

Statewide Engagement for a New Wisconsin History Museum

Summary Analysis Report

October 2018–September 2019



WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

**BY THE PEOPLE,
FOR THE PEOPLE**

**Statewide Engagement for a
New Wisconsin History Museum**

**Summary Analysis Report
October 2018–September 2019**



**WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

CONTENTS

- I. **Executive Summary: Share Your Voice Statewide Engagement Series**
 - Goals for Statewide Engagement*
 - Methodology*
 - Major Themes*

- II. **Statewide Results**
 - Key Takeaways*
 - Recommendations for Museum Planning*

- III. **Summaries by Geographic Region**
 - Northwest*
 - North Central*
 - Northeast*
 - Southeast*
 - South Central*
 - Southwest*

- IV. **Appendices**
 - American Indian Nations and Communities*
 - K-12 Education & Teen Voices Summary*
 - PDF of PowerPoint Presentation with Concept Designs ([viewable at this link](#))*

- V. **Acknowledgments**



Share Your Voice! Statewide Engagement

From October 2018 through September 2019, the Wisconsin Historical Society conducted a significant statewide engagement effort to inform the planning of a new state history museum.

During the “Share Your Voice!” statewide engagement series, the Society facilitated a total of 55 listening sessions statewide. More than 5,000 people participated in various gatherings, offering ideas and opinions about the plan to build a state-of-the-art history museum that connects people, places, and things that tell the story of Wisconsin.

The statewide engagement tour began October 1, 2018, in Superior and crisscrossed the state for the next eleven months, stopping at schools, libraries, community centers, and museums. The effort included targeted engagement with American Indian communities and African American, Asian American, and Latinx audiences, including a bilingual session in Wautoma.

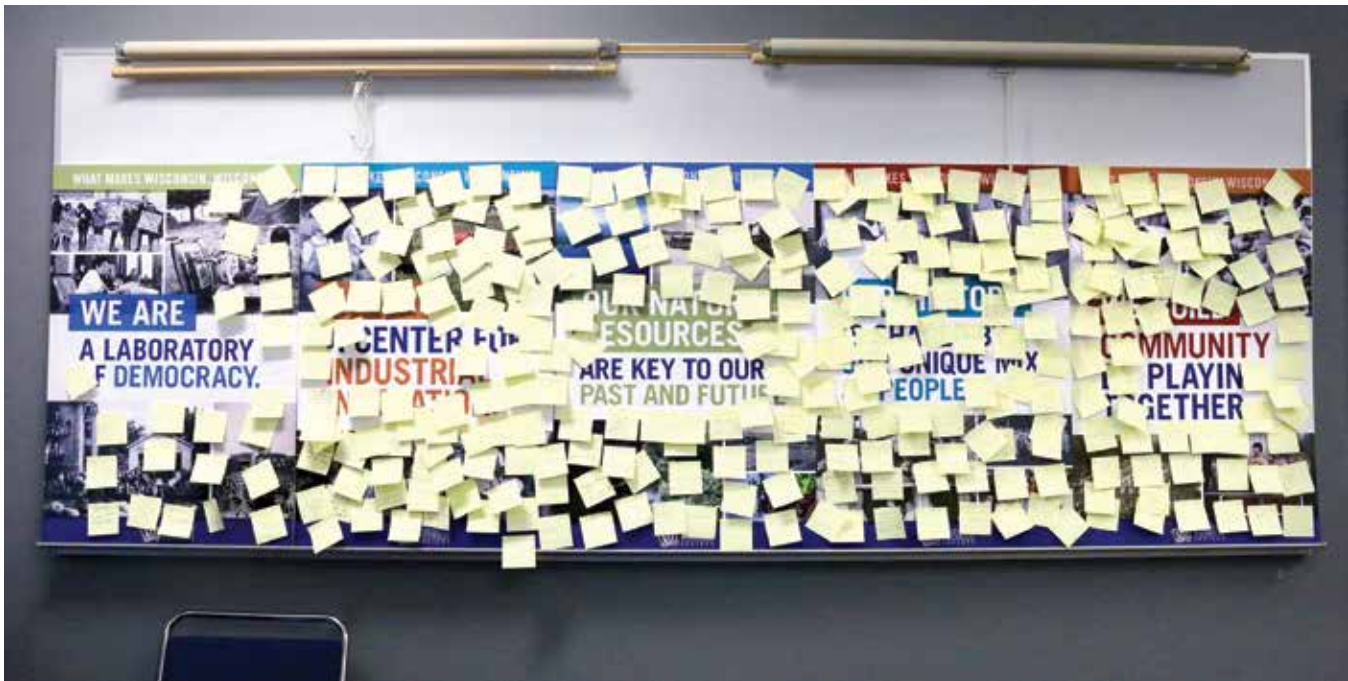
“We had incredibly meaningful discussions everywhere we went,” said Christian Øverland, the Ruth and Hartley Barker Director & CEO of the Society. “This is the people’s museum, designed by the people for the people, so this dialogue is essential. It’s vitally important to make sure we tell stories that all people will see themselves in. We learned a lot and recorded it all, and it will inform how we think about the museum design going forward. And we’re not done.”

This report summarizes and interprets the data collected according to geographical region, including targeted engagement with underrepresented communities. Summaries of American Indian engagement and K–8 student and teen sessions follow the regional summaries.



The things that make people connect to this place are the stories that we tell... It is who we are, how we come together, and how we define ourselves as a people.

—Mayor Jim Paine, Superior



Goals for Statewide Engagement

The Society identified the following goals for the “Share Your Voice!” statewide engagement series:

- **Provide a forum for the Society to gather feedback from the public on initial concepts for a new statewide history museum.**
- **Capture the diverse voices of Wisconsinites, including American Indian Nations, communities of color, and young people.**
- **Create an actionable summary of information to inform the exhibit design phase and future programming.**

In subsequent sections of this report, regional data and commentary is organized into key themes: Community Engagement & Participation, including American Indian engagement; Diversity & Inclusion in Storytelling; and Technology & Use of Artifacts. The statewide results, including word clouds, graphs, and key takeaways and recommendations for the next phase of museum planning, are highlighted below.

Methodology

The Wisconsin Historical Society planned 55 “Share Your Voice!” statewide engagement events from the fall of 2018 through the summer of 2019. Attendance across all event series was as follows:

NUMBER OF PEOPLE ENGAGED AS OF SEPTEMBER 30, 2019

5,504
total participants

449
Members of
American Indian
nations and
communities

1,549
at community
listening sessions

690
at public
presentations

1,667
at donor
meetings and
presentations

11
Guest experience
consultations

1,168
at K–12 student
classroom
sessions

Community and multicultural engagement sessions followed a standard agenda that included a welcome from the host community and nine-minute introductory video of the new museum project (viewable [at this link](#)), followed by three activities:

What is it about your community that makes Wisconsin, Wisconsin?

Attendees were given Post-it notes to write down three to five things they thought made their region or community unique and historically significant. Responses were sorted by theme.

Which exhibit design concepts do you like, not like?

Attendees were asked to use colored tabs or to mark a packet with their three favorite design concepts and one less-liked design concept.

What is your most memorable museum or cultural attraction experience?

Attendees were asked to jot down and share a memorable museum experience and to describe how that experience might impact what they would like to see in a new Wisconsin history museum.

Staff collected audience responses, entered data from each session into a master spreadsheet, and documented each session with a detailed report along with audio recordings and transcripts. Statewide and regional word clouds and graphs were created from the data collected at sessions. These statewide and regional graphs will follow in Part III, below, along with summaries of each region's responses as they pertain to the three major themes identified in Part I.

To ensure that the statewide engagement effort captured diverse voices, the Wisconsin Historical Society organized engagement series specifically targeting American Indian nations and communities, K-8 students, and teens, in addition to the multicultural sessions aimed at African American, Latinx, and Asian American communities. American Indian engagement and K-8 and teen sessions were tailored to each group and did not follow the same format as the general community and multicultural sessions; for additional information on these engagement efforts, please refer to the executive summaries for each series in the appendix.

Major Themes

Data and commentary gathered from sessions are organized into three broad categories and explored in detail for each of the six regional summaries.

Community Engagement & Participation

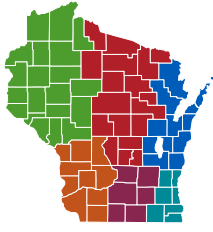
An overview of the general response to the new Wisconsin History Museum project and broad suggestions for future community engagements.

Diversity & Inclusion in Storytelling

An overview of major themes identified through the "What Makes Wisconsin, Wisconsin?" word cloud activity and summary of discussion of potential themes that represent the diversity of Wisconsin communities.

Technology & Use of Artifacts

A summary of regional response to the early concept designs for sections of the new Wisconsin history museum, including specific comments on the use of technology and preferences for interpretive approaches.



Statewide Results

Northwest

North Central

Northeast

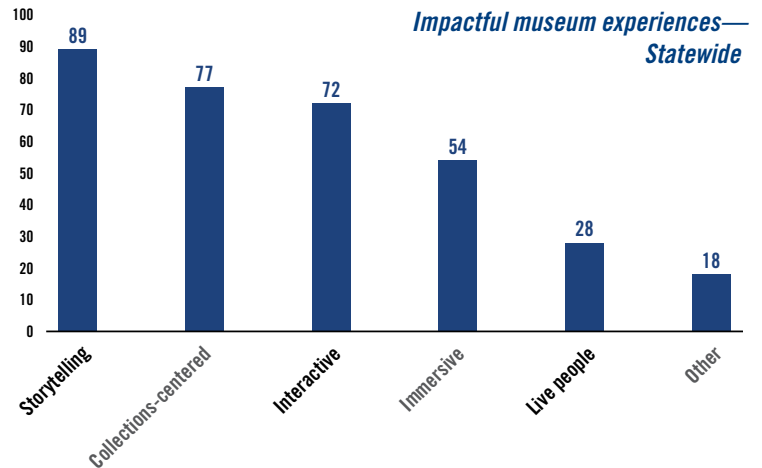
Southeast

South Central

Southwest

Key Takeaways

The following key takeaways were observed consistently across all regions of Wisconsin:

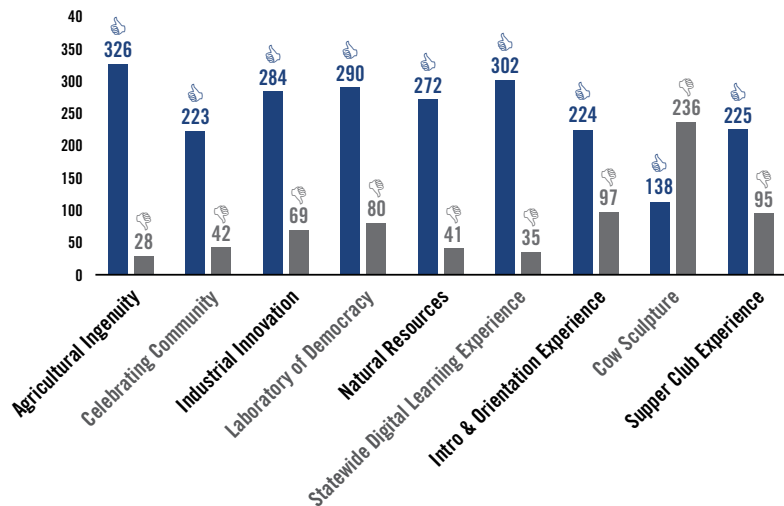


- Deep interest in stories that fully represent the geographic and cultural diversity of Wisconsin with clear direction to not oversimplify or avoid difficult topics in history.
- Excitement for technology that connects communities across the state to the museum and offers personalized digital content as part of the guest experience.
- Call for increased access through the use of technology to provide virtual school programming and educational experiences for all ages.
- Strong desire to experience the Society’s vast collections in person throughout the new museum’s exhibitions and programming whenever possible.
- Preference for immersive, interactive exhibition design driven by storytelling.
- Interest in challenging topics and enthusiasm for storylines related to hunting and fishing, immigration, and American Indian migrations among teen audiences.
- Clear preference for hands-on activities and artifacts over technology and digital content among elementary and secondary students.

