

GLAM Databases and First Nations Sovereignty in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

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What is the issue?

- The unauthorised extraction of digital records of First Nations' cultural heritage from open online collections is being used to train Artificial Intelligence ('AI') systems.
- These practices risk undermining Indigenous data sovereignty, stripping cultural expressions of context and protocols, and enabling their reproduction or manipulation in ways that are disrespectful, cause harm, and are misleading.
- This project investigates how GLAM institutions (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums) that create and/or hold such digital repositories can serve as trustworthy stewards of First Nations' knowledge in an era of generative AI.

The goal is to embed established 'Indigenous governance principles' into metadata structures, access protocols, and rights management -ensuring that trust is built into the very architecture of digital cultural collections.

Legal, technical, and policy research will be undertaken in parallel.

- Current GLAM sector practices will be mapped.
- Legal and infrastructural vulnerabilities to AI scraping will be identified.
- Existing frameworks will be critically analysed to determine adaptation pathways for digital contexts.
- Working with selected institutional and First Nations community partners, we will co-design and develop prototype database standards and supporting governance materials.

This project brings together **GLAM institutions** and **First Nations communities** to address longstanding inequalities in the control over digital collections and representations of cultural heritage by **developing a community of practice** and proposing targeted policy frameworks and potential legal reform of the **Copyright Act 1968** to support First Nations data sovereignty. This would significantly **increase trustworthiness in digital society** by creating a mechanism for **empowering First Nations communities**.

Impact:

- Legal and ethical empowerment
- Sectoral transformation
- Policy influence

Impact will be measured through:

- Feedback from First Nations collaborators on the cultural appropriateness and effectiveness of the tools and policy recommendations developed.
- Adoption or piloting of our frameworks by selected GLAM institutions.
- Development of a community of practice by the GLAM sector incorporating practical frameworks & policy proposals.
- Engagement with policy audiences (including government) via targeted briefs and submissions to relevant inquiries.
- Publication and dissemination within legal, cultural, and information governance networks.