

# **CODE OF ETHICS and Guidance for Practice**

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**of the Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property  
and of the Canadian Association of Professional Conservators**

**Third Edition 2000  
Reprinted 2009**

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of the Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property  
and of the Canadian Association of Professional Conservators**

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**CAC**  
  
**ACCR**

The Canadian Association for Conservation  
of Cultural Property (CAC)  
207 Bank Street Suite 419  
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 2N2  
Tel. (613) 231-3977; fax (613) 231-4406  
E-mail address: [coordinator@cac-accr.com](mailto:coordinator@cac-accr.com)  
Website: [www.cac-accr.ca](http://www.cac-accr.ca)

**CAPC**  

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**ACRP**

The Canadian Association of Professional Conservators (CAPC)  
280 Metcalfe Street, Suite 400  
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1R7  
Tel. (613) 567-0099; fax (613) 233-5438  
E-mail address: [info@museums.ca](mailto:info@museums.ca)  
Website: [www.capc-acrp.ca](http://www.capc-acrp.ca)

This document is intended to serve both as a guide for use by conservation professionals, and as an outline of the ethical obligations of conservation professionals for use by their clients, colleagues and employers. It consists of four parts:

<b>1. The Code of Ethics</b> .....	1
<b>2. Guidance for Practice</b> .....	3
An interpretation of the principles stated in the Code of Ethics.	
<b>3. Glossary</b> .....	13
A list of definitions of terms as they are used in this document. The equivalent French terms are also given. The terms which are included in the Glossary are marked with an asterisk in the Code of Ethics and in the section entitled Guidance for Practice.	
<b>4. Bibliography</b> .....	16
A list of the principal references consulted by the authors in the writing of this document.	



## CODE OF ETHICS

### of the Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property and of the Canadian Association of Professional Conservators

The fundamental role of the conservation professional is to preserve and to restore, as appropriate, cultural property for present and future generations. The following are principles of ethical behaviour for those involved in the conservation of cultural property:

- I. It is the responsibility of the conservation professional\*, acting alone or with others, to strive constantly to maintain a balance between the need in society to use a cultural property\*, and to ensure the preservation\* of that cultural property.
- II. In the conservation\* of cultural property, all actions of the conservation professional must be governed by an informed respect for the integrity of the property, including physical, conceptual, historical and aesthetic considerations.
- III. The conservation professional shall strive to attain the highest possible standards in all aspects of conservation, including preventive conservation\*, examination\*, documentation\*, research, treatment\* and education.
- IV. The conservation professional shall seek to prevent damage and deterioration to a cultural property under his/her care by implementing, or by recommending to the owner, appropriate preventive conservation measures.
- V. The conservation professional shall recognize his or her limitations and the special skills and knowledge of others.
- VI. The conservation professional shall continue to develop knowledge and skills with the aim of improving the quality of his/her professional work.
- VII. The conservation professional shall contribute to the evolution and growth of the profession by sharing experience and information with colleagues.
- VIII. The conservation professional shall act with honesty and integrity in all professional relationships, recognize the rights of all colleagues and respect the profession as a whole.
- IX. The conservation professional shall seek to promote an awareness and understanding of conservation through communication with those who have a vested interest in the cultural property, with other professionals and with members of the public.
- X. The conservation professional has an obligation to comply with and to promote an understanding of this *Code of Ethics*.

\* All terms marked with an asterisk are defined in the Glossary.



**GUIDANCE FOR PRACTICE**  
**of the Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property**  
**and of the Canadian Association of Professional Conservators**

**Professional Standards in the Conservation of Cultural Property**

**General Obligations**

1. Shared Responsibility
2. Respect for the Integrity of the Cultural Property
3. Standard of Conservation Work
4. Documentation
5. Recognition of Limitations
6. Professional Development

**Preventive Conservation**

7. Preventive Conservation
8. Safekeeping of Cultural Property

**Examination**

9. Examination
10. Risks of Examination
11. Sampling
12. Documentation of Examination

**Conservation Treatment**

13. Necessity and Extent of Treatment
14. Treatment Proposal
15. Documentation of Treatment
16. Techniques and Materials
17. Removal or Alteration of Material
18. Restoration and Reconstruction
19. Reformatting
20. Reproduction or Detailed Recording

