

# Conservation Policy

**MUSEUM**  
STRATHROY-CARADOC

## **1. Introduction**

The following *Conservation Policy* is derived from the Museum Strathroy-Caradoc *Collections Management Policy*, which states:

- 4.1 *Artefacts are to be exhibited, stored, researched, treated and conserved according to current professional standards to the full extent of available resources;*

The inclusion of this statement in the *Collections Management Policy* indicates the dedication of Museum Strathroy-Caradoc to the persistent care of its collection.

The Museum Strathroy-Caradoc *Conservation Policy* sets the guidelines of Museum Strathroy-Caradoc with respect to the preservation and maintenance of the Museum collection.

## **2. General Principles**

Museum Strathroy-Caradoc, (hereafter referred to as the “Museum”), will at all times care for its collections in a manner reflecting the principles of preventive conservation. The Museum recognizes that it is preferable to prevent or slow deterioration of its collection, rather than to provide intervention to address damage which could have been prevented by proper care.

Preventive conservation measures include proper housing, environmental control, careful and appropriate handling techniques, restriction of access to sensitive materials, and responsible exhibition and usage practices. The aims of preventive conservation are to place and maintain collections in the best possible physical circumstances, to the best of the Museum’s abilities. In addition, objects in the collection which are known to be deteriorating are to be protected from further degradation and, where possible, remedial action is to be taken to return the object to a stable condition while retaining as much of its original material as possible.

## **3. Responsibility for Conservation**

- 3.1 The Museum recognizes that it bears the responsibility for conservation of its collections. In order to carry out that responsibility to the highest degree, the Museum Strathroy-Caradoc Advisory Committee shall appoint a Collections Committee, comprised of the Curator/Director, a representative of the Museum Advisory Committee, and members of the community.

- 3.2 It is the responsibility of the governing body, represented by the Curator/Director, to ensure that conservation activities are carried out on an ongoing basis. These activities will include:
- 3.2.1 Protection of the collection through provision of proper care and handling;
  - 3.2.2 Protection of the collection through provision of sufficient and appropriate storage;
  - 3.2.3 Protection of the collection while on exhibition;
  - 3.2.4 Protection of the collection from theft and environmental hazard;
  - 3.2.5 Protection of the collection through the provision of environmental controls which contribute to enduring preservation;
  - 3.2.6 Protection of the collection by ensuring that all necessary conservation treatments are carried out by trained personnel, and include appropriate documentation;
- 3.3 The preservation of conservation records provides a valuable tool in the long-term maintenance of artefacts. The Museum will maintain conservation records as they are generated for each object in its care. The conservation records will be kept in an orderly fashion, and will be easily accessible for future reference by staff members and other individuals where appropriate. The conservation records should meet archival standards wherever possible.

#### **4. Conservation Standards**

- 4.1 The Museum will strive to establish and maintain a high standard in conditions of storage, display, use, and handling of the cultural property in its collections;
- 4.2 The Museum strives to meet and exceed the *Standards for Community Museums in Ontario*;
- 4.3 The Museum will regularly review changes in these standards, and if necessary, alter its *Conservation Policy* to meet them;
- 4.4 The Museum shall maintain current educational resources which concern the care and preventive conservation of materials within its collection;

#### **5. Conservation Treatments**

- 5.1 Conservation treatments, where required, will be carried out by a trained conservator with demonstrated expertise in treatment of the material for which the conservator has been engaged;

- 5.2 A trained conservator shall be engaged to supervise and/or offer consultation on any restoration to an object in the care of the Museum, even if the physical work is to be undertaken by other personnel;
- 5.3 Whenever conservation treatments are required for individual artefacts the conservation treatment will be based on several criteria, ranked in order of importance:
  - 5.3.1 Stabilization to prevent further deterioration and consequent damage;
  - 5.3.2 Preservation of historical, cultural, conceptual, and aesthetic integrity of the object as well as its physical integrity;
  - 5.3.3 Improvements to the stability and appearance of an object to prepare it for public use;

No conservation treatment will be undertaken which does not meet the above criteria;

