

**COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICIES**

**OF**

**The Valdez Museum & Historical Archive**

**Association, Inc.**

Approved by the VMHA Board of Directors on September 18, 2014  
Adopted by VMHA Members on October 6, 2014

**COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICIES**

**OF**

**The Valdez Museum & Historical Archive Association, Inc**

These policies are established to provide the staff guidance to insure the Museum's programs and internal functions remain consistent with its public purpose and responsibilities.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Attest: \_\_\_\_\_

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## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Valdez Museum preserves, presents, and interprets the heritage and culture of Valdez, Alaska, the Copper River Basin, and Prince William Sound.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Board of Directors:**

The VMHA Board of Directors is comprised of thirteen volunteer individuals appointed by the VMHA Members in a public meeting. The Valdez City Manager and the VMHA Executive Director are non-voting *ex officio* directors.

**Members:**

The Articles of Incorporation for the Valdez Museum and Historical Archives Association, Inc. specifies the Member Association will not exceed more than seven people. They will be the seven members of the City Council.

**The Valdez Museum and Historical Archives:**

The Valdez Museum is a private non-profit corporation contracted by the City of Valdez to oversee the City's collections of artifacts and archival materials. The Valdez Museum is not affiliated with any other local history organization in Valdez.

**Collections Committee:**

A committee chaired by the Curator of Collections. The other members include the Executive Director, the Exhibits Curator, the Ways and Means Chair from the Board of Directors, an additional member of the Board of Directors and the City Clerk or other City designee.

This Committee will evaluate policies concerning the purpose of the Museum and the collections, review all purchases for the Museum collection and evaluate all possible deaccessioning recommended by the Curator of Collections.

**Friends of the Valdez Museum:**

This is a private, not-for-profit organization constituted for the sole purpose of supporting the Valdez Museum. Its fund-raising activities support acquisitions, restoration projects and public receptions in the Museum. By formal agreement with the VMHA, the Friends operate a gift shop in the Museum. Profits from this store are dedicated to the Phyllis Irish Memorial Fund.

**Permanent Collections:**

The permanent collection of the Valdez Museum includes artifacts and archival materials relating to the community's history. These collections are managed consistent with

professional standards of the American Association of Museums and the Society of American Archivists.

**Acquisition:**

To enter donated object(s) or archival material into the museum or archives collections by means of donation or purchase.

**Accession:**

To enter donated object(s) into the permanent records of the Valdez Museum for future identification and accountability purposes. All historical artifacts and/or archival materials accepted by the Valdez Museum on behalf of the City of Valdez for the permanent collections of the Valdez Museum are accessioned.

**Deaccession:**

The permanent removal of objects from the Museum's collections. This procedure provides a well-defined mechanism for removal of objects/materials which are not appropriate to the Museum's purpose yet consume resources [i.e., staff time, storage space, etc.]; were collected prior to or are inconsistent with the Museum's purposes; or are, after inspection by a conservator, deemed beyond saving or as a danger to other artifacts. The process by which an object is deaccessioned is extensive and appears in the Deaccession Policy.

Transfer or exchange with other historical organizations is the preferred method of disposing of deaccessioned objects and materials. All disposition of objects and materials will be consistent American Association of Museums standards.

## **BOUNDARIES/SCOPE OF OPERATIONAL INFLUENCE**

In geographic terms, the primary scope of operational influence of The Valdez Museum will include the Prince William Sound area to Valdez and upcountry about 100 miles into the Copper River area.

Where historical themes which include but are not limited to the Gold Rush, the Highway, Communications and the oil Pipeline, the operational area of influence is extended to routes as far north as the Alaska-Yukon border near Eagle, along the Richardson Highway to Fairbanks and to the Bering Sea along the Oil Pipeline. This recognizes the historic role of Valdez in the economic, political and cultural development of interior Alaska. With regard to Native Alaska cultures, interpretation will focus on the culture groups relevant to the Museum's region, which culturally may extend east to Katalla and west to the tip of the Alaska Peninsula.

In its activities, particularly in acquisitions, the Valdez Museum will respect the rightful scope of influence of other historical institutions and organizations, and will cooperate and assist in the development of those other programs and collections.

