

ODHS Policy on Repatriation and Culturally Sensitive Materials

IX. CULTURALLY SENSITIVE MATERIALS

The contributions made by the various cultural and ethnic groups that have populated the Oliver and District region constitute a rich part of the area's history and of contemporary life in the South Okanagan. The collections of the ODHS reflect this influence and include objects of the material culture of these groups. The ODHS is committed to preserving the record of this cultural heritage; the ODHS also recognizes that these are living cultures, and is committed to a collaborative relationship with groups who may have convictions regarding treatment, use, and ownership of culturally sensitive materials.

Culturally sensitive materials are those objects or other materials, which have sacred significance to contemporary cultural groups, and whose treatment, custodianship, and use is a matter of profound concern to those groups. The ODHS recognizes the concerns of First Nations, other ethnic groups, and religious communities from whose cultural heritage such materials derive. This policy addresses the treatment and disposition of culturally sensitive materials, which may be part of the ODHS's collections, and establishes guidelines regarding future acquisition of such materials. The ODHS 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 those rights that do exist from material objects remain in possession of the originating people.

A. Acquisition

The ODHS will not knowingly acquire an object with sacred significance to a cultural group and whose possession of or use by the cultural group is considered essential for religious purposes. The ODHS will act as an intermediary to facilitate the return of such objects to their group of origin, or will take other actions as appropriate to that end. Oliver and District Heritage Society 14 Collections Management Policy The ODHS will not accept into its collections archaeological material removed from private or public lands. Potential donors of such material will be directed to the Heritage Branch of the B.C. Government for further information. The Collections Committee will review potential acquisitions that may be culturally sensitive. An ODHS representative will confer with a First Nation's authority or other relevant consultants as needed.

B. Treatment and Use

Objects identified as culturally sensitive will be exhibited only with prior consent of the culturally affiliated group's legally designated governance. The ODHS is committed to dialogue and consultation with cultural groups to ensure that objects are exhibited, interpreted, cared for, and/or stored in a way that is sensitive to cultural standards and wishes in addition to recognized provincial and federal guidelines. Public access to culturally sensitive materials is restricted. Every reasonable effort will be made to honor requests for access to culturally affiliated groups or individuals. Access for research purposes will be carefully considered and granted when such use is not in conflict with respectful and appropriate treatment of the materials. Requests for loan of materials, documentation, or technical assistance from communities or cultural groups from which objects have been acquired will receive special consideration, and every reasonable effort will be made to honor such requests.

C. Repatriation

Repatriation is the return of culturally sensitive materials to appropriate parties. The ODHS views repatriation as an opportunity for a mutually beneficial relationship based on trust and open dialogue. It is the policy of the ODHS to respectfully consider all repatriation requests in accordance with current professional standards and guidelines. It is the ODHS's intention that any objects that are actively needed for the current practice of a traditional religion, consist of human remains or funerary objects, or that are essential to the well-being of a cultural group, be returned to the appropriate parties. If conflict exists between cultural groups over appropriate ownership, the ODHS will suggest mediation by an objective third party, but will not actively participate in the mediation. Conflict issues must be resolved before repatriation can be concluded. Release of objects for repatriation will be treated and recorded as a deaccession, in which case all normal deaccessioning procedures (except disposition) will be followed. However, in these cases, the Collections Committee and staff maintain the right to seek advice of qualified outside experts in determining legitimacy of claims.

- From ODHS Collections Management Policy,
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