- 5.4 No unnecessary treatments will be undertaken. An unnecessary treatment is one which is undertaken solely for the purposes of cosmetic alteration, or one which removes or obscures sound, original material for the purposes for visual improvement;
- 5.5 On occasion, it may be necessary for the Museum to undertake reconstruction of a portion of an artefact. In approaching a reconstruction project, the Museum will:
  - 5.5.1 Avoid any unnecessary treatment, as described in section 5.4;
  - 5.5.2 Have as the principal goal the promotion of understanding of a cultural property based on clear evidence of a former state;
  - 5.5.3 Base any reconstruction on evidence of the following types, listed in order of priority:
    - a) graphic, pictorial, historical, archaeological, literary, or scientific evidence pertaining to the object itself;
    - b) graphic, pictorial, historical, archaeological, literary, or scientific evidence pertaining to other objects of its type;Where an object has undergone many changes over its useful life, it will be at the discretion of the Curator/Director, in consultation with the Collections Committee, to determine the interpretation of the artefact which best serves the integrity of the object, as defined within the *Conservation Policy*, and the aims of the Museum as set out in the *Collections Management Policy*;
- 5.6 Any approved treatment will meet the following standard:
  - 5.6.1 There will be full documentation of the object before, during, and after treatment. Documentation will include, but not be restricted to:

- a) photographs to demonstrate condition before treatment proceeds, to augment written documentation of treatment, and to show the appearance of the object after treatment;
  - b) a written examination report detailing appearance, dimensions, and condition of the object before treatment;
  - c) a written treatment proposal and cost estimate, describing in detail each procedure involved in treatment, as well as the cost of the treatment. Any deviation from the original proposal shall be approved before any further treatment by a representative of the Museum, usually the Curator/Director. The changes shall be presented in writing, along with any changes to the cost estimate;
  - d) a written treatment report, including photographs, and samples of original material shall be provided by the conservator to the Museum, to be kept by the Museum as part of the permanent record. The treatment report shall include recommendations for care of the object with information on environmental requirements, maintenance, and any special instructions for storage or transportation which could affect continued preservation of the artefact;
- 5.6.2 Treatments will be conducted with the minimum possible intervention to the original material, and without fraudulent intent. There will be no attempt to disguise non-original material. Original material will not be removed without justification. Removal of any original material will be fully documented. Materials removed may be retained as documentary evidence;
- 5.6.3 Sampling may be performed on an object only where it is required to determine:
- a) authenticity or historical place;
  - b) the nature of a degenerative product;
  - c) the nature of a component part of the object where the nature of that component may be a determining factor in its treatment;
- Samples taken must be of the smallest possible size to allow for accuracy of testing. The process of sampling must not disfigure the object in any way, or weaken the structural integrity of the object;
- 5.6.4 The conservator shall not place the object in jeopardy by knowingly using materials which will have a degenerative effect, either physically or chemically;

## 6. Accessions

- 6.1 The Museum will not accept new donations, loans, or acquisitions for which it cannot provide the requirements set out in Section 2, General Principles;
- 6.2 The Collections Committee will include a conservator who is able to judge the condition of potential accessions, and offer a professional opinion as to the conservation needs of a potential accession;
- 6.3 Each accession will be isolated from the collection at large (held in quarantine) until it has received an examination for infestation. In this way, the Museum's permanent collection can be safeguarded from the entry of pests or hazardous material;
- 6.4 There will be a condition report prepared for each artefact which enters the collection. One of the fields in the condition report should summarize how the artefact might best be used in its current condition. For example, if the artefact is of a ubiquitous type and is in robust condition, it may be suitable for many functions. If it is one of a kind, fragile, and unstable, it should be subject to limited access, until such time as its condition can be improved;