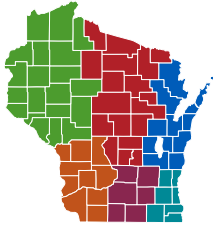


In addition, American Indian engagement raised additional, specific concerns:

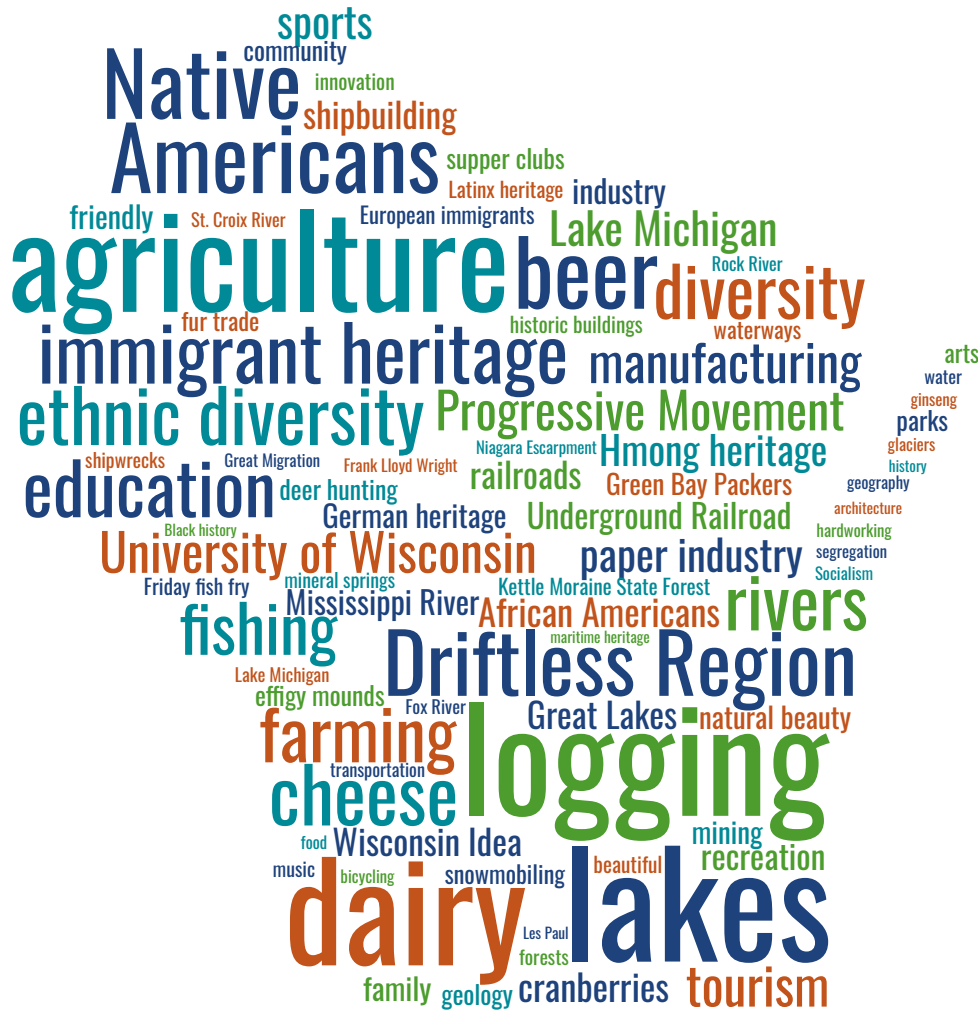
- **Call for increased access to American Indian cultural assets held within museum collections, including transparency on how they were collected.**
- **Concern about the museum’s ability to appropriately contextualize American Indian cultural assets in exhibits.**
- **Desire for increased collection loans to local tribal museums.**



Concept rendering feedback—Statewide



Statewide Results



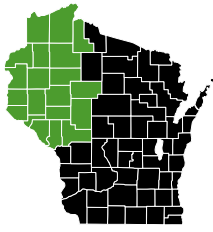
“I think that Wisconsin experiences all the big changes of American life, but it experiences it in its own particular way. You can really paint a picture of what’s changed in the United States over the entire last 175 years with stories of what individual people would tell you about their experiences in Wisconsin.”

—Eau Claire session

Recommendations for Museum Planning

Based on these key takeaways listed on previous pages, the following recommendations have been identified for future museum planning:

- **Provide opportunities for individuals, organizations, and communities to tell their own stories and share cultural perspectives.**
- **Design for accessibility by balancing the amount of technology and considering special needs populations and varied audiences, including school groups.**
- **Create exhibitions that do not rely on broad generalizations by increasing meaningful community involvement as part of the design process.**
- **Expand exhibition concepts to emphasize broad themes that connect across regions, cultures, and communities.**
- **Design virtual and physical spaces that create forums for conversations that explore complex, relevant issues within historical contexts.**



Northwest

SESSIONS

[Cameron](#)

[Eau Claire](#)

[Hudson](#)

[Superior](#)

[Lac Courte](#)

[Oreilles](#)

[Band of Lake](#)

[Superior Ojibwe](#)

[Red Cliff](#)

[Band of Lake](#)

[Superior Ojibwe](#)

Click the links above to view individual event recaps, word clouds, and photos.

(There is no recap available for the Red Cliff session.)

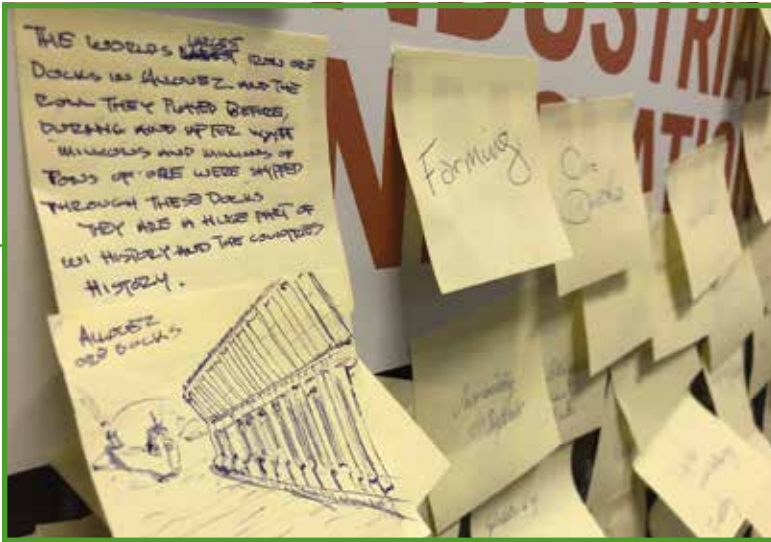
Community Engagement & Participation

A major theme across the Northwest region sessions reflects on the distinct identities of regions. In particular, participants expressed a sense of disconnect from Madison and Milwaukee, highlighted border community connections that extend beyond political borders, and voiced a desire for the new museum to fully explore the history of communities across all 72 Wisconsin counties.



The further north you go from Madison and Milwaukee the more disconnected people feel as Wisconsinites... I think it's really important to include all of the counties as part of Wisconsin.

—*Eau Claire*



Participants expressed enthusiasm for the concept of a new state history museum in Madison that features innovative technologies and programming that encourages participation from across the state and beyond. While eager to see their own community or regional stories represented, participants prioritized connecting to statewide themes and contributions of national significance.

American Indian Engagement

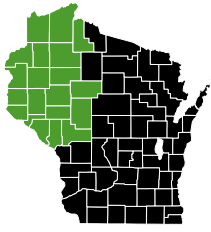
American Indian nations and communities in region: Bad River Ojibwe, Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe, Red Cliff Ojibwe, and St. Croix Ojibwe

Meetings were conducted with tribal representatives and staff from the Ojibwe bands of Bad River, Lac Courte Oreilles, and Red Cliff. The first event was held in Lac Courte Oreilles in October 2018, with two members of the community in attendance. In May 2019, a small session was held at the Red Cliff Community Health Center. Future efforts will include follow-up with Red Cliff and Lac Courte Oreilles to expand on prior conversations and reach additional community members. Initial outreach to St. Croix will be prioritized as well as re-establishing planning meetings with Bad River.

“I grew up in Allouez, just watching the ore docks... hundreds of millions of tons of iron ore moved through those docks from Allouez to the East End... the important role we had in rebuilding this country after World War II and the amount of steel for World War II. I would be willing to bet that 20, maybe 30 percent of people here have relatives, grandfathers, grandmothers, fathers, that worked on those docks.”

—*Superior*





KEY TAKEAWAYS: NORTHWEST

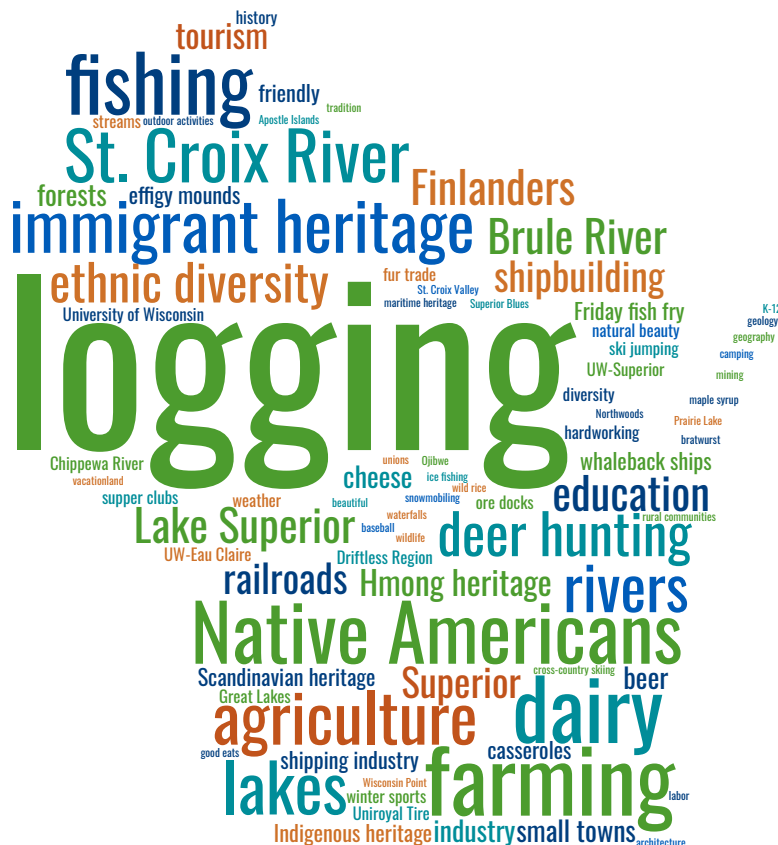
- Explore the distinct identities of regions across all 72 counties.
- Connect to statewide themes and highlight stories of national significance.
- Focus on diverse storytelling, especially regarding Native history.

Diversity & Inclusion in Storytelling

Residents in the northwest region spoke often of the importance of diverse storytelling. Conversations at each session touched on the Native history of Wisconsin, from acknowledging the thousands of years of human history of the place we now call Wisconsin, to sharing the history, culture, and the ongoing contributions of Indigenous peoples. Logging, agriculture, and dairy, essentially the cutover region story, were highlighted in written and verbal comments. Specific examples of tire manufacturing in Eau Claire and maritime and iron ore industries centered around the Twin



Ports of Superior-Duluth highlight the significance of the industry theme to this region. The natural resources theme was apparent in the strong showing of responses related to Northwoods tourism, the St. Croix River Valley, and Lake Superior. “What Makes Wisconsin” responses emphasized immigrant and refugee groups, from the Finns in far northwest to one of the state’s largest Hmong communities in Eau Claire.

