

# COLLECTIONS POLICY

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Talkeetna Historical Society and Museum establishes policies and guidelines for the acquisition, deaccession, loan, care, and use of the collections of the Talkeetna Museum. THS policies shall not replace any other policy or regulation, nor local, state, or federal law, statute or regulation under which the Museum is legally or ethically bound to operate.

The Museum functions as the museum of history for the Upper Susitna Valley. It is the primary repository for cultural and natural history collections from the Upper Susitna region. THS has the responsibility to develop collections and programs that will contribute to the mission of public service and preservation.

The Museum Board has oversight of a collection of artifacts, artwork, archival material, photographs and books owned by, on loan to and stored by the Talkeetna Historical Society and Museum.

Collection care and management is the responsibility of staff under the supervision of the Director as set forth in these policies. The Talkeetna Museum standard of care will reflect current American Association of Museums standards.

In the case of Native materials, Collection Management will follow the intent and spirit of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (Public law #101-601). Repatriation situations will affect the Collections Policy in the areas of Acquisitions and Deaccessions. Categories listed under NAGPRA are: Human remains; associated funerary objects; unassociated funerary objects; sacred objects; and objects of cultural patrimony.

**MISSION** *Preserving, Interpreting and Sharing Talkeetna's Past, to enrich the Present and inspire the Future..*

## SCOPE OF COLLECTIONS

The Museum acquires, interprets, exhibits and preserves collections representing disciplines in Upper Valley aviation, mountaineering on Denali, area archaeology, history, and art. These research collections emphasize the natural, cultural and art history of Talkeetna, Trapper Creek, Chase and other historic villages in the region.

## CATEGORIES OF COLLECTIONS

**DEFINITION:** The collections of the THS Museum are defined as the anthropological, biological, fine arts, historical, and geological objects and related supporting documentation acquired and conserved because of their scientific and/or cultural significance and value.

“Object” refers to, but is not restricted to, all collection materials, including specimens, artifacts, photographs, film, and works of art.

“Supporting documentation” includes, but is not limited to, archival and library materials, field records, notebooks, maps, photographs, exhibits, and electronic databases.

THS categorizes its holdings into several collection types, each of which receives a different level of care and supporting documentation.

## **A. PERMANENT COLLECTION**

The objects in the permanent collections make up the bulk of the holdings at the Museum. These are collections of intrinsic value to art, history, science, or culture that support the mission of the Museum and are held and curated on a permanent basis. These objects are fully accessioned and cataloged to the highest standards. They also receive the highest level of care and security.

## **B. EDUCATION & HANDS-ON COLLECTIONS**

These collections support the mission of the Museum and are held primarily for use in public programs and exhibitions. They are intended to be handled by the public and are considered disposable, in comparison to the permanent collections at the Museum. The majority of these holdings are managed by the Museum Education department, but each collections department may also have a discipline-specific hands-on or teaching collection. These collection objects typically receive special catalog numbers to set them apart from the permanent collection, but allow for the tracking and documentation of them. The education department has a dedicated collections storage space in the Education Center. Hands-on objects in collections departments are housed in the lower level collections range with the rest of the collections, but typically set apart in dedicated cabinetry.

These collections are used during public programs, often when the security or environmental conditions are not determined to be to the standard required for permanent holdings. When departmental staff determine the object is no longer of use, pieces are deaccessioned and typically destroyed. Many of the items in this collection are here due to lack of data.

## **D. OTHER COLLECTIONS**

In addition to the primary category types at THS, there are special categories of objects that are subject to specific care and security guidelines:

### **OBJECTS HELD IN TRUST**

Departmental collections may have within their holdings objects that are not owned by the Museum, but are being stored under special trust agreements or contracts. These objects are cared for as determined by their specific agreements and are often subject to different access restrictions.

### **EXHIBIT PROPS**

collections purchased for specific exhibitions, which are re-used for public programs, in-house exhibitions and other purposes. These items are not accessioned into the permanent collection of the Museum and are not used for research or loan.

## Acquisitions

Acquisitions, whether through gifts, donations or purchases will be measured against the mission statement. All acquisitions and loans must comply with State and Federal laws governing wildlife protection and antiquities, including, but not limited to the US Antiquities Act of 1906 and subsequent amendments, the Alaska Historic Preservation Act of 1971, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990, and the National Historic Sites Act.

