

Victoria County Historical Society Collections Management Policy

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Victoria County Historical Society Collections Management Policy

1.0 Introduction

Victoria County Historical Society's collection management policy sets forth the goals of Victoria County Historical Society with respect to managing its collections. The policy outlines responsibilities and sets standards for all collection related activities at Victoria County Historical Society.

1.1 Legal Authority

Victoria County Historical Society (VCHS) is the repository for a collection that is representative of the history of Victoria County, now under the City of Kawartha Lakes municipality. The collection is held by the VCHS and is managed in the public trust.

2.0 Responsibility of Staff and Volunteers

The Board of Directors of the VCHS is ultimately responsible for the collection and the Curatorial Committee ensures that collection management policies, guidelines, procedures and standards are developed and implemented. The Curatorial Committee is responsible for ensuring that anyone who works with the collection is aware of policies and procedures and Ministry standards for a community museum. Staff and volunteers must follow these procedures and standards in a consistent manner.

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

All staff and volunteers are responsible for maintaining the security of the collection. This includes loss or breaches in security. Staff and volunteers must document and report immediately any confirmed loss to the Curatorial Committee who will report to the Board of Directors. In some cases (e.g. firearms) legal considerations may require that the police are also notified.

The Curatorial Committee will ensure that artifacts having the potential to be hazardous to the public, staff, volunteers, the environment or the collection, will be properly handled and stored. All safety regulations (WHMIS) must be followed.

The Curatorial Committee will ensure that staff and volunteers who have physical access to the collection are trained in and use appropriate care and handling procedures.

Ministry Standards for Collections Management for a Community Museum:

- assign the duties of a Collections Manager (or equivalent position) to an appropriately trained staff member and provides adequate time, workspace and funding for collections

- management activities
- Use an effective collection documentation system, which may be paper-based, electronic, or a combination and includes:
 - a standardized numbering system
 - an accession register
 - a master catalogue file
 - signed donor and loan forms
- Keep a periodically updated paper or electronic copy of the collection records off-site in a secure location
- Keep its collection records current

2.1 Ethics

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

The VCHS does *not* acquire material:

- which has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any provincial or national statute;
- which has questionable, undetermined or unethical history of ownership;
- 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 on June 28, 1978;
- if, in addition to or beyond the preceding clauses, there is any reason to believe that the object's recovery involved recent unscientific handling and/or intentional destruction or damage of archaeological/historical sites or illegal/ clandestine excavations;
- which may constitute a conflict of interest related to the issue of personal collecting. Personal collecting is defined as the acquisition by the VCHS's employees, Curatorial Committee, and Board of Directors members of an object similar to or related to that which the VCHS collects or intends to acquire. All staff, Board Members and Committee Members are required to declare a conflict of interest when such a situation arises. Staff, Board and Committee members are required to offer the VCHS the opportunity to acquire the artifact(s) in question. See *Conflict of Interest & Ethical Guidelines Policy*.

3.0 Collection Development

The development of the VCHS's collection follows the focus established by the mission statement. Development of the collection will meet both the immediate and long-term objectives of the VCHS. Development will build on strengths and address weaknesses of the collection as determined by the Curatorial Committee and will take into account current and future projects and needs.

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 budget of the VCHS.

The responsibility for the development of the permanent collection resides with the Curatorial Committee and the Board of Directors. Each assumes an active role in the community with regard to maintaining contacts with potential donors, an awareness of auction contents, the closure of businesses and institutions, etc.

The responsibility for the development of the education collection resides with the Board of Directors.

4.0 Acquisition

The VCHS acquires materials relating to the historic Victoria County, now part of the City of Kawartha Lakes municipality, and of the City of Kawartha Lakes. All references to Victoria County also include the contemporary histories of the City of Kawartha Lakes. The VCHS collects objects, photographs, printed and audio visual material pertaining to these histories in accordance with its mission statement. The collection is for the purpose of documentation, preservation, research, exhibition and interpretation for all generations.

The VCHS is dedicated to increasing community awareness and appreciation of local heritage. It seeks to inspire and engage with the public through cultural exhibits, events, and partnerships within its community.

