

# FORT LA REINE MUSEUM

## COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY

*Last Reviewed and Updated: June 2018*

### **1. Introduction and Mission**

The Fort la Reine Museum collection policy is a public document that guides the management and development of the collection. It outlines why, what, where, how and when the museum collects, and how and why items may be deaccessioned and disposed.

The collection is a source of knowledge, ideas, stories and memories. It is developed and managed as a community resource to inspire, educate and inform the community and visitors, and to contribute to the conservation of the history and heritage of Manitoba, and more specifically of the Portage District.

### **2. History of the Museum**

Fort la Reine was established in what would be Portage la Prairie by acclaimed innovator and explorer Pierre Gaultier de Varennes et de La Vérendrye in 1738. Fort la Reine not only served as a trading post, but was the primary base of operations for much historic exploration north and west. In 1967, for the nation's centennial, Fort la Reine was established as a museum to celebrate the pioneer, agricultural, commercial, and domestic history of Portage la Prairie and Southern Manitoba. Throughout the years the Museum has grown to include a Pioneer Village, domestic homes (showcasing various historic eras in the Portage District), a military compound, two historic churches, and several agricultural exhibition spaces.

### **3. Purpose and Significance of the Collection**

- Collect and conserve important objects associated with the history of the district.
- Collect local photographs and other materials illustrating the places and people of the district.
- Build an historical resource for the community.
- Develop the collection as an educational resource.
- Interpret the history and development of the district.

### **4. Key Themes**

- Early settlement and development of the Portage district.
- Agriculture and rural history of the Portage District (and Southern Manitoba)
- Local business history.
- Domestic and family life.

- War service and military history.
- Indigenous cultures and communities.
- Ukrainian cultural and religious history.
- Contemporary events and subjects as they pertain to local history and/or heritage.

## **5. Collection Policies**

Collection policies are statements of principle and commitments to good museum practice. These policies guide the way the museum acquires and uses the collection for public benefit. Everything the museum does with the collection should be consistent with these clauses.

- 5.1 Objects and collections may be acquired as donations, bequests, purchases, transfer or commissions.*
- 5.2 The museum will only acquire objects that can be properly stored, documented and managed.*
- 5.3 The museum provides community access to the collection, through exhibitions, access to collection information, response to public enquiries and other means.*
- 5.4 The museum only acquires objects that are provenanced to the area, or that help to interpret themes, places and people in the history of the district.*
- 5.5 The museum aims to build unique historical records about local people and places, themes and environments through the collection, related archives and associated projects.*
- 5.6 The museum will identify priority themes as a focus for research, strategic collecting and documentation on an annual basis.*
- 5.7 Where possible the museum will develop non-collecting initiatives, such as assisting the community to document and care for their heritage collections in their original context of use. Collecting isn't always the best option. Many objects are best left in the family context in which they have most meaning. Museums can provide advice on caring for items in the home, and encourage families to record the object's history while the story is still in living memory.*
- 5.8 The museum works in partnership with other museums, libraries, galleries, archives, heritage and community organisations in the district, where possible developing a collaborative approach to collecting, and the research, analysis and interpretation of collections.*
- 5.9 No objects will be acquired from significant heritage sites and buildings where acquisition and removal would diminish the significance of the place; except in circumstances where the object is at risk.*
- 5.10 No objects or collections will be acquired or accepted with conditions or restrictions on the way they might be used or displayed in the future.*
- 5.11 Ensure the donor or vendor of a proposed acquisition has clear legal title to the item*

**5.12** Where possible, the museum will obtain copyright and reproduction rights for new objects at the time of acquisition. No item will be acquired or accepted where copyright cannot be obtained.

**5.13** The collection policy is a public document that is readily available in the museum for inspection by visitors and volunteers.

**5.14** The Museum reserves the right to use donated or acquired heritage documents or buildings in any way that benefits the organization.

