

# **Guelph Museums Collection Management Policy**

## **1.0 Introduction**

Guelph Museums' collection management policy sets forth the goals and standards of Guelph Museums with respect to managing its collections. The policy outlines responsibilities for all collection-related activities at Guelph Civic Museum, McCrae House and Locomotive 6167.

### **1.1 Legal authority**

Guelph Museums is the repository for a collection that is representative of Guelph's history, under the trusteeship of the Guelph Museums Advisory Committee, which is appointed by Guelph City Council. The collection is held and managed in the public trust.

## **2.0 Responsibility of staff and volunteers**

The Museum Manager is ultimately responsible for the collection and, with the Curator, ensures collection management policies, guidelines, procedures, and standards are developed and implemented. The Curator is responsible for ensuring anyone who works with the collection is aware of policies and procedures. Staff and volunteers must follow these procedures and standards in a consistent manner.

Staff and volunteers strive to maintain artifacts and collection records in an environment conducive to preservation. The Curator will ensure the collection is inspected regularly for evidence of damage or deterioration. Any staff member or volunteer who discovers a preservation issue or damage to an artifact must document and report it immediately to the Curator or the Collections and Research Coordinator.

All staff members are responsible for maintaining the security of the collection. Staff and volunteers must document and report immediately any confirmed loss to the Curator, who will report to the Manager. In some cases (e.g., [Firearms Act](#)) legal considerations may require police also be notified.

The Curator ensures artifacts which are potentially hazardous to people, the environment, or the collection, are properly handled and stored. All safety regulations including WHMIS and the City of Guelph Asbestos Management Plan must be followed.

The Curator and the Collections and Research Coordinator will ensure staff and volunteers who have physical access to the collection are trained in and use appropriate care and handling procedures.

### **2.1 Ethics**

Guelph Museums acquires artifacts and/or collections only if it has adequate resources (human, financial, temporal, and spatial) to document, preserve, store, research, exhibit, and interpret the material being considered.

Guelph Museums does not acquire material:

- i which has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of provincial or national statute;
- ii which has questionable, undetermined or unethical history of ownership;

- iii which has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (or any similar statutes) as ratified by Canada June 28, 1978;
- iv if, in addition to or beyond the preceding clauses, there is any reason to believe the object's recovery involved recent unscientific handling and/or intentional destruction or damage of archaeological/historical sites or illegal/clandestine excavations;
- v which may constitute a conflict of interest related to the issue of personal collecting. Personal collecting is defined as the acquisition by Guelph Museums employees and Advisory Committee members of an object similar or related to that which Guelph Museums collects or intends to acquire. All staff and Advisory Committee members are required to declare a conflict of interest when such a situation arises. Staff and Advisory Committee members are required to offer Guelph Museums the opportunity to acquire the artifact(s) in question.

### **3.0 Collection Development**

The development of the Guelph Museums collection aligns with the focus established by the Museum's mandate.

Development of the collection will meet both immediate and long-term objectives of Guelph Museums.

Development will build on strengths and address weaknesses of the collection as determined by curatorial staff and will consider current and future initiatives.

It is recognized the priorities will change over time and according to storage capabilities, future exhibitions, and the recognition of deficiencies in the collection. The purchase and/or conservation of objects acquired to address gaps in the collection are financially supported by the Moon-MacKeigan Artifact Fund.

The responsibility for the development of the permanent collection resides with the Museum Manager, Curator, and Collections and Research Coordinator. Each assumes an active role in the community, maintaining contacts with potential donors, being aware of auction contents, tracking community events and the closure of businesses and institutions, etc.

### **4.0 Acquisition**

Guelph Museums collects objects, photographs, and print, audio-visual and born-digital materials pertaining to the history of Guelph, in accordance with its mandate. The collection is for the purpose of documentation, preservation, research, exhibition, and interpretation for all generations.

Within the museum's operating budget, funds are provided for acquisition, cataloging, storage, and care of materials.

