



1. PREAMBLE

In order for the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum & Community Centre (WSM&CC) to fulfill its objectives as described in the Vision, Mission and Values Statement, a collection of artifacts must be developed, cared for, and made available to the public. The WSM&CC acknowledges the inherent value of the artifacts that make up the Collection; these heritage resources represent a legacy that, once lost, can never be replaced. The WSM&CC recognizes its responsibility to preserve and protect the assets of the site and to demonstrate stewardship of its collections by following procedures that will ensure their long-term preservation.

2. PURPOSE

Conservation is necessary to maintain the Museum's collections so that the artifacts may be usefully studied, exhibited, and interpreted. This Conservation Policy defines, in general terms, the guidelines for the conservation practices that will be observed whenever handling any of the Museum's artifacts. The WSM&CC recognizes that a balance must be struck between preservation of the collection for the future and its use for research, exhibition, and educational purposes.

3. SCOPE OF POLICY

The terms of this policy apply to all artifacts in the Museum's Permanent Collection, the Museum's historic buildings, and any artifacts on loan to the Museum.

4. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum holds in trust a growing collection of artifacts for the enjoyment and education of the public. The Museum must ensure that the artifacts are passed along to future generations in the best possible condition. It is the responsibility of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum Advisory Committee (the Committee), in conjunction with staff, to ensure that the conservation of the collection is a top priority in all operational activities and planning initiatives undertaken by the Museum, and that artifacts are housed, cared for, exhibited, and interpreted in the safest possible manner to promote their preservation. The Museum is committed to ethical behavior in the care of collections. The Museum staff are responsible for the day-to-day implementation and practice of proper preventive conservation methods.

5. DEFINITIONS

Preservation: the protection from harmful conditions -- extremes of temperature and relative humidity, excess light and ultraviolet radiation, careless handling, incorrect storage and display methods, dust and dirt, damage in transport, pests, and other problems that might result from an inadequate physical plant and/or untrained staff. It provides the most effective use of resources for preservation of the Collection.

Restoration: an attempt to overcome the damages that time and harmful conditions can cause. It includes mending, replacing missing parts, removal of corrosion and tarnish, straightening crooked pieces, and a myriad of other processes. While *preservation* can and should be carried out by all Museum staff, *restoration* requires a professional conservator or supervised staff with specialized training.

Conservation: to pass the significant cultural values of artifacts from one generation to the next, with minimum impairment, by adopting approaches which arrest decay to the greatest extent possible. Conservation may require positive intervention to restore, repair, reinstate or replace particular elements.* Therefore conservation encompasses both *preservation* as the ideal and *restoration* when preservation has failed or been neglected. As one moves along the scale from preservation toward restoration, (1) staff training, knowledge and experience increase; (2), the access, contact, and intervention to artifacts increase; but (3) the scope of personnel permitted such access narrows.

* Adapted from Herb Stovel's presentation at the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario's Workshop Designing for Conservation Brampton, Ontario Winter 1991

Preventive Conservation: occurs when actions are taken to retard deterioration and prevent damage to artifacts through the provision of optimal conditions of storage, use, and handling.

Treatment Conservation: occurs when actions are taken to stabilize, modify, repair, or restore artifacts to a known earlier state with the aim to preserve aesthetic and historic value.

6. CONSERVATION PROGRAM

There are two main custodial functions that are involved with the conservation of the Museum's artifacts: Preventive Conservation and Treatment Conservation.

6.1 Preventive Conservation

- 6.1.1 The WSM&CC will strive to achieve optimum environmental standards for the preservation of the artifacts on exhibit, in storage, or on loan. Environmental conditions of humidity, light, temperature, and air cleanliness shall meet acceptable museum standards such as those included in the Province of Ontario's Standards for Community Museums, wherever possible.
- 6.1.2 The WSM&CC will provide storage areas sufficient and appropriate to house existing and future collections. Access will be provided for the purposes of conservation, documentation, retrieval for study and/or exhibition, and maintenance. Public access to artifact storage areas shall be restricted and allowed only under the direct supervision of the Curator or his/her designate.
- 6.1.3 When planning renovations or creating any new collections area, a risk assessment for the care of the collections will be undertaken.
- 6.1.4 Lights in storage areas will be turned off when not occupied. No food or beverages will be permitted in the collection storage areas. Shelving and storage furniture will be of sufficient size and strength and be made of inert materials.
- 6.1.5 The WSM&CC shall ensure that buildings that house artifacts are structurally sound, their building envelopes uncompromised, and their interiors suitable in terms of temperature, relative humidity, lighting and air cleanliness to the best of its ability. Annual inspections to identify maintenance and repair needs will be completed. For the Museum's historic buildings, careful planning will be undertaken to ensure that upgrades to improve the environmental conditions in collections areas do not compromise the architectural integrity and authentic restoration of the historic buildings.
- 6.1.6 Since the Museum's historic buildings are among its most valuable artifact assets, the WSM&CC will give them the same consideration regarding conservation as all other artifacts in the Collection. Maintenance will be carried out in a planned manner, identifying and correcting problems in building fabric due to deterioration. Every effort will be made during restoration and maintenance to retain original components and features of the buildings. Alterations will only be made based on sound research, architectural evidence, and/or the advice of appropriate

consultants.