## **INTERPRETATIONAL OBJECTIVES**

The Valdez Museum conducts a variety of programs to interpret the natural history, pre-history, cultural, social, economic and political history of Valdez. Particular emphasis will be placed on illuminating the lives and activities of Valdez residents.

More specifically, these areas of interpretation are:

Natural History:

Placing Valdezans in context with their natural environment through interpretation of life and earth sciences.

Pre-History:

Relating the historical uses of the region prior to the written record from the oral tradition and other sources.

Cultures:

Identifying the Native and non-Native peoples who have occupied or used Valdez, Prince William Sound and Copper River area; and defining their roles in the community's growth.

Social:

Interpreting sub-organizations within the community such as fraternal groups, sports and recreational programs, arts and cultural activities, churches, and other civic activities.

**Economic:**

Tracing past, present and future commerce and industry in Valdez, including air, land and sea transportation, mining, fisheries and hatcheries, oil pipeline development, fur farming, and business in general.

**Political:**

Relating to the development and activities of local, regional and national government in Valdez, including the military, law enforcement, the judicial process and courts, and political figures and processes.

## **ACQUISITION**

The Valdez museum will acquire those types of objects and informational materials, which will accomplish its interpretational objectives.

Management of the Valdez Museum's permanent collection shall be in accordance with professional standards as defined by the American Association of Museums and the Society for American Archivists.

All Valdez Museum acquisitions will comply with the State of Alaska and Federal laws governing antiquities, including the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Agreement. Objects and informational materials collected under exploitative, irresponsible or illegal circumstances and, in particular, archeological materials collected in an unscientific manner will not be acquired. To be considered for acceptance, archeological and natural history objects require legal provenance. Undocumented materials found in the collection will similarly abide by procedures required by municipal, State of Alaska, and Federal laws regarding such materials. See the appendix for details on State laws.

The Executive Director or Curator of Collections will have authority to accept objects that comply with the Mission Statement and statement of Purpose. The Director of Curator will receipt as a loan, research the background of the item or collection and make recommendations to the Collections Committee regarding possible donations that may require a financial investment in restoration or storage, or for possible purchases. All activities of the Collections Committee will be reported regularly to the Board of Directors in the Board meeting packet.

Acquisitions of objects and informational materials by the Valdez Museum will be accomplished via:

1. Donations - as outright gifts
2. Loans - to accomplish specific purposes and generally for short periods of time
3. Purchases - where appropriate and necessary to accomplish specific program

## Objectives

These methods of acquisition are further defined as follows:

### Donations:

All donations of artifacts and archival materials to the Valdez Museum's permanent collections must be presented to and accepted by the Collections Committee, except those accepted under the Executive Director or Curator of Collection's discretionary authority as defined above. The Collections Committee may take the recommendation to the Board of Directors for final approval. The Board of Directors has the option to take the recommendation to the Members for review and/or approval. A report of all acquisitions and purchases will be sent to the Members quarterly.

Donations to the Museum's permanent collections should be free and unrestricted gifts to the City of Valdez; where restrictions are unavoidable, their scope and period of time imposed should be minimal. The donor will be requested to provide proof of ownership prior to the Museum's acquisition, if such documentation is available. Only objects that are consistent with the Museum's Mission Statement and statement of Purpose will be accepted. A potential donor with items outside the area designated by these statements will be encouraged to donate these items to another, more relevant repository. If the donor will donate only the entire collection an exception may be made.

Where a time factor prevents a meeting of the collections Committee to consider acceptance of an offer to donate objects/materials to the Museum's permanent collection, the Director or Curator may poll Committee members verbally for acceptance. In this event, formal Committee action will follow at the next regular collections Committee meeting.

### Loans (to the museum):

Loans of objects and informational materials to the Valdez Museum shall be discouraged except for short-term purposes [i.e. acquisition consideration, research, temporary exhibition, etc.]. The Executive Director or Curator of Collections will approve all loans of less than one year in duration. Loans to the Valdez Museum exceeding one year must be approved in advance by the Collections Committee. The Curator of Collections will fill out the necessary forms and do a condition report on all items entering the Museum. The individual/individuals and/or entity to which the loan item belongs shall provide proof of ownership of the item or items in question in a manner acceptable to the Collections Committee.