#### **4.1 Criteria for acquisition**

Guelph Museums strives to acquire artifacts that are complete and in good condition, and for which provenance is well documented. The decision to acquire an artifact is based upon the following considerations:

- i Constitute an exemplary sample of an aspect of Guelph history currently not represented in the collection
- ii Is in danger of loss or destruction

- iii Is directly relevant to current research, exhibition, or interpretation programs
- iv Is well documented
- v Is in good to excellent condition

For specific collections, Guelph Museums acquires material using the following criteria:

**Guelph Civic Museum:**

- i artifacts which are specific to Guelph;
- ii artifacts produced in Guelph;
- iii artifacts related to people, places, and events in Guelph or which had an impact on the Guelph community.
- iv artifacts which are typical of Guelph as a community;
- v artifacts sold in Guelph;
- vi artifacts used in Guelph and/or owned by Guelph residents.

**McCrae House:**

- i artifacts owned and used by Lt. Col. John McCrae and/or pertaining to the life of Lt. Col. John McCrae;
- ii artifacts pertaining to the McCrae family;
- iii artifacts which were typical of the experience of:
  - a. The First World War (1914-1918)
  - b. The South African War (1899–1902)
- iv artifacts pertaining to McCrae House;
- v artifacts pertaining to the Lt. Col. McCrae Birthplace Society;
- vi items of Remembrance inspired by the legacy of Lt. Col. McCrae.

**Locomotive 6167:**

- i Artifacts associated with Locomotive 6167

## **4.2 Approval process for acquisition**

Acquisitions are ultimately the responsibility of the Museum Manager. The responsibility is delegated to the Curator. The decision to acquire an artifact is made by the Collections Committee, which includes the Manager, Curator, Collections and Research Coordinator, and up to two members of the Museum Advisory Committee. The Collections Committee may invite additional staff and community members to take part in committee meetings and artifact assessment processes, as determined by the Manager (i.e. individuals with unique knowledge and perspectives specific to the understanding of artifacts in context of Guelph history).

Guelph Museums receives donation offers through an established intake process. The Collections Committee meets to consider all offers of donation. A Temporary Custody Record is created in the collections management database to track all incoming donation offers made to Guelph Museums. On rare occasion, a prospective donor may bring an artifact to the museum for closer analysis. Should potential donations be left in the temporary care of the museum pending review by the Collections Committee, the donor must be issued a Temporary Custody Receipt.

If the artifact is declined by the Collections Committee, the owner of the artifact will be notified. If the item is physically in the temporary custody of the Museum, the donor will have 30 days to retrieve the object. If the object is not retrieved within 30 days, it may be disposed according to Guelph Museums guidelines and procedures.

If an artifact is accepted by the Collections Committee, a Deed of Gift must be signed to prove the transfer of ownership. In most cases, the donor will be asked to sign the Deed of Gift when the item is delivered to the museum. If the Deed of Gift is not signed at the time of delivery, the donor has six months to return the signed Deed of Gift to Guelph Museums. If the donor does not return the signed Deed of Gift within that period, the artifact will be returned. If the donor fails to retrieve the artifact, it may be disposed according to Guelph Museums guidelines and procedures.

### **4.3 Methods of acquisition**

Objects are acquired through gift or bequest, purchase, exchange, and transfer. Undocumented material found in the collection may also be considered for acquisition.

#### **Gift or Bequest**

A gift or bequest may be accepted from any source, including a staff member.

#### **Purchase**

Artifacts may be purchased by the Manager and curatorial staff from any reputable source.

Purchases over \$1,000.00 must be approved by the Manager.

#### **Exchange**

Exchanges between institutions may be arranged by the Curator with approval of the Manager, provided:

- i Both parties are in full agreement with the terms and conditions.
- ii Both the acquisition and the disposal of artifacts are documented for the permanent records.
- iii The removal of artifacts follows the established deaccessioning process.

#### **Transfer**

Guelph Museums may acquire artifacts from other institutions. The transfer must be supported with documentation.