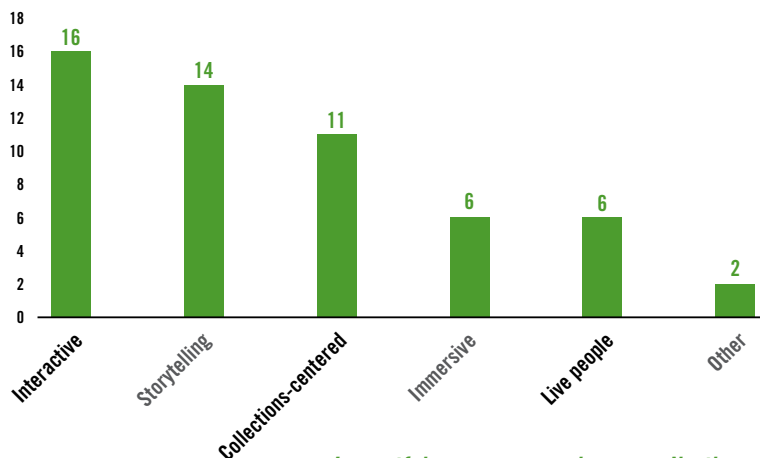


Technology & Use of Artifacts

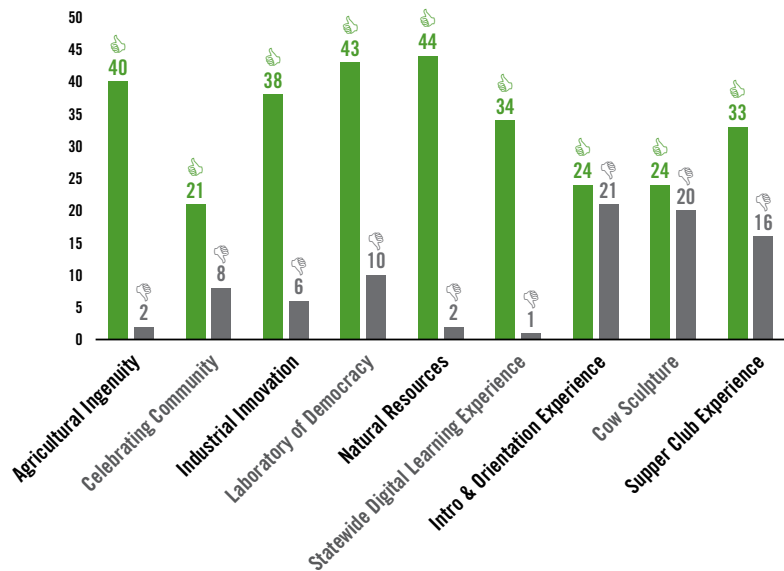
Attendees shared specific memories of museums that made lasting impressions. From the Salt Museum of Pomorie, Bulgaria, and the

Chippewa Valley Museum in Eau Claire, to the Science Museum of Minnesota, guests strongly preferred interactive and immersive exhibits connect to the past through powerful stories and environments. Hudson session participants asked how the new Wisconsin museum would compare to the Minnesota History Museum, but it is interesting to note the *Open House: If These Walls Could Talk* and the *Weather Permitting* tornado exhibits were mentioned frequently as memorable museum experiences at sessions in several regions.

Participants scored their preferences on concept drawings for the new museum. In the Northwest region, Natural Resources, Laboratory of Democracy, and Agricultural Ingenuity exhibit concepts scored the highest. There was an evenly mixed reaction to the Cow Sculpture. Participants scored the design elements with technology lower, many expressing concerns that it could be overwhelming for visitors, especially those with special needs. Some did note the positive aspects of designing for flexible visitors experience and youth audiences.



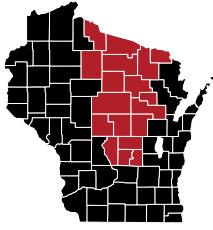
Impactful museum experiences—Northwest



Concept rendering feedback—Northwest

“With different screens, you can adjust for your audience.... With the younger crowd, they are used to having sixteen screens open... they can handle what I would consider the chaos. On the other hand, you can have a different look, softer colors, more white space, and you can focus on the screens you want.”

—Hudson



North Central

SESSIONS

[Eagle River](#)

[Wausau](#)

[Wautoma](#)

Click the links above to view individual event recaps, word clouds, and photos.

Community Engagement & Participation



The events held in Eagle River and Wausau followed the standard listening session format. The Wautoma session was a unique opportunity to meet with about 50 Latino community members from the central Wisconsin region. The program was held after Sunday

mass at St. Joseph Catholic Church and was planned with the support of community members and parish staff Lupe Cervante. Society staff, with event and translation support from UW–Extension, presented a Spanish-language video overview of the new museum project, offered coloring sheet activities for children, shared collections and archival documents from the Society’s collections, and visited with attendees over a lunch prepared by a local restaurant.

Common responses to “What Makes Wisconsin, Wisconsin?” included cheese, dairy, sports teams such as the Packers, Brewers, and Bucks, as well as hunting and outdoor

recreation. Participants noted the significance of regional author Jerry Apps, Waushara County agriculture, and resident Jesus Salas as a founder of the *Obreros Unidos* migrant worker movement and the 1966 march from Wautoma to Madison.



Residents of Eagle River and surrounding Northwoods communities were delighted to participate in planning for a new museum facility representing the full scope and diversity of Wisconsin, including these northern communities hours away from Madison. Participants at the Wausau listening session were eager to share the full scope of Wausau and Marathon County history. This central Wisconsin community of 39,000 at the “crossroads of Wisconsin” is surrounded by small towns and suburbs with a regional population of more than 100,000.

American Indian Engagement

American Indian nations and communities in region: Forest County Potawatomi, Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe, Menominee, Mole Lake Sokaogon, and Stockbridge-Munsee

Meetings were conducted with tribal representatives and staff from Lac du Flambeau and Menominee.

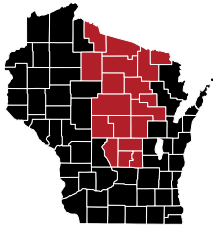
Engagement included a session with the Menominee in October 2018 and tabling an event in Lac du Flambeau

during the annual Wild Rice Festival in September 2019. In July 2019, the Lac du Flambeau tribal council passed a resolution in support of the new museum following a presentation to the council by the American Indian Nations Liaison. Future efforts will focus on initiating planning and outreach with Mole Lake, Forest County Potawatomi, and Stockbridge-Munsee, and continue to expand and build upon prior engagement with Menominee and Lac du Flambeau.



You’re talking about a place where you meet somebody from overseas and you say, “Yeah, we’re between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River.” Boom, they know where you’re at.

—Eagle River



KEY TAKEAWAYS: NORTH CENTRAL

- Design multilingual exhibition labels to ensure an inclusive visitor experience.
- Showcase natural resources as a driver for agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism.
- Offer virtual programming that can be accessed throughout the state.



Diversity & Inclusion in Storytelling

In Eagle River, the “What Makes Wisconsin, Wisconsin” activity responses touched on Northwoods traditions of the brandy old fashioned, supper clubs, and resorts, along with mentions of logging, freshwater resources, and the number of reservations and diversity of Native Nations in the ceded territory. The region’s natural resources drive the logging and tourism industries

through all seasons. Winter recreation, specifically snowmobiling, is serious business. Eagle River trademarked their claim to fame as the “Snowmobile Capital of the World.”



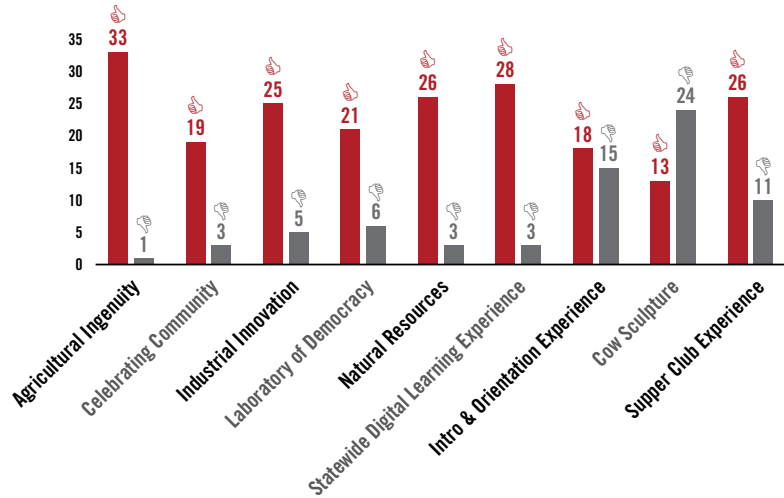
Residents of Wausau spoke of the city’s strong Polish and German heritage and noted the city is home to the state’s second largest Hmong community. Conversations covered the transition from the early logging industry to the rise of paper and other manufacturing and, eventually, the emergence of the insurance industry, sparked by Wisconsin’s passage of the nation’s first workers’s compensation legislation. In addition to a strong dairy industry, more than 90 percent of the nation’s cultivated ginseng is grown in Wisconsin, with 90 to 95 percent produced in Marathon County.

Technology & Use of Artifacts

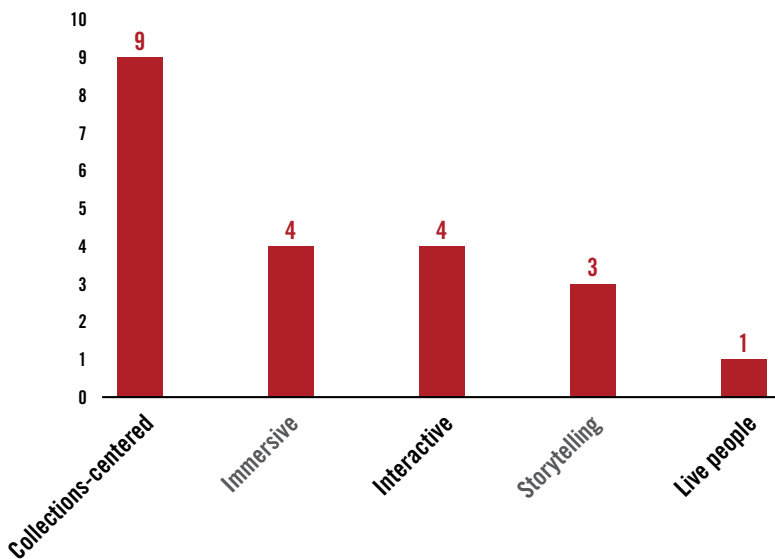
The response to design concepts followed trends in other regions. Participants responded positively to the Agricultural Ingenuity and Natural Resources concepts, with mixed reactions to the 72 County Cow Sculpture. One participant commented, “We’re no longer the largest milk producer in the U.S. and we’re losing family farms by the month, so I question the symbol of the cow to represent Wisconsin.” The Statewide Digital Learning Experience scored highly, as Wisconsin residents farther away from Madison expressed interest in digital programs that could connect residents in every corner of the state.

Attendees listed a range of favorite museums and cultural attractions, from the Streets of Old Milwaukee exhibit at Milwaukee Public Museum to the Museum of Industry and Technology in Manchester, England. Participants preferred collections-centered and immersive design, indicated by memorable museum visits to the Museum of African American History and Culture in

Washington, D.C., the Metropolitan Art Museum of New York, the Imperial War Museum in London, and the German American Heritage Center & Museum in Davenport, Iowa.

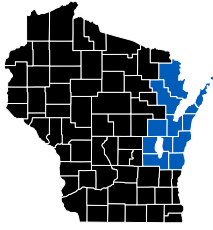


Concept rendering feedback—North Central



Impactful museum experiences—North Central





Northeast

SESSIONS

[Appleton](#)

[Fond du Lac](#)

[Green Bay](#)

[Manitowoc](#)

[Sheboygan](#)

Click the links above to view individual event recaps, word clouds, and photos.

