



Sensory Bag Program: Making Museums More Accessible

WITH SARA MACKENZIE AND ALEX MCLEAN

Museums serve their local communities and welcome tourists from out of town, but not everyone who visits has equal access and opportunity to explore exhibits and fully participate in programs. For visitors with sensory disabilities, museum visits can be overwhelming and stressful. Museums have unfamiliar faces, new activities, bright and/or flashing lights, a range of noise levels, and other experiences that create an overwhelming environment and lead to sensory overload. This makes it difficult to focus on, engage in, and enjoy visits.

Earlier this year, the Ottawa Museum Network (OMN) launched a sensory bag program to address these barriers with a grant from the Government of Canada's Enabling Accessibility Fund. The bags contain tools that support self-regulation, tactile input, attention focusing, and communication to prevent sensory overload, and are now available for visitors to borrow at all 12 museums in the network.

This webinar will explore how sensory bags can help remove sensory-related barriers for visitors, making museums more inclusive. The OMN will provide insights into how the program was developed using feedback from community consultations and a neuro-diverse consultant. They will also discuss the items included in the bags and why they were chosen, while sharing the benefits and challenges experienced to date.



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Level Suitability - All Levels



Type -Webinar



Theme - Equity,
Diversity, Inclusion,
Accessibility

Tuesday, November 5th, 2024

- 10:00 am - 12:00 pm -

Webinar

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Sara MacKenzie, Executive Director, Ottawa Museum Network



Sara MacKenzie joined the Ottawa Museum Network as Executive Director in July 2021. She is an experienced executive and communications professional with over 23 years of experience in the federal public service, most recently as Director General of Strategic Communications for Health Canada and the Public Health Agency of Canada. She has an extensive background in strategic and risk communications, media relations, and digital engagement. Sara has directed several successful national public education and marketing campaigns.

Sara has a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of Ottawa and volunteers her time on several boards of cultural and heritage organizations



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Alex MacLean, Program Manager, Ottawa Museum Network



Alex McLean (she/her) is the Program Manager at the Ottawa Museum Network. She is responsible for coordinating their programs and activities, from community-based projects to professional development opportunities for museum staff. Alex's work focuses on increasing accessibility and inclusion in Ottawa's small museums, with initiatives aimed at removing barriers for visitors. She is passionate about making museums accessible for all.

Alex has a Bachelor of Arts in Archaeology from the University of Calgary and a Master of Arts in Public History from Carleton University.



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