A budget line is provided in the annual operating budget for the acquisition of objects, their cataloguing, storage and care.

4.1 Criteria for Acquisition

The VCHS will strive to acquire artifacts that generally are complete and in good condition and for which provenance is well documented. The decision to acquire an artifact will be based upon the following considerations:

- Constitute an exemplary sample of an aspect of Victoria County's history currently not represented in the collection
- Are in danger of loss or destruction
- Are directly relevant to current research, exhibit or interpretation programs
- Are well documented
- Are in good to excellent condition

The VCHS collects according to the following criteria:

- artifacts which are specific to Victoria County:
 - artifacts produced in Victoria County;
 - artifacts related to historically important people, places and events in Victoria County.
- artifacts which are typical of Victoria County as a community in Ontario, Canada and the international arena:
 - artifacts sold in Victoria County;
 - artifacts used in Victoria County and/or owned by Victoria County residents.

4.2 Approval Process for Acquisition

Acquisitions are ultimately the responsibility of the Board of Directors. The responsibility is

delegated to the Curatorial Committee. The decision to acquire an artifact will be made by the Curatorial Committee which includes the members of the Board of Directors.

The prospective donor or vendor must be issued a *Temporary Custody Receipt* when artifacts are received by the VCHS. The artifacts will be given a number, following standard number conventions, and will be entered into the accessions register.

If the artifact is rejected, the owner will be notified and given thirty days to retrieve the object. If the owner does not retrieve the object within thirty days it will be disposed of in accordance with the VCHS collection guidelines and procedures.

A *Deed of Gift* or invoice must be signed to prove the transfer of ownership if the artifact is accepted. The owner has sixty days to return the signed Deed of Gift to the VCHS. If the owner does not return the signed Deed of Gift in that time period, the artifact is returned.

4.3 Methods of Acquisition

Objects are acquired through gift or bequest, purchase, exchange and transfer; some are also found in the collection.

4.3.1 Gift or Bequest

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

4.3.2 Purchase

Artifacts may be purchased by the Board of Directors from any source. All purchases must be approved by the Board of Directors.

4.3.4 Exchange

The exchange of artifacts between institutions is an established and useful means of developing and improving a collection. Exchanges may be arranged by the Curatorial Committee with approval of the Board of Directors.

Exchanges may be made provided that:

- Both parties are in full agreement with the terms and conditions.
- Both the acquisition and the disposal of artifacts are documented for the permanent records.
- The removal will be approved through the deaccessioning process.

4.3.5 Transfer

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

4.3.6 Artifacts Found in the Collection

Unaccessioned objects that have been treated as artifacts over time but for which acquisition documentation cannot be found will have their source listed as “found in collection.” These objects will be accessioned and numbered with an X in front of their accession number if approved through the acquisition process.

4.4 Income Tax Receipts and Appraisals

Income tax receipts will be issued to donors if requested, on an annual basis, at minimum, for artifacts donated to the VCHS. The receipt will reflect fair market value at the time of acquisition determined by appraisal.

The VCHS will not issue a tax receipt before a Deed of Gift agreement is signed. The appraisal will not be undertaken before a Deed of Gift is signed. All tax receipts are issued by the VCHS.

The appraisal is undertaken by an appraiser acting at arm's length from the VCHS and the donor.

Donations exceeding a value of \$1000 must be accompanied by a written professional appraisal, to be paid by the Donor, before a tax receipt can be issued.

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

Tax receipts are *not* issued for artifacts donated to the Education Collection, unless the artifact is deemed of utmost importance by professional staff.

5.0 Documentation

The VCHS must accurately and thoroughly document the collection to realize its value and significance. Documentation is essential for collection development, research, preservation and interpretation. Documentation is the responsibility of the designated Collection Management staff or volunteers.

Documentation will include information in written, electronic, audio visual or 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 being integrated into the collection, each artifact must be 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, on exhibit or deaccessioned must be thoroughly documented with condition reports and loan forms.

The VCHS will use accepted and consistent standards, methods and procedures to document the collection. Documentation must be maintained as a permanent record. Documentation of artifacts is not considered part of the collection. Legal documents dealing with 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 should be maintained in a secure and stable environment.