**Subsequent Care**

21. Subsequent Care

**Emergency Situations**

22. Emergency Situations

## **Professional Conduct**

### **Relationship with the Owner**

23. Relationship with the Owner
24. Confidentiality
25. Contract
26. Fees
27. Consent of the Owner
28. Request for a Second Opinion
29. In Case of Disagreement

### **Relationship with Other Professionals, Trainees and Members of the Public**

30. Communication
31. False Information
32. Advertising
33. Public Education
34. Training
35. Delegating and Subcontracting
36. Acknowledgment
37. References and Referrals
38. Comments on the Work of Another Conservation Professional
39. Conflict of Interest
40. Freelance Work
41. Laws and Regulations
42. Illicit Materials
43. Safety
44. Conduct



**GUIDANCE FOR PRACTICE**  
**of the Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property**  
**and of the Canadian Association of Professional Conservators**

An interpretation of the principles stated in the *Code of Ethics*.

**Professional Standards in the Conservation of Cultural Property**

**General Obligations**

**1. Shared Responsibility**

The care and treatment\* of a cultural property\* is the shared responsibility of the owner\*, the conservation professional\* and when applicable, the originator\*.

**2. Respect for the Integrity of the Cultural Property**

When conserving a cultural property, the conservation professional shall respect the integrity of the cultural property by endeavouring to preserve its material composition and culturally significant qualities through minimal intervention. The original intention, usage, history and evidence of provenance of the property must be respected. This respect for the integrity of the cultural property shall be based upon the study of the cultural property and on consultations with the owner and, when applicable, the originator. When relevant, other authorities or documentary sources should be consulted.

**3. Standard of Conservation\* Work**

While circumstances may limit both the resources allocated to a particular situation and the extent of the work, the quality of work that the conservation professional performs shall not be compromised, regardless of any opinion held with respect to the value or quality of the cultural property.

**4. Documentation\***

The conservation professional shall document his/her work by recording all essential details of the conservation of a cultural property. The extent and type of documentation will vary with the nature of the cultural property and conservation work required. Documentation is part of the history of the cultural property and shall be produced and maintained in as permanent a manner as is practical. Documentation shall be available for appropriate access when this access does not contravene confidentiality.

**5. Recognition of Limitations**

The conservation professional shall carry out only that work which is within the limits of his/her professional competence and facilities. When a conservation professional is asked to provide a service beyond the limits of his/her competence, the assistance of a qualified professional shall be sought or the work shall be referred or subcontracted to a qualified professional.

**6. Professional Development**

The conservation professional shall strive to improve his/her knowledge and skills and keep abreast of current developments through continuing study and through communication with conservation professionals and others.

**Preventive Conservation****7. Preventive Conservation\***

Preventive conservation is a primary objective of the conservation professional and must be considered prior to direct intervention with the cultural property. The conservation professional shall strive to ensure appropriate conditions of storage, display, use and handling of a cultural property, or shall provide guidance for others to do so.

**8. Safekeeping of Cultural Property**

The conservation professional should ensure working, storage and transportation conditions designed to protect cultural property while in his or her care.

**Examination****9. Examination\***

The conservation professional shall make a thorough examination of the cultural property and shall document this examination before performing any conservation treatment. This examination includes a determination of its structure and materials and an assessment of its condition, in particular, the extent of deterioration, alteration and loss. He/she shall study relevant historical and technical records. Where necessary, the conservation professional should initiate analyses of materials and undertake research into historical, conceptual and technical aspects of the cultural property.

**10. Risks of Examination**

Before undertaking any examination which may result in a change in the cultural property, the conservation professional shall establish the necessity for such an examination and receive permission to proceed from the owner.

**11. Sampling**

In cases where sample material must be taken from a cultural property, prior consent must be obtained from the owner. Only a minimum of sample material shall be removed, and a record of sample removal shall be kept. Where relevant, and with the agreement of the owner, material removed from a cultural property should be retained as part of the documentation of that cultural property.

**12. Documentation of Examination**

The conservation professional shall prepare an examination report (alternatively called 'condition report') that shall identify the cultural property, include all relevant information on its structure, materials, history and condition, and provide the date of the examination. The conservation professional shall provide a copy of the examination report to the owner.

## Conservation Treatment

### 13. Necessity and Extent of Treatment

The conservation professional shall only recommend or undertake treatment that is necessary to, and appropriate for, the conservation of the cultural property. Conversely, a conservation professional shall not intentionally omit to recommend an essential treatment. When non intervention best serves to promote the preservation\* of the cultural property, it is appropriate that no treatment be performed.

