

# North Vancouver Museum & Archives Commission's Museum Collection Review Project

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### What is the Museum Collection Review project?

- The City and the District of North Vancouver are providing funding (shared 50/50) for a multi-year project to refine and downsize the Museum collection.
- This process involves inventorying and reviewing each object in the permanent collection (and corresponding documentation), assessing the object for relevance and quality, evaluating the strength of its connection to North Vancouver, and recommending whether it should remain as part of the collection.

NOTE: *This project does not involve the Archives – NVMA's archival collection of photographs, documents, ephemera and other materials is not affected by this project.*

### Why is this project necessary?

- Over the forty-one years since the NVMA's founding, the Museum's collection has grown much larger than the space available to store it and resources needed to maintain it.
- In recent years, the mission and focus of the Museum have also evolved, such that some of the pioneer artifacts in the legacy collection are no longer useful for NVMA programs and exhibits.
- By rationalizing and downsizing its Museum collection, the NVMA will create a more relevant, thematically-focused collection that is smaller in size, less expensive to store, higher in quality, of greater significance to North Vancouver, of more interest to our community's residents and visitors, and more easily accessed for use in exhibits and programs.

### What is in the Museum's collection?

- The Museum's collection consists of more than 20,000 artifacts. They range from Coast Salish baskets and works of art, to military medals and jewellery, logging and shipbuilding tools, trophies and sports equipment, household implements, clothing and uniforms, personal items, and historic vehicles.
- For the most part, NVMA's collections have been built on the generous donations of community members.
- Prized items include an extremely rare Chief's blanket from the Maisie Hurley Collection of First Nations objects; an 1890s dress worn by the school mistress at Moodyville (our community's first townsite); hand-made skis used by early mountaineers; the player piano from the Hotel North Vancouver (an early tourist hub); ship, ferry, tugboat and streetcar models; artifacts donated by Walter Draycott (a North Vancouver pioneer and author of "Early Days in Lynn Valley"); and hundreds of works of art from the collection of Fred Amess (influential principal of the Vancouver School of Decorative and Applied Art).

### **How long will the Collection Review Project take and how much will you keep?**

- The project runs from June 2012 through May 2015.
- By the end of the project, we expect to have reduced the number of artifacts in the existing collection by approximately one-third and to have decreased the amount of storage space required by at least one-half.

### **How do you decide what to acquire, what to retain, and what to remove?**

- Decisions about what to acquire are made by the NVMA's Acquisitions Committee, based on criteria outlined in the Commission's Collections Policy and Collecting Plan, as well as the NVMA's founding bylaws, Vision and Mandate and the available and anticipated resources needed to care for the collections.
- Decisions about whether to retain or remove individual artifacts are made in reference to the same criteria and guiding documents.
- The NVMA Commission's official **Mandate** is to "serve as sole custodian of the City and District cultural, archival and museum collections" and to "facilitate, encourage, and provide a broad array of museum and archives services". Its **Vision** is to "create a dynamic and innovative history centre and become a focal point of community life on the North Shore". Its **Mission** is to "engage, strengthen and inspire our community and its visitors by exploring history, connecting people and sharing ideas."

### **What does it mean "to deaccession" something and who approves this?**

- When an artifact is formally acquired (accepted into the museum collection) and becomes civic property, it is "accessioned".
- When it is "deaccessioned", it is formally removed from the collection. Approval is received from the NVMA Director, the NVMA Commission and the Councils of the City and the District of North Vancouver.

### **Will you notify a donor when you plan to dispose of an object?**

- Decisions to notify donors of objects considered for deaccessioning are made on a case-by-case basis.
- While we would like to contact the donor of each object considered for removal, we are unable to do so because of the time, cost and staff resources required to track down all individual donors, donors' descendants or executor(s).

### **How are you disposing of deaccessioned objects?**

- We will try to keep objects in the public realm where possible. Those that appear to have relevance to another public, collecting museum will be offered to that museum. If no public museum wishes to take them or the object has no strong connection to another museum's collection area, we will follow municipal property disposal procedures, which may include public auction or destruction.

### **How can I find out what items will be deaccessioned?**

- Lists of items that are proposed, and later approved, for deaccessioning are attached to agendas of municipal Council meetings. The most recent deaccession list can be found at:  
<http://www.cnv.org/attach/2013%2001%2014%20item%2007%20attach%2001.pdf>

### **How can I acquire artifacts being removed from the Museum collection?**

- Accessioned artifacts are owned by the City and the District of North Vancouver. According to municipal policy, they cannot be given to private individuals (even if an individual was the original donor of an item).
- Most deaccessioned items will be disposed of through public auctions conducted by commercial auctioneers. Items will be sent to the auctioneers in batches. Auctioneers will group them with materials from other owners and decide when and how to sell them. The NVMA has no way of knowing when individual items will be put on sale.
- Proceeds from the sale of all deaccessioned materials will be deposited in a Special Purpose Fund for the Commission's use in maintaining the Museum and Archives collections and acquiring new items to augment the collections.

### **Are you still accepting donations to the Museum collection?**

- Yes, we are still accepting selected artifacts. Please see NVMA's webpage on donating to the collections for more information ([nvma.ca/collections6.htm](http://nvma.ca/collections6.htm)) or contact Luc Desmarais at the number/email below.