Community Engagement & Participation

Participants in the Northeast region expressed excitement about having their local history shared through a state museum and seeing Wisconsin's 72 counties represented. In particular, attendees gravitated towards exhibit experiences that were tailored to visitors' home communities and that highlighted local collections.



I know I would come out of there with a lot of pride. I would be so proud of our state for doing something like this for our country.

—*Manitowoc*

While reactions to the exhibit rendering featuring a sculptural representation of a cow received mixed-to-negative reviews, suggestions for another format for sharing statewide collections, like an artists' gallery, were widely supported.



“This is our opportunity to get our local history out on a state level. We’re excited to show the state what we’re proud of and what makes Manitowoc County such a great part of Wisconsin.”

—Manitowoc

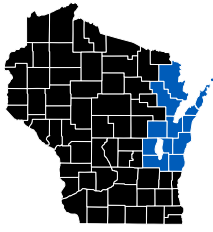
Attendees were also enthusiastic about a new state history museum that would elevate stories illustrating the national importance of Wisconsin. Participants were proud of the many innovations and industries coming out of this region—from WWII shipbuilding in Manitowoc to the paper industry in the Fox Valley—and were eager to share their unique contributions to history.

.....

American Indian Engagement

American Indian nations and communities in region: Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, Brothertown Indian Nation

Two preliminary meetings were conducted with the director of the Oneida Nation Museum. Future efforts will focus on establishing and strengthening communication with elected representatives from the Oneida Nation Business Committee, as well as initiating outreach with the Brothertown Nation (a non-state and non-federally recognized tribe).



KEY TAKEAWAYS: NORTHEAST

- Showcase local stories while placing Wisconsin innovations in a national context.
- Highlight the diversity of Wisconsin’s people while avoiding stereotypes.
- Create a museum that is uniquely Wisconsin as opposed to vaguely Midwestern.

Diversity & Inclusion in Storytelling

Attendees in this region stressed the need for diverse and inclusive storylines in the new museum’s interpretation. Participants noted the very long history of this part of the state, beginning with Native peoples and moving through the first European explorers to reach Wisconsin and later settlement. The diversity of European settlers was highlighted, as were

more recent immigrant groups, like Hmong refugees.

Participants clearly linked Wisconsin’s diverse mix of people with the state’s unique character and history.

Attendees encouraged the Society to combat stereotypes—Green Bay is more than the Packers, and Wisconsin is more than cows—and to showcase a diversity of opinions. Attendees at two sessions in this region noted how important agriculture is to the area but also how agricultural practices can have negative impacts as well. Attendees also discussed the racial history of the region, both positive and negative, through stories on the Underground Railroad and the presence of the Ku Klux Klan, for example.

“The special things in Wisconsin... came out of the people who made up the initial communities. German culture brought a lot of socialistic ideas to Milwaukee, Scandinavians up in Northwestern Wisconsin—their contributions like the first kindergarten, first unemployment compensation, first income tax, first technical college, one after another came back from a heritage that they brought over here from Europe... Those communities, along with the indigenous community, helped build the foundation on which we’ve built.”

—Sheboygan



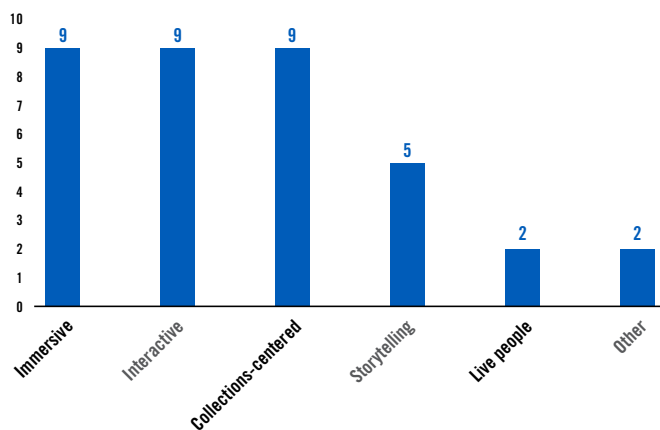
Technology & Use of Artifacts

Attendees shared memorable experiences from cultural organizations around the world. Participants stressed

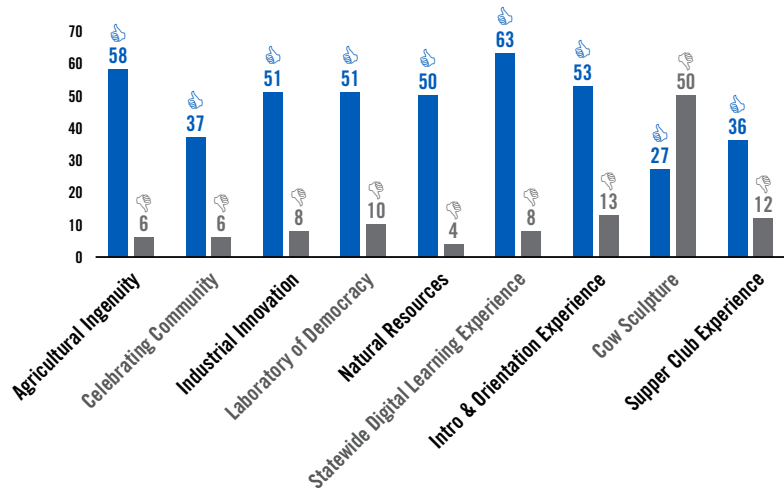
the importance of connecting to museum visitors emotionally through personal stories or by engaging the senses. Many memorable experiences, like visiting the USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor, also represented tangible connections to the past that were immersive, emotional, and authentic.

Participants indicated their like or dislike of exhibit concept designs by voting. In this region, the Statewide Digital Learning Experience, Agricultural Ingenuity gallery, and Introduction & Orientation Experience scored the highest. Many attendees liked that technological elements had the potential to be “evergreen” and adaptive, changing to fit the times or the audience.

The sculptural display of a cow scored the lowest, while the Supper Club Experience had mixed reviews, with several attendees pointing out that museum concessions are often disappointing.



Impactful museum experiences—Northeast

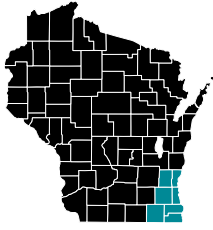


Concept rendering feedback—Northeast

“It lends itself to discussion on any open-ended topic because you can show anything... it’s multifaceted and endless in its opportunity.”

—Sheboygan

Although technology-driven experiences scored highly, several participants had reservations about the reliability of technology in museums and about the potential to be overwhelmed by information or images. Attendees also stressed the need to distinguish the state from other Midwestern states through the use of unique artifacts and stories from the Society’s collections.



Southeast

SESSIONS

[Kenosha](#)

[Milwaukee](#)

[Islamic
Community
Center](#)

[Milwaukee
County
Historical
Society](#)

[United
Community
Center](#)

[Wisconsin
Black
Historical
Society](#)

[Racine](#)

[St. Francis](#)

[Waukesha](#)

[Whitefish Bay](#)

Click the links above to view individual event recaps, word clouds, and photos.

Community Engagement & Participation

To connect with population centers in southeastern Wisconsin, the Society hosted the largest number of sessions in this region, including multicultural sessions focused on the African American, Latinx, and Asian American communities.

Indeed, it was the lack of racial and ethnic diversity at the first Milwaukee session that motivated the Society to prioritize planning dedicated multicultural sessions in partnership with local cultural organizations.





I would encourage you to have a process that allows independent integration, meaning someone could go online, tell a story, upload a document with a photo or maybe a video... the “guerrilla” or “raw” history telling.

—*Milwaukee, United Community Center*

Participants were interested in ways that local historical societies could be supported by the new museum and in the Society expanding outreach to local communities and schools through programming and teaching collections. They felt that virtual learning opportunities would encourage participation from schools who could not travel to the museum and that the opportunity for local societies to contribute to the museum would bring accessibility that is not currently possible with their collections. That said, participants were not thrilled with the rendering of the sculptural display of the cow representing all 72 counties—one attendee in Waukesha likened the concept to a “garbage dump.”



American Indian Engagement

American Indian nations and communities in region: Milwaukee urban Indian community

Initial meetings were conducted with community leaders in education, healthcare, and local volunteer non-profits. In June 2019, the Society partnered with the Indian Community School of Milwaukee, in Franklin, to conduct community outreach during the school’s end-of-the-year powwow. The Society provided a tent with refreshments for dancers and pow-wow attendees while Society leadership and staff spoke with students, parents, community members, and vendors throughout the day. The American Indian Nations Liaison hosted a community health and wellness event in August 2019 organized by the Gerald L. Ignace Indian Health Center. Communication continues to be actively maintained with the Indian Community School.

One of the most memorable exchanges in the statewide engagement tour happened at the Kenosha session, where participants engaged in a dialogue on their different reactions to the supper club exhibit concept.

This dialogue was reflected at other sessions, where conversations began to focus more on concepts that could tie together foodways from different cultures, rather than the “very limited experience” of the white middle-class supper club, where not everyone feels welcome.

At these sessions as at others, participants felt it was of paramount importance to share the long history and vibrant present of Native populations in the state. Attendees also expressed their desire to see queer and trans community stories in the new museum.

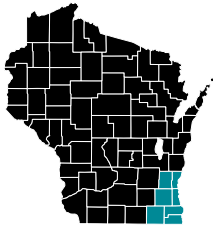
“When you think of Wisconsin, you think of Supper Clubs, being up north in the woods by a nice friendly fireplace, having an Old Fashioned and a nice fish fry... That’s living.”

“This Supper Club thing is not my experience at all... African Americans in a lot of [those] places weren’t welcome... A Supper Club experience is not my experience, is not my grandparents’ experience at all... That does not even register.”

—Kenosha

“I like the concept of bringing things together, and I think especially through food. For example, my dad will always do fried rice, but he’ll do brat fried rice... Especially with the festivals, a lot of the ways I experienced cultures growing up was through food.”

—Milwaukee, Islamic Resource Center



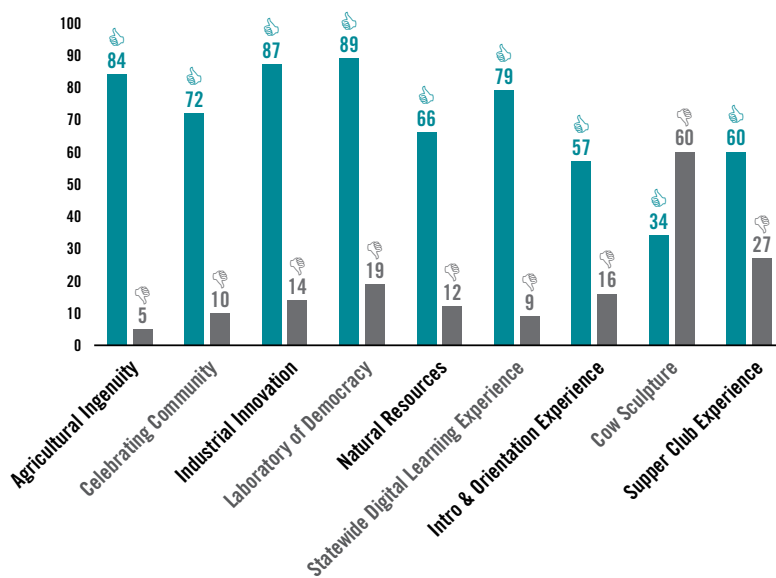
KEY TAKEAWAYS: SOUTHEAST

- Provide opportunities for local history organizations to share their collections.
- Embrace the discomfort of telling contested histories.
- Highlight the state’s multiculturalism without oversimplifying it.

Technology & Use of Artifacts

Participants indicated their like or dislike of exhibit concept designs by voting. In this region, the Laboratory of Democracy, Industrial Innovation, and Agricultural Ingenuity concepts scored the highest. Attendees felt that the Laboratory of Democracy and Industrial Innovation concepts were ideal for sharing the state’s progressive and labor history, respectively, and they enjoyed the immersive environment and multicultural storytelling of the Agricultural Ingenuity concept. Here again, the exhibit rendering of the cow sculpture scored the lowest, and attendees encouraged the Society to rethink the supper club experience due to its limited appeal.