### 14. Treatment Proposal

On the basis of the examination, the conservation professional shall report his/her findings and recommendations in writing to the owner, including justification for and the objectives of the treatment, an estimate of resources required, alternative approaches if feasible, and the potential risks of treatment. The treatment proposal is submitted in order to fully inform the owner and to obtain consent to proceed. For large groups of similar objects (for example library collections, archaeological finds), a treatment proposal may be written for the group as a whole. Any significant changes to the proposed treatment shall be conveyed to the owner and consent must be received before the conservation professional carries out the revised treatment.

### 15. Documentation of Treatment

Treatment records shall include the date of the treatment, a description of the interventions and of the materials used (with their composition, where known), observations, as well as any details of the structure, materials, condition or relevant history of the cultural property that have been revealed during treatment. From these records a summary shall be prepared in the form of a treatment report. The conservation professional shall provide the owner with this report and shall stress the importance of maintaining the report as part of the history of the cultural property.

### 16. Techniques and Materials

The conservation professional shall endeavour to use only techniques and materials which, to the best of current knowledge, meet the objectives of the treatment and have the least adverse effect on the cultural property. Ideally, the conservation professional shall use materials that can be most easily and most completely removed with minimal risk to any original part. Similarly, these techniques and materials should not impede future treatment or examination.

### 17. Removal or Alteration of Material

No aspect of a cultural property should be altered nor should material be removed from it without justification. When such removal or alteration is required, those aspects or materials shall first be documented in their existing state. Where relevant, and with the agreement of the owner, material removed from an object shall be retained as part of the documentation of a cultural property.

**18. Restoration\* and Reconstruction\***

Restoration and reconstruction are means of re-establishing culturally significant qualities of a cultural property. If undertaken they shall be fully documented and shall be carried out without fraudulent intent and to the minimum extent necessary. The presence and extent of any restoration or reconstruction must be detectable, though they need not be conspicuous.

**19. Reformatting\***

Reformatting is an appropriate intervention for cultural property which is valued exclusively for its information content and where, despite current conservation practices, future retrieval of this information may not be possible.

**20. Reproduction or Detailed Recording**

When a cultural property is inherently unstable or when its social use is incompatible with its preservation, the conservation professional shall recommend a reproduction or a detailed recording as appropriate to the situation. The conservation professional shall outline suitable options that meet the need for content retention and that will result, during the reproduction or recording, in the least alteration to the original. A reproduction shall be clearly and easily identified as such.

**Subsequent Care****21. Subsequent Care**

The conservation professional shall advise the owner on the requirements for subsequent care of the cultural property, which may include specifications for shipping and handling, storage, display and maintenance.

**Emergency Situations****22. Emergency Situations**

The conservation professional shall endeavour to be prepared for emergency situations or to undertake emergency response planning according to currently accepted practice. This includes consultation with the owner and, when applicable, with the originator in order to establish the extent of, or priority for, recovery. In an emergency, the conservation professional shall render all assistance practicable with due respect given, as far as possible, to the guidelines in this document. If a departure from normal practice is necessary, the conservation professional shall take care to advise the owner or appropriate authority and should recommend subsequent actions. During or subsequent to the emergency situation, the conservation professional shall document the actions taken.

## Professional Conduct

### Relationship with the Owner

#### 23. Relationship with the Owner

The conservation professional shall strive to establish a relationship with the owner based on mutual trust and respect. He/she shall communicate openly and clearly with the owner so that there is a thorough understanding of risks and responsibilities, and that agreements between the two parties reflect shared decisions and realistic expectations.

#### 24. Confidentiality

The conservation professional shall consider relationships with an owner as confidential. Information pertaining to the cultural property derived from examination, scientific investigation or treatment of the cultural property shall not be published or otherwise made public without permission of the owner, unless failure to convey the information would support an illegal or an unethical act. The conservation professional shall not take personal, financial or other advantage of this information nor allow others to take advantage of this information unless the owner consents.

#### 25. Contract

The conservation professional may enter into contractual agreements with individuals, institutions, businesses, or government agencies provided that such agreements do not conflict with the terms and intent of the *Code of Ethics and Guidance for Practice*. It is prudent to obtain written contracts in order to avoid misunderstandings and to support the legal rights and responsibilities of the parties involved. Where possible, the agreement with the client should specify the following: the work to be done, its objectives and justification; the possible effects and outcome of the work; the basis for fees or estimate of fees; the extent and type of documentation; the expected completion date; method of handling; whether any work is to be delegated or subcontracted.

