

UBC Museum of Anthropology Guidelines for Management of Culturally Sensitive Materials

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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 that 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 MOA, 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.
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 MOA's 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.