



Collections Development Plan

Western Development Museum Collections Development Plan

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Purpose

The WDM has two documents that guide the management and development of its collections: The *Collection Management Policies* and the *Collections Development Plan*.

The *Collection Management Policies* provide standards to ensure that the WDM achieves its public-trust responsibilities through the care and stewardship of the WDM collections. These policies provide a management framework for the acquisition, care, use, deaccession and disposal of the WDM collections, contributing to the effectiveness and accountability of the WDM in fulfilling its mandate and mission.

The *Collections Development Plan* guides decision making by defining the criteria for accepting artifacts into the WDM's accessioned collections, the criteria for removing artifacts from the WDM's accessioned collections, and how limited resources will be allocated in the overall care and maintenance of the WDM's accessioned collections. The *Collection Management Policies* guide decision making around objects and materials in the WDM's non-accessioned collections.

The *Collection Management Policies* are reviewed on a three-year cycle. The *Collections Development Plan* will be reviewed on a five-year cycle.

In addition to these documents, the WDM uses collections management software to document, research and support decision making with respect to the collection. The system's public portal, [Argus](#), makes the collection more accessible to Saskatchewan people and beyond.

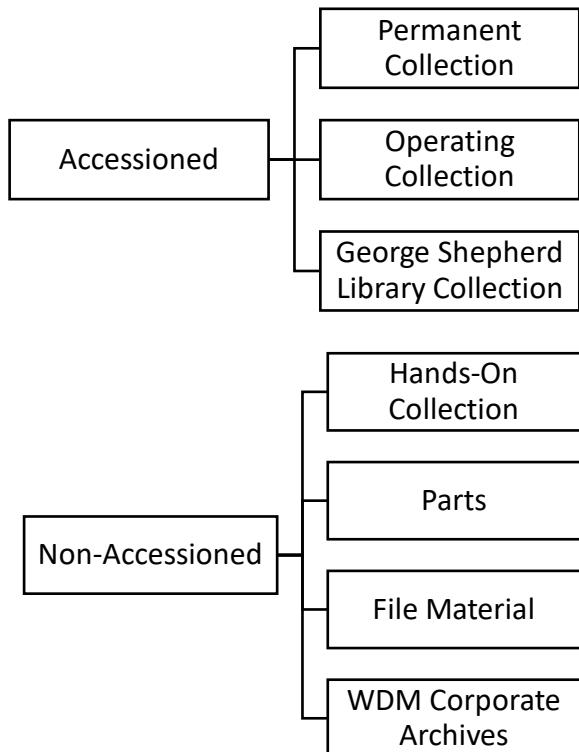
For each new artifact accessioned into the Permanent Collection, a *Statement of Significance* (Appendix A) will be prepared as part of the cataloguing procedure. Inclusive language remediation of old catalogue records will be an important part of the Curatorial Department's priorities in conjunction with this *Plan*.

WDM Collections

The WDM collections represent the cultural and economic history of Western Canada, with strong emphasis on Saskatchewan, from the settlement period and the negotiation of the Numbered Treaties (c.1870s) to the present day. These collections are held in trust for the people of Saskatchewan.

The WDM holds over 75,000 artifacts and over 500,000 archival, photographic and library materials. These objects and their associated documentation are acquired for research, programming and exhibit development. Generally, the WDM does not collect fine arts, natural history or archaeological artifacts, although some of these types of artifacts remain in the Permanent Collection from earlier collecting priorities.

The WDM collections are divided into two main collection categories, *Accessioned* and *Non-Accessioned*. Within these two categories are several collection types.¹



The objects and materials in the accessioned collections are the subject of this plan. The Permanent Collection consists of artifacts that illustrate the cultural and economic history of Saskatchewan and its people. Artifacts in the Permanent Collection represent significant tangible and intangible aspects of these histories on a wide range of topics. The Permanent Collection is the core for WDM research, exhibition and interpretation activities.

The WDM also recognizes the value of maintaining an operating collection of machinery and equipment. Artifacts in the Operating Collection are used for demonstration, training and other museum functions.

The George Shepherd Library Collection consists of accessioned and non-accessioned research materials available to staff and volunteers; while accessioned materials are available to the public, non-accessioned and uncatalogued materials may be limited in access.

Since its founding in 1949, the WDM has evolved to become much more than an agricultural implement museum. With a legislated mandate to stimulate interest in the history of the economic and cultural development of Western Canada², the Museum's collections have grown to better represent the diversity of the Saskatchewan spirit up to the present day. To meet its

¹ More detailed information about each collection type can be found in the *Collections Management Policies*.

² *The Western Development Museum Act*, subsection 11(c).

mandate, the WDM collections must represent all Saskatchewan peoples and the diverse histories of our province. The *Collections Development Plan* sets out the criteria used to develop the Museum's collections in keeping with its mandate.

Approach

The WDM began researching its collections with the goal of implementing a collections development plan as early as 2012. Years of research, inventories, assessments and staff consultations have been conducted since. That research, combined with new planning processes conducted in 2019, informed the first *Collections Development Plan* released in 2020.³

The *Collections Development Plan* (herein referred to as the *Plan*) is aligned to the WDM's mandate as legislated by the Government of Saskatchewan in *The Western Development Museum Act* and the Board of Directors' Ends Policies. The *Plan* responds to the WDM Vision of ***To embody Saskatchewan's diverse cultural heritage and inspire curiosity in our shared histories***, in its goals to develop the collections to better represent all Saskatchewan people, particularly those who have been unrepresented, underrepresented, misrepresented or erased in the Museum. The *Plan* meets several of the recommendations in the WDM's *Inclusivity Report: Reconciliation and Diversity at the WDM*, particularly Recommendation 4(a), "establishing new significance criteria for actively collecting from underrepresented communities."