6.0 Preservation

The VCHS has a responsibility to preserve its collection in perpetuity, with the exception of objects designated as 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 all of these activities, staff of the VCHS will comply with the VCHS's *Conservation Policy*.

The preservation of the collection is the direct responsibility of the Curatorial Committee and other staff as appropriate. All staff and volunteers however, must share the responsibility.

7.0 Use

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

Access to the collection is provided through exhibitions, programs, events, publications, searchable database online, collection records, research files, visual resources and consultation with the Curatorial Committee.

The VCHS also 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 federal legislation.

7.1 Staff Access to the Collection

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

7.2 Public Use of the Collection

The VCHS 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.

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

Intellectual access to the collection through records, images, and other information may be requested for publication, research, web sites, electronic media, display, promotional materials, personal use, media, films and advertising. Access to and use of the collection is at the discretion of the Collections Management staff and volunteers and is generally provided to any person who can demonstrate a need. Determining factors include:

- Condition of the artifact
- Risk to the artifact Location Security
- Health and safety risks

- Copyright
- Intended use
- Expertise of the researcher
- Human and financial resources available

Access and the fee structure for use of the collection for commercial purposes are governed by the VCHS on a case by case basis.

The VCHS must be credited for any use of its collection with “Courtesy of The Victoria County Historical Society.”

7.3 Education Collection

The VCHS recognizes the importance of experiential learning for its visitors. In fulfilment of this need and to ensure the integrity of the permanent collection, the VCHS collects and manages objects separate from the permanent collection to be used for the purpose of enhancing the learning experience during a museum visit, school program, outreach activities or travelling exhibition. To fulfil this need, the VCHS has established an Education Collection.

To be accepted into the Education Collection the items should reflect the following:

- be in good to excellent condition;
- be either original or reproduction;
- reflect the programming needs of the VCHS;
- be safe to use;
- not contravene any legislation.

The VCHS may transfer artifacts that are deaccessioned from the permanent collection into the Education Collection for program use. The reason for this change of status must be documented. The decision to designate an artifact to the Education Collection will be made by the Curatorial Committee with approval from the Board of Directors. All material (artifacts, videos, slides, printed materials, etc.) that form the Education Collection are managed according to the VCHS’s collection management procedures and professional standards.

Tax receipts are *not* issued for artifacts donated to the Education Collection, unless the artifact is deemed of utmost importance for the education collection, by professional staff.

When an artifact in the Education Collection is no longer needed, useful or in poor condition it does not undergo a formal deaccession process but disposal must be approved by the Curatorial Committee.

8.0 Loans

8.1 Loans to The Victoria County Historical Society

The VCHS borrows artifacts for exhibition, study or other purposes consistent with the mandate of the VCHS for a specified time period, a maximum of one year or the conclusion of exhibit, whichever comes first. Extension of loans may be done on a case by case basis.

Loans are made to the VCHS by institutions and individuals. A loan agreement specifying intended

use must be completed for such material and the transaction must be recommended by the Curatorial Committee and then approved by the Board of Directors.

The VCHS will provide the same standard of care and security for the 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 the VCHS borrows material and exhibits from another institution, it will follow the procedures prescribed by the lending institution.

When the VCHS borrows material from individuals or from institutions with no lending procedures or forms, it will follow the procedures of the VCHS.

Incoming loans must be fully documented. The documentation will include one copy of the signed loan form and information relating to value and condition, including photographs. This record becomes a permanent record. The lender will receive one copy of the signed loan form. While the artifact is not on display, it will be stored with one copy of the signed loan form.

When the loaned item is being returned, the lender will pick up the items from the museum, show proper identification, and sign the returned portion of the loan agreement. The VCHS will take photographs of the loaned items when they are returned.

8.2 Loans from The Victoria County Historical Society

The VCHS lends artifacts to other institutions. Loans are not made to individuals. The purpose of the loan must be consistent with the interests of the VCHS and not pose undue risk to the artifact. Loans are made for a specified time period of not more than 12 months.