The Collections Committee, consisting of the E. Director, Board President and community at-large committee member, will review donations and purchases. If an item that clearly fits the Museum's Mission is offered for donation, the Director may call Collections Committee members for approval to accept it. The Collections Committee will inform the Museum Board of acquisitions to the collection. All donations and purchases of items with a value of \$1000 or more must be approved by the Board. When committee seats become vacant, the opening will be advertised in local media.

If an item that may be subject to repatriation is offered for donation, the Museum shall support repatriation. The donor is to be notified which pieces may be eligible for repatriation and why. If the donation proceeds, the relevant Native group(s) will be contacted in regard to the Museum's new holdings. If a donated item is repatriated within 2 years of acceptance and the donor has an appraisal summary on file (IRS form 8283), the Museum must notify the IRS that it no longer has ownership of the item.

The Museum shall be reasonably assured that legal title is obtainable, or that the Museum can be the legal repository for a government agency's artifacts before items are accepted. The donation or purchased item(s) become the full legal property of the Museum. Any accompanying copyrights and/or literary property rights are conveyed except as agreed upon by the previous owner and the Museum representative. The Museum does not ordinarily accept restricted donations.

The Museum does not provide appraisals. Donors will be responsible for the appraisal of their donations or loans. Upon request, Museum staff may provide an unendorsed list of appraisers.

Museum requested appraisals of collection items for in-house purposes will be completed by qualified appraisers in that field.

Loans - The Museum no longer accepts loans from individuals. The Museum can accept loans from another museum or historical society for display purposes. Loans from other organizations to THS are acceptable (see Loans to the Collection).

### ACCESSION PROCEDURES

1. Curators will identify proposed additions, following any legal or ethical procedures listed.
2. A receipt will be issued by the curator or collections manager to serve as evidence of physical transfer of the object, when appropriate.
3. Collection manager will prepare legal documentation to transfer title of the object to the Museum.

4. THS will permanently maintain accession paperwork as evidence for the legal title. Records that accompany accessions may include, but are not limited to:

- a. Name and address of donor (includes landowner for field-generated collections on private land), seller, trading/exchanging institution, or governmental agency for which object(s) or collection is being held-in-trust.
- b. Copy of permit for held-in-trust objects or collections.
- c. Copy of permit for field-generated collections, where necessary.
- d. Bill of sale and bill of lading.
- e. Any gift restrictions.
- f. Copyright considerations.
- g. Provenience and/or provenance information.
- h. History of object(s).
- i. Dates or ages of object(s).
- j. Valuation of object, if available (monetary, scientific, cultural, historic, etc.).

5. Donations and other gifts-in-kind will be reported for proper tracking.

### **ESTABLISHING TITLE**

Title to all objects acquired for the collections should be obtained free and clear, without restrictions as to use, exhibition, loan, or future disposition.

1. If, under special circumstances, an object is accepted with restrictions or limitations, such conditions must:

- a. be approved by the curator and the director and,
- b. be stated clearly in the instrument of conveyance (e.g., Memorandum of Understanding, Memorandum of Agreement, or Trust Agreement with Alaska Native corporations) and made part of the accession records for the object.

2. When title is uncertain, the curator shall make a well-documented effort to ascertain the history and sources of the object and to determine that acquiring it will not contribute to illicit trade.

### **ACQUISITIONS FOR NON-PERMANENT COLLECTIONS**

If donations are made to the Museum that do not meet the criteria established by the curator, they may be dealt with in a number of ways, if the donor is first informed of and approves such action:

1. They may be used in hands-on collection.
2. They may be offered as exhibit props.
3. They may be used as Museum furnishing items for Museum staff.
4. They may be offered to another, more appropriate museum.

## **UNSOLICITED DONATIONS**

In general, THS will not accept unsolicited donations through the mail or in person. In the case of objects of extraordinary scientific, cultural, historical, artistic, or monetary value, the curator, Museum Director, and/or Acquisitions Committee may approve such donations. Rejected objects will be returned to sender, if known. Otherwise, the rejected objects will be considered abandoned and the Museum reserves the right to dispose of such property as it sees fit. Donors are asked to contact individual departmental staff with photographs and descriptions of offered material so that curators may review the object in terms of the collecting plan for the department.

