

# **Shoreline Historical Museum Collections Management Policy**

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## **I. Mission of the Shoreline Historical Museum**

The Shoreline Historical Museum is a non-profit 501 (C) 3 organization founded in 1975 to commemorate the area that was encompassed by the Shoreline School District, which spans from 85<sup>th</sup> to 205<sup>th</sup> street and from the shores of the Puget Sound to the Shores of Lake Washington. The mission of the Shoreline Historical Museum is to record, preserve, and interpret the history of the Shoreline area and its relationship to the Northwest region, by collecting and caring for artifacts, documents, and other cultural material and displaying and interpreting them for the cultural benefit of the public.

## **II. Introduction to the Collections Management Policy of the Shoreline Historical Museum**

### **A. Purpose of this document**

The objects in the Shoreline Historical Museum's collections are held in trust for the public and are acquired, recorded, and managed solely to further the organization's nonprofit purpose, in pursuit of its mission, and in accordance with its policies and procedures. The Collections Management Policy of the Shoreline Historical Museum establishes guidelines and procedures for the acquisition, disposition, and use of the collections of the museum.

### **B. Authority**

All museum policies and procedures will be reviewed at least every five years to reflect changes in circumstance as well as prevailing museum standards. All revisions of policies and procedures must be approved by the museum's Board of Trustees. The Executive Director is responsible for ensuring adherence to the Collections Management Policy.

### C. Collections Committee

The Collections Committee supports the growth, preservation, and protection of the collections and related documents of the Shoreline Historical Museum through policy and procedure development. The Collections Committee also serves as an advocate for collections use in research, exhibits, and public programs while contributing to the mission of the Shoreline Historical Museum. See Appendix A for Collections Committee responsibilities.

## **III. Scope of Collections**

The Shoreline Historical Museum collects artifacts, documents, and other materials that further the museum's mission to record, preserve, and interpret the history of the Shoreline area from the first arrival of Native Americans to the present day. Objects considered for accession must relate to the lives and culture of Shoreline residents and/or highlight Shoreline's interaction with the region, state, nation, or world. The museum maintains the following categories of objects:

1. Collection- the museum's primary collection consists of objects that support the institution's mission and are intended to be in the museum's care, and thus held in public trust, for the foreseeable future.
2. Archival material- the archival collection of books, photographs, records, and printed and written materials is maintained for research and education purposes and is available to the public during specified hours and by appointment.

## **IV. Accessions**

### A. Definition

An accession is an object that has come into the custody of the museum and is formally and legally transferred to the museum's ownership and added to its collection. Only objects intended to be kept for the foreseeable future will be accessioned.

B. Criteria for accessioning

Objects accessioned into the collection of the Shoreline Historical Museum must further the institution's mission. Candidates for accessioning will be evaluated with the following criteria, among others:

1. The object relates to the history and/or culture of the Shoreline community.
2. The object highlights Shoreline's interaction with the region, state, nation, or world.
3. There are sufficient resources within the institution to care for the object without compromising the care of the rest of the collection. These resources include labor, facilities, money, and technical expertise, among others.
4. The object is in reasonably good condition. The resources that would be needed to restore or stabilize it are available.
5. The cost of maintaining the object compares favorably to the contribution of the object to the collection.
6. The documentation is adequate to establish provenance and justify the significance of the object to the museum.
7. Clear and legal title can be obtained for the object.
8. The object is not a duplicate or near duplicate of an object already in the collection.
9. The object is likely to be used. This could include display, research, or loan.

10. The acquisition of this object will not harm the museum's relationship with the Shoreline community.
11. If the donor wishes to place any specific restrictions on the object, they are reasonable and realistic.
12. The object will not compromise the safety of staff, volunteers, visitors, or other objects in the collection.
13. The object does not require special security or safety measures that are not available at the museum.

See Appendix B for additional considerations.

#### C. Authority

Objects considered for accessioning will be brought before the Collections Committee, who will make a recommendation to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will ultimately decide if the object will be accessioned.

### **V. Deaccessions and Disposals**

#### A. Deaccession

Deaccessioning is the permanent removal of an accessioned object from the museum's collection. When an object is removed from the collection, it is done so to further refine and increase the quality of the collection. Objects in the collection may not be deaccessioned or disposed of to provide financial support for museum operations, or for any reason other than the direct care, preservation, or acquisition of collections.

