning of the conference although the Field Museum is lead organizer and venue.

We understand that there have been serious concerns raised about the Field Museum as the principal venue for the conference, given its long history of harm to Native Peoples and more recent issues. We take these concerns seriously. We have undertaken due diligence in seeking alternative sites for the conference, and have concluded that time and budget constraints mean that we cannot at this point change the venue. One of the original reasons for selecting the Field as the conference venue was the installation of ***Native Truths: Our Voices, Our Stories***, which represents a shift in Indigenizing the Museum’s approach. The Field is still early in its process and work remains to be done. We will share some of their plans at the conference and invite everyone to share resources and information about their efforts as well.

More specifically, and more importantly, we hope the conference will lift up the way we are all transforming museum practices and what it would mean for the field to embrace Indigenous methods in all systems --- including how we care for collections, how we partner for research, how we share exhibitions and other resources, how we achieve financial sustainability and how we hold mainstream museums accountable for past and continuing harms. To that end, we have structured the conference with three plenaries—one with artists, one with emerging or early career professionals, and a third with senior museum directors and curators—and smaller, focused workshops on the above mentioned topics among others. There will also be opportunities for informal conversations over meals and viewing of exhibitions at the Field Museum and the Block Museum of Art. We also hope that the conference provides an opportunity to discuss difficult issues. Please view the conference website for details about the plenary speakers and workshop topics (<https://www.centeringindigenouspractices.com>). And if you have not already done so, please do register for the conference as soon as possible.

We look forward to connecting with you in Chicago!

Sincerely,

The CIPiM Conference Planning Committee

–Field Museum, CNAIR and Block Museum of Art

