

# **McCandless Northern Allegheny Heritage Center**

## **Institutional Code of Ethics**

### **Introduction**

A code of ethics is a statement of shared values. It puts forth the public trust and stewardship responsibilities/obligations as a museum. It creates accountability and ensures a personal/professional code of conduct. It also governs staff/board/volunteer behavior. The code of ethics is a public trust contract. It promotes transparency and accountability both internally and externally, and it informs decision-making.

### **Governance**

The Town of McCandless Town Council shall act as the governing body for the McCandless/Northern Allegheny Heritage Center. As such, it serves the public to keep best interests as it relates to the Museum, and is accountable to the public as well as the Center. In most cases, the Town Council acts as the ultimate legal entity for the Museum and is responsible for making and maintaining any general policies, standards, conditions, and operation continuity. The Town Council must be loyal to the purpose of the Center, and must understand and respect the core documents that provide for its establishment, character, and governance.

Thus, the Town Council ensures that:

1. All those who work or volunteer for or on behalf of the Center understand and support its mission and public trust responsibilities.
2. Town Council members understand and fulfill their position and act as one solidified group, not as individuals.
3. Each Town Council member will devote time and attention to the affairs of the Center and ensure that fellow council members act in accordance with the core documents and with applicable state and federal laws. Town Council members must ensure that no policies or activities jeopardize the nonprofit status of the Center, or reflect poorly upon it or the Town of McCandless.
4. Town Council members with special areas of expertise or position regarding the Center should understand that advocacy for those interests should be advanced only within the framework of the Center's interest as a whole.
5. All information considered confidential including information related to administration or activities of the Center — especially, but not exclusive to —

private donor information should be maintained in confidence when it is not available to the public.

6. Town Council members hold the ultimate fiduciary responsibility for the Center and for the protection and nurturing of its various assets: the collections and related documentation, financial assets, and the staff. They must develop and define the purposes and related policies of the institution, and ensure that all of the Center's assets are properly and effectively used for public purposes. Council also will set hours of operation for the Center.

7. The Town Council has strong obligations to provide the proper environment for the physical security and preservation of the collections and to monitor and develop the financial structure of the Center so that it continues to exist as an institution in support of the mission. In keeping with their primary responsibility for the protection of the Center's collection, Town Council members should not jeopardize the collection by using it as collateral for a loan or by otherwise selling or mortgaging the collection in order to secure funds for operations, buildings, or expansion of the facility.

8. The Town Council will designate its trust to the Town Manager and his designees to delegate responsibilities that include, but are not limited to, staffing, programming, inventory, and procedures/best practices.

9. All individuals and groups associated with the Center represent the interests of society. Administration and Town Council alike maintain the relationship with staff, in which shared roles are recognized and separate responsibilities respected. Working relationships among trustees, employees, and volunteers are based on equity and mutual respect.

10. Policies regarding communication and proper care of the Center and its assets are articulated, and prudent oversight is practiced. Above all else, governance promotes the public good.

## **Collections**

The Town of McCandless and the Town Council shall ensure that all collections (owned, borrowed, or loaned) in its custody support its mission and public trust responsibilities. Collection items shall be categorized into either the Permanent Collection including objects which hold historical significance to the Northern Allegheny region, or the Reference Collection including books and archival material.

The collections in the Center's custody are lawfully held, protected, secured, cared for, and preserved in an appropriate manner. All items and collections in custody of the Center are accounted for and documented in an inventory compilation. The Center is responsible for maintaining accurate and current records of the identification, location, and condition of objects in the Permanent and Reference Collections or left in the custody of the Center. Access to this

information and other related information is permitted and regulated by staff designated by Town Council or the Town Manager.

Acquisition, disposal, and loan activities are conducted in a manner that respects the protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources and discourages illicit trade in such materials. All items will be cared for and preserved in the same manner as other items that are property of the Town.

Acquisition, disposal, and loan activities shall conform to its mission and public trust responsibilities. Collections activities shall enhance and strengthen the collections, and preserve and promote the political, social, and economic history of the Northern Allegheny area. Additions to the Collections of the Center will only be accepted if they enhance the educational experience for the public and conform to the mission of the Center.

The disposal of collections through sale, trade, or research activities is solely for the advancement of the Center's mission. Proceeds from the sale of collections are to be used consistent with the established standards of the Center's discipline, but in no event shall they be used for anything other than acquisition or direct care of collections.

The Center has the right to accept or turn away any item or material it sees fit by abiding by the Center's mission and Collections Management Policy. Collections-related activities promote the public good rather than individual financial gain by the institution or members.

The Town of McCandless shall handle competing claims of ownership that may be asserted in connection with objects in its custody, openly, seriously, responsively, and with respect for the dignity of all parties involved.

## **Programs**

The Center shall serve society by advancing an understanding and appreciation of the political, social, and economic history of the Northern Allegheny area through exhibitions, research, scholarship, publications and educational activities. These programs further the Center's mission and are responsive to the concerns, interests and needs of the community.

Center programs shall support its mission and public service responsibilities in support of educating the local community about their own community. The Town Council places trust in a designated employee/volunteer to develop and approve all programs that will support the mission of the Center. These programs are

marked by intellectual integrity and must be led by individuals considered expert in a particular field.

These programs shall be accessible and encourage participation of the widest possible audience consistent with its mission and resources. Variety is also expected of scheduled programs. In addition, these programs respect pluralistic values, traditions, and concerns.

Revenue-producing activities and activities that involve relationships with external entities shall conform to the Center's mission and support its policies.

Above all else, programs promote the public good.

### **Promulgation**

The Institutional Code of Ethics of the Center has been adapted from the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) Code of Ethics. This document is designed to be used and updated. This Institutional Code of Ethics will be reviewed at new volunteer/employee orientation, as well as for Center purposes. Periodic refinements and revisions will be recommended to Town Council.

**To be kept on file (the following items will be maintained by Town Administration):** Hours of operation, a volunteer list.