



Management of Culturally Sensitive Material



Visible Storage
Photo: Bill McLennan

The Museum of Anthropology is committed to respecting the values and spiritual beliefs of the cultures represented in its collections. We know that our collections contain items which are important to the originating communities, and whose placement and care within the museum continue to affect the values and beliefs of those communities. The museum recognizes that these objects may have a non-material side embodying cultural rights, values, knowledge, and ideas which are not owned or possessed by the museum, but are retained by the originating communities.

The following are guidelines for identifying and managing such sensitive material so that the responsibilities of both the museum and the originating peoples are met.

The Museum of Anthropology:

1. Recognizes that legal purchase and possession of material objects does not in itself encompass purchase or possession of rights to ritual or spiritual qualities which may be associated with the object, and that such rights as do exist apart from material objects remain in possession of the originating people;
2. Willingly enters into discussion with originating communities as to the proper care, display, and storage of sensitive materials;
3. Will, within the constraints of museum resources, inform itself about and take appropriate measures (as outlined below) to ensure that any or all agreed-upon restrictions are observed.

Procedures

1. Through discussion with originating communities and regular review of scholarly literature, MOA staff will endeavor to identify objects which may be culturally sensitive, and take appropriate corrective measures concerning their storage or display.
2. Using a special form, staff will record all concerns about museum practices expressed to them by First Nations or others. The same form also will be available at Admissions or Reception for members of the public to fill out for themselves.
3. Reports concerning specific objects in the museum should identify object catalogue number(s), the respondent's name, address, and telephone number, relationship to the originating community, the date, and the nature of the concern.
4. All reports will be directed to the Collections Manager, who will convene a meeting of relevant staff to discuss the matter. Respondents will then receive a response from MOA either inviting further discussion or informing them of the steps the museum has or is taking regarding the issue.
5. All recorded inquiries will be kept on file at MOA for future reference.

Note: confidentiality will be observed where requested.



Query Form - Culturally Sensitive Materials

The Museum of Anthropology recognizes that there are objects in its collections which may be culturally sensitive. In order for us to respond appropriately to concerns you might have regarding the care, display or storage of such objects, we ask that you note your comments here. This report will then be directed to MOA's Collections Manager and other staff for consideration.

The museum will follow up your concerns by telephone or other communication and, in consultation with other relevant parties, determine changes to be made.

We appreciate hearing your concerns, and will make every effort to address them.

Confidentiality will be observed where requested.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Object type: _____

Catalogue #: _____

Comments:

(please include your relationship to this object, as well as your specific concerns)

Please mail, fax or email inquiries to the Collections Manager at the address below.

Collections Manager
Museum of Anthropology
At the University of British Columbia
6393 N.W. Marine Drive
Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z2

Tel 604.822.5087

Fax 604.822.2974

Email info@moa.ubc.ca