## B. Criteria for deaccessioning

Objects may be considered for deaccessioning if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. The object does not fit into the Shoreline Historical Museum's scope of collections.
2. There are not sufficient resources within the museum to care for the object without compromising the care of the rest of the collection.
3. The object has deteriorated beyond usefulness, and the cost of conservation treatment does not align with the object's contribution to the museum's mission.
4. The object is determined that the object is a fake or forgery.
5. The object is determined that the object was illegally or unethically obtained.
6. The object is a duplicate or near duplicate of another object or objects in the collection.
7. The object compromises the safety of staff, volunteers, visitors, or other objects in the collection.
8. The object requires special security or safety measures that the museum is unable to provide.

See Appendix C for additional considerations.

## C. Deaccessioning Authority

Objects considered for deaccession will be brought before the Collections Committee, who will make a recommendation to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will ultimately decide if the object will be deaccessioned.

D. Accepted Methods of Disposal:

**1. Transfer to another public institution**

Deaccessioned objects may be transferred to another nonprofit organization or a school.

**2. Sale**

Deaccessioned objects may be sold at a public auction or, less preferably, through a reputable dealer. Sales to museum staff, board members, or volunteers are prohibited unless the public has the same opportunity to purchase the object. All proceeds from the sale of deaccessioned objects will be used exclusively to acquire objects for the collection or to directly promote the long-term preservation of the collection.

**3. Exchange**

Deaccessioned objects may be exchanged with another nonprofit institution or a reputable dealer for an object or objects that will be accessioned into the collection.

**4. Repatriation**

Deaccessioned objects may be returned to an appropriate tribal entity or cultural group.

**5. Destruction**

Objects that are deteriorated, irreparable, determined to be forgeries or fakes, or that are hazardous may be destroyed.

#### E. Disposal Authority

Once the Executive Director has determined that an object will be deaccessioned, the Board of Trustees will approve of the disposal method.

### **VI. Loans**

#### A. Outgoing loans

The Shoreline Historical Museum may lend materials to other public, nonprofit institutions for the purpose of exhibition or study. An outgoing loan agreement between the Shoreline Historical Museum and the receiving institution must be signed prior to the object leaving the Shoreline Historical Museum. Requests for loans will be considered on a case-by-case basis using, but not limited to, the following criteria:

- Shoreline Historical Museum has legal title to the object requested for loan.
- The intended use of the loaned object is compatible with the Shoreline Historical Museum's mission.
- The loan is for an acceptable length of time, and Shoreline Historical Museum does not plan to exhibit or otherwise make use of the requested object during that time.
- The borrowing institution can demonstrate the intent and ability to provide adequate care and security for the loan and does not have a history of breaching loan agreements.
- The item's condition does not prevent it from being safely packed and transported.

#### B. Incoming Loans

The Shoreline Historical Museum may request loans from other public, nonprofit institutions or individuals for the purpose of exhibition or study. A loan agreement between the Shoreline Historical Museum and the lending institution must be signed prior to the object leaving the loaning institution. The Shoreline Historical Museum will provide the same level of reasonable care for loaned items as is afforded its own collection. Requests for loans will be considered on a case-by-case basis using, but not limited to, the following criteria:

- The loaned object will be used to support the mission of the Shoreline Historical Museum.
- The object is not being loaned for the primary purpose of storage.
- Shoreline Historical Museum can provide adequate security for the object.
- Shoreline Historical Museum can provide an adequate storage environment and/or exhibit environment for the object.
- The cost of insurance, packing and shipment, and other costs associated with the loan are within the means of the Shoreline Historical Museum and compare favorably to the object's contribution to the museum's mission.

## **VII. Inventory**

### **A. Authority**

To ensure the quality and safety of the collection, a complete inventory of accessioned items will be conducted every five years. Physical condition reports will also be updated at this time. The inventory will be carried out by the Collections Committee and overseen by the Executive Director.

## B. Found in collections

Items discovered in the collection whose provenance cannot be determined will be assigned a “found in collection” number and handled in accordance with Washington State laws. See Appendix D for a summary.

## C. Missing Items

Any item or part of an item that exists in the database but cannot be found in collections will be marked as “missing” or “partially missing.” Any items discovered missing must be reported immediately to the Executive Director.

# **VIII. Risk Management**

## A. Risk Assessment

The Executive Director is responsible for coordinating the development and maintenance of the Disaster/Emergency Preparedness Plan to ensure the protection of the collection and archives. The Executive Director will work with the Collections Management Committee to conduct an annual risk assessment. The results, including any recommendations for updating policy or procedure, will be shared with the Board of Trustees.

