



Collections Plan

**As reviewed and approved by
The Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society
Board of Directors on:**

OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Curator/Archivist

SUPERSEDES: Collections Plan 2022

COLLECTIONS PLAN

1. Introduction:

The Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society acknowledges the original custodians of this land and pays respect to the Elders - past, present, and future - for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture, and the hopes of Indigenous Peoples.

We also recognize that the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society stands on the traditional land of the Fort William First Nation, signatory to the Robinson Superior Treaty of 1850, and acknowledge the role of the Métis Settlement in the development of our community.

The Museum's mission is to serve all of the peoples who make up both the city and district of Thunder Bay in Northwestern Ontario, Canada, and to preserve the tangible and intangible heritage of the entire region.

Through the Museum's exhibits, publications, collections, and programs, the Thunder Bay Museum engages with the peoples of Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario in a spirit of openness and universal access as well as trust, freedom of expression, and debate. Our motto, "Learning Through History," reveals our fundamental commitment to education and a dedication to the idea of a community in which citizens enjoy equitable opportunities to participate in public life, culture, and an exploration of our collective past.

2. Collections Statement of Purpose:

- 2.1. The Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society shall collect, preserve, display and interpret those objects that serve to illustrate the history and development of the Thunder Bay District and Northwestern Ontario and its people, and to provide and maintain an archive for the use of researchers.
- 2.2. The Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society shall collect objects in the following categories: contemporary history, history of Black, Indigenous, and other people of colour in the region, history of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in the region, history of people with disabilities in the region, cultural development (including original and commercial art), natural resources and natural resource extraction, French and English colonialization, the fur trade, Euro-Canadian colonial settlement, industry, manufacturing, regional immigration, and trade and transportation.
- 2.3. The collection shall be available for public viewing in the museum gallery on a rotating basis and to researchers by permission of the Curator/Archivist.
- 2.4. The Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society shall serve as a repository for local historical information, which shall be available to the general public.

2.5. From time to time the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society shall:

2.5.1. Publish scholarly papers and articles of a general interest on topics related to the history of the Thunder Bay District and to the activities and purpose of the Museum.

2.5.2. Sponsor lectures and guest speakers on matters of general historical interest and on topics specifically related to the history of the Thunder Bay District.

2.5.3. Initiate extension services to civic and educational institutions.

2.6. From time to time, the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society shall act in an advisory and consultative capacity to government agencies and local institutions and organizations in matters relating to the historical development of the Thunder Bay District.

2.7. The Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society will co-operate with other museums and historical societies in the collection, display and preservation of significant materials.

3. Scope:

The Collection Development Plan informs acquisitions and provides staff with overarching guidelines for collections activity. It is an examination of what objects we have and what collecting gaps and weaknesses exist.

3.1. The Collections Plan of the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society is to serve as a guide for building a permanent collection that supports its *Collections Statement of Purpose*.

3.2. The Collections Plan embraces the best practices for acquisition, deaccession, loans, care and usage of the collection, as outlined in the Museum *Collections Policy*, while advising on the development of a comprehensive collection that balances physical and fiscal constraints with the Museum's *Statement of Purpose*.

3.3. It is understood that the collection of the Museum represents the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society's core interpretive asset. It not only supports our mission, but also serves to realign the mission as the collection grows or as collecting opportunities arise. However, this is to be always accomplished through thoughtful and purposeful planning.

4. Current Collections Overview:

This section provides an overview of the broad categories of archives and objects that already exist within the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society's collection.

The majority of the collection is composed of actively and passively collected objects and archives relating to the French and English colonialization, and Euro-Canadian settlement of, Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario.

- **Active collecting** is a state of collection acquisition where an institution purposely seeks out objects and stories to support the mandate and mission.
- **Passive collecting** is a state of collection acquisition where an institution relies on its community to come to them and donate objects, archives, and stories.

We acknowledge that the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society, like many other museums, emerged from the colonial endeavor.

We are working to truthfully address the history and legacy of colonialism in the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society's collection and policies.

Below, the Museum's current collections holdings are divided into major collection categories for ease of review.

4.1. Archives

4.1.1. **Business and Labour Records:** The records of businesses and labour unions in the City of Thunder Bay and the Thunder Bay district, particularly from the 1870s to 1960 but also including records from as early as 1806.

