OpenGLAM admirably counters the enclosures of copyright and even the exclusions of who can physically get to or afford to enter a museum. But it also carries its own set of risks, from further circulating sacred or secret indigenous artifacts or remains, to reproducing racism. Inherited metadata here serves as a microcosm of the power dynamics, the risks--and the great potential--of the mass digitization of cultural heritage objects that is underway globally.

Metadata has historically existed behind closed doors, as the professional--rather than public--information about the (digital) object at hand. In the analog realm, it was written by and for collectors to aid classification, archiving, and curating. In the digital realm, information scientists help structure and standardize metadata for interoperability and data stewardship. Rendered technical, it often eludes public interest or attention. But, as the internet explodes in content, information about information becomes increasingly relevant, significant--and contested. Who gets to describe the world’s cultural heritage? Who gets to decide what needs to be known--and how? Who gets to call what culture?

This Interactive Activity will invite audience participants to engage with the metadata of prominent and provocative digital cultural heritage objects licensed as open access. The session will begin with a brief introduction to Curationist’s metadata schema (which uses Wikidata as controlled vocabulary) and the Community Metadata Generator OpenGLAM OER platform, and then to the Traditional Knowledge and Biocultural Labels and Notices (introduced by the designers themselves). Then, the audience members will be grouped in different, self-identified domains of education, ranging from levels to disciplines to topics. Working in facilitated groups, audience participants will consider which TK/BC Notices might be applied to which digital objects, and how such Notices could ground generative, critical open educational resources.

Finally, the interactive activity will culminate in a moderated, multimedia dialogue the urgency for online materials that reflect and speak to the diversity of knowledges, experiences, and cultural heritages of the world’s Global Majority. How is it that OER and OpenGLAM risk reproducing power asymmetries benefitting English- and other dominant-language speakers, the elite, or white/colonial settler/Eurocentric biases? How can educators and OER advocates have a conversation about racism and unacknowledged white supremacy in GLAM collections without deleting what information remains about the objects in question?

This Interactive Activity addresses UNESCO’s OER Recommendations directly, particularly: #1, #3, and #5--from the perspective of indigenous data sovereignty and decoloniality. For instance, the Recommendations begin with the Preamble of UNESCO’s Constitution itself, which affirms, “that the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern.” This is admirable in its commitment to culture, education, humanity, justice, liberty, peace, human dignity, sacred duty, and mutual aid and benefit. Yet, ‘diffusion’ of which ‘culture’ out from where and to where? This post-war, postcolonial liberal internationalism risks connoting a Eurocentric geo-spatiality wherein culture arises from core civilizations and diffuses out from there. Meanwhile, invocations of ‘man’ risks universalizing an individualized, masculine norm that conflates the diversity of human experiences and perspectives. Finally, this presupposes the modern nation-state as a discrete unit of agency and scale of reference, while further overshadowing indigenous, African Diasporic, nomadic, migrant, and plurinational communities of the Global Majority.
We introduce the OpenGLAM OER Community Metadata Generator at large and the TK/BC Notices in particular as key mechanisms for **UNESCO’s OER Recommendation #1 Building capacity of stakeholders to create, access, re-use, adapt and redistribute OER**—that centers and advances indigenous data sovereignty. In the face of rigid intellectual property regime constraints, these Labels assert indigenous reclamation over their digital content. Working deliberately in the educational rather than the legal terrain, the Labels announce what is too sacred or secretive for non-indigenous audiences, what is verified (or not) by the indigenous communities themselves, and even what seasons or genders are allowed for certain digital, audio, visual files. The Labels, and thus the Notices, serve as bridges back to the indigenous knowledge-holders, as direct descendants from whom the objects were originally taken. In this way, they forge relationships where coloniality severed them.

In this way, the Labels and Notices, within the OpenGLAM OER context, advance UNESCO OER Recommendation #3: **Encouraging effective, inclusive and equitable access to quality OER.** The stakes of metadata get higher when the colonialist origins and legacies of collections come to light. As many indigenous, Black, and colonized communities have long noted, and as critical theorists have reiterated, museums served as arms of empire. Arms that reached across oceans and continents, arms that took and carried away, arms that built collections back in imperial centers, arms that painstakingly examined and classified, and arms that boasted and exoticized. The metadata records these layers of taking, in explicit and implicit ways. Provenance proudly announces the elite who obtained, owned, and donated the treasure. Titles often summarize and emblazon the colonial gaze. Even the location taxonomy often further erases the indigenous and diasporic geographies that generated the object at hand, reducing the place of plunder to its modern-day nation state.

Yet, metadata holds so much. For all the cultural dispossession of colonialism, metadata holds on to precious bits of information of what was not destroyed outright. Snippets of knowledge that could be reconstructed in a crumb-trail back to cultural recovery or perhaps even repatriation. Metadata holds so much knowledge, so many erasures, and so much potential. It is dynamic, not static. There exists a generative tension between the need to standardize for interoperability and searchability, and the need to recover cultural and ontological diversity. How can metadata extricate from and dismantle colonialism’s Doctrine of Discovery while expanding discoverability? One of the many ways this could unfold is through interactive, dialogic metadata layering, grounded in principles of anti-oppression and knowledge-diversity.

Layered metadata allows for constructive as well as critical dialogue. This leads to how this OpenGLAM OER Community Metadata Generator and TK/BC Notices in particular can help advance UNESCO’s OER Recommendation #5: **Promoting and reinforcing international cooperation.** How can global OER and OpenGLAM communities have honest conversations about racism and unacknowledged white supremacy in academic libraries, archives, and museum collections without deleting what information remains about the objects in question? How can the cultural artifacts and masterpieces be re-contextualized by and for the descendants of the communities from which they were taken? This will take layers of international, inter-local, intercultural dialogue, deliberation, collaboration, and cooperation, on such topics as the **CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance.**
With this OEGC Interactive Activity, we aim to learn from audience participants and how this Community Metadata Generator platform could be most useful for them. As a sort of beta-user-testing, we plan to braid this feedback into the user-experience design of this platform itself, so that it develops as a robust site for making and sharing OER. Accordingly, this session aims to build a community of praxis of OER advocates and practitioners working with OpenGLAM fora who are dedicated to indigenous data sovereignty, decoloniality, educational justice, and open knowledge.

Other authors/presenters:

- **Dr. Maui Hudson** (Local Contexts co-founder; Global Indigenous Data Alliance co-leader and co-founder of CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance)
- **Dr. Jane Anderson** (Local Contexts co-founder; New York University Law Prof)
- **Sharon Mizota** (DEI Metadata Consultant, Metadata Schema Designer at MHz Curationist)
- **Virginia Poundstone** (Director of Content & Product, MHz Curationist)

UNESCO OER Recommendation Action Area proposal relates to: (Refer to [UNESCO OER Recommendation](#) to learn about the action areas.)

- **#1:** Building capacity of stakeholders to create, access, re-use, adapt and redistribute OER
- **#3:** Encouraging effective, inclusive and equitable access to quality OER
- **#5:** Promoting and reinforcing international cooperation