## **DEACCESSIONING**

Objects may be deaccessioned and removed, exchanged or sold from the permanent collection subject to the approval of the Acquisitions/Collections Committee and Museum Board.

An object may be removed only because it:

1. has extensive and irreparable deterioration beyond use;
2. poses a hazard to people or other objects;
3. does not fulfill the goals of the Museum's collecting policies, i.e. inappropriate to the collection; belongs to a group or individual other than the Museum;
4. is redundant;
5. has been repatriated by a Native group.

When an item from the museum collection becomes the subject of a formal, valid, and legal repatriation claim under NAGPRA, it must be deaccessioned from the collection prior to return. The legal process of deaccession should meet the timeline established under NAGPRA. Approval of the deaccessioning process will be done in consultation with an attorney. The point at which the Museum action of deaccession begins should be at the time the repatriation claim is submitted to the National Park Service for publication in the Federal Register. Should the item in question have a counter-claim, the deaccession process will be halted until a claim has been resolved under NAGPRA procedure.

Any deaccessioned object shall be disposed of in an appropriate manner at the discretion of the above committees and boards. Consideration will be given to giving, selling or exchanging the object with another not-for-profit institution or appropriate Native group. If sold, proceeds from sales will go into the collection acquisitions fund. No employee, trustee or family of same will be allowed to purchase or otherwise acquire a deaccessioned item.

## **DEACCESSION AND DISPOSAL PROCEDURES**

1. The curator will identify an object for deaccession/disposal based on the criteria above.
2. The collections manager will investigate all legal and ethical considerations surrounding the proposed object(s).
  - a. The Museum must hold free and clear title to the object.
  - b. There must be no restrictions placed on the use of the object (e.g. copyright, MOA/MOU, trust agreements, donor-imposed restriction, etc.)
3. As a courtesy, reasonable efforts will be made to contact donors or their heirs, and living artists prior to the deaccessioning of objects from the Museum's collections.
4. The collections manager will prepare all required paperwork, including a Deaccession & Disposal form.
5. The curator will approve and obtain approval from additional personnel, when necessary (e.g. other curators, Director, Acquisitions Committee, etc.).
6. The curator will determine the method of disposal, taking into account the reason for deaccessioning.
7. The collections manager will remove or cross-out the catalog or accession number from the object prior to disposal.
8. The collections manager will modify catalog and accession files and database entries to reflect the change in status of the object and the change in monetary value, if any, for the collection; the records will not be deleted or removed but maintained intact for future reference.
9. The collections manager will place all documentation in the proper departmental files, where they will remain as part of the permanent record.

### **Loans to the Collection**

Although THS doesn't accept individual loans, loans from other museums and state/national entities (i.e. Smithsonian) are accepted. All items either borrowed at the Museum's request or loaned at the owner's initiative will be treated with the same care and security as objects in the permanent collections. The Museum may provide insurance for a loaned item from another institution if required for a necessary loan. All loaned items will be given loan accession and catalog numbers and documentation will include a condition report. All loans will be for a specified amount of time, subject to renewal. The lender must give the Museum a month's notice if the object is retrieved before the end of the loan period.

### **Loans from the Collection**

Artifacts owned by the Museum may be loaned to other museums and institutions that meet American Association of Museums accepted standard of security, environmental control and conservation practices. The

borrowing institution is responsible for demonstrating proof of insurance for the object(s) from the time they leave the Sheldon Museum until the time they return. The borrowing institution is also responsible for return shipping charges. Final loan approval is at the discretion of the Board.

Loans of books, photographs, and audio-visual aids may be approved for a specified period of time after careful review by the Collections and Exhibits Coordinator and Director. Fragile objects, archival materials and rare books will **not** be loaned.

## **OBJECTS OF UNCLEAR TITLE**

DEFINITION: Objects of unclear title may include: unclaimed loans or objects found in the collection. These are items in the Museum's physical possession or control that are unsupported by any documentation and/or lack sufficient evidence to prove Museum ownership.

### **A. UNCLAIMED LOANS**

1. An "unclaimed loan" is material that originated as an incoming loan from either another institution or an individual, has been in the possession of the Museum for at least seven (7) years past the loan expiration date, and to which return delivery has not been possible and/or the material has not been retrieved by its owner in a timely fashion.