## B. Insurance

The Executive Director and the Board of Trustees will review the insurance policy annually to verify that it continues to be adequate for the buildings, grounds, collections, and general liability. After the review, the policy will be renewed or replaced with a more suitable option.

## **IX. Glossary**

**Abandoned property**- Any unclaimed property held by the museum for more than five years.

**Accession** - The act of a formal, legal transfer of title from a separate entity to the museum.

**Archival material** - Records that document an individual, institution, group, place, or activity and are kept for their continuing value.

**Artifact**- An object made by humans that has cultural value.

**Acquisition**- any object that comes into the museum's physical possession, regardless of ownership status.

**Collection** - The objects or groups of objects held by a collecting institution such as a museum. These objects are formally accessioned into the collection, wherein they are protected, cared for, and preserved.

**Deaccession** - To permanently remove an object from the museum's collection.

**Loan** - a transaction in which one party allows an object it owns to be temporarily transferred to the custody of a second party for specified length of time without a transfer of ownership taking place.

**Provenance** – the background of an object in terms of its history of ownership and geographic origin.

**Repatriation**- The process and act of returning an object to its community and/or location of origin.

**Title** – Legal ownership of property.

## **Appendix A: Collection Committee Responsibilities**

The responsibilities of the Collections Committee include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Regular review and revision of the Collections Management Policy
- Making recommendations concerning proposed accessions and deaccessions
- Approving large collections- related purchases
- Developing and maintaining an Emergency Preparedness Plan for the collections
- Staying informed of evolving best practices for collections management and sharing this information with other staff and volunteers
- Managing regular collections inventory
- Maintaining collections records
- Making recommendations concerning loans
- Continually refining the scope of collections to best serve the museum's mission
- Identifying objects in the collection in need of special treatment or conservation
- Advocating for collections to be used safely for exhibit or study

## **Appendix B: Questions to Ask When Considering Accessions**

1. Does this object fit into the scope of collections? How does it add to the collection?
2. Is there physical space for the object? Where would it be stored, and would it be safe there long term?
3. Do staff and/or volunteers have time to dedicate to this object? This includes processing the acquisition, finding proper storage, preparing the object for display or loan, including it in future regular inventories, etc.
4. Is the object stable as is? If not, what would be needed to stabilize it, and could the museum realistically dedicate the needed resources to do so in the near future? Even if funding isn't an issue, can an appropriate conservator be found?
5. How do the costs associated with accepting the object compare to its contribution? Is it something that will draw in visitors? Does it add to the legitimacy and prestige of the collection?
6. Beyond establishing clear and legal title, was the object ethically obtained and is the museum an appropriate home? Does anyone lose from the museum taking control of the object? Could accepting it damage the museum's relationship with the community?
7. How might the object be used for exhibition, research, loan, etc. in the next five to ten years? If there are no plans to use it, how does the cost compare to the benefit of accessioning the object?
8. If the donor wishes to place restrictions on the object, what are their consequences? Does it add cost to accepting the object? Does it detract from the object's potential

contribution to the collection? Do staff and/or volunteers have the time to honor the request?

## **Appendix C: Questions to Ask When Considering Deaccessions**

1. What is the museum's responsibility to the donor? Did you agree to notify them if the object was deaccessioned? If not, how will deaccessioning the object affect the museum's relationship with the donor?
2. How will the deaccession be justified to the public? Can you articulate why removing the object improves the overall quality of the collections and furthers the mission of the museum?
3. Why is the selected method of disposal most appropriate? How might you justify it to the donor or a concerned community member?
4. How can the scope of collections and accessioning criteria be refined to prevent the need for future, similar deaccessions?

## **Appendix D: Summary of Washington State Abandoned Property Laws**

### **RCW 63.26.020 – Abandoned Property Notice**

Property held by a museum or historical society for more than five years is considered abandoned. The institution must post public notice of abandoned property and ownership transfers to the institution if the property has not been claimed within 90 days of the second notice.

### **RCW 63.26.040 Notice of Abandonment of Property**

To fulfill the public notice requirement, the institution must mail the notice by certified mail, return receipt requested, to the last known owner at the most recent address of the owner as shown on the museum's records. If no address is available or no reply is received within 30 days, the museum or society must publish notice, at least once each week for two consecutive weeks, in a newspaper of general circulation in both the county in which the museum is located and the county in which the last known address, if available, of the owner is located.