1. About the Redpath Museum

The Redpath Museum is both a museum and an academic department. Our core values model what we teach – biodiversity and cultural diversity. The museum is a rich repository of knowledge and educational resources on Canada’s natural history and world cultures. We share these resources through educational programs in the museum and at local schools. The academic unit fosters understanding and appreciation of the diversity of our biological, geological, and cultural heritage through scientific research, collections-based study, and education.

Demographics

The Redpath Museum is one of the oldest museums in Canada (est. 1882) which poses unique challenges for us when it comes to energy efficiency and upgrading our building systems. We have close to three million objects in our collection ranging from fossils, ancient antiquities, specimens, and the world’s largest shell collection. Our team consists of 8 administrative staff and 7 academic staff, receiving over 45,000 visitors every year. In our space, we offer approximately 5 workshops and talks per week, and operate 6 research labs.

Sustainability Mission – what we offer to sustainability at McGill

We play an important role as the bridge between the public and the university. We want to use our unique position and rich legacy to communicate McGill’s commitments to sustainability, while encouraging our guests to apply what they’ve learned about natural history and cultural appreciation.

Current initiatives

We cultivate two thriving gardens on campus: a medicinal herb garden near Burnside, and a pollinator garden in front of the museum. Many of our temporary exhibits focus on sustainability themes such as the “Water is Life”, and “Diversity in STEMM” exhibits. Our staff is environmentally minded, spearheading initiatives such as reducing printing, and setting up a compost bin in our kitchen. Our labs try to operate as responsibly as possible by avoiding equipment duplication, purchasing eco-friendly materials when possible, and providing online lab manuals as opposed to printed. We recently underwent a project to consolidate our collections, improving the efficiency of our specimen storage.
2. University Context

McGill adopted a Climate and Sustainability Action Plan that covers the 2017-2020 period. It outlines the University’s commitment to reach two ambitious long-term targets:

- Achieve carbon neutrality by 2040
- Attain a Platinum sustainability rating by 2030.

To start closing the gap towards these targets, the Action Plan also includes 22 actions to be implemented by 2020, separated among 5 categories:

- Research
- Education
- Connectivity
- Operations
- Governance & Administration

Beyond the actions laid out in the Climate and Sustainability Action Plan, a widespread effort from specific units is essential to advance the climate and sustainability agenda at McGill and to reach our long-term targets. Consequently, we are writing our own Climate & Sustainability Action Plan that is relevant to our own needs and challenges as a museum.
3. **2020 Action Plan**

Instituting sustainability in museums poses unique challenges and opportunities: activities such as preserving collections can incur a large ecological footprint, but we are well positioned to educate diverse audiences through our exhibits. In keeping with this, the Société des Musées Québécois has laid out 5 principles specific to museums, guiding sustainable development:

1. Equity and Social Solidarity
2. Participation and Engagement
3. Access to Knowledge
4. Protection of Cultural Heritage
5. Responsible Production & Consumption

We have taken these 5 principles into account in crafting our Sustainability Action Plan, and additionally hope to encompass the three pillars of sustainability – environmental, social, and economic.

**Research**

1. Research and implement best practices for maintaining exhibits in a sustainable manor
   - Benchmark and reach out to other museums for advice on low-impact alternatives to chemicals, paints, etc., to be used in exhibits
   - Work with the Office for Students Disabilities (OSD) to receive feedback on the accessibility considerations we would like to include in an exhibit redesign
   - Work with the office of Social Equity and Diversity Education (SEDE) to integrate principles of equity and diversity into our collections

**Education**

2. Ensure all crafts and activities use materials that are reusable, re-used, or recyclable
   - Complete an audit of all craft activities done at the museum
   - Find alternatives for wasteful materials
3. Create a new exhibit on the theme of Sustainability at McGill
   - Collaborate with the McGill Office of Sustainability to create an interactive exhibit on current initiatives and the road to carbon neutrality
Connectivity

4. Encourage visitors to walk, bike, or take public transit when visiting the museum
   - Complete a staff survey of how our team travels to work
   - Post the results in the museum and encourage our visitors to choose modes of transportation with smaller ecological footprints

5. Provide information to visitors about our new initiatives
   - Create a sustainability page on our website
   - Post signs about our actions around the museum to inform and encourage visitors to take similar actions

Operations

6. Minimize energy usage
   - Replace lights with LED fixtures and bulbs where possible
   - Introduce power bars in kitchens and shared areas with multiple appliances, and shut off at night
   - Explore purchasing an electric car for outreach activities, decreasing transportation emissions stemming from external workshops

Governance and Administration

7. Strike a sustainability committee to oversee this action plan
   - Meet once per week

8. Encourage sustainable event planning in our space
   - Create a sustainable events policy for events taking place at the museum
4. Implementation

Monitoring

Actions in this strategy will be assigned to individual staff and faculty within the unit to oversee the effective implementation of our goals. One of our actions is to strike a sustainability committee which will be able to keep track of the progress of the strategy, and find new avenues for improvement.

Partnerships

As part of our research into sustainable exhibits, we will be reaching out to other museums who have made strides to include sustainability in their activities. We hope to foster these partnerships and share new ideas.

We also be partnering with the resources available to us around campus including the McGill Office of Sustainability (MOOS), Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), and the office of Social Equity and Diversity Education (SEDE).

Communications

We will be communicating our sustainability efforts through our website and social media. We are also hoping to post information about our actions in the museum, to inform guests of our progress.