- 6.1.7 The Curator will ensure that regularly scheduled housekeeping is undertaken in all collections areas including storage areas and exhibition spaces. Only Museum personnel under the direction of the Curator or his/her designate will undertake housekeeping activities within storage areas and exhibition spaces. In exhibition spaces accessible by the public, contract cleaners will clean the floors and carefully dust horizontal surfaces. The Curator or the Town's Facilities Supervisor will ensure that contract cleaners are bondable and adequately trained with respect to the extra care required when cleaning exhibition spaces.
- 6.1.8 The Curator will ensure that inspections are completed and all storage areas fully inventoried on a regular basis, in accordance with the Museum's Collection Development/Management Policy. Spot checks of publicly-accessible, permanent and semi-permanent exhibition spaces will be undertaken semi-annually. Formal spot checks of temporary exhibitions will be undertaken monthly while cursory inspections will be completed daily as a part of opening/closing procedures.
- 6.1.9 Pest control inspections will be undertaken on a monthly basis. Remedial measures to address pest concerns such as the identification of points of entry or infestations will be implemented as needed and as quickly as possible.
- 6.1.10 The Curator is responsible for the assignment of artifacts to storage. Storage locations and any changes will be recorded in the Museum's electronic collection records. All artifacts will be inspected before being placed in storage. Artifacts suspected of infestation or that pose some sort of risk of contamination and/or deterioration to other artifacts, will be quarantined.
- 6.1.11 The Museum will provide training in the care for and handling of artifacts for all staff/volunteers involved with the collection. The Curator will ensure that all staff and volunteers working with the collection are familiar with the Conservation Policy and the importance of preventive conservation.
- 6.1.12 In accordance with the Staff Training Policy, the Manager of Culture & Community Services shall endeavour to provide funds and other resources for staff and volunteers to further their education in the area of conservation. The Curator will ensure that personnel are

adequately trained in proper artifact handling techniques, including safe packing/ unpacking and transportation.

6.1.13 The Museum will ensure that unnecessary handling of artifacts is avoided and that when artifacts are to be handled, it is done in a manner which is most conducive to the artifact's physical safety, in accordance with established Museum procedures. Clean white cotton or vinyl gloves will be used to handle all grease- and acid-sensitive materials.

6.1.14 All Museum staff and volunteers will be encouraged to notify the Curator of any and all damage to and deterioration of artifacts they notice.

6.2 **Treatment Conservation**

All physical interventions to an artifact will be based on sufficient research to identify and safeguard the historical values concerned. Contributions from all periods of the item's existence will be taken into account when deciding on the appropriate level of intervention.

Conservation and restoration treatments will follow a course of minimal intervention to the fabric of the object. Whenever possible, reversible techniques and materials will be used in treatments. Restorations will be historically accurate and easily detectable, although not necessarily conspicuous.

6.2.1 The Curator and/or designate, will examine and complete a full condition report for an object prior to its assessment for treatment.

6.2.2 The Curator, in accordance with the Code of Ethics of the Canadian Association of Professional Conservators, will identify and determine the need for conservation treatment to an object.

6.2.3 Priority for attention will be given to artifacts in the following order:

- Those artifacts in the Permanent Collection requiring emergency treatment or stabilization;
- Those artifacts in the Permanent Collection of particular historic or artistic significance;
- Those artifacts required for display;
- The artifacts required for programming; and finally,
- All other artifacts owned by the Museum.

- 6.2.4 All in-house and contracted conservation treatments will be carefully documented. The Museum will not alter the integrity of any object or change the intent of the object's maker or user. Clues to past use, development, and change should be retained and/or recorded, to guide researchers and historians. Condition and treatment reports will be maintained as permanent records.
- 6.2.5 In-house conservation treatments will be undertaken in a separate, well-equipped, and well ventilated location. Staff will follow practices and/or use materials in accordance with relevant legislation and the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville's Health & Safety Manual.
- 6.2.6 Where a conservation problem or treatment falls outside the range of expertise of the Museum staff, a qualified Conservator shall be consulted and, if necessary, will be contracted to carry out the treatment or remedy as budget permits.
- 6.2.7 Any donated object or material which is contaminated will be isolated from the rest of the collection and treated, in consultation with experts as necessary.

7. EXHIBITION

As reflected in the Museum's Exhibition Policy, conservation principles will be considered during all aspects of planning, installation, duration, and dismantling of an exhibit.

- 7.1 Artifacts will be adequately supported and display materials will not be harmful to artifacts.
- 7.2 Light sensitive materials will be displayed for short periods of time only.
- 7.3 Exhibition areas will be regularly monitored to identify loss and/or deterioration.

8. SECURITY

An important aspect of the conservation of artifacts, buildings, and documents is the provision of adequate security systems and procedures. Museum staff and volunteers will perform passive security in the museum during open hours to ensure the collection is safe from random theft and vandalism.

- 8.1 The WSM&CC shall provide security including keyed entrances, fire alarms and, wherever possible, video surveillance and intrusion alarms to all buildings that house artifacts.
- 8.2 The fire and intrusion alarm systems at the WSM&CC shall be routinely inspected and periodically assessed for effectiveness.
- 8.3 The Curator or his/her designate is responsible for the control of all keys for buildings, storage areas, and cabinets.

9. DANGEROUS MATERIALS

On occasion, the Museum may choose to acquire dangerous materials such as chemicals or firearms for the Collection. The handling of these items will be in accordance with relevant legislation, generally accepted museum standards, and the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville's Health & Safety Manual.

10. EMERGENCY/DISASTERS

If an emergency or disaster should occur at the WSM&CC, once the situation is stabilized, an immediate priority will be to prevent further damage to the collections and to conserve artifacts that may have been affected. Museum staff and volunteers will follow appropriate procedures as outlined in the Museum's Emergency/Disaster Response Procedures and/or the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville Emergency Plan.

11. INTERVAL OF REVIEW

The Committee will review this policy every three years or as required.

Committee Approval: May 3, 2017
 May 6, 2013, May 6, 2009, April 2, 2003

Council Adoption: _____, 2017
 August 13, 2013, June 23, 2009, May 6, 2003

Next Scheduled Review: 2020