



**BRANT
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

Your History Matters

POLICY TITLE: *CONSERVATION POLICY*

MONITORING: **Annual Review**

APPROVED: September 9, 2003

AMMENDED:

Introduction

The Brant Museum & Archives, which is owned and operated by the Brant Historical Society, shall provide stewardship of the collection. This policy defines how conservation enables the Brant Museum and Archives to fulfill its Statement of Purpose to collect, preserve, research, exhibit and interpret collections that may be of interest to the residents of our community, as well as illustrating the settlement, diversity and development of the County of Brant and the surrounding area. This policy serves as a checklist when conservation treatment is being considered, and helps the museum maintain high conservation standards.

Physical Plant

Environmental Soundness

The Museum's building is of primary concern and must be suitable for housing the Brant Historical Society's collection. Since the Charlotte Street location is an historic house, the Society shall endeavour not to damage the original structure and the historical appearance should not be altered.

The Museum will attempt to achieve optimum standards for the following environmental concerns:

- Appropriate control of relative humidity
- Appropriate control of temperature
- Appropriate control of light levels
- Appropriate control of air cleanliness

Maintenance

The Museum will establish a maintenance program for the building. This program will include:

- Regulation and upkeep of mechanical systems
- Building cleaning
- Pest control

The Museum will provide storage areas and artifact workroom space sufficient to accommodate the size and material composition of the collection.

Storage

The Museum will ensure that the artifacts are kept in a secure, environmentally controlled area, which is designated strictly for artifact storage within the physical limitations of the heritage building. The Museum will ensure that:

- Objects are accessible with relative ease, i.e., stored in an orderly fashion
- The location of every artifact is known and recorded

- Admittance be restricted to trained staff and/or researchers under supervision
- Storage shelves, containers, and packing materials are not harmful to the objects
- Security, fire and other controls must be as stringent as possible

Exhibits

The Museum will ensure that the artifacts placed on exhibit will:

- Only be handled by people who have been trained to do so
- Be protected from environmental conditions
- Be protected from public handling
- Be protected from theft

The objects selected for display must be:

- In satisfactory condition to exhibit in terms of both strength and appearance
- Installed in the exhibit area after all other work has been completed
- Exhibited in conjunction with display materials and mounting techniques that are safe for the objects

Artifact Condition

The Museum will ensure that periodic inspections of the collection are conducted in order to ensure that the physical condition of the artifacts have not undergone a change. The artifacts that are inspected will include:

- Objects on exhibit
- Objects in storage
- Objects on loan

Loans

The Museum will assess potential borrowers to ensure that the standards of exhibition, storage, handling and transportation provided by the borrower are equivalent to the Museum's standards.

Conservation concerns will be addressed in the loan agreements. These concerns are as follow:

- A condition report will be completed
- The borrower's standards will be assessed
- The borrower is responsible for the continued well-being of the artifacts while in their care
- Packing must be carried out by suitably trained people, using safe methods and materials
- Shipping must be done by a trustworthy carrier
- The borrower will understand these concerns

Preventative Conservation

The Museum shall use preventative conservation techniques and will use conservation treatments only when necessary or appropriate.

Conservation Treatment

The Museum will ensure that cleaning, repair or restoration of any artifact in its collection is carried out only by qualified personnel, and in such a manner as to maintain the historic and artistic integrity of that artifact.

The Director/Curator shall determine the factors when considering if a conservation treatment is necessary or appropriate. These factors shall include:

- Rarity of the object
- Significance to the Collection
- Potential for replacement
- Rate of decay
- Predictability of the results
- Whether the object is on loan to the Museum

The Director/Curator will have the final word on how an artifact will be treated, stored, exhibited or loaned.

Simple treatments will be conducted in-house by the Director/Curator or by the Assistant Curator under the direction of the Director/Curator.

More complex treatments will be conducted by qualified experts in the field of conservation.

The Director/Curator shall form an informed decision regarding any factors affecting the environment of the building, exhibit spaces and methods, storage spaces and methods, such as building or renovation projects, and any other factors affecting the physical state of the artifacts.

Condition Reports

Condition reports are detailed notes concerning the condition of an artifact. The Museum will use condition reports as the primary tool for making conservation decisions. The notes will not be limited to 'good' or 'poor' condition but will include a complete description of:

- Dirt
- Damage
- Missing or loose parts
- Disfigurement

Condition reports will be completed at the following times:

- New accessions – at the time of cataloguing
- Outgoing loans – at the time the artifact leaves the Museum and returns; before the loan agreement is signed; the borrower must be informed of the conditions and the report must be kept with the signed agreement
- Incoming loans – at the time the artifact enters the Museum and leaves; before the loan agreement is signed; the loaner must be informed of the conditions and the report must be kept with the signed agreement

Staff Training

All persons who have access to the artifacts will be aware of every aspect of preventive conservation, in particular, handling and housekeeping. Only persons with this training will be permitted to handle artifacts.

The Museum will provide in-house preventive conservation training for all staff and will provide encouragement and funding for further training through outside programs.

Security

The Museum will ensure that artifacts on exhibit, in storage and on loan will be protected against:

- Fire
- Flood or water damage
- Vandalism
- Theft
- Handling by the public

In order to protect artifacts from the above threats, an Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Manual will be created to prevent such threats and to cope with the results should any of these problems occur. Included in this manual will be contingency plans and staff training.

Policy Review and Approval

Brant Museum & Archives' Conservation Policy is recommended by the Museum & Archives Management Committee to the Brant Historical Society Board of Directors for approval. The Conservation Policy is reviewed and amended as required.