

## Conservation Policy

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### PURPOSE

The Royal BC Museum is a world class cultural institution, leading the way for international museums and archives. This has been achieved by adhering to international standards and instituting policies, procedures, and programs to the highest ideals.

The Museum Act (2003) sets out the purposes, powers, and governance of the Royal BC Museum. The Act explicitly states that the Royal BC Museum will be responsible "to secure, receive and preserve specimens, artifacts and archival and other materials that illustrate the natural or human history of British Columbia... to manage, conserve and provide access to the collection". The Museum's Mission states clearly that the Royal BC Museum brings British Columbia's stories together. Our collections, research and presentations enable us to tell the stories of BC in ways that enlighten, stimulate and inspire. By exploring our human history and natural history, the Royal BC Museum advances new knowledge and understanding of BC and provides a dynamic forum for discussion and a place for reflection. Aligned with the strategic objectives of the Royal BC Museum, the goals of Conservation will be to support the creation of a unique experience, to strengthen our digital infrastructure and reputation, to enable greater access to collections while improving long-term care, and to develop as a progressive organization.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The RBCM Collection Policy states that "the stewardship of the collection is guided by the need to preserve the collection, while encouraging access to it by the public, scholars, and staff". The Conservation Policy is guided by this principle. This Policy is inextricably linked to the RBCM Collection Policy and guides the decisions and actions directed toward preserving the RBCM collections. The ultimate aim of this policy is to reduce risks to Category A accessioned objects so that they may be maintained in stable condition, preserving the evidence, and all other values that are contained in the objects through their construction, materials, and indications of use for the benefit of the public.

Preventive conservation takes precedence over active intervention, including conservation treatment or other alteration to the structure or properties of a collections object. All conservation methods and procedures must be carried out in consensus with curators, archivists and collection managers. Conservators are guided by the ethical standards and the procedures to be employed in professional conservation practice. National and international standards for the care of collections are listed in the appendix at the end of this document.

Originating groups will be consulted concerning the respectful storage, display and treatment of culturally sensitive artifacts from their communities or organizations.

### GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Archival Materials:** Records of the Government of British Columbia, and historical records of provincial significance relating to British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest, including publications and fine art.

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**Artifacts:** Objects made by humans that are collected, studied, and shared to further understanding of history and culture.

**Conservation Treatment:** The deliberate alteration of the chemical and/or physical properties of objects aimed at prolonging their existence.

**Object:** A Royal BC Museum accessioned specimen, artifact or archival record.

**Preventive Conservation:** All of the actions, policies, standards, and physical supports provided to slow or halt deterioration of collection objects

**Sample:** A collection of specimens passively retrieved at the same time or a small portion of a specimen such as fluids, stomach contents, or hair.

**Specimens:** Preserved natural history samples or whole plants, animals or naturally occurring inorganic objects and their associated data that is collected, studied, and shared to further scientific knowledge.

### STANDARDS FOR COLLECTIONS CARE

The Conservation Manager, based on international and national standards and recognized best practices, will provide guidelines and procedures relating to collections care, including:

- Care and handling of collections (including policies and procedures for transportation, reproduction, exhibition, and public programs involving collections)
- Indoor temperature and relative humidity requirements for collections
- Exhibit lighting, pollutant control, and object supports
- Collections storage (supplies, equipment and facilities)
- Pest management (including the Integrated Insect Pest Management Program)
- Acquisition, deaccession, inspection, and condition assessment of collections
- Scientific and technical examination, analysis and experimentation for conservation
- Conservation treatment only as necessary to preserve public and scholarly access to collections and complete documentation of these treatments
- Emergency response and collections salvage as laid out in the RBCM "Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plan"
- Sustainable and safe conservation materials and techniques

Priorities will be established based on the following principles:

1. Emergency salvage and recovery
2. Mitigating risks to Category A RBCM collections
3. Preparation of collections for permanent displays in redeveloped exhibition galleries
4. Preparation of collections for other exhibitions
5. Preparation of collections for loans to other organizations

Based on guiding principles, international policies, standards, and best practices, it is the responsibility of the Conservation Manager to develop and implement six conservation programs. It is the responsibility of the Head of Collections Care and Conservation to provide the support and oversight required to ensure the success of these programs. The Vice

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President of Archives, Collections and Knowledge will review and approve the Conservation programs annually before March 31<sup>st</sup> of each fiscal year.

The six Conservation Programs are:

### 1. Collections Risk Assessment (CRA)

A collections risk assessment – whether formal or informal, extensive or limited to a representative subset of a collection, is an administrative tool used to identify risks and to estimate the magnitude of their effect on the collections. A collection risk assessment can be used to prioritize the implementation of measures to preserve the collection.

The Conservation Manager will direct a comprehensive CRA every five years, or in preparation for major projects or facilities redevelopment.

- The scope of the Collections Risk Assessment Program will include all RBCM Category A Research collections on site and off.
- The Conservation Manager will work with the RBCM Heads to develop a risk mitigation plan, complete with timelines and associated costs, based on the results of each collections risk assessment. This plan will be presented to the RBCM Executive for review and approval within six months of the completion of the assessment process. The Conservation Manager will report out annually on the status of the risk mitigation plan and maintain a current mitigation plan.

### 2. Environmental Monitoring and Control

Environmental monitoring and control (including regular measurements of and necessary adjustments to temperature, relative humidity, pollutants, and light levels) are core to any preventive conservation program in museums and archives.