## **6. Acquisition and Assessment Policies and Criteria**

**6.1** The museum will keep accurate, up to date and detailed records.

**6.2** The museum will establish object files for the most significant items and all new acquisitions.

**6.4** Significance is the basis for considering new acquisitions, and relevance to the museum's mission, purpose, and its collection themes. What story does the object tell about people, places or themes that are of interest to the museum? The primary assessment criteria are: historic significance, aesthetic significance, scientific or research significance, social or spiritual significance, provenance, representativeness, rarity, condition/intactness, and interpretive potential.

**6.5** Assess potential new acquisitions in light of the scope and content of the museum's collection. Does the proposed acquisition relate to key themes in the collection or strengthen the interpretation of a particular subject or group of items?

**6.6** Avoid duplicating items already in the collection unless the proposed acquisition is more significant than the items already in the collection, for example, where the proposed new acquisition is provenanced or is in better condition.

**6.7** No further objects will be acquired if there is a backlog with registration and collection documentation.

## **7. Acquisition Procedures**

**7.1** A receipt will be issued when an object is received as a possible donation.

**7.2** Where possible, the donor shall record the history, associations, context and significance of the object they are donating. Alternatively the person receiving the item should make notes on the object's history and associations. If there is no information this may indicate the object is of limited significance and should not be acquired.

**7.3** Museum staff and board will first assess the significance of the object and consider the proposed acquisition against the collection policies, themes and acquisition criteria before any donation is accepted. Consider if the museum can properly care for and manage the item.

**7.4** A short Statement of Significance will be prepared for all acquisitions, although this may be revised at a later date after further research.

**7.5** Register the object in a bound accession register noting the date, description of the object, object number and reference to the receipt number and donor details.

**7.6** A letter of thanks will be written to donor.

**7.7** Maintain an index of donors with a list of their donations and the object numbers.

**7.8** Items that are not approved for acquisition will be returned to the owner.

## **8. Deaccessioning Policy and Procedures**

**8.1** Deaccessioning is the process of de-registering an object from the collection for clearly stated reasons, and disposing of it in accordance with approved policies and procedures. Caution and transparency are essential in the deaccessioning process.

**8.2** To deaccession an object from the collection, assess the item against the museum's mission, the collection policy and themes, and the assessment criteria.

**8.3** The criteria for deaccessioning include: little or no significance, poor condition and lack of provenance, duplication, inability to safely store and manage the object, lack of relevance to collection themes and policy, lack of relevance to the museum's mission and purpose.

**8.4** Raising money for the museum through the sale of deaccessioned items is not a valid reason for deaccessioning.

**8.5** In identifying priority items for deaccessioning, the museum will give priority to larger items that take up storage and display space, objects in poor condition, items that are hazardous or that create particular problems for management or visitors.

**8.6** In exceptional circumstances, items may be deaccessioned where the object is of particular cultural significance and its return will support the maintenance and renewal of cultural traditions.

**8.7** Where there are reservations or disagreement about the significance and relevance of items proposed for deaccessioning, the museum may hold items for a period of 12 months before disposal. Items proposed for deaccessioning will be available for inspection, together with a statement detailing the reasons for deaccessioning.

**8.8** Items proposed for deaccessioning will be formally approved by the museum board.

**8.9** A short statement will be prepared indicating why the object is being deaccessioned and a photo taken. This information is kept in a register of all deaccessioned objects with a note about the method of disposal.

**8.10** There are five main methods of disposal: return to the donor, transfer to another museum, auction/sale, destruction.

**8.11** If items are transferred to another institution, the museum will ensure the item is appropriate to the organisation's mission and collection policy, and that they have the resources to manage the item.

**8.12** In other cases, where the item is incomplete, in poor condition, and of no value, it may be destroyed.

**8.13** Objects of lower significance may be deaccessioned and transferred to a reserve or education collection for active hands-on use in education programs. This includes returning items to Indigenous groups or social organisations.