#### **Found in the collection**

Objects that have been treated as artifacts but for which acquisition documentation cannot be found are designated “found in the collection.” Objects “found in the collection” will be reviewed by the Collections Committee. If accepted, the object will be accessioned and the accession number will include an “X” to indicate “found in the collection” status (e.g. [1987X.21.1](#)).

Objects “found in the collection” which are declined by the Collections Committee will be disposed according to Guelph Museums guidelines and procedures.

### **4.4 Income tax receipts and appraisals**

Once a year income tax receipts for artifacts are issued to all donors. Receipts reflect fair market value at the time of acquisition determined by appraisal.

Signed Deeds of Gifts are required before appraisals are undertaken and tax receipts issued.

All tax receipts are issued by the City of Guelph Finance Department.

Appraisals are conducted by a qualified appraiser acting at arm's length from Guelph Museums and the donor.

In rare circumstances, the Museum may consider acceptance of an appraisal that has been secured outside of the regular annual appraisal practice, provided the Museum can validate the qualifications of the appraiser and the fairness of the appraisal.

Museum staff will not endorse or recommend to the public a specific dealer, appraiser, or auctioneer.

Application for certification of Cultural Property for income tax purposes may be prepared for artifacts that appear to be of outstanding significance and national importance. The process is initiated by the Curator. All applications and correspondence will be submitted to the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board by the Museum Manager.

Tax receipts are not issued for objects donated to the Education Collection.

## **5.0 Documentation**

Guelph Museums accurately and thoroughly documents the collection to realize its value and significance. Documentation is essential for collection development, research, preservation, and interpretation. Documentation is the responsibility of the Curator, Collections and Research Coordinator, and Collections Assistant, and other designated staff, interns, and volunteers under the direction of curatorial staff.

Documentation includes information in written, electronic, audio visual and graphic form pertaining to the identity, locality, provenance, and transfer of legal title of artifacts in the collection, and other related information regarding significance, function, description, and condition.

When integrated into the collection, each artifact is described in sufficient detail to enable the detection of any deterioration. Any change in condition or treatment to an artifact will also be documented.

Temporary or permanent change in the status of an artifact, such as an outgoing loan, exhibition status, or deaccession is thoroughly documented.

Guelph Museums will use accepted and consistent standards, methods, and procedures to document the collection. Documentation is maintained as a permanent record. Typically, documentation itself is not considered part of the collection.

Legal documents pertaining to acquisitions must be kept in hard-copy form with a duplicate set stored in an off-site location. Copies of electronic records must be maintained and stored off-site.

Documentation is maintained in a secure and stable environment.

## **6.0 Preservation**

Guelph Museums has a responsibility to preserve its collection in perpetuity, except for objects designated as part of the Education Collection. This includes artifacts in storage, on exhibit, used for research, on loan, and in transit. All staff and volunteers will be trained in proper and current methods of care and handling of the collection, as it pertains to their area of work. In these activities, Guelph Museums staff will comply with the museum's Conservation Policy.

The preservation of the collection is the direct responsibility of the Curator and other designated staff. All staff and volunteers share this responsibility as their work engages the collection.

## **7.0 Use of Collection**

Guelph Museums is committed to long-term preservation of artifacts. A balance must be maintained between preservation of the collection and its use for research, exhibition, and educational, promotional, and commercial purposes. Guelph Museums acknowledges that access to and use of the collection by staff and members of the public increases the risk to artifacts and requires appropriate controls.

Access to the collection is provided through a searchable online database, exhibition, programs, events, publications, collection records, research files, visual resources, and consultation with curatorial staff. The Freedom of Information pursuant to the Municipal Act and Protection of Privacy and Copyright legislation restricts access to some information.

Guelph Museums respects the provisions of the Ontario Heritage Act, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and the [Wild Animals and Plant Protection Regulation of the International and Interprovincial Trade Act \(WAPPRITA\)](#)

Access to and handling of firearms is restricted under the [Firearms Act](#).

