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## CONSERVATION POLICY

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### SASKATCHEWAN WESTERN DEVELOPMENT MUSEUMS CONSERVATION POLICY I. INTRODUCTION

This statement of policy defines the roles and responsibilities of the Conservation Division within the Western Development Museum with respect to the Museum's collections and in relation to the various custodial divisions of the WDM's Provincial Service Center, the four branch sites of the WDM, the Saskatchewan museum community and the general public.

Conservation is recognized as being high on the list of priorities of the WDM. According to the Statement of Intent of the Board of the Western Development Museum (March 1, 1979, "Objectives of the Museum." Cbj, p.1). a primary objective of the Museum is, "to collect, arrange, catalogue, recondition, preserve and exhibit to the public, the tools, machinery, implements, engines, devices and other goods and chattels referred to in clause (a). It

For the purpose of achieving this objective, conservation is classified *as* a basic program within the core activity of the Museum (Statement of Intent. "Basic Programs of the Museum," p.1). The scope of this program is clearly defined: "The museum will, in reasonable balance with its other purposes and functions, take all feasible steps to prevent the deterioration of the objects in the collection, to restore them as necessary, and to preserve them for posterity "(Ibid.. "Conservation. 5.1,911 p.5).

The following Conservation Policy conforms to these goals.

## II, CONSERVATION POLICY

### I.0.0. Conservation Division

The executive instrument of this policy shall be a Conservation Division established at the W.D.M.'s Provincial Service Centre in Saskatoon. The Division shall be directed by a Conservator who shall report to the Head of the Collections Division.

The Conservation Division shall be provided with adequate funds *facilities and personnel to discharge its* responsibilities to the PSC and the four branch sites, the Saskatchewan museum community and the general public effectively and safely.

## 2.0.0. Priorities

The priorities established by the Conservation Division of the Western Development Museum are:

1. Preventive Conservation
2. Conservation Treatment
3. Restoration
4. Conservation Training
5. Conservation Research

## .0.0. Responsibilities

3.1.0. The Conservator. Conservation Division, WDM. shall be the Museum's primary authority on the preservation of all objects in the permanent collection and shall have the final responsibility for all treatments involving physical intervention (wet cleaning, stabilization, consolidation, repair and restoration), ensuring that such intervention is appropriate and consistent with the preservation of the object for posterity.

3.2.0. While the curatorial and custodial divisions of the PSC and the branch managers will continue to be responsible for the safe custody and appropriate use of the artifacts in the collections, the Conservation Division shall be consulted on all anticipated uses of artifacts (loans, exhibitions, storage, handling, transportation and research) so that it can advise on the appropriate materials, methods and procedures for the optimum preservation of the artifacts.

3.3.0. The Conservation Division recognizes the fact that its involvement with the four branch sites will be limited due to reasons of distance and financial restraint. The Conservation Division will act primarily as an advisory and educational service to the branches. The information and advice offered to the branches will extend primarily to preventive conservation measures (superficial cleaning, proper handling, storage and display techniques).

The Conservation Division shall provide a treatment service for the artifacts of the branch sites as resources permit. The conservation treatment so provided will be carried out at an approved facility under the direct supervision of the Conservator or museum staff delegated by the Conservator.

3.4.0. The Conservation Division recognizes the need of the WDM to maintain a number of technological artifacts in presentable and operational condition for effective demonstration purposes, i.e. to stimulate public interest in the museum's activities and collections. To achieve this goal, certain artifacts may be selected for restoration and operation, officially becoming, in the process part of a designated Extension Collection (see Section 6.1.0.). The restoration preparation and maintenance of the artifacts in this collection shall be the responsibility of the Artifact Care Coordinator and/or Branch Manager concerned and shall be undertaken in consultation with and following the recommendations of the Conservator.

3.5.0. The Conservation Division shall act as an advisory and educational service to the Saskatchewan museum community and the general public on a consultative basis at the Conservator's discretion time and resources permitting.

3.6.0. The Conservation Division may provide a conservation treatment service to the Saskatchewan museum community and other cultural institutions as time and resources permit. The cost of these treatments shall be entirely recoverable from the parties concerned.

#### 4.0.0. Preventive Conservation

4.1.0. Preventive conservation refers to those measures taken to prevent or reduce deterioration by attempting to control its causes, without physical or chemical intervention.

The Conservation Division shall advise and assist the custodial divisions of the PSC and the four branch managers by recommending standards and procedures for the optimum preservation of the museum's collections with respect to temperature, relative humidity, illumination, airborne contamination, pest control, storage materials, cleaning, handling, routine maintenance, support and transportation. The various divisions and branch managers remain responsible for ensuring that the advice and procedures recommended by the Conservator are followed.

