
Oakville Museum Artifact Deaccessioning and Disposal

Procedure number: MS-REC-001-003
Parent policy number: MS-REC-001
Section: Municipal services
Sub-section: Recreation services
Author(s): Recreation and Culture
[]
Authority: CAO
Effective date: 2013-05-06
Review by date: *5 years from CAO approval*

Purpose statement

Museums are committed to preserving, displaying, and interpreting collections of artifacts. In order to do this effectively, artifacts should be in displayable and sustainable condition, have a documented history and be relevant to the themes of the institution. Each artifact is held in trust for the public and requires an expenditure of resources for its care and display. Ethical museum practice includes the periodic review of the collection and removal of unsuitable artifacts, enabling the museum to devote resources to those artifacts that do meet its mandate. This process is called “deaccessioning”.

Deaccessioning is governed by strict policy and procedures to ensure accountability, transparency and adherence to the highest professional standards and ethics, and so as to not jeopardize the integrity and reputation of the Town and Museum.

Scope

This procedure applies to all artifacts in the Oakville Museum Collection, as applicable. The procedure, also applies to Museum staff, volunteers and donors when entering into agreements or making recommendations regarding acquisition, deaccessioning and disposal of artifacts.

Procedure

Documentation

The Museum will thoroughly research and document all objects prior to deaccessioning.

Deaccessioning

Acceptable reasons for deaccessioning an object:

1. The object does not meet the Museum's collections mandate;
2. The object is a duplicate;
3. The object has been damaged or slowly deteriorated over time and the costs of conservation outweigh the value to the collection;
4. The object poses a danger to the collection or staff (i.e. infestation, hazardous materials);
5. The object can no longer be suitably stored by the organization;
6. The object is being returned or repatriated to its place or community of origin (e.g. First Nations ~~band~~ [Community](#));
7. The original owner or legal heir has proven legal title to it;
8. The object has been stolen or lost.*

*In the event of accidental loss or destruction, a report will be given by the Museum Supervisor to Council. Steps will be taken to prevent similar occurrences and insurance claims will be filed. Public authorities will be notified as required.

The Museum will record the authority for disposal and the date authority was granted, the reason for disposal, the approved method of disposal and the date of the actual disposal. This information will be placed in the Donor File and [recorded within the Museum's Collections Management Software to be](#)~~will be~~ kept on a permanent basis.

Disposal

The Oakville Museum will do its utmost to ensure that deaccessioned objects will remain in the public trust. If unsuccessful in offering an object to public ~~Museums~~ [museums](#) or similar public institutions the item may be given, traded, exchanged, or sold to a private institution devoted to the preservation of heritage, to a dealer, private collector, or individual. No object shall be acquired by a Councillor, Museum staff member, Museum volunteer, their immediate family or representative. Disposal of objects shall be governed by their individual or aggregate value, where a group of objects is being deaccessioned, under the approval table given below. Oakville Town Council, as the board of the Museum will be given an annual report of all deaccessions. Any funds generated from the disposal process must be used for artifact acquisition or conservation.

Order of priority for disposal of objects:

1. Offer to Oakville Historical Society (as per December, 1992 Agreement, as amended, between the Town of Oakville and the Oakville Historical Society);
2. Gift, exchange or sale to responsible public museum;
3. Gift, exchange or sale to responsible public institution or agency involved in heritage preservation;
4. Gift, exchange or sale to responsible private museum, institution or agency involved in heritage preservation;
5. Sale to public at auction;
6. Exchange or sale to dealer or collector;
7. Destruction.

Where conditions are attached to an acquisition restricting its disposal, the Town of Oakville will endeavor to comply with those restrictions upon consultation with the donor, heirs or representatives.

Public Notice

- Donors, heirs or representatives, will be notified in writing of the deaccessioning.
- In the case of a major deaccession either in quantity or monetary value, a notice of intent will be issued to the community through the appropriate media.
- Where the Town of Oakville wishes to deaccession objects on long term loan, but is unable to locate the lender, the Town of Oakville will make public through the appropriate media, a statement to the following effect:
 - a) The Town of Oakville is seeking contact with the individual who has loaned the object to the Town of Oakville
 - b) The Town of Oakville wishes to return the object to the rightful owner heir or representative
 - c) The Town of Oakville requests that the rightful owner, heir or representative, or anyone knowing the whereabouts of the above, should contact the Town of Oakville.

References and related documents

Ontario Heritage Act, [R.R.O. \(OHA\)](#), Regulation 877, [Grants for Museums](#)
Standards for Community Museums in Ontario, [Ontario](#) Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport

[ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, International Council of Museums](#)
Oakville Museum Collections Management Procedure

Definitions

Deaccessioning: The formal process of removing an object from the Museum's permanent collection register, catalogue or database.

Disposal: The physical removal of the object from the organization.

Responsibilities

- The Curator [and Collections Coordinator](#) ~~of Collections~~ is responsible for maintaining collections records and advising re: potential deaccessions.
- The Museum Supervisor, in consultation with the Curator [and Collections Coordinator](#) ~~of Collections~~, is responsible for preparing recommendations for deaccessioning. Oakville Town Council, is the Museum's accountable public body for governance and as such has the ultimate authority regarding deaccessioning and disposal of artifacts from the Museum's collection.

[Deaccessioning approval table:](#)

Supervisor Museum	Senior Manager Culture	Director Culture and Recreation	Oakville Town Council
< \$1000 \$5,000	\$1000 -- \$5000	\$5000 – \$10000	>\$10000