## **7. Environment**

- 7.1 The Museum will at all times maintain its collections in such a way as to promote their long term preservation, by providing to the best of its ability clean, secure, and spacious facilities for the storage, study, conservation, and exhibition of the collection. These facilities should operate within accepted environmental norms of light exposure, temperature, and relative humidity for each class of material housed.
- 7.2 The Museum will undertake to demonstrate its commitment to provision of a safe and stable environment for its collections by monitoring environmental conditions, keeping a record of temperature, relative humidity, and light levels (lux and UV). The Museum shall strive to remedy any deficiencies in environmental conditions. Personnel responsible for monitoring of environmental conditions shall receive training in correct use of monitoring devices;
- 7.3 The Museum will ensure that exhibition conditions are compatible with the long-term preservation of its collections;
- 7.4 The Museum will institute and carry out a program of regular monitoring of collections on display and in storage to ensure that artefacts are maintained in good condition. The inspections, which may be carried out as spot checks, shall occur at regular intervals and should aim to cover the entire collection within a reasonable time frame. Museum personnel should be trained to observe potential sources and signs of damage by any of the following agents: moisture, heat, light, pests ranging from insects to vertebrates, microbiological attack by mould and other organisms. The Museum shall act to ameliorate deficiencies discovered in such surveys. A full

condition survey for the collection should be undertaken to set a baseline for future activity;

- 7.5 The Museum will attempt to control the presence of pests by preventive measures, such as a program of Integrated Pest Management. A regular survey of potential damage by pests should also be undertaken. Regular monitoring and cleaning of exhibit areas, storage and study areas, and public areas contribute to the safety of the collection by removing attractions to pests, and alerting Museum personnel to deficiencies which may become loci for pest problems. A Program of Risk Management, involving installation of barriers, removal of attractions, installation and monitoring of traps to alert personnel to the presence of pests in the collection should also be implemented. Pest outbreaks must be dealt with immediately to prevent the spread of pests within the collections;
- 7.6 Pets shall not be allowed into the Museum. Service animals, such as seeing-eye dogs, shall be exempt from this prohibition;

## **8. Care & Handling**

- 8.1 All Museum staff and volunteers will be instructed in the safe handling of artefacts by a trained person or persons. Such training should follow guidelines set out in an established document so that standardized training can occur;
- 8.2 Staff members responsible for packing and transportation of artefacts will receive training in appropriate handling procedures, use of appropriate packing materials and techniques. Where a packing and/or transportation operation exceeds the capabilities of Museum personnel, the Museum shall engage the services of a reputable professional firm to undertake the safeguarding of its travelling collections;
- 8.3 The Museum will ensure that patrons and researchers who are granted access to artefacts within the Museum's collections observe museum practice when handling these objects. This shall include good hygiene, the wearing of gloves where appropriate, use of pencils only for writing. It may include instruction and supervision of persons before allowing them to use the collection, and during their time in the collection. These measures will assist in preventing damage to the collection through wear, soiling, physical damage, and theft. In addition, the Museum shall ensure that persons using their collections have sufficient space in which to work safely;

## **9. Health & Safety**

- 9.1 Materials on exhibit should be safely and securely displayed, so as not to pose a hazard to the visitor. Exhibit conditions should be monitored regularly;
- 9.2 Materials in storage should be safely and securely housed so as not to pose a hazard to staff members. Overcrowding and inadequate shelving must be avoided;
- 9.3 Hazardous materials within the collection, such as radioactive or toxic materials, should be held safely and with limited access. Hazards must be clearly identified. If the Museum cannot safely isolate such materials, de-accessioning to an institution which is so equipped should be considered;
- 9.4 The Museum will prepare to safeguard Museum staff and collections in the event of a disaster, such as flood, fire or explosion. The emergency plan for collections should be part of the overall disaster preparedness document for the Museum. Much disaster preparedness lies in preventive measures such as overhead protection, elevation of collections storage off the floor, care in use of flammable and explosive materials, maintenance of wiring and fixtures, etc. In addition, a disaster recovery plan should also be put in place;
- 9.5 When conservation treatments are undertaken on site, the Museum will ensure that treatments are conducted responsibly in respect of health and safety of the conservator, Museum personnel and the general public;

## **10. Policy Review and Approval**

The Museum Strathroy-Caradoc *Conservation Policy* is approved by the Museum Strathroy-Caradoc Advisory Committee.

The *Conservation Policy* is to be reviewed on an annual basis, or at any time that changes are deemed necessary. The Director/Curator, in conjunction with the professional staff, conducts the review. The revised version is submitted to the Museum Strathroy-Caradoc Advisory Committee for approval.

This *Conservation Policy* may not be altered without the consent of the Museum Strathroy-Caradoc Advisory Committee.