The Curatorial Committee is responsible for ensuring that those who borrow or otherwise use material for any purpose are able to 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 the VCHS must be recommended by the Curatorial Committee and then approved by the Board of Directors.

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. The borrower will receive one copy of the signed loan form. A condition report with photographs will be completed at the time the loan goes out and on its return.

The VCHS reserves the right not to lend artifacts or other materials.

9.0 Insurance

The VCHS provides insurance for its collection and for loans to and from the collection. The Board of Directors are responsible for the insurance of the collection at fair market value and acquiring additional coverage when necessary. The Curatorial Committee is responsible for providing valuations for insurance purposes.

10.0 Deaccessioning

Deaccessioning refers to the permanent removal of one or more artifacts from the permanent collection. In order to maintain a growing and relevant collection in accordance with the mission statement and current professional standards, occasionally it is necessary to deaccession an artifact. Deaccessioning must be undertaken in accordance with the highest professional standards and ethics. Reasons must be ethical, defensible and objective. Approval is required from the VCHS's Board of Directors.

10.1 Criteria for Deaccessioning

The Curatorial Committee must initiate a proposal and must be able to demonstrate clearly the need for deaccessioning in accordance with one or more of the following criteria:

- An artifact constitutes a physical hazard or health risk to staff or public;
- An artifact does not fall within VCHS's mandate and collection development objectives;
- The VCHS is incapable of providing the conditions necessary for minimum curatorial care;
- An artifact has deteriorated or is damaged to a point where it does not serve a useful purpose or poses a preservation threat to other elements of the collection;
- An artifact is a duplicate. Provenance and other documentation must be taken into account when determining duplicate status;
- An artifact has unethical or illegal provenance;
- An artifact has been misidentified or is found to be a fake, forgery or copy with no definable purpose;
- An artifact may be removed from the collection as a result of a request for repatriation.

10.2 Conditions for Deaccessioning

When an artifact is deaccessioned the VCHS must ensure that:

- 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;
- There are no legal restrictions that prohibit deaccessioning the artifact;
- The reasons for removal of the object from the collection must be thoroughly documented in accordance to professional standards and documentation;
- If an artifact is undocumented the VCHS must make serious and documented effort to learn more about it before considering deaccessioning.

10.3 Process of Deaccessioning

The process for deaccessioning must be initiated with a written proposal supported by appropriate documentation and recommend means of disposition. The proposal must be brought forward for review at a board meeting and the Board of Directors must approve.

10.4 Methods of Disposition

A demonstrative 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 (except where a tax receipt has been issued, in which case it must go to public auction). A member of the

Curatorial Committee, Board of Directors, staff or volunteers and their family members may not acquire through any means any artifact deaccessioned by the VCHS.

The following methods may be considered for disposition of an artifact:

- Internal transfer to the Education Collection, Working Collection or non-collection use;
- Gift to another museum or public institution;
- Exchange with another museum or public institution;
- Sale through a publicly advertised auction sale or by reputable and established dealers; Funds from these sales are deposited into a separate artifact fund for future artifact acquisitions;
- Destruction:
 - if the object is hazardous or poses a danger to staff, public or the collection;
 - if the object has deteriorated or is damaged to a point where it does not serve a definable purpose;
 - if all reasonable efforts have been made to dispose of the object through other methods.

Two witnesses must be present to observe the destruction.

11.0 Repatriation

The VCHS may repatriate artifacts in accordance with the principles and guidelines stated in the Canadian Museum Association Ethics Guidelines.

All requests for repatriation must be approached with respect and sensitivity. The VCHS recognizes that requests for repatriation can only be resolved on a case-by-case basis.

12.0 Cooperation with Institutions

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

13.0 Policy Review

The VCHS Collection Management Policy is approved by the Board of Directors.

The Collection Management Policy is reviewed every 3 years, or any time that changes are deemed necessary. The Curatorial Committee will conduct the review, in conjunction with other professional staff. The reviewed version will be submitted to the Board of Directors for approval.

13.1 Policy Review to date

Approved April 1, 2019 by Board of Directors

Amended July 9, 2019

Suggested changes December 2019

Amended December 1, 2020 by Curatorial Committee

Approved _____, 2020 by Board of Directors