4.2.0. The activities of museum volunteers with respect to the care of the museum's collections shall be limited to preventive conservation in the form of routine maintenance as defined by the Conservator and conforming to the standards established by the Conservation Division.

4.3.0. The Conservation Division shall offer information and advice pertaining to preventive conservation free of charge to the Saskatchewan museum community and the general public as a consultative service, time and resources permitting.

#### 5.0.0. Conservation Treatment

5.1.0. Conservation treatment refers to those measures taken to stabilize, consolidate, clean, repair, strengthen, reassemble or otherwise preserve an artifact by means of physical or chemical intervention. The final appearance and functional capabilities of the artifact are of secondary importance.

5.2.0. All conservation treatments performed by the Conservation Division of the WDM shall adhere to the principals and procedures set forth in the Code of Ethics and Guidance for Practice for Those Involved in the Conservation of Cultural Property in Canada, published and distributed jointly by the International Institute for Conservation - Canadian Group and the Canadian Association of Professional Conservators.

5.3.0. The conservation treatment of the museum's artifacts, or any part(s) thereof shall be carried out only at an approved facility under the direct supervision of the Conservator or museum staff delegated by the Conservator. Treatments shall commence only after a detailed

condition report treatment proposal and visual documentation for each artifact have been submitted to the Conservation Division and have been approved in writing by the Conservator.

#### 6.0.0. Restoration

6.1.0. Restoration at the WDM shall refer to, the practice of returning an artifact to its original operating capability and, in most cases, recreating the appearance of a known former state. In general, this will involve the use of modern materials and the non conservation practices of mechanical rebuilding and surface refinishing. Because the actual operation of an artifact inevitably contributes to its deterioration and because the demands of returning an artifact to an operational state and replicating a former appearance invariably involve the permanent alteration and/or replacement of at least some of the artifact's components and/or surfaces only those artifacts which are officially part of a designated Extension Collection shall be restored and maintained in operating condition. The final selection of these artifacts and the former state which will be aesthetically recreated in each case shall rest with the Executive Director on the joint recommendation of the Artifact Care Coordinator, the Education/Extension Coordinator, the Branch Manager involved and the Conservator. The selection **will** fully take into account the artifact's historical significance\* rarity, degree of original material and proposed useage. The artifact so designated shall be restored prepared and maintained for operational use in accordance with the conditions stated above (see Section 3.4.0.).

6.2.0. The restoration of non-extension artifacts in order to recreate a known former appearance may be performed in certain exceptional instances e.g., when the restoration work will serve as preventive maintenance for those artifacts displayed, by necessity, out of doors, or when the artifact would otherwise have no interpretive value to the museum. The final selection of these artifacts for preventive/interpretive restoration work shall rest with the Executive Director on the joint recommendation of the Branch Manager involved and the Conservator. The criteria for this selection shall be the same as those stated above for the selection of extension artifacts (see Restoration; Section 6.1.0.). This restoration work shall be conducted following the guidelines and procedures stated above for the Conservation Treatment of artifacts (Sections 5.2.0. & 5.3.0.).

#### 7.0.0. Conservation Training

7.1.0. The museum shall afford the staff of the Conservation Division reasonable opportunity to develop their professional skills and expertise through further training and attendance at seminars and conferences relevant to the field of museum conservation as time and resources permit.

7.2.0. The Conservation Division shall offer basic instruction in preventive conservation practices to all WDM staff and volunteers who will handle the artifacts of the WDM collection. This basic training--or its equivalent, as determined by the Conservator shall serve as a prerequisite to the handling of artifacts for all museum staff and volunteers.

#### 8.0.0. Conservation Research

8.1.0. The Conservation Division recognizes the fact that the conservation profession has not yet

addressed the ethical and practical problems encountered in the preservation of technological collections for either static or operational display. These problems relate directly to a great part of the WDM's collection.

Accordingly, the Conservation Division shall devote a reasonable amount of its time and resources towards the testing and critical evaluation of materials and methods currently used to preserve and/or restore technological artifacts in commercial restoration operations and museums of technology.

8. 2.0. The Conservation Division shall maintain communications with industry, museum technological associations and conservation institutes both nationally and internationally in order to avoid duplication of research and to ensure maximum economy in these efforts.

8.3.0. The Conservation Division shall record and freely exchange such information as it generates with the conservation profession and the museum community both nationally and internationally.

#### 9.0.0. Conservation Records

9.1.0. The Conservation Division shall keep detailed and formal records of all artifact examinations and treatments which it performs within the WDM, and shall establish a formal system for the preservation and retrieval of such information.

9.2.0. The Conservation Division shall keep detailed and formal records of all advice and information which it offers to the Saskatchewan museum community and the general public.