In alignment to the WDM's Guiding Principles and Plans, the Curatorial Committee uses four curatorial priorities to inform its decision making:

- 1. Honouring our Roots through the Legacy Collection⁴**
- 2. Truth and Reconciliation**
- 3. Diversity and Inclusion**
- 4. Saskatchewan Innovation**

These focused priorities guide the work of the Curatorial Committee in allocating limited resources towards multiple operational streams including, collections management, research projects, content development, exhibition production, programming creation and delivery and other general museum functions. The *Plan* reflects these priorities by identifying high- and low-priority collecting areas; setting criteria for assessing prospective acquisitions for *significance*, *comparative criteria* and *interpretive capacity*; and identifying probable artifact categories and setting out plans for deaccessioning projects.

³ These research materials and findings are stored digitally in the WDM's file management system.

⁴ The Legacy Collection includes foundational artifacts collected from the 1940s to approximately the mid-1970s, under the direction of the Museum's founders and its first curator Dr. George Shepherd.

Acquisitions Process

The following plan sets out broad, flexible yet defined, collecting priorities and assessment tools for assessing the strength and suitability of prospective acquisitions. The Curatorial Committee will employ the *Plan* and related tools in its decision-making for acquisitions.

Artifacts accessioned into the Permanent Collection will continue to be highly selective based on the Museum's mandate and current resources. Generally, to be accessioned, artifacts will need to fall under Tier 1 or 2 as outlined in the *Collections Assessment Tool* (Appendix B).

Deaccessioning will complement the acquisitions process to develop a more balanced and focused collection and allocate the Museum's limited resources in the most effective way. The most resources will be allocated to acquiring and caring for artifacts from the high-priority categories outlined below.

Most artifacts under consideration for acquisitions will continue to come from donation offers from the public. As resources are obtained and/or allow, the Curatorial Committee may actively solicit artifacts for prospective acquisition as per the criteria and high-priority categories outlined below. The WDM may also purchase artifacts from a small allocated annual budget. The WDM does not currently have the capacity to implement and manage a full-scale active collecting program. The WDM receives hundreds of prospective artifact donations per year from the public, which absorbs considerable resources. Educating donors and stakeholders about the *Plan* is an important part of managing public expectations and avoiding disappointment.

Basic Acquisitions Criteria

All prospective offers must meet the basic acquisitions criteria as set out in the *CM-4 Acquisition Policy* before being assessed for *significance, comparative criteria and interpretive capacity*. The basic acquisitions criteria are as follows:

- The artifact helps to fulfill the WDM's vision, mission, mandate, guiding plans and priorities.
- The artifact tells a Saskatchewan story.
- The artifact represents an activity, process, time-period, event, region, person or community with demonstrable connection to Saskatchewan.
- The artifact belongs to an identified high-priority or 'continued-collecting' category identified in the *Plan*.
- The artifact has a documented history of ownership and use.
- The artifact is in good stable physical condition and does not pose a significant threat to the health and safety of the public, staff or the WDM collections.
- The WDM has the resources required to document, care for, preserve and provide reasonable access to the artifact.
- The artifact is offered as an unconditional donation.

- The artifact does not infringe on intellectual property or privacy rights.
- The artifact creates opportunities for research, exhibition, programming, or other uses.

The Registrar, or a designate in their absence, will determine if the artifact meets the basic criteria. The core members of the Curatorial Committee⁵, Collections Manager and Registrar have the authority to decline artifact offers at the time of donation that do not meet the basic criteria. Once the Registrar, or designate, has determined the artifact meets the basic criteria, they will, in consultation with other Curatorial Department staff members, assess its significance using the *Collections Assessment Tool* (herein referred to as the *Tool*) and record their assessments on the *Artifact Accession Recommendation Worksheet* (Appendix C). The Curatorial Committee will review worksheets forwarded to it for decision making at its regular meetings. The Curatorial Committee will instruct the Registrar to inform the donor of its decision. Further procedures are outlined in the Collections Procedures Manual.

Assessing Significance, Comparative Criteria and Interpretive Capacity

A clear evidence-based procedure for assessing the *significance* of artifacts promotes a fair and equitable decision-making process. Artifacts are assessed against a set of defined criteria for their:

- historical significance,
- artistic/aesthetic significance,
- scientific significance and/or,
- social/spiritual significance.

Artifacts are then assessed against three *comparative criteria* on the strength of their:

- provenance,
- representativeness in the WDM collection and,
- rarity.

Finally, artifacts are assessed for their *interpretive capacity* to tell impactful, diverse and inclusive stories. Using the *Tool*, artifacts will be assigned to one of three collection tiers.

Based on the overall assessment of *significance*, *comparative criteria* and *interpretive capacity*, artifacts will be assigned to a group level and collection tier. Tier 1 (groups 1 & 2) represents the most significant artifacts in the WDM Collection with high levels of provincial, national and international significance. Tier 2 (group 3) represents artifacts that have high levels of significance to local communities or regions within Saskatchewan but not usually beyond. Tier 3 (groups 4 & 5) represents artifacts with little to no significance for Saskatchewan History or significance which cannot be determined due to deficiencies in provenance.