Overall, there was concern that the renderings were too focused on multimedia experiences and not enough on interactivity. Attendees encouraged the Society to share its vast collections and to create paths for museum-goers to interact with exhibits and dig deeper into topics of interest.



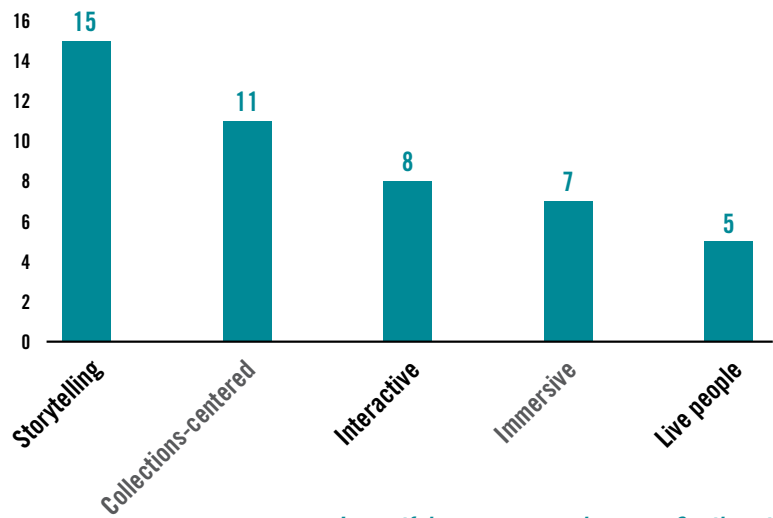
Concept rendering feedback—Southeast

“Theatres take up space. Unless there’s something happening or showing that I’m immediately interested in, I’m going to walk past it. Meanwhile, that’s less artifacts you can put in place that I’m interested in seeing.”

—Waukesha

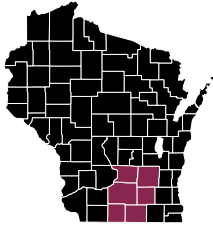


When asked to share memorable museum experiences, attendees highlighted museums that included emotional, personalized experiences, immersive environments, and opportunities for children to use their imaginations. These included following the path of a new immigrant through Ellis Island, walking through the Valley Forge experience at Mount Vernon or the submarine at Chicago’s Museum of Science & Industry, and using one’s imagination to bring the dioramas to life at Milwaukee Public Museum.



Impactful museum experiences—Southeast





South Central

SESSIONS

[Beloit](#)

[Janesville](#)

[Madison](#)

[Badger Rock
Community
Center](#)

[Goodman
Center](#)

[Latino
Chamber of
Commerce](#)

[Warner Park](#)

[Wisconsin
Historical
Society
Black History
Month Open
House](#)

[American
Indian
Engagement
Session](#)

Click the links above to view individual event recaps, word clouds, and photos.

Community Engagement & Participation

Participants in the South Central region were especially interested in community engagement and participation in the new museum, given their geographic

proximity to the project. Participants were eager to share their impressions of the new

museum project but expressed reservations about the planned location of the building on Capitol Square. In particular, several attendees felt it was “beyond ironic” that, at the time, the Churchill Building, Madison’s first skyscraper, was a possibility to be demolished to build the new museum, while others worried about the amount of space taken up by the museum, traffic congestion on Capitol Square, and reduced sightlines from elsewhere to the Capitol.

“I don’t know the words to describe the feeling of seeing a picture of your church from before you were even born [hanging] on the walls of this museum.”

— *Madison, Black History Month Open House*



This document was updated in Jan. 2023 to remove the likeness of and quotations from session participant, Kay LeClaire, who falsified their Native ancestry.



I think everyone needs to have a voice and be able to tell their story. We all need to understand the past in order to move forward... and be more impactful as we strategize to create a place of inclusion. This is a great dialogue to start and to share what we'd like to see the future museum look like.

—*Madison, Latino Chamber of Commerce*



This region also included several multicultural sessions at which attendees expressed enthusiasm for participating in the museum planning process while recognizing that the Society had not actively engaged their communities in the past. At an event co-hosted by the Latino Chamber of Commerce, attendees were eager to share their stories and to contribute positive views of Latinx people that are often missing in the media. At the Black History Month Open House engagement session, attendees of color expressed disappointment that their community was largely missing from an introductory

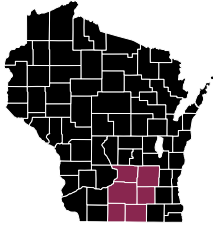
video on the new museum project but were hopeful that the Society would evolve to encourage more participation from the community.

American Indian Engagement

American Indian nations and communities in region: American Indian community in Madison and Dane County

The Society partnered with the Wisconsin Indian Education Association, a statewide non-profit Indian organization, to host a listening session at the Wisconsin Historical Museum. The event was structured similarly to other sessions held in Madison, and drew an attendance of about 40 people.





KEY TAKEAWAYS: SOUTH CENTRAL

- Include underrepresented groups in museum planning and interpretation.
- Represent the mix of cultures that form Latino and Asian American communities.
- Highlight the diverse political history of Wisconsin as a laboratory of democracy.

Diversity & Inclusion in Storytelling

Diversity and inclusion in storytelling were of paramount importance to this region. This region has an incredibly long Native American presence that is geographically evident in effigy and burial mounds dotting the landscape. Generations of immigrants from many different cultures have also made their mark on these communities, and participants felt there was an opportunity to create common ground and understanding by reminding museum visitors that, outside of Native populations, all Wisconsinites have an immigrant background.

In Beloit and Janesville, attendees encouraged the Society to recognize inequities in our state and to interpret tough racial topics, like disparities in education, incarceration, and housing; segregation; and local “sundown” towns. At the Latino Chamber of Commerce event, attendees were enthusiastic about an exhibit rendering featuring agricultural ingenuity but reminded the Society to recognize that most farmworkers today are

Latinx. At that session, participants also pointed out that supper clubs, which elicited “warm and fuzzy” reactions from many white attendees at other sessions, have a different connotation for people of color.

“When I go into a supper club, I feel very bad. I come home in a bad mood... How do we change the atmosphere so people feel welcome?”

— Madison, Latino Chamber of Commerce

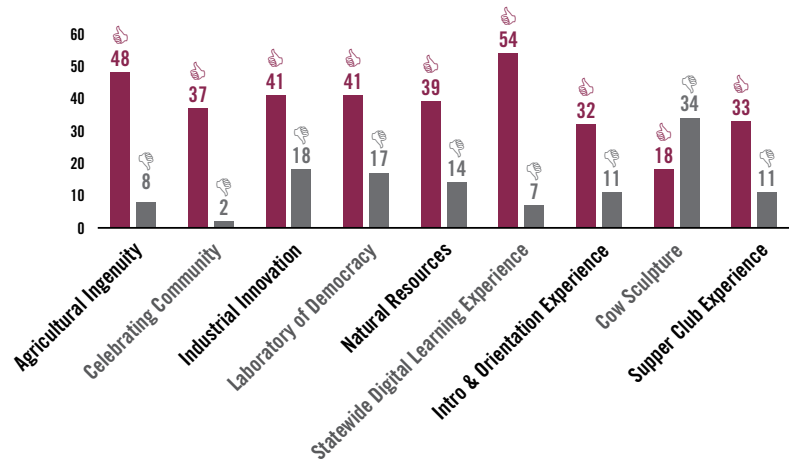


Outside of racial and ethnic diversity, participants also expressed a desire to see Wisconsin’s education system and political diversity interpreted in the museum. At sessions in Madison, many diverse political topics were discussed, including a history of policy development, the Progressive Movement, and various political figures, from Bob La Follette to Joseph McCarthy. Attendees also shared perspectives from both white-collar and blue-collar workers.

Technology & Use of Artifacts

In this region, the Agricultural Ingenuity concept scored highest, with many attendees seeing space for diverse voices to tell agricultural stories. The exhibit rendering of a cow sculpture scored lowest, but attendees were supportive of a different design that would display artifacts from all 72 counties.

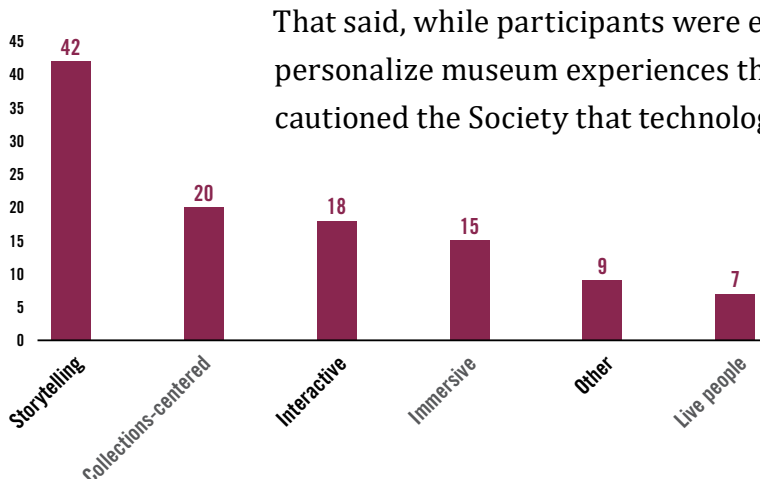
When asked to share memorable museum experiences, participants selected immersive, interactive, and sensory experiences. Whether they were feeling an earthquake at the California Academy of Sciences, being hit with the smell of the decaying shoes of Holocaust victims at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial, or experiencing the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald at the Great Lake Shipwrecks Museum, attendees were most impacted by exhibits that created a visceral response.



Concept rendering feedback—South Central

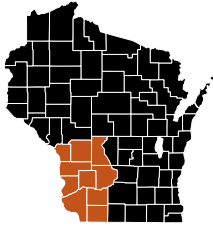
“Some people think that Latinos only come from one certain country... if you could include even the smallest of countries, it would definitely feel even more inclusive and more diverse.”

— *Madison, Latino Chamber of Commerce*



Impactful museum experiences—South Central

That said, while participants were enthusiastic about opportunities to personalize museum experiences through the use of technology, they cautioned the Society that technology cannot replace engaging stories and authentic artifacts. This ambivalence towards technology was also reflected in the mixed ratings the Introduction & Orientation Experience received in the region—it had both the second-highest and second-lowest rating.



Southwest

SESSIONS

[Mauston](#)

[La Crosse](#)

[Platteville](#)

Click the links above to view individual event recaps, word clouds, and photos.

Community Engagement & Participation

Participants in the Southwest sessions were eager to discuss regional history and identity while expressing a keen interest in design concepts and the role of technology in museums. The three sessions held in La Crosse, Mauston, and Platteville

centered on the unique geography and history of Wisconsin's Driftless Region.



The history of all of the cultures that have settled in the Driftless area have informed us in terms of civilization and ways of living and how we take care of one another and take care of the environment... so much to learn from the thousands of years of history and cultural settling in this area.

—*La Crosse*



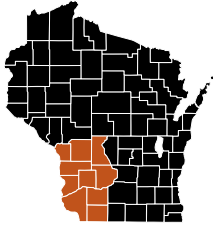
In La Crosse, the Mississippi River and bluffs define the city. As explained by a local resident and museum director, “La Crosse is the shape it is because of the place it is, and that’s really important.” The geology of the Driftless Region shaped responses at the Platteville session, which centered around the history of lead mining dating back thousands of years. The Mauston session focused in on agricultural history, from dairy to cranberry production.

Those who attended listening sessions in the Southwest region were especially interested in representation in the new museum and suggested temporary and rotating exhibitions that would highlight the history and culture of counties, regions, and individual communities.