- 8.14** Deaccessioned items may be sold through public auction or other method of sale.
- 8.15** All funds raised through the sale of deaccessioned items will be used for collection development or new acquisitions, or reserved for collection conservation.
- 8.16** Note the reasons for deaccessioning in the register and catalogue. Draw a line through the object in the register or the card catalogue. Do not delete the record.
- 8.17** No members, volunteers, staff, or committee members, or their relatives, may benefit or in any way acquire objects that have been deaccessioned.

## **9. Loans**

- 9.1** No objects will be accepted on indefinite or long term loan.
- 9.2** Loans in or out may only be arranged for fixed periods and for specific purposes.
- 9.3** Before accepting or making a loan, photograph and record a detailed description of the object's condition (complete and file a "Condition Report").
- 9.4** Prepare a written and signed loan agreement between the museum and the lender or borrower, detailing the condition of the object and a fixed time span for the loan. This is signed by the museum and the lender or borrower.
- 9.5** Ensure that items lent from the museum's collection are in good condition, and are displayed in appropriate environmental conditions, in places with adequate security and supervision.

## **10. Exhibition and Education Policies**

- 10.1** Make the collection accessible through well-researched and interpreted displays and exhibitions.
- 10.2** Where possible promote local heritage places, attractions and businesses as they relate to the heritage of the Portage district.
- 10.3** Objects made from organic materials will not be kept on permanent display as they deteriorate over time, e.g. textiles, costumes, leather, bone and original paper items.
- 10.4** Where possible original historic photographs will be copied, with the copies placed on exhibition and the original photos kept in secure storage and shown for limited periods of time.
- 10.5** As resources allow, work with local teachers to develop education programs and opportunities for students to learn from the collection.
- 10.6** Develop a research and publication program with identified priorities, detailed in the museum's strategic plan.
- 10.7** Explore opportunities to make the collection (or portions of the collection) accessible online.
- 10.8** A secondary education collection may be developed comprising objects of lower significance that may be used for demonstrations, hands-on access and education activities. Such objects will be clearly identified in a separate register as part of the education collection.

## **11. Management of the Collection**

- 11.1 Develop a team to be responsible for the collection and its management. A representative of the collection management team will be on the museum's management committee or board.*
- 11.2 Provide training opportunities for volunteers working on the collection. This might include funding their participation in workshops and conferences.*
- 11.3 Ensure there is a clean, secure working space for collection documentation, research and significance assessment.*
- 11.4 Regularly monitor and check the condition of the collection on display and in storage.*
- 11.5 Conduct a stock take or audit of the collection every 5 years. Alternatively review designated sections of the collection on an annual basis.*
- 11.6 Before conservation or restoration work to any item in the collection, prepare a statement of significance for the item and an outline of the proposed treatment. Seek advice from a trained conservator before starting work.*
- 11.7 Photograph and document any restoration or conservation work in the object file, including details of all materials used, processes and people involved in the work.*
- 11.8 Develop an annual work program for collection and ensure there is an annual budget line for collection management expenses and training.*
- 11.9 Collection management is a standing item on the agenda of the museum's regular management committee meetings. The museum's annual report to members includes a section on the collection management work of the preceding year.*
- 11.10 Regularly review the collection policy as knowledge of the collection develops.*

## **12. Related Collections**

- 12.1 The museum will complement the collections in other museums, galleries, libraries and archives in the region.*
- 12.2 The museum will explore ways of working co-operatively to collaborate on strategic collecting of particular themes and priorities.*

## **13. Future Collection Development Priorities**

The best collections are developed by actively pursuing identified priorities and themes, rather than waiting for offers of donation. Use the process of reviewing the significance of the collection to identify priority areas for active collecting through research, public promotions and community awareness campaigns. These priorities may be linked to forthcoming exhibitions, such as a display of items made in your town or locality.

## **14. Adopting the Collection Policy**

The Collection Policy and collecting priorities should be formally adopted by the management committee/board or the museum's annual general meeting.