⁵ The core members of the Curatorial Committee are the Chief Curator – Director of Collections & Research, Director of Exhibits and Director of Community Engagement.

Artifacts in Tier 1 (groups 1 & 2) and Tier 2 (group 3) will be allocated the most resources as they represent the most significant and rare of objects with higher likelihoods of telling diverse Saskatchewan stories. These objects are the most likely to be recommended for acquisition or retainment in the Permanent Collection.

Artifacts in Tier 3 (groups 4 & 5) will be allocated fewer resources and are good candidates for deaccessioning and/or internal transfer to the Hands-On, Operating or Parts Collections and/or exhibit props. These objects are often ubiquitous and lack demonstrable Saskatchewan significance and connection. Artifacts in Tier 3 will rarely be recommended for acquisition to the Permanent Collection. In exceptionally rare circumstances, an artifact in this tier may be acquired to replace similar artifacts in poor condition that can subsequently be deaccessioned.

Assessing artifacts is a poetic exercise where a certain level of subjectivity and interpretation will inevitably remain. It is not a perfect science. The *Tool* is meant to act as a guide, helping assessors determine which tier an artifact belongs to at the time of assessment.

Significance and relevance can change over time. The *Tool* helps WDM staff make the best decisions possible today. Curatorial Department staff will assess prospective acquisitions using the *Tool* and record their assessments using the *Artifact Accession Recommendation Worksheet* (Appendix C). Further staff procedures for using the *Tool* and preparing the *Worksheet* are included in the Collections Procedures Manual.

Acquisitions Plan

The *Collections Development Plan* prioritizes collecting artifacts from unrepresented, underrepresented, misrepresented and erased people and groups in Saskatchewan's history and the WDM collections. These groups have been identified as **Indigenous peoples and diverse settlers, including 2SLGBTQ+ people, communities and organizations**. These individuals and groups have made significant contributions to Saskatchewan's culture and economy and should have their histories preserved in the WDM to best meet its mandate and present a fuller, more inclusive narrative of our shared provincial history. **Saskatchewan Innovation** remains a high priority collecting category.

The Acquisitions Plan outlines the collecting priorities of the WDM but is not prescriptive. The WDM will remain flexible and open to unforeseen opportunities that may present themselves over the course of time.

Periodization and Geographical Focus

The high priority collecting categories outlined below are broad by design to allow for a wide range of histories to be discovered and considered. The historical period will range from the late 19th century to the present day as per the WDM's mandate. The focus will be on the post-1950s as the Permanent Collection currently skews more heavily to the pre-1950s. The geographic boundaries will generally be the provincial boundaries with consideration given to the Treaty boundaries, the boundaries of the Métis Nation and the traditional territories of all

First Nations in what is now Saskatchewan. A decolonized approach recognizes that linear boundaries are colonial and Indigenous movement was and is more fluid across time and space. Rarely, will a regional settler artifact be considered for accession (i.e. prairie, broadly speaking); instead, the appropriate provincial human history museum will be recommended (i.e. an artifact with a strong grounding in Alberta's history will be recommended to the Royal Alberta Museum).

Indigenous Peoples Collections

The Permanent Collection contains approximately 300 artifacts that represent Indigenous histories. Artifacts include clothing, footwear, accessories, beadwork, tools and implements, artwork and cultural items. Archaeological and sacred artifacts have been transferred to the Royal Saskatchewan Museum or, more recently, repatriated to their source communities.

The WDM welcomes working with Indigenous individuals, families, organizations, communities and nations to better represent their histories by expanding Indigenous collections at their discretion. Artifacts that explore the Treaty relationship, the history of colonialism and the Métis experience would provide Saskatchewan people with a greater understanding of our shared past. Artifacts that demonstrate Indigenous culture, entrepreneurship, achievement, innovation and ingenuity in the 20th century would complement the Indigenous artifacts in the WDM collection from the late 19th century. To continue on our Reconciliation journey, the WDM's Indigenous collections would benefit from expansion, led by Indigenous people from an Indigenous perspective and are thus a high priority area for collections development.

The WDM affirms its commitment to respecting the rights and interests of Indigenous peoples in the management of the Indigenous artifacts in its care. The WDM supports repatriation and has a *Repatriation and In-Trust Safekeeping Policy*, welcoming requests for repatriation of its existing collections and supporting in-trust safekeeping arrangements on a case-by-case basis as resources allow.

Diverse Settler Collections

Thousands of artifacts in the WDM collection represent the experiences of early settlers, particularly the histories of white, English-speaking rural and urban settlers from Britain, the United States and other parts of Canada. Small artifact groupings that represent the history of Chinese, Ukrainian, French, Jewish and Scandinavian families and communities, thousands of whom have lived here since before provincehood, amount to an underrepresentation. Very small to no groupings represent other migrant groups, particularly those who made Saskatchewan home from the 1950s to the present day. Immigrants from African, Asian/Southeast Asian, other Eastern European, Central and Latin American and some Western European countries (i.e. Italian, Greek, Dutch, etc.) are unrepresented or underrepresented in the Permanent Collection. Artifacts that tell stories from all areas of the cultural and economic lives of these groups should be considered for acquisition. In short, the full of history of

immigration to Saskatchewan is not represented in the Permanent Collection and is thus an area of high priority collecting.

