

## **ITP Final Report 2025**

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The International Training Programme (ITP) was a highly valued experience to me because it created the right conditions for expertise exchange. We had the opportunity to speak with a wide range of experts from the British Museum and to exchange knowledge with international fellows, which enriched the theoretical framework we use at work and allowed direct comparison of approaches among colleagues who face similar challenges in different contexts, while also revealing smart solutions in action.



The Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas was generous with access and discussion, facilitating visits to a great number of institutional partners for dialogue and practical learning. For me, SDCELAR was the heart of the experience. The Centre supports collaborative research with communities across Latin America and with diaspora groups, linking collections, archives, and living knowledge. Its partnerships grow across borders without losing sight of local responsibilities, and its projects demonstrate how research, care, and interpretation can be built through shared authority, clear consent processes, and co-authorship. The team works with multilingual outputs, open dialogue about provenance, and practical training for partners, which makes the work rigorous and usable. The clarity of purpose is visible in planning, in how consent is recorded, in writing practices, and in review processes. This approach strengthens my commitment to bring the same level of intention to my home institution.



Equally important was the care with which SDCELAR planned activities together and positioned this work within the British Museum's internal goals. We mapped objectives, roles, and timelines and identified where my existing expertise could contribute to current projects. This integration allowed the sharing of methods and materials from the National Museum for Indigenous Peoples and made that contribution visible in the museum's planning cycle. Being included in goal setting signalled genuine respect for my professional expertise and created a strong sense of belonging to the museum's work. It was professionally affirming and personally very gratifying.

The Manchester placement made the value of co-curation and decolonial storytelling concrete in daily practice. At the Whitworth participation functioned as a working method rather than a single outreach event. A recent exhibition on addiction was co-curated with six people in recovery who were remunerated and held real decision-making power over narrative, selection, and interpretation. The group chose works from collections storage and set aside the artist's name and the larger art historical frame. They read the objects through what each piece sparked during their own treatment and the labels carried personal voices that named pain, fear, hope, memory, and doubt they faced in an open language. The result humanised participants as authors of lived experience, resulting in a human relatable exhibit, showing that care, social responsibility and accountability can be built into everyday museum work.

Manchester Museum extended and deepened this lesson through the South Asia Gallery. Co-curation there involved a large collective that was paid for its time and given real agency over narrative and selection. The gallery brought together objects from Manchester and from the British Museum with new commissions and personal items, and it invited more than one voice and more than one kind of knowledge to be present on the wall. Labels were co-authored and the storyline was openly polyphonic. The space made room for disagreement and for nuance without losing clarity or design quality. Most importantly, the gallery showed that painful debates and open wounds about the lived impact of colonization can be addressed with respect and humanity, without diluting the violence being confronted or shielding audiences who continue to benefit from its legacies.



The outcome was not a set of new hands-on skills but a richer toolbox of ideas. In preventive and interventive conservation, simple adjustments in the techniques used can reduce risk during rotations and loans. In mounting and interpretation, low-cost choices make narratives more inclusive and readable without sacrificing precision. In documentation, specific fields and notes bring cultural knowledge into the record rather than leaving it to dissociation. Taken together, these changes improve daily work for staff and visitors and create space for community voices in routine decisions. Back home the focus will be on conceptual changes with institutional impact. A policy for collections auditing will set a regular review cycle and a clear path from findings to action, define responsibilities, and indicate how items that require community consultation are flagged and addressed in a respectful timeframe. A straightforward framework for co-curation with Indigenous communities will set steps from first

conversation to opening day and beyond, name decision points and consent needs, and define authorship, credit, language use, and care for sensitive knowledge. These frameworks give colleagues a common map, fit available resources, and support steady change.



Not everything observed at the British Museum can be used or implemented back home, since legal context and funding conditions differ. This is why the international cohort was so valuable. Colleagues with similar climates, budgets, and policy constraints shared examples that travel well and were candid about what does not. A simple template that clears a documentation bottleneck is more valuable than a large-scale solution that cannot be implemented. Ongoing exchange with this network will help us share knowledge, save time and help avoid avoidable mistakes.

SDCELAR remains the key reference from the programme. Its practice shows that decolonial work is not a slogan but a sequence of choices that can be written down and shared, supported by a way of listening that holds space for more than one truth. The Manchester experience also remains central, especially the clarity around paid participation, shared authorship, and visible plurivocal interpretation. On a personal level the programme renewed a sense of purpose. Encountering a collection of objects linked to my Macushi heritage and discussing it with attentive colleagues was moving. During the programme, a call was convened with Macushi community members in Brazil and Guiana and with the Instituto Insikiran at the Federal University of Roraima to discuss projects related to the collection, which reinforced SDCELAR's commitment to empowering the communities it works with.

Seeing professionals in very different places wrestling with the same questions, and willing to share what worked and what did not, was energising. The programme ends with a trusted network that can review drafts, comment on forms and labels, and offer context checks, and that support will be reciprocated.

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The most important change is not a single project but a more confident way to argue for policies that align museum work with the people it serves. The ITP provided stronger examples, better language, and a community that will hold the work to account. That is the kind of learning that endures.