2. Alaska Statute 14.57.200 Acquisition of Title to Loaned Property outlines the process all Alaska museums must go through in order to acquire title to loaned material that has been abandoned. THS will follow all required procedures, which are summarized here:

a. The Museum must document that at least seven (7) years have passed after the expiration date of the loan without written or other contact between the lender and the Museum. If there is no expiration date, at least seven years past the physical transfer of material.

b. The Museum shall first send notice by certified mail to the lender's latest address, if known. The notice will include all information stipulated by AS 14.57.200.

c. If a valid claim is not received by the Museum within 30 days from the date the notice was mailed or if the Museum does not have an address for the lender, the Museum shall publish a notice at least once a week for four consecutive weeks, as described by AS 14.57.200.

d. The Museum acquires the title to the property, subject to reclamation of the property under AS 14.57.220, as of the 46th day after the date of the last publication of the notice.

If this summary conflicts or differs from legal requirements, only the legal requirements need to be followed.

3. Manager will work with Board to assess the status of the unclaimed loan and to prepare the required paperwork to obtain title. If an object or group of objects from one unclaimed loan is assessed to have a market value of over \$10,000, the Museum Director and Board must be involved in the decision to accession or dispose of the object.

## **OBJECTS FOUND IN THE COLLECTION (FIC)**

1. An “object found in the collection” or an “undocumented object” is defined as material in the Museum’s physical possession or control that is unsupported by any documentation and/or lacks sufficient evidence to prove Museum ownership.

2. Alaska Statute 14.57.210 Acquisition of Title to Undocumented Property outlines the process all Alaska museums must go through in order to acquire title to objects found in the collection. THS will follow all legally required procedures. The procedures are summarized here:

a. The Museum must document and verify in writing, that the property has been held by the Museum for at least seven (7) years.

b. When applicable, the Museum must notify by mail all corporations, except nonprofit corporations created under 43 U.S.C. 1601-1629e (Alaska Native Claims Settlement Page 23 of 49 Act) that the undocumented property appears to be a Native artifact, and invite them to act, as outlined in AS 14.57.210.

c. The Museum must show that during the seven-year holding period, or longer if expanded by the application of a Native corporation, a person has not filed a claim with the Museum that the person is the owner of the property.

d. To acquire title, the Museum shall publish a notice at least once a week for four consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation, as described by AS 14.57.210.

e. The Museum acquires the title to the undocumented property, subject to reclamation of the property under AS 14.57.220, as of the 46th day after the date of the last publication of the notice, if all other requirements are satisfied and no valid claims have been made within 45 days after the date of the last publication of the notice under (d) of this section. If this summary conflicts or differs from legal requirements, only the legal requirements need to be followed.

3. Departmental curators and collections managers will work together to assess the status of the undocumented object, with the collections managers preparing the required paperwork to obtain title. If an object or group of objects is assessed to have a market value of over \$10,000, the Museum Director and other curators must be involved in the decision to accession or dispose of the object.

4. The departmental curator or collections manager may create an official affidavit as a means of documenting the seven-year holding time.

## **Photography**

The Talkeetna Museum will permit photographs to be taken of items from the permanent collection under controlled conditions. A Museum staff member must be present at all times when objects in storage are being photographed. The Director, or designee, must approve the photographic conditions: placement of lights, handling of objects, method of display, length of time objects may be exposed to light. Removing objects from exhibit for photographing purposes, or handling objects on exhibit may be done only with advanced written permission from the Director and should be completed outside visiting hours.



For a fee, photographs from the collection may be copied for private use, for research, or for use in a publication.

Credit must be given to the Talkeetna Historical Society and Museum. If a photograph or a photograph of an object belonging to the Museum is used in a publication or exhibit. A copy of any such publication must be donated to the collection. Notice of copyright will be prominent on any such publication if copyrighted works are included. The borrower assumes full legal responsibility for any infringement of literary, copyright, or publication rights.

The borrower will not reproduce loaned objects in any media without written permission of the Director. A staff member may copy Archival and AV material unless restricted by donor or copyright. The Director may waive any or all of the above provisions.

Photographs may not be made for the purpose of reproduction of an object or for publication without specific written permission of the Director or designee. If reproduced, published or printed, credit must be given to the Museum and a copy of the publication must be donated to the collection. A royalty may be required on some items.

During public hours, visitors may take photographs and videotapes with their own equipment for personal, educational or non-commercial purposes.

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