Saskatchewan Innovation

Documenting a wide array of cross-sector innovations and inventions made in Saskatchewan remains a high-priority collecting area, particularly for the post-1950s to the present and for those sectors and industries that are not yet well-represented in the Permanent Collection. Sectors include, but are not limited to, exceptional examples in agriculture, mining, forestry, energy, technology, medicine and manufacturing.

Areas of Continued Collecting and Focus

The WDM will acquire artifacts from subject areas currently represented in the Collection when they present high levels of *significance*, *comparative criteria* and *interpretative capacity* and/or complement the collection in a formidable way. These areas remain somewhat underdeveloped in the collection and would benefit from expansion, particularly for the post-1950s to the present day:

- Saskatchewan histories of human rights and social advancements or regressions;
- Saskatchewan women's histories, particularly women in STEM or other paid work;
- Histories of Northern Saskatchewan;
- Cultural histories of sports⁶, leisure, music and performance in Saskatchewan;
- Other exceptional or significant moments in Saskatchewan History both celebratory and tragic.

The *Saskatchewan 2SLGBTQ+ History Collection* was established in 2018 and is a permanent sub-collection of artifacts telling stories about 2SLGBTQ+ life in Saskatchewan. The WDM is committed to preserving and sharing stories of the 2SLGBTQ+ communities' histories through this collection.

Artifacts Rarely Acquired

The WDM does not have the resources to collect artifacts already represented in the Collection, nor will the WDM collect artifacts to represent every type or time period of any particular object (i.e. encyclopedic collecting).

Early agricultural settler histories are well represented in the WDM Collection. In many cases, these artifacts amount to an over-representation in the Collection. Only early settler artifacts with an exceptional Saskatchewan story and highest level of significance may be considered for

⁶ The WDM will be mindful of the Saskatchewan Sports Hall of Fame mandate to avoid duplicating collecting efforts.

acquisition. The following early settler artifacts represent those types we are not currently collecting:

- 1920s vehicles
- Adding machines/calculators
- Aprons
- Baby carriages
- Basic hand tools
- Bed frames/bassinets/cribs
- Bibles
- Binders
- Buffalo fur coats
- Butter churns
- Button hooks
- Cameras
- Cash registers
- Children's books
- Christening/baptism gowns
- Clocks
- Cream separators
- Crocks
- Dictionaries
- Dinnerware
- Doilies
- Dolls
- Encyclopedia sets
- Family Portraits
- Fanning mills
- Fiction Books
- Furs
- Gas Tractors
- Glass insulators
- Lamps/lanterns
- Looms
- Magazines (mass circulation)
- Milk bottles
- Newspapers
- Nightgowns
- Pianos
- Player piano rolls
- Plows
- Portable engines
- Pump organs
- Radios
- Razors
- Scythes
- Sad irons
- Separators
- Sewing machines
- Sewing patterns
- Shawls
- Sheet music
- Sickles
- Slide projectors
- Stuffed animals
- Threshing machines
- Train sets
- Trophies
- Trunks
- Typewriters
- Typical early settler clothing
- Wagons/buggies
- Wash boards
- Wedding dresses

The Operating Collection of machinery is full and closed to new acquisitions. The Chief Curator – Director of Collections & Research may approve transfers of Tier 3 artifacts from the Permanent Collection to the Operating Collection on a case-by-case basis and only accompanied by a complete proposal with reasons for the proposed transfer as per the *CM-3 Types of Collections Policy*. The Chief Curator – Director of Collections & Research may also approve the transfer of artifacts or objects in other collections or in possession of the Museum

into the Operating Collection on a case-by-case basis for purposes such as improving documentation or an object having been assigned to an incorrect collection type previously.

Rapid Response and Contemporary Collecting

There are moments in history where the WDM will need to collect while an event or process is unfolding. Not doing so risks losing the artifacts quickly to the passage of time. This type of contemporary collecting is often referred to as “rapid response collecting.” The WDM will prioritize this type of collecting during moments where a rapid response is deemed necessary. Saskatchewan’s lived experience during the COVID-19 global pandemic was a good example of the need to execute rapid response collecting plans. Other examples include protests, emergencies (including natural disasters), tragedies, spontaneous or planned important events, short-lived but important business ventures or prototypes, and institutional or business closures.

This type of collecting is increasingly common in history museums and is practiced widely in North America. The Curatorial Committee will be proactive and make historical decisions for the future when it deems it necessary. While this presents certain challenges, and can be resource-intensive, rapid response collecting can prevent significant historical objects of the future from being lost now. It should be employed only in exceptional circumstances where highly significant artifacts are in danger of being lost.

Ad Hoc Sub-collecting Plans

The Curatorial Committee may create ad hoc sub-collecting plans that complement this *Plan* as resources allow and opportunities are presented. These plans must meet the criteria and priorities set out in the Acquisitions Plan above.

Deaccessions Plan

Deaccessioning is a necessary component of responsible collections management and is used to refine the WDM’s accessioned collections, improving their relevance and sustainability. The decision to deaccession must be thoroughly documented and based on objective, ethical and defensible motives. As per the *CM-8 Deaccession Policy*, the Board of Directors must approve all deaccessions. The Chief Curator – Director of Collections & Research will provide written guidance to the Curatorial Committee on planned deaccession investigations and projects every five years as part of this *Plan*.

