



Donating an Artifact to the WDM: Frequently Asked Questions

- **How does the WDM decide what it will accept for its collection?**

The WDM decides whether to accept or decline an artifact offer based on criteria set out in our Collections Management Policies. We are further guided by a *Collections Development Plan* (under development) that defines our collection priorities in accordance with the WDM's vision, mission, mandate, and other guiding plans and priorities.

All new artifact offers to the WDM are processed by a Curatorial Assistant. They make an initial assessment of the object and ask questions about its history, how it was used, its condition and if there are supporting materials such as photos of the object in use. If the object does meet basic requirements set out in our Policies and *Collection Development Plan*, it will be put on the agenda for our next Collections Development Committee meeting.

- **How long will it take the Museum to review my donation offer?**

Offers that meet our criteria and collection priorities will be reviewed at our next Collections Development Committee meeting which is scheduled every three weeks. Sometimes we need more information from you, or we must conduct outside research. This can take several weeks to complete. The Curatorial Assistant will keep you updated throughout this process.

- **What types of objects do you collect?**

The WDM collection consists of several sub-collections, each with a specific purpose:

- 1) *Permanent Collection***

These are the artifacts you see on exhibit in our galleries. They are significant to the history of Saskatchewan. Their long-term preservation, documentation and care is the utmost priority of the WDM's Curatorial Department. These artifacts are usually preserved in the same state we received them and are not operated or modified for exhibit or demonstration purposes. About 50% of the WDM permanent collection is on display at our four Museums at any given time. The other 50% remains in storage for safe-keeping and preservation.

2) *Operating Collection*

This collection includes steam and gas tractors, stationary and portable engines, animal-powered transportation, automobiles and trade-specific tools that are restored and used for demonstration, training and other WDM events.

We rarely accept new artifacts into this collection as we already have a significant number of operating machines.

3) *George Shepherd Library Collection*

The George Shepherd library is a non-circulating reference library that supports the work of the Curatorial Department. This collection includes pamphlets, catalogues, manuals and photographs (printed and digital) related to objects in our collection and to Saskatchewan and Western Canadian History.

4) *Hands-on Collection*

This collection includes personal objects such as clothing and small household objects that are used by WDM education staff for hands-on public programs. These objects can be touched and used by staff, volunteers and/or the public and are subject to wear and tear. Although we take care to maintain them, hands-on collections objects are considered expendable and are disposed of when no longer needed.

5) *Parts Collection*

The WDM collects machinery parts for maintenance and repair of our operating collection artifacts.

- **Why does the WDM decline some artifact offers?**

We receive far more offers of donations than we can accept. Storage space is limited, as are resources to care for and monitor artifacts. We usually gratefully decline offers of objects that are well-represented in our collection, objects without a known history objects without a connection to Saskatchewan and objects in poor physical condition.

There are some items that we are regularly offered and would only accept if there was a truly exceptional story connected to it. For example, we currently have 50 organs and 22 pianos in our collection. In 2018, we were offered 33 pianos and organs. We also currently have 35 wedding dresses in our collection and were offered 18 more in 2018.

If we decline, we will do our best to recommend alternate museums and organizations that might be interested. The Museums Association of Saskatchewan has a “Find a Museum” function that may be helpful for identifying other museums near you. It can be found here: <http://saskmuseums.org/museums/search>.

- **I found some old things in my basement - do you want them? How about these antiques I bought from a garage sale?**

Our current collection priorities mean that we rarely collect general antiques where little personal history is known.

An example of a strong Saskatchewan story would be: a Chinese Lion Dance costume that was brought to Canada from China in the 1940s-50s by the owners of a popular Chinese restaurant in Saskatoon. The costume was used at Chinese cultural celebrations in Saskatoon for decades, both in the historic Chinatown district in Riverdale and at Chinese businesses outside of it, helping to maintain Chinese cultural traditions in Saskatoon. The owner of the costume was prominent in the Saskatoon Chinese-Canadian community, leading philanthropic and cultural organizations. He led the Chinese Saskatoon Folk Art Society, which taught lion dancing to members of the community, and in addition to being used in performances, the mask was used to teach the dance to students.

The item is suitable for the collection because it helps us reflect the diversity of Saskatchewan, we have no representation of similar items currently in our collection, and it has a strong connection to Saskatchewan. In addition to this, this one object helps tell a story of a wider community, not just one person.

- **My object has a strong history, but it belonged to my great-aunt in Ontario. Can I still donate it?**

The WDM rarely accepts artifacts with no significant link to Saskatchewan's history. If an object was never used in Saskatchewan, we recommend finding a museum closer to where it was purchased/used to donate it to.

- **Can I offer my object in person at my nearest WDM?**

We ask that you do not bring artifact offers to any WDM location unless expressly requested by Curatorial staff. The WDM collection is managed centrally at the WDM Corporate Office in Saskatoon. Please contact the Corporate Office directly through the online submission form, email or phone to offer an artifact.

- **I don't want to go through the formal donation process, can I just drop it off anonymously?**

No, any objects dropped off without contact information included are considered abandoned property and disposed of. We will not accept abandoned property into our collection as we do not know its history and we are unable to complete a transfer of ownership agreement.

- **Will the Museum purchase an artifact from me?**

Most of our artifacts are obtained through donation. The WDM rarely purchases unsolicited offers of artifacts and will only do so if they meet specific need in our collection.

- **Can I loan my objects to the WDM?**

The WDM generally does not accept artifact loans from members of the public.

- **What kind of information will you share about me?**

If you grant us permission, the WDM may use names, personal history, correspondence, transcripts, images and documents collected regarding your donation for purposes including, research, publication in print and online, educational programming and exhibition.

You are welcome to restrict sensitive information that you do not want shared with the public.

Your personal contact information will remain confidential to the WDM.

- **I've changed my mind. Can I have my donation back?**

No, as a registered charity, the WDM cannot return deaccessioned artifacts to their original donors in compliance with the Canadian *Income Tax Act*.

- **Can I obtain a tax receipt for my donation?**

Yes, the WDM will issue a tax receipt reflecting the fair market value of donated artifacts at the request of the donor.

In order to issue a tax receipt, a qualified professional must complete an assessment of the gift's worth. As the value of the gift is in the donor's interest, the donor will be asked to obtain and pay for the appraisal as possible. Appraisals for income tax purposes should be made by an appraiser not associated with the donor.

- **Will the WDM appraise my object for me?**

We are unable to offer appraisal services.

- **Will the Museum keep my donated artifact forever?**

The WDM accepts objects for its permanent and George Shepherd Library collections with the goal of keeping them for the foreseeable future. However, there are situations that arise which may cause us to remove an item from our collection. If an item has degraded past our ability to care for it, if we discover it is hazardous to staff or other artifacts (if it contains asbestos or arsenic, for example), if it is determined the object should be repatriated to an Indigenous community, or for a multitude of other reasons,

the Museum may remove it from its collection. This is called deaccessioning and is regular part of a museum's collections duties.

Objects accepted for the WDM hands-on, operational and parts collections are considered expendable and will be used or disposed of as needed.

- **What if I want to donate sensitive cultural materials?**

The WDM will consult with Indigenous organizations, Elders and Knowledge Keepers when considering Indigenous artifacts for acquisition. We do not collect sacred objects.

The WDM will not collect objects where there is evidence of cultural appropriation unless Indigenous peoples wish for these items to be retained for their historical value as examples of cultural appropriation.

For non-Indigenous artifacts, the WDM will consult with community representatives when appropriate before making any decisions on accepting an item.