### Loans (from the museum):

The Executive Director or Curator of Collections will approve loans for local, temporary exhibition purposes. Loans or use of objects and informational materials from the Museum's collections outside Valdez must be approved by the Collections Committee. The Curator of Collections will fill out the necessary paper work and do condition reports on all objects leaving the Museum.

#### Purchases:

The Executive Director and the Curator may, in consultation with the collections Committee, make purchases of appropriate objects and materials for the permanent collection where such purchases are consistent with overall acquisition policies and goals, and when budgeted funds are available. The Collections Committee will make recommendations to the Board of Directors for proposed purchases that exceed the budgeted funds.

Where a time factor prevents a meeting of the collections committee to consider acceptance of an offer to purchase objects/materials to the Museum's permanent collection, the Director or Curator may poll committee members verbally for acceptance. In this event, action taken will be reported at the next regular Collection Committee meeting.

### **DEACCESSION**

#### Definition:

Deaccessioning is the process used to remove permanently and object from museum or library's collections. The purpose of deaccessioning is to refine the collection so it will help carry out the museum's purpose. The Valdez Museum will deaccession items only for the following reasons:

1. Duplication of a better example.
2. The condition of the object threatens itself or the rest of the collection.
3. The object is not relevant to the collection.
4. The museum cannot care for the object properly.
5. The authenticity of the object is questionable.

#### Ethics:

The Museum and its staff are bound by established Codes of Ethics for museums and archives. Copies of the Codes of Ethics for the American Association of Museums, the American Association for State and Local Government, and the Society for American Archivists are attached as appendices to this document.

#### Procedure:

The Curator of Collections will research all objects that may be candidates for deaccession, investigating title and donor-imposed restrictions and contacting the donor or descendant of the donor if available. The Curator will discuss the finding with the Executive Director. If a decision is made to recommend deaccessioning, the Curator will present a completed Deaccession Justification Form, including recommended disposition, to the Collections Committee. Proposed deaccessions will be listed as action items on Collections Committee meeting agendas distributed in advance of the meeting. All deaccessions will be handled in accordance with municipal, State of Alaska, and Federal laws regarding the disposition of museum property.

The VMHA Board of Directors will review proposed deaccessions based on Collections Committee recommendations, including means of disposition. The Board of Directors will take the proposal to the VMHA Members who, representing the City of Valdez and owners of the collection, will have the final approval for deaccessioning. Approved deaccessions will be publicized locally. A 30-day appeal period will be scheduled before the disposition of items approved for deaccession. Appeals will be heard by the VMHA Members.

Objects may only be disposed of by:

1. Return to donor or a descendant of the donor. This may cause a problem with the Internal Revenue Service if a tax deduction was taken for the donation. The donor would be informed of that fact and would be responsible to contact the IRS.
2. Exchange with, transfer or sell to another museum or historical repository.
3. Public sale or auction.
4. Absolute destruction.

No deaccessioned object may be conveyed in any manner to a member of the Museum staff, a volunteer, a member of the Board of Directors or a Member. Proceeds from sales of deaccessioned materials may accrue only to the Valdez Museum memorial endowment fund.

The Museum's catalogue number will be removed from the object. A note that the object has been deaccessioned will be entered on the accession record in red ink. Computer records will be flagged to indicate the object has been deaccessioned.

### **PERMANENT EXHIBITS**

Permanent exhibits of the Valdez Museum shall utilize objects and informational materials from its permanent collections to accomplish interpretation goals and objectives in an interesting and informative manner.

Where possible, practical and economically feasible, the permanent exhibits shall present objects and materials in accurate replicas or representations of their original environments or in visually attractive groupings. Exhibits shall, where appropriate, contain informational materials to interpret the significance and use of the objects within the exhibit.

### **TEMPORARY EXHIBITS**

Temporary exhibitions shall be organized regularly to augment and enhance the permanent exhibits program of the Valdez Museum. The Exhibits Curator will plan and arrange these exhibits with input from the Museum staff and approval of the Executive Director. These exhibitions will recognize the seasonal changes in the Museum's

patronage, and will be conducted to fulfill the needs of the visitors and stimulate the interest of residents.