All Curatorial Department staff are responsible for the ongoing routine identification and research of artifacts that may meet deaccession criteria. Deaccession recommendations to the Board of Directors originate in two streams:

- 1. Recommendations born of day-to-day research and contact with the collections, and**
- 2. Planned investigations and projects outlined in this Plan.**

In both streams, the electronic collections management database will be used to research, track and record all deaccessioning activities.

Basic Deaccession Criteria

All potential deaccessions must meet the basic deaccession criteria as set out in the *CM-8 Deaccession Policy* before being assessed for *significance, comparative criteria and interpretive capacity*:

- The artifact or library material lacks relevance to the WDM's vision, mission, mandate, guiding plans and priorities as outlined in the *Plan*.
- The artifact or library material is in poor physical condition and has deteriorated or is damaged or incomplete to a point where it does not serve a useful purpose.
- The artifact or library material is a hazard to the collection.
- The artifact or library material is a weak representation of a type that is over-represented in the collection.
- There are prohibitive restrictions to use by the WDM, including but not limited to donor conditions, intellectual property rights, privacy, copyright and trademark.
- The artifact or library material constitutes a significant human health risk.
- The artifact or library material is to be repatriated.
- The artifact or library material is permanently lost or has been stolen.

Once potential artifacts for deaccession have met any of the basic criteria above, they will be assessed for *significance, comparative criteria and interpretive capacity* and assigned to a Tier. Artifacts assigned to Tier 3, using the *Tool*, will be allocated less resources and are good candidates for deaccessioning and/or internal transfer to the Hands-On, Operating and/or Parts Collections or exhibit props. These artifacts are often ubiquitous and/or lack demonstrable Saskatchewan significance. It is unlikely artifacts assigned to Tiers 1 and 2 would be candidates for deaccession but this could occur on rare occasions due to deteriorated condition, the unsuitability of the WDM to care for the object, or in cases of repatriation.

Major Deaccessioning Project #1 Hazards in the Collection – Coad's Drug Store

Hazardous materials are present in all historical museum collections, and the WDM Collection is not unique in the types of hazards represented within its artifacts. Identifying and remediating hazards is a routine and ongoing responsibility in collection management. Foundational documentation for hazard identification and reporting has been developed, including the *Potentially Hazardous Materials in the WDM Collection (2023)* document and new identification fields and icons implemented in Argus. Further progress is dependent on ongoing research and information gathering.

Hazard remediation within the WDM Collection is an essential but resource-intensive responsibility that requires significant staff time, occasional external expertise and dedicated

funding to be carried out effectively. As such, we will develop a detailed strategy to begin organizing and carrying out ongoing remediation in the Collection based on the highest level of risk. This strategy will be developed and approved by **March 31, 2027**.

Deaccessioning and disposal will be an arm of this strategy. The first deaccessioning priority is assessment of the **Coad's Drug Store** pharmacy collection. This artifact group includes hundreds of vessels containing manufactured drugs and compounding ingredients for pharmacy use. These artifacts were removed from the WDM Saskatoon and are currently safely stored at the Curatorial and Corporate Services Centre (CCSC). An assessment project plan will be developed and approved by **March 31, 2027**. Deaccessioning and disposal will be completed by **March 31, 2030**, budget permitting.

It is important to note that not all hazardous artifacts identified will be deaccessioned merely because they are hazardous. Some of the most significant artifacts in the Collection may contain hazards. Proper storage, handling and containment protocols will be an important part of retaining hazardous yet significant artifacts.

[**Major Deaccessioning Project #2 “Room D” Project – Housekeeping Tools & Equipment \(T&E\)/Textile Working Tools & Equipment \(T&E\)**](#)

In 2019, a deaccessioning research project began to assess the artifacts in “Room D” of the Curatorial and Corporate Services Centre for possible deaccessioning. Room D contains a variety of small to medium sized artifacts, mostly representing domestic early settler life in Saskatchewan, many of which are part of the list on page 10 of this *Plan*. There are also artifact groupings in Room D that are duplicated in WDM locations, significantly overrepresented in the Collection, lack significance and are ubiquitous examples of antiques. Significant storage room and conservation costs will be saved in refining and reducing this collection. The furniture sub-group assessments from the Collections *Development Plan* (2020) will be completed by **March 31, 2026**, when the *Room D Fire Code Upgrade Project* is also slated to be completed.

A project plan to finish two more artifact sub-groups of assessments and deaccessioning in Room D has been developed and approved. These artifact sub-groupings are: **Housekeeping T&E** (washing machines, mangles, irons, etc.) and **Textile Working T&E** (spinning wheels, sewing machines, etc.). Each of these sub-groups will be scheduled to be completed within approximately two and a half years with a final completion date for both of **March 31, 2030**.

[**Additional Guidance on Planned Deaccessioning Projects**](#)

Curatorial Department staff are encouraged at any time to launch small, scalable deaccession projects born of their day-to-day work for artifacts known to belong to, or likely belong to, Tier 3. Artifacts with clear provenance outside of Saskatchewan may be recommend for deaccession and direct transfer to public museums in those provinces. Staff may also recommend Indigenous cultural belongings in any Tier as possible candidates for deaccessioning for the

purpose of repatriation. Assessments may be prepared and forwarded to the Collections Manager for consideration to recommend deaccessioning to the Chief Curator – Director of Collections & Research at any time. Additional planned deaccession projects may be developed and carried out at the discretion of the Collections Manager on any artifacts overrepresented in the Collection listed on page 10 of this *Plan*. These plans will be developed to work alongside the two major planned deaccessioning projects above only as resources and staffing allow. Priority will be given to artifacts that consume significant resources, such as physically large artifacts in Room A/B of the CCSC, or those in very poor physical condition across the WDM system.