The collection must be organized and managed in such a way that it is readily accessible for all purposes consistent with the goals of the strategic plan for Guelph Museums.

### **7.1 Staff access to the collection**

The level of staff access to the collection is determined by the Curator. Staff and volunteers who handle artifacts must be appropriately trained and supervised.

### **7.2 Public use of the collection**

Guelph Museums allows limited use of its collection by the public for commercial and non-commercial purposes. This may involve physical or intellectual access to the collection.

Digital access to collection images and descriptions is available to the public through the online collection database, accessed through the Museum's website

Physical access to artifacts is provided through exhibition, programs, events, and tours. Other requests for physical access are considered individually (e.g. loans, individual requests, and fee-for-use situations).

Access to the collection through records, images, and other information may be requested for publication, research, websites, electronic media, display, promotional materials, personal use, media, films, and advertising.

Access to and use of the collection is at the discretion of the Curator and the Collections and Research Coordinator and is generally provided to any person who can demonstrate a need.

Determining factors include:

- i Condition of the artifact
- ii Risk to the artifact
- iii Location
- iv Security
- v Health and safety risks
- vi Copyright
- vii Intended use
- viii Expertise of the researcher
- ix Human and financial resources available

Access and the fee structure for commercial uses of the collection are governed by Guelph Museums Schedule of Fees and Charges.

Guelph Museums must be credited for any use of its collection with “Courtesy of Guelph Museums.”

### **7.3 Education Collection**

Guelph Museums recognizes the importance of experiential learning for its visitors. To support learning experiences while ensuring the integrity of the permanent collection, Guelph Museums collects and manages objects separate from the permanent collection to be used to enhance museum visits, school programs, outreach activities, and travelling exhibitions.

To be accepted into the Education Collection, material should reflect the following:

- i be in good to excellent condition
- ii be either original or reproduction
- iii reflect the programming needs of Guelph Museums
- iv be safe to use
- v not contravene any legislation

Guelph Museums may transfer artifacts that are deaccessioned from the permanent collection into the Education Collection for program use. The reason for a change of status must be documented. The decision to designate an artifact to/from the Education Collection will be made by the Museum Manager, Curator, and Collections and Research Coordinator.

All material (artifacts, videos, slides, printed materials, etc.) that forms the Education Collection is managed according to Guelph Museums collection management procedures and professional standards.

When an artifact in the Education Collection is no longer needed, no longer useful, or in poor condition it can be disposed by curatorial staff without undergoing a formal deaccession process.

#### **7.4 Reference Collection**

Guelph Museums recognizes the value of archival materials and artifacts for exhibition and research. Reference Collection materials can be handled by staff, volunteers, and the public. Ultimately, items in the Reference Collection may be expendable and can be removed from the collection for disposal at the discretion of curatorial staff.

Archival materials in the permanent collection can be deaccessioned from the Guelph Civic Museum, McCrae, and Locomotive 6167 collections and internally transferred to the Reference Collection, following established transfer processes.

### **8.0 Loans**

#### **8.1 Loans to Guelph Museums**

Guelph Museums borrows, for a specified time, artifacts for exhibition, study, or other purposes consistent with the Museum's mandate.

Loans are made to Guelph Museums by institutions and individuals. A loan agreement specifying intended use must be completed for such material and the transaction must be approved by the Curator or designate.

Guelph Museums will provide the same standard of care and security for objects on loan as it does for those in its collection. Treatment will not be undertaken on borrowed objects without prior written consent from the owner. Any treatments must be documented.

When Guelph Museums borrows material and exhibitions from another institution, it will follow the procedures prescribed by the lending institution. When Guelph Museums borrows material from individuals or from institutions with no lending procedures or forms, it will follow the procedures of Guelph Museums.

Incoming loans must be fully documented. The documentation will include one copy of the signed loan form and information relating to value and condition. This record becomes a permanent record.

#### **8.2 Loans from Guelph Museums**



Guelph Museums lends artifacts to other institutions. Loans are not normally made to individuals. The purpose of the loan must be consistent with the interests of Guelph Museums and not pose undue risk to the artifact. Loans are made for a specified time period.