Temporary exhibition themes shall include, but not be limited to the following:

1. Contemporary arts and crafts with emphasis on locally or regionally produced items. Sales activity by or for exhibiting artists and crafts persons will be permitted in the Valdez Museum; a gallery commission will be levied on all such sales activity.
2. Local or regional history depicted through use of objects and materials from the permanent collection as well as loaned items.
3. History, art or other exhibitions from other communities or historical organizations in Alaska and elsewhere that will bring a values experience to Valdez residents.

## **PUBLIC ACCESS TO COLLECTIONS**

Public access to the Valdez Museum collections of artifacts and archival materials will be restricted only by requirements of security and conservation. In the use of these materials by the public, they will remain in the Museum or its secure storage areas except as authorized by the Executive director or Curator of Collections.

Objects and materials in the collection may be photographed or copied for public purposes so long as this reproduction is consistent with the purposes and objectives of the Valdez Museum and is consistent with written donor restrictions or copyright laws [Title 17, USC]. Original artworks (where the Valdez Museum possesses reproduction rights) will generally not be reproduced from commercial purposes except by the Valdez Museum or its assigns.

The Curator of Collections will formulate specific Use Conditions to insure that all reproductions of artifacts and archival materials in the Museum's permanent collections are appropriate, credited properly, and their historical significance correctly interpreted. Failure to comply with Use Conditions could result in future access restrictions.

Costs of providing copies of materials in the Valdez Museum's collections will be charged to users. Fees, recommended by the Executive Director and adopted by the Board of Directors, will be charged uniformly to all users.

The Collections Committee may be consulted regarding proposed reproductions of Museum objects/materials where this reproduction may appear to be inconsistent with museum purposes or policies.

The Curator of Collections will formulate rules governing the uses of all artifacts and archival materials; these will be reviewed periodically by the Collections Committee

## ANIMAL ADMITTANCE POLICY

In accordance with best museum practices as recommended by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), and in the interest of the health and safety of Valdez Museum visitors, personnel and collections, no animals excepting service animals will be allowed within the premises of the Valdez Museum & Historical Archive. The policy concerning the access of privately owned animals (pets) to The Valdez Museum is as follows:

1. No animals will be permitted into or on museum property within enclosed spaces.

This policy is in effect at all times, including when the facilities are not open to the public. This includes exhibition areas, collection storage, and administrative and storage spaces. People visiting the museum with live animals in their possession will be requested to leave or to leave their pet outside the buildings.

2. Exceptions are as follows:

- Certified Service Animals and Animals in Training for Certification will be permitted to assist visitors with disabilities. Service Dogs or Service Dogs in Training must be 12 months or older. Puppies under 12 months of age will not be permitted.

As mandated by the American Disabilities Act (ADA) revised September 15, 2010, staff may only ask of the handler the following questions: (1) is the dog a service animal required because of a disability, and (2) what work or task the dog is trained to perform. Staff cannot ask about the person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.

- Police or other certified assistance animals will be permitted when accompanied by a qualified handler on official business.
- The Executive Director or Curator of Collections and Exhibitions may allow animals into enclosed areas in all venues for the purposes of special programming presentations or for other reasons deemed necessary. Permission must be documented in writing and should be consistent with health and safety guidelines.

3. Under no circumstances will live animals be allowed in areas used for food preparation or consumption.

4. Animals left outside the buildings on museum grounds must not present a safety or health hazard to visitors, personnel, or museum property. Failure to do so will result in the owner being requested to leave the museum property. Owners or handlers leaving live animals outside the museum buildings on museum property are required to clean up after their pets.

## APPENDICES

- I. Forms and Documents
  - A. Temporary Custody Form
  - B. Acquisition Research Form
  - C. Deaccession Justification Form
  - D. Donations
    - 1. Donation Form
    - 2. Donation Form Addendum: Proof of Ownership
  - E. Loan Form
  - F. State of Alaska Laws regarding acquisition and disposition of property
  - G. Collections Management Plan
  - H. Usage Guidelines
  
- I. Code of Ethics
  - A. American Association of Museums
  - B. American Association for State and Local History
  - C. Society for American Archivists