Deaccessioning library materials in the George Shepherd Library is a normal part of good library collection management. Curatorial Department staff may recommend materials for deaccession at any time to the Collections Manager. Materials of low significance, duplication, poor condition or low circulation may be good candidates for deaccession. Library materials have been regularly deaccessioned and disposed of since 2013. Curatorial Department staff may recommend larger deaccessioning projects in the Library to the Collections Manager at any time as resources allow.

Operating Collection Research Project

The Operating Collection Research Project, which began in 2025, will update documentation for all working machinery and related artifacts in the WDM Operating Collection. This information will create a clearer understanding of the scope, condition and needs of the WDM's working equipment, enabling the WDM to update policies and procedures and make informed decisions on future priorities. Progress on this work will depend on the availability of staff, volunteer support and institutional resources.

Acknowledgements

The WDM thanks all former and current staff and volunteers who were consulted for their insights on how best to develop the collections. Credit for the concept of “assessing significance” is due to the [Collections Council of Australia](#). We also acknowledge the fundamental shift museum collections are undergoing worldwide, inspired by the concept of active collections, as defined by Elizabeth Wood, Rainey Tisdale and Trevor Jones in their edited collection [Active Collections](#) (London: Routledge, 2018). We have drawn much inspiration from the active collections concept on how to improve the quality, not quantity, of the WDM collections. Both [Trevor Jones' tiering collections work](#) and the [Significance 2.0 guide](#) from the Collection Council of Australia helped us create our *Collections Assessment Tool*. Inspiration for this *Plan* was also drawn from the [New Bedford Whaling Museum Collections Development Plan](#).

The archived *Collections Development Plan* (2020) is available for reproduction by request.

Appendix A – Artifact Statement of Significance

Artifact Statement of Significance: WDM-____-X-____, Object Name

Draft written (date) by (staff name)

Draft approved by Chief Curator – Director of Collections & Research (date)



Artifact Photo

Themes and Context: Historic event or movement (Second World War, 1939 Royal Visit, Immigration, Public Health), Organization or Corporation (Canadian Pacific Railway, 4-H, University of Saskatchewan), Universal Human Theme/Story (love, loss, courage, conflict, luck, starting over...), Ethnic, Cultural, or Religious Group (Mennonite, Sikh, Ukrainian, Cree), Keywords (Advocacy, Education, Leadership, Racial Stereotypes). Guidelines to be developed.

Description and Statement of Significance:

Paragraph #1: Artifact/Collection description. Brief and concise. No more than 3-5 sentences. Highlight any unique or unusual physical characteristics. This is not a cataloguing description.

Paragraph #2: Clearly state significance and the group the artifact/collection was assessed at according to the [WDM Collections Groupings Assessment Tool](#). Briefly state why by referencing the chart in the assessment tool. What makes this artifact special: connection to tradition or historical events, aesthetics, scientific achievement, spiritual meaning, rarity, etc. What is the personal or powerful story and its connection/importance to Saskatchewan? Focus on tying everything back into the value of the artifact and stay succinct rather than getting into detailed history, that can be done later with in exhibit text or an article.

Paragraph #3: Further Context. What is a little of the history and narrative of the artifact? Is there a reason it is rare? Is there information or an idea from a secondary source that would be helpful here? A collection of items or multiple complex stories may occasionally require more than a single paragraph.

Health & Safety: State health and safety concerns such as lead paint, asbestos, requirement of two people to lift and move, flammability, etc. If there are no health concerns, state it.

Conservation: TBD by Collections Care Specialist. Basic condition and simplified list of concerns like significant oxidation, stains, holes, etc. State if there are no immediate concerns. Reference

any detailed assessments by the Collections Care Specialist and either attach a copy or refer to the location of it.

Donation Conditions: Restrictions on name use, agreements to delay exhibiting it, privacy concerns (banking information, healthcare information, school attendance records), etc. State if there are no donation conditions.

References: Please list all references using Chicago Style citations, including artifact files or records and other internal WDM sources. This list is usually brief. These statements are a summary of the available information used to assess the current level of significance of the artifact/collection, not biographies or research papers.

Appendix B – Collections Assessment Tool

The *Collections Assessment Tool* is a flexible but clear mechanism used to assign an artifact to a collection tier and group level on three categories: *significance*, *comparative criteria* and *interpretive capacity*.

Artifacts in collection Tier 1 (groups 1 & 2) and Tier 2 (group 3) will be allocated the most resources as they represent the most significant and rare of objects with higher likelihoods of telling diverse Saskatchewan stories. These objects are the most likely to be recommended for acquisition or retainment in the Permanent Collection.

Artifacts in Tier 3 (groups 4 & 5) will be allocated fewer resources and are good candidates for deaccessioning and/or internal transfer to the Hands-On, Operating, Parts and exhibit props. These artifacts are often ubiquitous and lack demonstrable Saskatchewan significance and connection. Artifacts in Tier 3 will rarely be recommended for acquisition to the Permanent Collection. In exceptionally rare circumstances an artifact in this tier may be acquired to replace similar artifacts in poor condition that can subsequently be deaccessioned.