American Indian Engagement

American Indian nations and communities in region: Ho-Chunk Nation

Two initial meetings to discuss the new museum were conducted between the Office of the President of the Ho-Chunk Nation and the Wisconsin Historical Society Director’s Office and included staff and representatives from the Nation’s Division of Heritage Preservation. Several members of the Ho-Chunk Nation attended the inter-tribal community session in Madison as private citizens; these members did not represent or speak on behalf of the tribal government. Future efforts will involve re-starting communication and planning with tribal officials to reach members throughout the Nation’s distinct geographical regions and communities.



KEY TAKEAWAYS: SOUTHWEST

- Explore ways that unique geographies across Wisconsin impact communities.
- Use rotating exhibitions to highlight the history of counties and regions.
- Tell the full scope of Wisconsin's past by embracing difficult history.

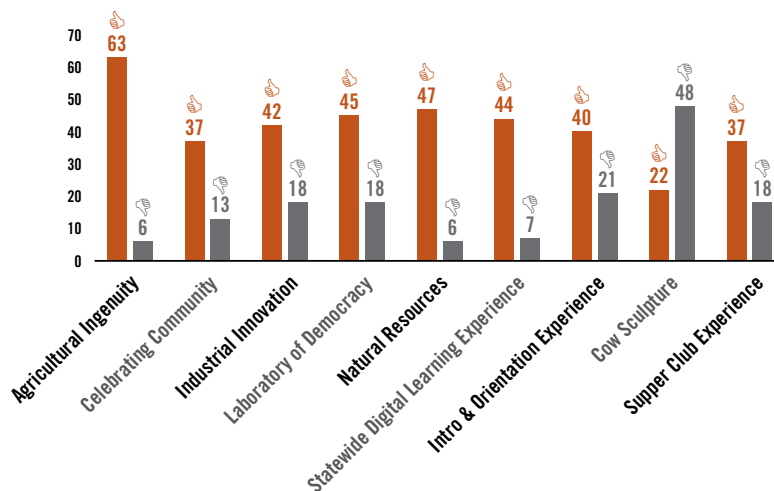
Diversity & Inclusion in Storytelling

A unique aspect of the Southwest region sessions was a focus on specific tribal nations and history. Participants often shared reminders of the full scope of human history in this region. Local host Dr. Eugene Tesdahl of UW–Platteville led attendees in an opening greeting that included words of gratitude in the languages of the Ho-Chunk, the Sac and Fox Nation, Ojibwe, and the Potawatomi. La Crosse residents frequently referenced the history and continued presence and contributions of the Ho-Chunk Nation in the region. The city is also home to one of the state's largest Hmong populations.

In Platteville, participants warned not to avoid difficult history and to tell the full scope of Wisconsin's past; for example, they mentioned Wisconsin's first territorial governor, Henry Dodge, who owned slaves even though Wisconsin was supposed to be a free territory. Another attendee highlighted the forced removal of both the Meskwaki and Ho-Chunk. "I think it's important to not forget those ugly chapters of our region as well," he said.

A review of the "What Makes Wisconsin, Wisconsin?" responses indicated a strong showing of topics within three themes: Industry & Agriculture, People & Industry, and Places & Communities. Industries supported by the Mississippi River defined La Crosse responses, as did the city's brewing industry; specifically, the G. Heileman Brewing Co. was founded in 1858 as The City Brewery and eventually brought its signature Old Style lager to the national market. Mining, organic farming, and education framed conversations in Platteville, the site of Wisconsin's first state teacher preparation institution, now UW–Platteville. Several communities were represented at the Mauston session, from Reedsburg to Montello. In Mauston, conversation focused on agriculture, the tourism industry surrounding the Wisconsin Dells region, and the lakes, rivers, and rock formations of the region.





Concept rendering feedback—Southwest

Technology & Use of Artifacts

Participants in this region engaged in robust conversations about the role of technology in museums.

Jarrod Roll, a local museum director, loved the idea of being able to personalize the Introductory Orientation Experience to a group; however, he cautioned about the dangers of relying on technology that could fail, leading to “out of order” signs. Suggestions to improve the design included adding three-dimensional objects to that space to balance the technology. A teacher expressed concern about the effects of such a digitally dense space for special needs students. Several others remarked on the need for seating areas to ensure accessibility.

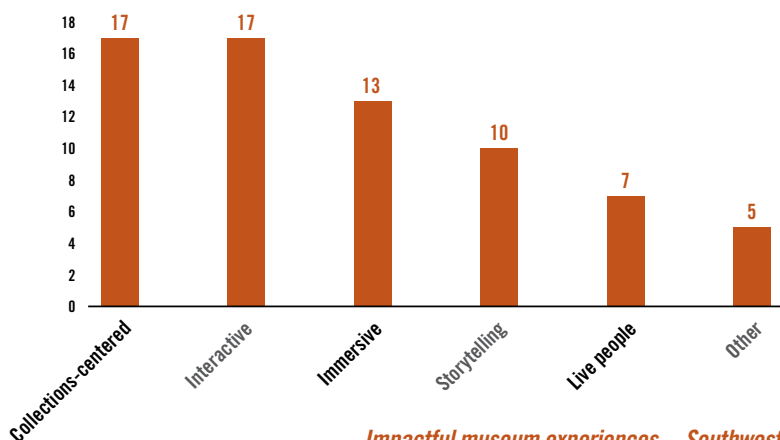
“I like the idea of something that represents every single county. I don’t think that this is the way to execute it. But I like trying to find a unifying theme and something that people can then explore on their own.”

— *Platteville*

The Agricultural Ingenuity concept scored highly here, as did the Orientation Experience and Laboratory of Democracy concepts. The trend of strong opinions on the cow sculpture continued in this region. A retired farmer who attended the Mauston session remarked, “As cheap as cows are, you should get a real one.”

Participants expressed a strong preference for interpretive techniques rooted in storytelling, as well as collections-centered design and interactive experiences.

Examples of impactful museum experiences included the immersive and interactive experiences offered at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum in Manitowoc, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Museum in Springfield, Illinois, the Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia, and the Imperial War Museum in London.

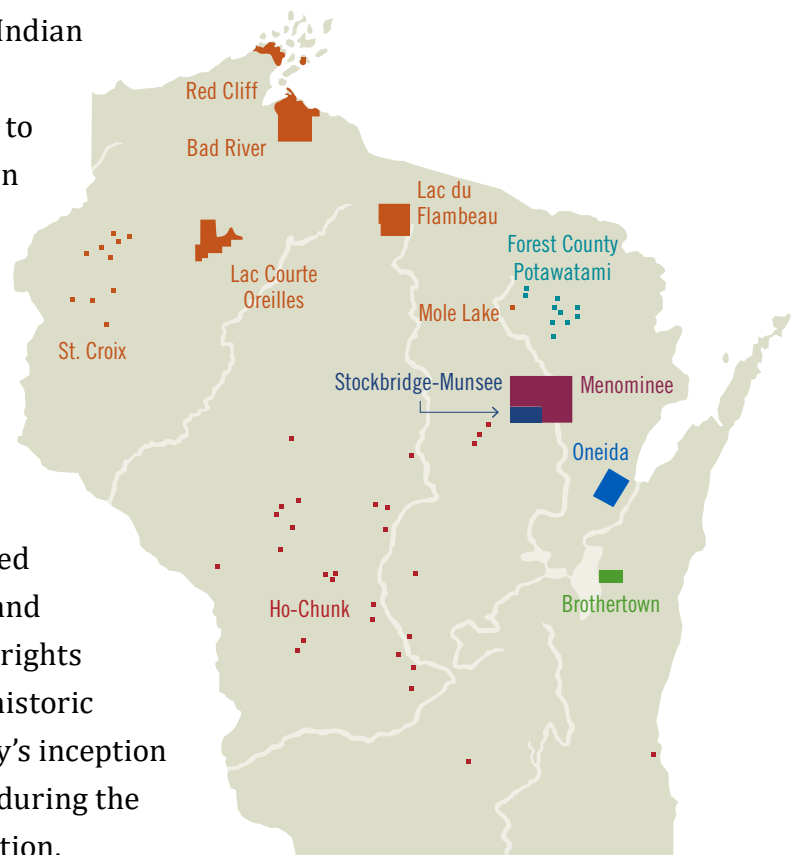


Impactful museum experiences—Southwest

American Indian Engagement

Conversations and Considerations with American Indian Nations and Communities

Working collaboratively with American Indian nations and communities requires significant time and investment in order to build relationships, foster trust, and learn the appropriate cultural protocols among distinct and diverse American Indian communities. Historically, American Indians have had strained relationships with federal and state governments, including museums and cultural institutions. American institutions have frequently demonstrated a lack of understanding, accountability, and respect for culture, sovereignty, and the rights of Indigenous people. This deep-rooted historic precedent was established at the country's inception and has only recently begun to improve during the last 50 years in the era of self-determination.



You can't talk about us in the past tense. We're in the present... Sovereignty, language, identity, these are all parts of things that need to be put into this so people can understand who we are...

—Bad River tribal member, Madison WIEA listening session

Process & Methodology

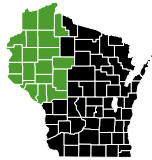
Engagement initiatives were tailored individually by community and focused on using culturally responsive methods to foster ongoing communication and

engagement with members from Wisconsin's American Indian nations and communities. Initial efforts focused on establishing communication with community leaders, including identifying methods and protocols for the sharing of information, as well as the appropriate channels of communication for working with members of the community to further plan and conduct current and future engagement. Efforts were planned and developed in consultation with input from community leaders and tribal representatives and sought to establish holistic dialogue around relevant topics and issues. Pertinent input, information, and feedback regarding the Society and/or the new museum continues to be received on a continual basis through both formal and

informal means and including phone calls, meetings, and informal conversations, in addition to structured sessions and events.



American Indian Engagement by Region



Northwest region

American Indian nations and communities in region:

Bad River Ojibwe, Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe, Red Cliff Ojibwe, and St. Croix Ojibwe

Meetings were conducted with tribal representatives and staff from the Ojibwe bands of Bad River, Lac Courte Oreilles, and Red Cliff. The first event was held in Lac Courte Oreilles in October 2018, with two members of the community in attendance. In May 2019, a small session was held at the Red Cliff Community Health Center. Future efforts will include follow-up with Red Cliff and Lac Courte Oreilles to expand on prior conversations and reach additional community members. Initial outreach to St. Croix will be prioritized as well as re-establishing planning meetings with Bad River.



North Central region

American Indian nations and communities in region: Forest County Potawatomi,

Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe, Menominee, Mole Lake Sokaogon, and Stockbridge-Munsee

Meetings were conducted with tribal representatives and staff from Lac du Flambeau and Menominee. Engagement included a session with the Menominee in October 2018 and tabling an event in Lac du Flambeau during the annual Wild Rice Festival in September 2019. In July 2019, the Lac du Flambeau tribal council passed a resolution in support of the new museum following a presentation to the council by the American Indian Nations Liaison. Future efforts will focus on initiating planning and outreach with Mole Lake, Forest County Potawatomi, and Stockbridge-Munsee, and continue to expand and build upon prior engagement with Menominee and Lac du Flambeau.



Northeast region

American Indian nations and communities in region:

Oneida Nation of Wisconsin, Brothertown Indian Nation

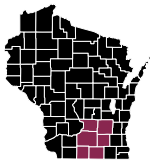
Two preliminary meetings were conducted with the director of the Oneida Nation Museum. Future efforts will focus on establishing and strengthening communication with elected representatives from the Oneida Nation Business Committee, as well as initiating outreach with the Brothertown Nation (a non-state and non-federally recognized tribe).



Southeast region

*American Indian nations and communities in region:
Milwaukee urban Indian community*

In June 2019, the Society partnered with the Indian Community School of Milwaukee to conduct outreach during the school's end-of-the-year powwow. The Society provided a tent with refreshments for dancers and attendees while Society leadership and staff spoke with students, parents, community members, and vendors throughout the day. The American Indian Nations Liaison hosted a community health and wellness event in August 2019 organized by the Gerald L. Ignace Indian Health Center. Communication continues to be actively maintained with the Indian Community School.