The Curator is responsible for ensuring that those who borrow or otherwise use material for any purpose can provide necessary care. Individuals within both the borrowing and lending institutions taking responsibility for the transaction must be authorized to do so. All loans from Guelph Museums must be approved by the Curator.

Outgoing loans must be fully documented. The documentation will include one copy of the signed loan form and information relating to value and condition. This record becomes a permanent record.

Guelph Museums reserves the right not to lend artifacts or other materials.

## **9.0 Insurance**

Through the City of Guelph, Guelph Museums provides insurance for its collection and for loans to and from Guelph Museums. The Manager is responsible for the insurance of the collection at fair market value and acquiring additional coverage when necessary. The Curator is responsible for providing valuations for insurance purposes.

## **10.0 Deaccession & Disposal Procedure**

### **10.1 Deaccession**

Deaccessioning is a multi-step process that is carefully considered by the museum's curatorial staff, Collections Committee, Manager, and General Manager, Culture and Recreation. When thoughtfully undertaken the deaccession process is an integral part of responsible collections management.

### **10.2 Purpose and outcomes of deaccessioning**

The deaccession process ensures longevity, care, and public access of collections. Deaccessioning certain objects allows for the meaningful allocation of resources, responsible use of storage space, and enhancement of the Museum's ability to effectively grow the collection for future generations.

### **10.3 Deaccession process and documentation**

The process of deaccessioning an object will be made in accordance with the Canadian Museums Association's [Deaccession Guidelines](#), the Canadian Museum Association's [Ethics Guidelines](#), the International Council for Museums [Code of Ethics for Museums](#) and Guelph Museum's Collection Policy.

The process must be initiated with a written proposal and appropriate supporting documentation and a recommended means of disposition. The proposal must be brought forward to the Collections Committee for review and approval. Once approved, the Manager will forward the completed proposal to the General Manager, Culture and Recreation for review and final approval.

The process of deaccessioning and disposing of an object is carefully documented in the Museum's collections records. These records are permanently retained, even after an object is disposed from the Museum's collection.

### 10.5 Criteria for deaccession

Guelph Museums will not remove from its collections any object of prime historical, cultural, or scientific value as determined by the Collections Committee. An object must meet at least one of the following criteria to be considered for deaccession:

- i **Scope:** The object does not meet Guelph Museums' mandate or collection development objectives.
- ii **Hazardous Materials:** The object constitutes an unacceptable physical hazard or health risk to staff and public.
- iii **Stewardship:** Guelph Museums is unable to provide adequate financial, physical, and human resources to properly house, document, display, and preserve the object.
- iv **Deterioration/Damage:** The object has deteriorated or is damaged beyond the point of reasonable repair. The historical, cultural, and/or scientific value of the object is compromised due to poor condition. The deteriorated object poses a preservation risk to other collection items.
- v **Duplication:** There are duplicate objects in the collection that are better examples of type, are in better condition or have more complete documentation. The object offers no added value as a part of a series.
- vi **Lack of Documentation:** The object lacks adequate documentation making it valueless for the purposes of exhibition, scholarship, and education.
- vii **Authenticity:** An object has been misidentified or is found to be a fake, forgery or copy with no definable purpose.
- viii **Legal:** Possession of the object is inconsistent with applicable law or ethical principles.
- ix **Repatriation:** An object may be removed from the collection as a result of a request for repatriation.
- x **Correcting accessioning mistakes:** Display cases, exhibition props, and other similar items, which were never intended to become part of the collection, but have been erroneously accessioned.

### 10.6 Conditions for deaccessioning

When an artifact is deaccessioned, Guelph Museums must ensure that:

- i It has clear title to the object or in the case of poorly or undocumented material, be able to demonstrate that it has made a serious, diligent, and documented investigation to determine ownership.
- ii There are no legal restrictions that prohibit deaccessioning the artifact.
- iii The reasons for removal of the object from the collection are thoroughly documented in accordance with professional standards and documentation.
- iv If an artifact is undocumented, Guelph Museums must make serious and documented effort to learn more about it before considering deaccessioning.