The *Tool* should also be applied to materials to be acquired for or deaccessioned from the George Shepherd Library and the Operating Collection.

During research for acquisition and deaccessioning, Curatorial Department staff will assign an artifact to group level and a collection tier based on the criteria below. If Curatorial Department staff are unable to ascertain and assign a group level and/or tier, the decision will rest with the Curatorial Committee. If the Curatorial Committee is unable to reach a majority decision, the decision will rest with the Chief Curator – Director of Collections & Research and/or the Chief Executive Officer. Further procedures for using the *Tool* can be found in the Collections Procedures Manual.

To use the Tool:

Step One:

- **Acquisitions:** All prospective offers must meet the basic acquisitions criteria as set out in the *CM-4 Acquisition Policy*, pages 14-15, before being assessed for *significance*, *comparative criteria* and *interpretive capacity*.
- **Deaccessions:** All prospective deaccessions must be assessed against the basic deaccessioning criteria as set out in the *CM-8 Deaccession Policy*, page 26, before being assessed for *significance*, *comparative criteria* and *interpretive capacity*.

Step Two:

- For both **Acquisitions** and **Deaccessions**: Using the chart below, assess the artifact across all categories of *significance*, *comparative criteria* and *interpretive capacity*.

Step 3:

- Assign the overall group level and collection tier. The overall group level is determined by how the artifact was assessed for each category. For example, an artifact may be assigned to group 1 for *significance* and *interpretive capacity* but score lower in *comparative criteria*. In this case, the artifact should still be assigned to group 1 with notations in the *Statement of Significance* about the lower elements of the rating.

Collection Tiers:

Tier 1: Significant to Saskatchewan AND nationally or internationally significant and/or significant to Saskatchewan BUT not nationally or internationally significant.

Tier 2: Significant locally to one or more communities in Saskatchewan.

Tier 3: Significant regionally to the Prairies but not specifically to Saskatchewan and/or limited or unknown geographic significance in Saskatchewan or the Prairies.

Group Level Criteria:

	Tier 1		Tier 2		Tier 3	
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	
SIGNIFICANCE						
Historical	Exceptional, unique example of person, people, event, place or theme in Saskatchewan History (either ordinary or extraordinary) that changed the course of history for humankind broadly	Excellent, somewhat unique example of person, people, event, place or theme in Saskatchewan History (either ordinary or extraordinary) that changed the course of history provincially	Good example of person, people, event, place or theme in Saskatchewan History; might be common or unique	Generic or vague example of person, people, event, place or theme in Saskatchewan History	Limited to no historical significance to Saskatchewan May have clear evidence of significance elsewhere	
Artistic/Aesthetic	Exceptional level of craftsmanship , technical	Excellent somewhat unique level of	Good example of craftsmanship,	Generic example of craftsmanship,	Limited to no artistic or aesthetic value; often	

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
	excellence, beauty, demonstrated skill, quality, execution, and/or design (either Indigenous or Settler); generally, globally famous artist, musician or author from or with connection to Saskatchewan ; changed the course of cultural style or aesthetic globally	craftsmanship , technical excellence, beauty, demonstrated skill, quality, execution and/or design (either Indigenous or Settler); generally well-known artist, musician or author from or with connection to Saskatchewan but not nationally or internationall y	technicality , beauty, demonstrated skill, quality, execution, design (either Indigenous or Settler) from or with connection to Saskatchewan; generally ordinary makers; might be common or unique	technicality , beauty, demonstrated skill, quality, execution, design (either Indigenous or Settler); might be mass-produced	mass-produced
Scientific	Exceptional unique scientific innovation, invention, patent, product or process designed, invented or made in Saskatchewan that had major global impact, generally with recognition	Excellent scientific innovation, invention, patent, product or process designed, invented or made in Saskatchewan ; might not be wholly unique; may have improved on previous technology; made life easier/better	Good but common scientific innovation, invention, patent, product or process designed, invented or made in Saskatchewan; and/or homemade with no broad reach but impactful in a	Generic or mass produced; not designed, invented or made in Saskatchewan	Limited to no scientific significance and/or not relevant to Saskatchewan

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
		for people in Saskatchewan	defined way		
Social/Spiritual	Object held in exceptionally high community esteem; exceptionally high levels of affection for or feelings against; represents core identities, community cohesion or strife; integral to belief systems; exceptionally high political significance; wholly embodies cultural expression	Object held in community esteem; high levels of affection for or feelings against; represents core identities, community cohesion or strife; important to belief systems; high political significance	Object held somewhat in community esteem, perhaps only for a few; some level of affection for or feelings against; represents only some identities, community cohesion or strife; tangential to belief systems; some political significance	Object not widely held in community esteem; no real affection for or feelings against; does not well-represent core identities, community cohesion or strife; not important to belief systems; little political significance	Limited to no community esteem; level of affection for or feelings against; does not represent core identities, community cohesion or strife; no connection to belief systems; no political significance
COMPARATIVE CRITERIA					
Provenance	Exceptionally strong	Strong	Good	Moderate	Little to none
Representativeness in WDM Collection	None to very few duplicates in WDM Collection or other Canadian collections	Few similar examples in WDM Collection or other Canadian collections	Similar examples in WDM Collection or other Canadian collections	Common in WDM Collection or other Canadian collections	Significant overrepresentation in WDM Collection or other Canadian collections