South Central region

*American Indian nations and communities in region:
American Indian community in Madison and Dane County*

The Society partnered with the Wisconsin Indian Education Association, a statewide non-profit Indian organization, to host a listening session at the Wisconsin Historical Museum. The event was structured similarly to other sessions held in Madison, and drew an attendance of about 40 people representing various tribal communities including the Ho-Chunk, Ojibwe, Menominee, and Oneida.



Southwest region

*American Indian nations and communities in region:
Ho-Chunk Nation*

Two initial meetings to discuss the new museum were conducted between the Office of the President of the Ho-Chunk Nation and the Wisconsin Historical Society Director's Office and included staff and representatives from the Nation's Division of Heritage Preservation. Several members of the Ho-Chunk Nation attended the inter-tribal community session in Madison as private citizens; these members did not represent or speak on behalf of the tribal government. Future efforts will involve re-starting communication and planning with tribal officials to reach members throughout the Nation's distinct geographical regions and communities.

Key Takeaways

- **It is the responsibility of the museum to accurately reflect and represent American Indians without whitewashing the guest experience or sanitizing history.**
 - **American Indians and American Indian communities continue to have significant concerns regarding access to their cultural assets held within museum collections, how objects were collected, and the museum’s ability to appropriately contextualize American Indian cultural assets in exhibits.**
 - **Tribal members and representatives stated the importance of collection loans to local tribal museums and the usage of technology to provide virtual school programming and educational experiences.**
 - **Tribal leaders and members stated the importance of recognizing the sovereign nations of the American Indians who live and lived in Wisconsin and the Great Lakes Area.**
 - **Language is an important part of Native cultures and multi-language text would be useful.**
 - **The new museum introductory experience should begin with the Ho-Chunk and other tribal nations welcoming guests to the museum and their ancestral lands.**
-

At a session held at the Culture Center at the College of Menominee Nation, tribal Chairman Douglas Cox emphasized the importance and opportunity for tribal participation in the new museum project. Cox underscored the Society’s role and responsibility as a steward of Menominee history and culture. “We are alive and well,” Cox said, “and we continue residing here—on our ancestral land in the Menominee Nation.”

Concluding his remarks, Cox stated that the Menominee are ready for the opportunity to share their ideas and voices and participate in partnerships with the Society that address issues that are critical to the Menominee Nation. Amid personal stories and impactful anecdotes, guests at this session emphasized the importance of place and ensuring that cultural objects and learning are readily accessible in the community.

At Lac Courte Oreilles, attendees shared their experiences growing up on the reservation and other stories of tribal life. One tribal elder talked about learning the skill of ricing from her mother and grandmother, and how she now teaches it to younger tribal members. That experience launched a conversation about how digital technology will allow live programming to be broadcast from the museum to locations around the state, and vice versa.



Conversations with attendees at the Menominee Nation session also reflected on the importance of place and increased access to resources, guests shared enthusiasm about several of the renderings that depicted programming spaces with the potential to broadcast live between the museum and students in the Menominee Indian School District.

During a session held in conjunction with the Wisconsin Indian Education Association's annual legislative breakfast in Madison, a member of the Bad River Ojibwe spoke of how tribes were forcibly removed from their land and sent to reservations after the economic value of timber and minerals were identified by European settlers and speculators.

"The history of this state is inextricably tied into the need for these resources by the economic powers that came in," he stated. "(Those lands) were all obtained through treaties... It's not two stories. It's one story that we all share together, and that's what somehow needs to be told in the new museum. Treaty education is going to be vital if you want people to really understand how this state came to be."

Conversations at the session held at the Red Cliff Community Health Center also centered on treaty rights. A Red Cliff elder asked how the new museum would accurately represent American Indians without sanitizing history. When responding to the initial design renderings Society staff shared with attendees, he said, "Put us in front of the story. Don't put us in the middle or the back. It's really discouraging to come and ask what we think should be in there, because when you tell a story, you should start at the beginning of the story... then it becomes a question of how much truth do you want to provide in that story?"

RECURRING THEMES AND TOPICS

Relationships between people, land, and nations

History across Wisconsin's landscape—tribal sovereignty at play

Pre-contact, depth of Indigenous peoples' presence, land stewardship, human migration, colonization, post-contact, military conflicts

Relationships between people amongst difference

Climate of human presence in Wisconsin—diverse, dynamic, and contested

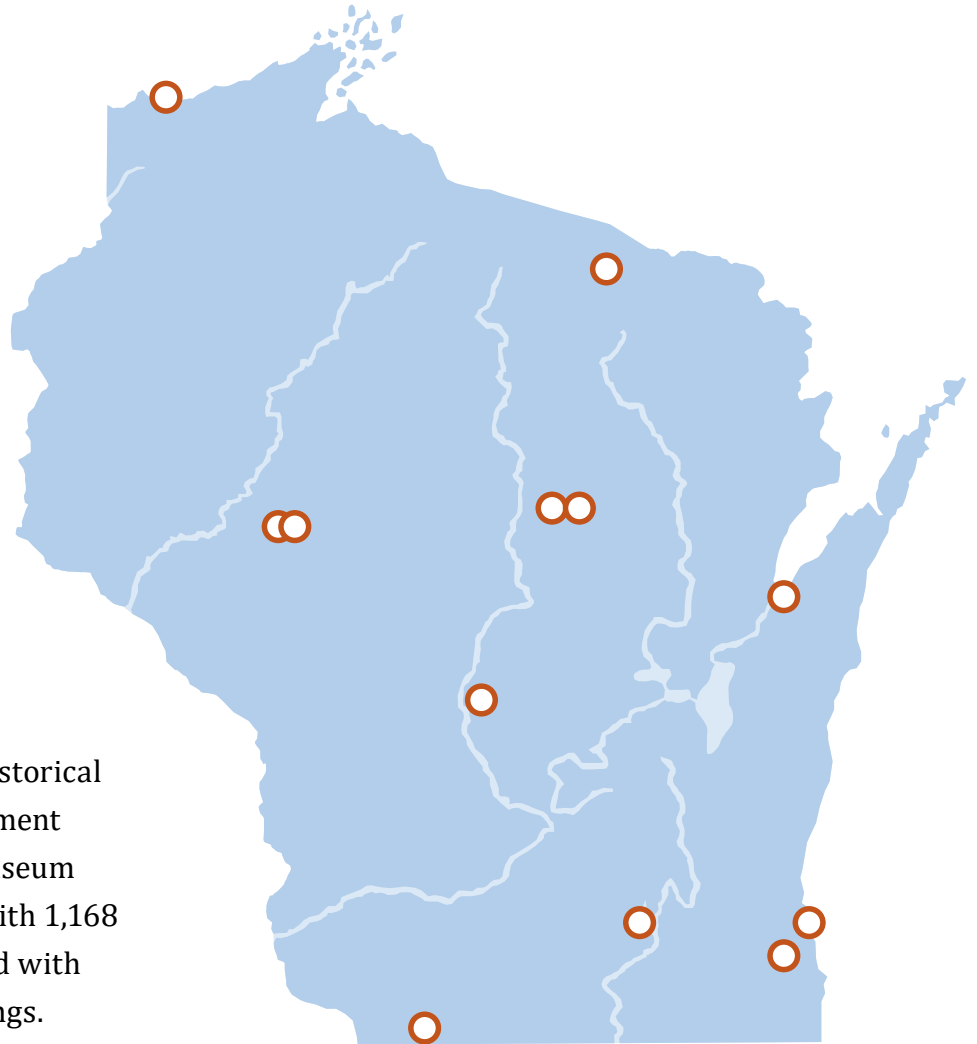
Treaty rights, Indian removal, assimilation, boarding schools, economic drivers of colonialism, diversity among and between American Indians, economic contributions of Nations

The role of culture and community among Indigenous peoples

Language is culture—importance of community for cultural vitality

Language, survival, resilience, self-determination, responsibility to protect and preserve language and culture, roles and responsibility across generations, traditional knowledge, progress, innovations and cultural revitalization

K–12 Education & Teen Voices



As part of the Wisconsin Historical Society’s statewide engagement efforts in 2019, the New Museum Education Team engaged with 1,168 students in grades K–12 and with teenagers in informal settings.



I feel important and like I’m making a difference.

—Jenna, student, D.C. Everest High School, Schofield

K–12 Sessions Overview

Communities visited during 2019 included: Cambridge, Hazel Green, Franklin, Ringle, Schofield, Necedah, Eagle River, Milwaukee (Whittier and Milwaukee Indian School), Green Bay, Superior, Eau Claire, and Altoona.

The goal was two-fold: first, to gauge student reactions to the concepts for a new museum and, second, to collect new ideas. Staff presented four different styles of listening sessions, each designed to meet the developmental needs of the specific audiences. Each session engaged students in age-appropriate activities from coloring to inquiry-based games. K–12 sessions were conducted on school grounds in a variety of areas, from classrooms to gymnasiums. Release forms for image and audio use were distributed to parents/guardians in advance of the school visits.



K-2

The K-2 sessions included discussion about the idea of Wisconsin as the place students live. Kindergarteners are still developing their sense of place in the community and have a difficult time with abstracts. First- and second-graders are better able to grasp the meaning of being a “Wisconsinite” and what that means to them. Students were shown a variety of objects from the Hands-On History teaching collection that represented the story of Wisconsin. Using the inquiry method, a museum educator guided students to discover what objects are, why we save them, and how they might end up in a museum.



Students were shown a slideshow of images curated for the “What Makes Wisconsin, Wisconsin?” lesson plan and asked to focus on one image that spoke to them as about the place they live. Students were also asked to pick one thing they love about Wisconsin to color, as well as the first letter of the thing they are drawing (Wisconsin A-Z). Photos were taken of the students’ work and the students (where possible regarding releases), and the teacher was given a survey to complete. Students at this age were not surveyed.



Grades 3-5

The 3-5 sessions included discussion centered on the purposes of museums. As students learned about the basics of object theory and the Society’s intention to build a new museum, they offered suggestions for content and were shown a variety of objects themed around late-19th/early 20th

century immigration. Students at this level have firm ideas about Wisconsin and their place in it, as well as cognitive and social skills that allow for more in-depth exploration of the “What Makes Wisconsin, Wisconsin?” idea. Students played an immigration game, assuming the role of a family coming to Wisconsin: What do they keep? What do they leave behind? They chose from a variety of objects they had been introduced to earlier and scores were tallied at the end. If there was time remaining, students were shown a range of images as above and asked to focus on one that spoke to them. After these sessions, students and teachers were given a survey to fill out.

Grades 6–8

The grade 6–8 sessions began with a similar discussion of object theory and the role of museums in general, eliciting responses from the participants. Some students watched the “Share Your Voice” introductory video. All students played the immigration game as described above. Using a simple “Heads Down, Hands Up” voting method, students were asked their opinion on selected storylines from the new museum project. These votes were tallied and shared with the class immediately. If there was time after the voting session, the students were shown the “What Makes Wisconsin, Wisconsin?” images and asked to focus on one that spoke to them. Finally, all students and teachers completed a post-visit survey.

Grades 9–12

Students in grades 9-12 engaged in some of the same material discussions on object theory, interactives, and digital media as in grades 6-8. The decision was made to treat these sessions to resemble the statewide engagement sessions, with students first viewing the video and then engaging with renderings of the museum galleries. They also interacted with museum collection objects and were asked to consider “What Makes Wisconsin, Wisconsin?” to them. Additionally, due to the lengthier time frame, some high school sessions included the “Immigration Game.”



Findings

K-2 STUDENTS articulated many basic facts about Wisconsin and their immediate surroundings. They tend to “know what they know” and in general liked hands-on activities and open spaces for exploration. As a group, they have shorter attention spans and enjoy compelling video and easy-to-use digital interfaces. Their drawings indicated knowledge of the basics of Wisconsin iconography as well as showing what they think is important. Images of cheese, water, trees, and the Packers were the most popular picks for representing Wisconsin.