4.1.2. **Records of Community Organizations:** The records of community organizations in Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario, primarily from the late 19th century to the present.

4.1.3. **Personal Papers:** Personal papers encompass a wide range of subjects from politics and industrial history to education and the arts. Each deals with some aspect of Northwestern Ontario or, more specifically, with Thunder Bay and its predecessors, Fort William and Port Arthur.

4.1.4. **Records of Military Organizations:** Primarily the records of the Lake Superior Regiment during the two World Wars, but also including some records of peacetime service between the wars and after 1945. Includes, but not limited to, the 96th Lake Superior Regiment, the Lake Superior Regiment (Motor), and the Lake Superior Scottish Regiment.

4.1.5. **Records of Government and Judiciary:** The Thunder Bay Museum is not an official repository for the records of any government. However, from time to time records created by governments do become part of the Society's collections, and fonds have been created for these records.

4.1.6. **Ethnic Fonds:** Ethnic archives are hard to define precisely. However, the Thunder Bay Museum has several fonds that deal at least in part with ethnic themes, either through their creators or through their activities. Each of these fonds is also listed in the categories above.

4.2. Objects

The Museum has a strong permanent collection of objects and artifacts that tell the story of the French and English colonialization, and Euro-Canadian settlement of, Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario. The Museum's permanent collection has over 60,000 objects including the numbered archives collection.

4.2.1. **History:** The Museum has a mixed collection of objects reflecting the colonialization and settlement of Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario up to and including recent history (1930-present).

4.2.2. **Archaeology:** The Museum has a collection of archaeological artifacts relating to the history of Northwestern Ontario specifically, and Canada more broadly.

4.2.3. **Natural Sciences:** The Museum has a collection of geological samples that reflect the history of earth sciences and mining in Northwestern Ontario.

4.2.4. **Photographs and Negatives:** The Museum has a collection of over 40,000 photographs, photographic prints, and negatives that are visual records of the social and regional history of Northwestern Ontario. The various types of photographs and negatives are listed below.

- Daguerreotype
- Ambrotype
- Tintypes
- Cellulose Nitrate Negatives
- Cellulose Acetate Negatives
- Glass-plate Negatives
- Polyester Negatives

5. Collection Weaknesses and Goals:

For the majority of the Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society's history, we have focused on collecting and representing the stories surrounding the colonization and Euro-Canadian settlement of Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario.

Moving forward, the Museum is working to build a collection that reflects a more complete, inclusive, and truthful history of Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario's many peoples.

As such, a main priority of our collecting plan is the active and passive collection of stories, archives, and objects that address the gaps in the collection relating to the many diverse peoples who call Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario home.

Where the Museum needs to grow its collection includes:

- History and contemporary stories of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit individuals and communities in Northwestern Ontario/Thunder Bay
 - The Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society will only acquire Indigenous cultural resources in instances where:
 - There is documented consent to do so from the Indigenous rights holders.
 - It is demonstrable that the cultural resource left an Indigenous community through a decolonized pathway.
- History and contemporary stories of 2SLGBTQIA+ people and communities in Northwestern Ontario/Thunder Bay
- History and contemporary stories of Black Canadians in Northwestern Ontario/Thunder Bay
- History and contemporary stories of People of Colour in Northwestern Ontario/Thunder Bay
- History and contemporary stories of immigration to Northwestern Ontario/Thunder Bay
- History and contemporary stories of people with disabilities in Northwestern Ontario/Thunder Bay
- Contemporary social history of Northwestern Ontario/Thunder Bay
- Specific topics within the general history of Northwestern Ontario/Thunder Bay that are determined to be missing from the permanent collection. Including, but not limited to:

- Resource extraction businesses
- Women's history
- Social and political organizations
- Human rights history
- Environmental movements relating to conservation and climate change
- Local businesses

6. Conclusion

The Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society will continue to passively and actively collect and preserve the tangible and intangible culture of Thunder Bay and Northwestern Ontario's with a focus on addressing the gaps in our collection, and preventing a future collection that does not accurately represent our community.

The Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society 2024-2028 Strategic Plan and Feasibility Study Addendum will provide additional direction and support to the Collections Plan in the future.