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
Rarity	Rare, one-of-a-kind, likely irreplaceable	Uncommon, difficult to replace	Moderately difficult to replace, becoming increasingly rare with passage of time	Easy to replace or borrow from other collections	Prolific, mass produced, readily available for the foreseeable future
INTERPRETIVE CAPACITY					
Impact	Could be used to tell multiple powerful and impactful stories about Saskatchewan and its place in Canada and the World	Could be used to tell multiple compelling, interesting stories about Saskatchewan, the Prairies, its people and their lives	Could be used to tell good local place-based stories and their connection to Saskatchewan History	Could be used in a supporting role to complement a more impactful story but not as the focus; exhibit fill	Could be used in a minor supporting role; prop; used as examples of prolific objects
Diversity and Inclusion	Represents marginalized, misrepresented, or underrepresented person or group in Saskatchewan History; tells a little known but important story	Could be used to illustrate a marginalized, misrepresented, or underrepresented person or group in Saskatchewan history; tells a more generic story	Represents the dominant settler group but could be used to tell a diverse and inclusive story	Represents the dominant settler group; excludes many; erases some or many	Doesn't represent a particular group
Indigenous Artifacts	Connected to community of origin; Elders consulted; frequent cultural	Community of origin identified; some information from Elders;	Possible community of origin identified or broader cultural	Unlikely to identify community of origin; possibly able to	Impossible to identify community of origin; difficult to identify broader

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5
	contact with object	some contact with object	group; contact made; working towards access	identify broader cultural group; no contact yet	cultural group; contact unlikely

Appendix C – Artifact Accession Recommendation Worksheet

For Object(s):

Assessor Name(s): _____ Date: _____

Basic Criteria Checklist:

- Fulfils WDM vision, mission, mandate, guiding plans and priorities
- Tells a Saskatchewan story
- Represents an activity, process, time-period, event, region, person or community with demonstrable connection to Saskatchewan
- Belongs to a high-priority or 'continued collecting' category identified in the *Collections Development Plan*
- Has a documented history of ownership and use
- Is in good stable physical condition and does not pose a significant threat to the health and safety of the public, staff or the WDM collections
- WDM has resources required to document, care for, preserve and provide reasonable access to the object
- Is offered as an unconditional donation
- Does not infringe on intellectual property or privacy rights
- Creates opportunities for research, exhibition, programming, or other uses

Group Level: **1 2 3 4 5**

	Group Level	Assessment Summary
SIGNIFICANCE		
Historical		
Artistic/Aesthetic		
Scientific		
Social/Spiritual		

	Group Level	Assessment Summary
COMPARATIVE CRITERIA		
Provenance		
Representativeness in WDM Collection		
Rarity		
INTERPRETIVE CAPACITY		
Impact		
Diversity and Inclusion		
Indigenous Artifacts		

Recommended Collection Tier (based on overall assessment): 1 2 3

Additional Comments:

Date: _____

Signature & WDM Title: _____

Appendix D – Artifact Deaccession Recommendation Worksheet

For Artifact:

Assessor Name(s):

Date:

Assessment/Deaccession Stream: (Refer to CM-8: Deaccession Process)

I. Deaccession recommendation born of day-to-day research and contact with the collections.

II. Planned deaccession investigations and projects. If selected, name deaccession project name:

Assessment Summary: (Refer to Collections Development Plan)

Collections Assessment Tool:

Group Level: 1 2 3 4 5

<input type="checkbox"/>				
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	Group Level	Assessment Summary
SIGNIFICANCE		
Historical		
Artistic/Aesthetic		
Scientific		
Social/Spiritual		
Comparative Criteria		
Provenance		

	Group Level	Assessment Summary
Representativeness		
Rarity		
Interpretive Impact		
Diversity & Inclusion		
Indigenous Artifacts		

Recommended Collection Tier: (based on overall assessment)

1 2 3

Retain in Collection: Yes No

Comments/Photos:

Reason for Recommending Deaccession (Refer to CM-8: Deaccession Criteria)

Disposal Plan:

Approval to send to WDM board for deaccessioning:

Elizabeth Scott, Curator

Date

Julie Jackson, Collections Manager

Date

Deaccessioning:

- Recommendation to deaccession, including disposal plan, created and signed by Curator and one WDM manager
- Assessment info added to database

Artifact photos taken and attached to database

Recommendation to deaccession sent to CEO

Board approval for deaccession date:

Artifact(s) moved to holding area

Database and artifact folders updated with "deaccessioned"

Disposal:

Other relevant organizations informed if appropriate:

Museums Association of Saskatchewan

Canadian Museums

Association List others:

Final Disposal Method Determined:

Explain:

CEO authorized disposal method:

Transfer

Parts

Gift

Sell at public auction

Destroy

Other

Accession numbers and any identifying labels removed

Document prepared for disposal type if necessary

Disposal completed

Disposal information updated on database and location changed to "Deaccessioned"

Artifact file(s) stamped "Deaccessioned"

WDM Deaccession Recommendation, Deaccessioning and Disposal Worksheet, and any transfer, sale, or other relevant documents inserted into artifact file(s)

If sold by public auction, give copy of CEO approval, receipt, and any other sale documentation to WDM administration

Joan Kanigan, WDM CEO

Date