STUDENTS IN GRADES 3-5 also tended toward iconography, with drawings representing dairy, the Northwoods, natural resources, and sports teams. However, the post-visit survey data tended to draw out deeper thoughts and ideas of likes and dislikes about museums. Of the many choices given through post-visit surveys, students most often chose “Displays of cool things (91%)” and “Learning new things (77%)” as what they liked most about museums.

STUDENTS IN GRADES 6-8 have an expanded view of both themselves and the world around them. They may have difficulty recalling specific events in Wisconsin history, but they were well-versed in the familiar tropes of cheese, dairy, cows, and the Packers. These students engaged in a discussion and opinion poll on actual storylines. The results of the storyline voting were overall positive, with few “no” votes. Storylines that received fewer yes votes included: Cultural Gathering Spots, Conservation, Seasons, and Festivals. Storylines that generated the greatest enthusiasm included Hunting/Fishing, Immigration, and Native American Migrations.



STUDENTS IN GRADES 9–12 are more able to make their own decisions on whether or not they would attend a museum over another form of attraction. Similar to students in grades 6-8, they may have difficulty recalling specific instances of Wisconsin history. Students at this age evinced a high degree of engagement with the Immigration game, highlighting the need for interactivity with the museum. This age group appreciated the ability to explore and learn through interaction with the objects of the past. One key takeaway from the age group is that many students have difficulty expressing what their area of the state is locally known for, and that opens the opportunity to engage them through local history exhibitions.

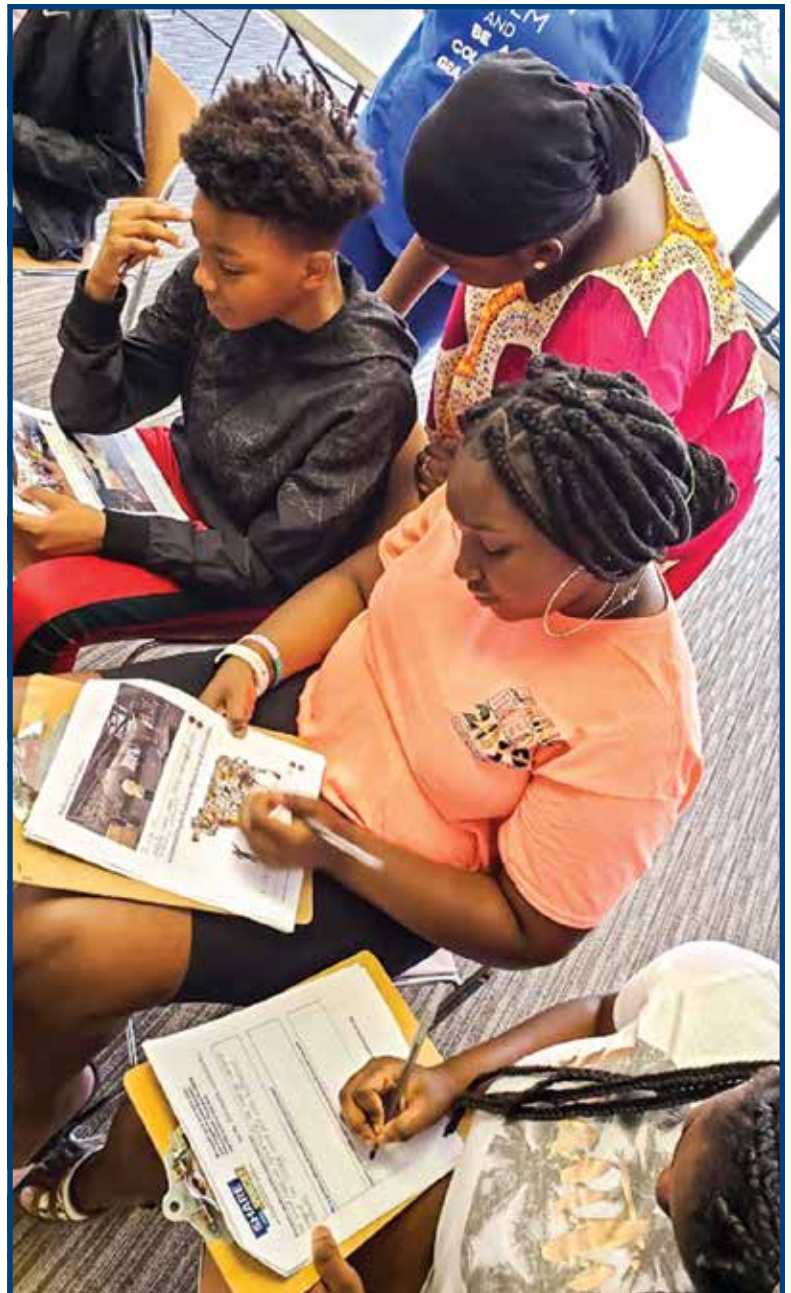
STORIES	Yes!		OK		NOPE	
DELLS	16	14	9	5	1	5
CHEESE	12	9	11	14	3	2
IMMIGRATION	15	17	9	8	2	3
NATIVE IMMIGRATION	13	8	15	14	0	6
CULTURAL GATHERING PLACES	8	7	14	15	8	6
LGBTQ+	6	8	9	9	9	10
FUGITIVE SLAVE ACT	7	23	7	5	1	1
CIVIL RIGHTS	20	17	9	12	2	0
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE	20	17	8	10	1	0
CONSERVATION ENVIRONMENTALISM	13	6	9	16	3	6
SEASONS	10	10	6	3	2	11
SPORTS	18	10	4	8	3	7
HUNTING/FISHING	16	13	8	11	1	3
FISH FRY	4	7	9	6	15	11
FESTIVALS	17	18	9	6	1	2

Given the option of selecting more than one response, 94% chose more than one thing they liked about museums. The overwhelming majority of students, 77%, said that museums are places where they can learn new things or learn things in a new way. While the idea of technology and digital screens appealed to students, hands-on activities and artifacts were the preference. As one high school student stated, “You need more hands-on rather than screens.”

Teen Sessions Overview

Teen listening sessions were held at Edgewood College in Madison as part of the Black History Education Conference, at Crandon High School, at the Urban Underground youth center in Milwaukee, and at the National History Day competition in Maryland with the Wisconsin NHD finalists. The Society also convened a separate Teen Advisory Council to advise on content development and experience design.

Overall, students were enthusiastic; however, constructive criticism can be found even in their positivity for what they expect of a new Wisconsin History Museum. Students indicated they wanted a museum that would share diverse stories and take on challenging topics. In teen sessions, students suggested featuring young voices who are current history-makers making a difference in their communities today.



Teens participating in Milwaukee sessions focused on the importance of exploring the history and current issue of segregation in their city. Teens talked passionately about how they experience racism in the form of vandalized school projects, issues with police, and bathroom stall doors being taken away. In the middle school storyline voting, students expressed preference for storylines about the American Indian Movement, Fugitive Slave Act, and the environmental conservation movement.

Interactivity was important for older students, too. Screens and digital media can be interactive, but youth expressed the importance of mechanical interactives as well. The game used to introduce the idea of museums and collections was filled with hands-on teaching collections students could interact with directly.



In looking at the renderings, teens noted they were concerned about seating and comfort when reviewing concept design for the introductory and community theater spaces. A couple of students also started a great conversation about how the renderings were purposefully designed to show the diversity of life in Wisconsin and the people who live here, but there are language barriers that exist. They asked how the Society plans to translate that information both onsite and online.

Certain renderings did not resonate with young people; for example, most students were unfamiliar with the concept of supper clubs. In one teen session, a student said he knew what supper clubs were but described a family restaurant instead. In response, teens suggested including the story of supper clubs but highlighting Culver's as a dining experience.



This audience had mixed reviews of the orientation space. Some liked the idea of the technology and interactivity, while others joked they were afraid they would break the screens, especially if they reach the floor. Teens also were concerned that maintaining the technology would be difficult and that the technology would become dated. Lastly, teachers and youth with family members on the autism spectrum expressed concern that the orientation space would be sensory overload.



Concerns were shared about field trip fees and busing costs. Regardless of the museum the Society builds, there will be cost barriers that keep some school districts and Wisconsinites from attending.

In teen sessions, it became clear that students in this stage of their lives have a different concept of identity as “a Wisconsinite” than adults do or may not connect as strongly to that identity. This was especially true with students in Milwaukee, who had strong attachments to the city itself instead.

This museum is being built for today’s youth, so their feedback will be considered equally with adult feedback. It was clear from their feedback the importance of building a museum where young people see themselves in the story. Capturing their voices and feedback will lead to continued buy-in from those young people in the years ahead.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to our sponsors and local partners!

SPONSORS

MGE Foundation

Kohler Trust for Preservation

Summit Credit Union

National Guardian Life Insurance

SCHOOLS & YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

Aldo Leopold Community School, Green Bay

Arts @ Large

Altoona High School

Cambridge Elementary

D.C. Everest Middle and High Schools, Schofield (Wausau area)

Edgewood College

Goodrich Elementary, Milwaukee

Indian Community School of Milwaukee

Longfellow Elementary, Eau Claire

Necedah Elementary, Middle, and High Schools

Northern Lights Elementary, Superior

Northland Pines Elementary, Middle, and High Schools, Eagle River

Riverside Elementary, Ringle

Rogers Street Elementary, Milwaukee

Southwestern Wisconsin Elementary and Middle Schools, Hazel Green

Superior Middle School

Urban Underground, Milwaukee

Whittier Elementary, Milwaukee

Teen Advisory Council, Wisconsin Historical Society

LOCAL HOSTS & PARTNERS

Appleton Historical Society	Jewish Museum Milwaukee	Phipps Center for the Arts
Badger Rock Neighborhood Center	Juneau County Historical Society	Platteville Public Library
Barron County Historical Society	Kenosha History Center	Racine Heritage Museum
Beloit Historical Society	Kenosha Public Museums	Racine Public Library
Cameron Senior Center	L.E. Phillips Memorial Public Library	Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior
Chippewa Valley Museum	La Crosse County Historical Society	Chippewa Tribal Council
Civil War Museum, Kenosha	La Crosse Public Library	Red Cliff Tribal Historic Preservation
College of Menominee Nation	Lac Courte Oreilles Tribal Governing	Office
Douglas County Historical Society	Board	Richard I. Bong Veterans Historical
Eagle River Historical Society	Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake	Center
Fond du Lac County Historical	Superior Ojibwe Tribal Council	Rock County Historical Society
Society	Lac du Flambeau Tribal Historic	Sheboygan County Historical Society
Fond du Lac Public Library	Preservation Office	St. Croix County Historical Society
George W. Brown, Jr. Ojibwe Museum	Latino Chamber of Commerce of	St. Francis Historical Society
& Cultural Center	Dane County	St. Joseph Catholic Church
Goodman Community Center	Manitowoc County Historical Society	Superior Public Museums
Grant County Historical Society	Marathon County Historical Society	United Community Center
Harry & Rose Samson Family Jewish	Menominee Indian Tribe of	UW-Platteville History Department
Community Center	Wisconsin (MITW) Chairman's Office	Wade House
Hatch Public Library	MITW Historic Preservation	Warner Park Community Recreation
Heritage Rock County	Department	Center
History Museum at the Castle	Milwaukee County Historical Society	Waukesha County Historical Society
Indian Community School of	Neville Public Museum	Wisconsin Black Historical Society
Milwaukee	Old World Wisconsin	Wisconsin Indian Education
Islamic Resource Center	Olson Memorial Library	Association
		Wisconsin Maritime Museum



**BY THE PEOPLE,
FOR THE PEOPLE**

**Statewide Engagement for a
New Wisconsin History Museum**

**Summary Analysis Report
October 2018–September 2019**



**WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**