- Conservation will establish standards and procedures for environmental monitoring and control in all areas of the RBCM precinct and off-site storage facilities that will minimize the risk of damage due to these agents of deterioration.
- The Conservation Manager will work closely with the RBCM Property Management Office to share information and to devise improvements to environmental controls.
- Category A objects sensitive to extremes or fluctuations in temperature, relative humidity, pollutants, and light will not be unduly exposed to these agents of deterioration while in use on exhibit, loan, or reference.
- Light levels in exhibit areas will never exceed 25 C, 65% RH, or 250 lux illumination.
- Sustainable practices will be employed as much as possible to achieve international collection care standards.

### 3. Conservation Training

Conservation will keep current and communicate guidelines and standards for care and handling of collections to all staff.

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- The Conservation Manager will create a training schedule for staff that will address general and, as required, specific conservation matters.
- The Conservation Manager will maintain an updated skills inventory of RBCM's conservators and will develop new skill sets within the conservator group as required by the RBCM.

### 4. Integrated Insect Pest Management (IIPM)

Conservation will oversee IIPM throughout all RBCM facilities with the assistance of other RBCM staff. Building Operations personnel will oversee other pest management programs, including but not limited to rodents and birds.

- IIPM consists of monitoring collections storage and exhibit areas, inspecting collections and other materials entering RBCM buildings, insect trapping, isolation and freezing of suspected infested materials, and cleaning those materials to a zero point afterward.
- Procedures around the consumption of food and drink in all RBCM buildings will be developed and communicated by the Conservation Manager in order to reduce the risk of infestation.
- Success of the IIPM will rely on the initiative and cooperation of all RBCM staff through formal and informal channels of communication and adherence to policies and procedures.

### 5. Objects on Display, in Use, and on Loan

This program relates to all RBCM Category A collections on display in galleries, as well as those used in temporary exhibits, programs, events and on loan to other institutions.

- The Conservation Manager will work closely with RBCM Heads to ensure that risks are minimized for Category A objects on display, in use, and on loan.
- The Conservation Manager will implement a scheduling and reporting system for the monitoring of RBCM collections on display.
- The Conservation Manager will action all reports relating to unacceptable collection care or stewardship issues and report the incident and remedial actions to the Vice President responsible for collections.
- In order to promote accountability, ALL costs associated with collections care while objects are on display or on loan will be borne by the exhibition budget and/or borrower unless documented exceptions involving partnership or other agreements are secured in advance.

### 6. Community Consultation

Conservation will respond to public enquiries regarding the physical care of their objects, methods and theories of preventive conservation, materials identification and any other topics within the conservators' areas of expertise.




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- Conservators or other RBCM experts will provide a written or oral response within 10 working days.
- Priority for inquiries response shall be: Government (federal, First Nations, provincial, and agencies under the Local Government Act; specific public inquiries (i.e., based on public safety, legislated, judicial or hardship issues); general public inquiries.
- Additional assistance such as site visits, assistance with collections care projects, and emergency response services are not covered by this program.
- The Conservation Manager will maintain a roster of conservation and restoration specialists and their contact information and will share this information with members of the public upon request. Listing in this register does not constitute accreditation by the Royal BC Museum. Any agreements will be solely between members of the public and private conservator/restorers on the list. The program is one of initial advisory or guidance and is free of charge. Further advice or guidance fall outside of this community program and fee for services schedules may apply.

The specific guidelines and procedures to support this policy are detailed in the Conservation Guidelines & Procedures document.

Approved \_\_\_\_\_

  
Professor Jack Lohman, CBE  
Chief Executive Officer

14.4.14

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Date

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### Appendix of Standards

Below is a list of standards that guide the policies and procedures for collections care at the Royal BC Museum.

ICOM *Code of Ethics for Museums* (2006)

[http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user\\_upload/pdf/Codes/code\\_ethics2013\\_eng.pdf](http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Codes/code_ethics2013_eng.pdf)

ICOM *Code of Ethics for Natural History Museums* (2013)

<http://icom.museum/news/news/article/icom-publishes-its-code-of-ethics-for-natural-history-museums/>

Canadian Museums Association *Ethics Guidelines* (2006)

[www.museums.ca/filestorage/ethicsguidelines.pdf](http://www.museums.ca/filestorage/ethicsguidelines.pdf)

International Council of Archives "Code of Ethics" (1996)

<http://www.wien2004.ica.org/sites/default/files/Ethics-EN.pdf>

Canadian Association for the Conservation of Cultural Property *Code of Ethics and Guidance for Practice* (2000)

<http://www.cac-accr.ca/files/pdf/ecode.pdf>

ISO/TC 46/SC 10 Requirements for document storage and conditions for preservation (2005)

[http://www.iso.org/iso/home/standards\\_development/list\\_of\\_iso\\_technical\\_committees/iso\\_technical\\_committee.htm?commid=48842](http://www.iso.org/iso/home/standards_development/list_of_iso_technical_committees/iso_technical_committee.htm?commid=48842)

American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers "Museums, Galleries, Archives, and Libraries, Chapter 23" in *ASHRAE Handbook: Heating, Ventilating, and Air-Conditioning Applications, SI Edition* (2011)

<https://www.ashrae.org/resources-publications/Table-of-Contents-2011-ASHRAE-Handbook-HVAC-Applications>

Canadian Conservation Institute "Environmental Guidelines for Museums" (2014)

<http://www.cci-icc.gc.ca/caringfor-prendresoindes/articles/enviro/index-eng.aspx>

ICOM-CC "The Conservator-Restorer: a Definition of the Profession" (2010)

[http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user\\_upload/pdf/professions/Theconservator-restorer.pdf](http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/professions/Theconservator-restorer.pdf)

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (2014)

[http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws\\_new/document/ID/freeside/96165\\_00](http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/96165_00)

Royal BC Museum Outgoing Loan Agreement (2013). ORCS 21300-25. Form No. CREG600.

Royal BC Museum Health and Safety Policy (2012). ARCS 9460-00