



## CONSERVATION POLICY

### **Mission Statement**

The Ogniwio Polish Museum Society Inc. is committed to collecting artefacts that define Polish Canadian life in Manitoba. Our purpose is to:

- A. collect, preserve, exhibit, and research the historic and current Polish Canadian immigrant experience in Manitoba since 1800;
- B. promote and educate the public about traditional Polish culture, folk art, and traditions.

### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide direction for the on-going development and management of conservation activities within the Ogniwio Polish Museum. This policy is intended to provide the framework within which the Polish Museum staff will operate in regards to artefact conservation.

The Polish Museum understands that conservation is necessary to maintain its collection and that the processes involved in conservation encompass both preservation and restoration. It is also understood that conservation is of the highest priority and that the safekeeping of the collection is of the utmost importance. The museum is responsible for the safety of all its artefacts and will provide the best possible physical environment, preventative maintenance programs, and conservation services to meet this responsibility.

This policy and its spirit will be applied when conserving, restoring or otherwise intervening directly (physical changes) or indirectly (environmental changes) with the artefacts, specimens and historical structures that make up the museum's collection.

This policy is to be used in conjunction with the Ogniwio Polish Museum's Collection and Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Plan.

### **2. Definitions**

The Ogniwio Polish Museum understands that by definition:

Conservation is the application of science to the examination, maintenance, and treatment of artefacts or specimens. Its principal aim is to stabilize artefacts and specimens in their present state. It encompasses both preventive conservation (non-invasive actions taken to slow or stop deterioration and to prevent damage) and conservation treatments (interventions causing changes in the physical properties or structure of the object).

Preservation: means protection from damage, extremes of temperature and/or humidity, excessive light, careless handling, improper storage and/or display, dust, dirt, damage in transport, pests, and other problems which may result from inadequate environmental conditions and untrained staff.

Restoration: an attempt to help stop damage caused by time or other harmful conditions. It includes the upkeep of the artefact in its current condition through processes such as cleaning, mending, replacing missing parts, corrosion and tarnish removal, and other processes. While preservation can and should be carried out by all trained museum staff, restoration requires a professional conservator or fully trained and supervised staff workers.

### **3. Environment**

The priorities of the Conservation Policy begin with the physical environment in which the collections are housed and the OgniwO Polish Museum will attempt to achieve optimum environmental standards for the preservation of the collection in all physical areas where artefacts may be placed. Control standards for temperature, relative humidity, lighting, and air cleanliness will be established by the museum Curator after a consultation with qualified experts. Through general building maintenance (pest control, housekeeping, building repairs, etc.) the museum will strive to provide a safe environment for all of its artefacts. It is the responsibility of the Curator, in consultation with Polish Museum staff to establish priorities for the conservation of the collections and to ensure that sufficient space is allotted for artefact storage areas and workrooms.

In the museum, adequate storage space will be provided so that the collection will be kept in an orderly fashion. This space will be environmentally controlled and will allow adequate physical access to the artefacts. Admittance to the museum collection storage area will be restricted to trained staff or to others under proper supervision. Any staff member who provides physical access to the collection to a non-staff member is responsible for ensuring that the person understands and agrees to use appropriate care and handling techniques.

Artefacts on display during exhibits will be handled only by those who have been properly trained to do so. All artefacts will be displayed so that members of the viewing public will not have access to these items.

All staff are responsible for maintaining the security of the collection. This encompasses protection from damage, deterioration, or loss.

### **4. Artefact Condition**

Upon receiving an item the Curator and Chief Collection Manager will choose whether or not to accession the item into the Polish Museum's collection based upon the museum's accession policy. If the item is accepted into the collection, a thorough condition assessment will be

performed on the item when it is accessioned and periodic condition assessments will be performed on items in the collection regularly. The museum will ensure that all artefacts in the collection, whether owned or borrowed, are correctly documented with respect to ownership, incoming and current condition, and need for conservation treatment.

Any staff member who discovers a preservation problem must report it immediately to either the Curator or Chief Collection Manager.

An established computerized and photographic process will document all artefact locations, initial physical condition, as well as any changes to the physical condition of an artefact. Examination reports, treatment reports, maintenance reports and location inventories of artefacts and reproductions will be maintained to keep a record for each artefact.

No artefact will be stored or displayed in ways which would expose the artefact to unacceptable risk of damage, or deterioration, or theft. Limits will be placed on the duration of time any particularly sensitive artefact is placed on exhibition or used in programs.

## **5. Loans**

Potential borrowers of artefacts from the Ogniwo Polish Museum must be studied to ensure that their standards of exhibitions, storage, and handling match those maintained by the Polish Museum. Conditions under which artefacts will be loaned to other organizations or persons are outlined in the Polish Museum's Loan Policy. When an artefact is loaned a Loan Agreement Form must be properly filled out before the artefact can be loaned out from the museum. Packaging artefacts for transportation must be carried out or overseen by suitably trained people to ensure safe methods, materials, and shipping practices are used.

## **6. Role of the Conservator**

Until such a time that the Ogniwo Polish Museum obtains qualified conservation staff the museum will refer to an outside agent to have any treatments carried out on artefacts in need of restoration. The Polish Museum must have knowledge of the proficiency of the outside agent and their capabilities to ensure their work will be of the highest standards.

The Curator together with Chief Collections Manager will determine which artefacts take priority for conservation treatments and will have the final word on how objects will be exhibited, treated, and loaned. They will ensure that all individuals involved in the conservation and preservation of the collection receive sufficient instruction in conservation treatment.

## **7. Staff Training**

The Ogniwo Polish Museum will develop standards and procedures and will designate appropriate responsibility for handling, storage, exhibition, packing, and transportation of its

artefacts in order to best preserve the collection. As such, the museum will provide a training program for its entire staff that will outline proper handling and conservation techniques for all artefacts. The museum will also encourage the education of all staff in the areas of conservation through outside educational programs.

#### **8. Emergency Preparedness**

The Ogniwo Polish Museum will establish a plan of action to protect the collection in case of emergency situations (fire, theft, flood or water damage, insects, pests and vermin, accident, and vandalism). The museum will ensure that all staff is well versed in this emergency preparedness plan.

#### **9. Evaluation of Conservation Policy**

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Curator and the Museum Board of Directors. If any changes are needed they will be discussed and approved at an annual general meeting.

***This Motion presented and passed at a meeting of the Board of Directors, this 18<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2012.***