### 10.7 Disposal

Once an object has been deaccessioned from the Museum's collection, it remains the property of the Museum. Disposal (also known as disposition) is the formal and permanent transfer of legal title from Guelph Museums to another institution or individual by way of gift, exchange, sale, or the purposeful destruction of a deaccessioned item. A demonstrated effort must be made to keep a deaccessioned artifact in the public domain and in Canada by offering it to other museums or public institutions as a gift or for exchange. Evidence of this effort should be documented and permanently retained.

Members of Guelph Museums Advisory Committee, staff or volunteers and their family members may not acquire, through any means, any artifact that has been deaccessioned and disposed by Guelph Museums.

If donor-imposed conditions (agreed to in the original Deed of Gift) restrict disposal, the Museum will consider resolutions in accordance with all relevant laws and ethical guidelines.

### **Disposal pathways**

When an object is successfully approved for deaccession, the chosen disposal method(s) must also be approved. Disposal methods include:

#### **Internal Transfer**

Deaccessioned objects may be transferred to the Education collection.

#### **Sale**

All sales of deaccessioned collection items will be through a publicly advertised auction or by reputable and established dealers. Funds from these sales are deposited into the Moon-MacKeigan Artifact fund for future artifact acquisitions. At no point will the potential monetary value be considered as the motive for determining deaccession.

#### **Gift or exchange to another Institution**

Public institutions are notified that approved items are deaccessioned and available as gifts. This notification to the public should be posted for a minimum of two weeks to allow interested institutions the time to respond. Notifications can be made by posting through the Ontario Museums list serv, contacting individual institutions, or posting information to the appropriate public sectors. Deaccessioned items cannot be transferred to private individuals.

If after two weeks of public notification no institution indicates interest in the deaccessioned object, the object becomes a candidate for destruction. All attempts at public notification and any related correspondence are to be dated and recorded.

#### **Destruction**

Destruction is the obliteration of an object by physical or mechanical means. No remains of the object may be retained by museum staff or affiliated parties.

Prior to the destruction of an object an assessment will be undertaken to ascertain whether it contains any hazardous materials. If hazardous material is identified, destruction methods will be in accordance with all relevant legal principals and safety procedures.

All destroyed items must be photo-documented before they are destroyed with at least two images (front view and back view) and detail shots of any relevant damage or deterioration. The destruction of any object must be witnessed by at least two museum staff members whose signatures must be recorded on the Deaccession Form. This documentation must be permanently retained with the collection records.

Any remains of the object must be placed in a Museum garbage receptacle, unless constituent parts are considered to be hazardous. In the case of large objects, the Museum will employ a waste disposal service to eliminate the object.

### **11.0 Repatriation**

Consistent with the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Guelph Museums recognizes repatriation as an institutional responsibility.

Guelph Museums will address repatriation requests on a case-by-case basis, with respect, sensitivity, and a commitment to cultivating and preserving relationships with Indigenous Peoples and Nations.

### **12.0 Cooperation with Institutions**

Guelph Museums cooperates with other museums, galleries, cultural and educational institutions, organizations, and agencies, to avoid duplication and achieve an integrated plan for documentation, preservation and interpretation of artifacts and local history.

### **13.0 Policy Review**

Guelph Museums' Collection Management Policy is approved by the Guelph Museums Advisory Committee.

The Collection Management Policy is reviewed on a regular basis, or any time that changes are deemed necessary. The Manager and the Curator will conduct the review, in conjunction with other professional staff. The reviewed version will be submitted to the Guelph Museums Advisory Committee for approval.

**Approved by Guelph Museums Board of Management, September 30, 1993**  
**Updated by Guelph Museums Board of Management, November 6, 1997**  
**Updated by Guelph Museums Board of Management, June 29, 2000**  
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