#### 26. Fees

The conservation professional shall ensure at all times that conservation services are carried out in a financially responsible manner with due regard for fairness to the client and with respect for the profession. Fees charged for services provided to the private sector shall take into account all costs related to providing the service, the ability and experience of the conservation professionals involved, and the degree of responsibility assumed. The conservation professional shall establish a consistent fee structure which shall not vary according to the value of the cultural property. Agreement on fees shall be obtained from the client prior to providing conservation services.

#### 27. Consent of the Owner

The informed consent of the owner must be obtained prior to a direct intervention which may result in a change in the cultural property. It is prudent to obtain the owner's consent in writing in order to avoid misunderstandings and to support the legal rights and responsibilities of the parties involved.

**28. Request for a Second Opinion**

If, for any reason, before or during treatment, the owner requests the opinion of another conservation professional, this request shall be respected by the original conservation professional. The conservation professional should assist the owner in obtaining a second opinion.

**29. In Case of Disagreement**

Should the conservation professional and the owner disagree over a proposed treatment or care of a cultural property, they should review the situation, if necessary in consultation with other specialists in the field, to ensure that the nature of the problems and implications of the treatment or care are fully understood. The conservation professional maintains the right of refusal to undertake any treatment or procedure which he/she considers to be contrary to the terms and intent of the *Code of Ethics and Guidance for Practice*.

**Relationship with Other Professionals,  
Trainees and Members of the Public****30. Communication**

To further the development of the profession, a conservation professional should, where possible, share with colleagues information gained from research, examination, preventive conservation activities or treatment. The peer review system shall be encouraged as part of professional publishing practice.

**31. False Information**

The conservation professional shall not knowingly be party to the dissemination of false or misleading information pertaining to any of the following: cultural property, its age, origin, or authenticity; professional or business relationships; conservation materials, procedures or services.

**32. Advertising**

Advertising and other representations by the conservation professional shall present an accurate description of credentials and services.

**33. Public Education**

The conservation professional shall promote an awareness and understanding of conservation through communication with, and dissemination of appropriate information to, those who have a vested interest in the cultural property, other professionals and members of the general public. Prior to providing training or detailed information that pertains to conservation treatments, the conservation professional shall set, where necessary, appropriate criteria for qualifications and experience of the participants.

**34. Training**

The conservation professional should endeavour to become involved in the instruction of trainees, but only within the limits of his/her knowledge and ability, and the time and technical facilities available. The objectives and obligations of both the trainer and the trainee should be clearly stated and mutually agreed upon in writing, and should include such items as terms of payment, anticipated length of training and areas of competence to be taught.

**35. Delegating and Subcontracting**

The conservation professional is responsible for delegated or subcontracted work on cultural property. This includes work delegated to other conservation professionals, trainees, volunteers and other individuals. Work shall not be delegated or subcontracted unless the individual has the appropriate qualifications to execute the work. The conservation professional shall provide direct supervision unless he/she has sufficient knowledge of the individual to be confident that the work will be of a high standard. The conservation professional shall ensure that appropriate remuneration is given for subcontracted work. The conservation professional shall inform the owner whether delegating or subcontracting is to occur.

**36. Acknowledgment**

The conservation professional shall ensure that work produced by a colleague (trainee, contractor, co-worker) is acknowledged, where appropriate, in documentation, publications and presentations of that work. The author's consent must be obtained before the dissemination of unpublished research or reports.

**37. References and Referrals**

The conservation professional shall only provide a reference for an individual if he/she has personal knowledge of the competence and experience of that individual. The conservation professional shall make referrals only to accredited professionals, or to professionals in which he/she has knowledge of their competence. When acting on behalf of an employer, a conservation professional employed by a public institution shall make referrals in a manner which best meets the needs of the client and which respects fair competition by providing a list of qualified professionals.

**38. Comments on the Work of Another Conservation Professional**

The conservation professional shall not volunteer adverse judgement or comment on the work of another conservation professional, except where non-disclosure will result in damage to the cultural property. All comments should be based on facts and personal knowledge rather than on hearsay. If such comments are warranted, it is best to first discuss the matter directly with the person concerned; further comment and discussion belong in an appropriate forum.

**39. Conflict of Interest**

The conservation professional shall not enter knowingly into contractual or other working arrangements or agreements which place the conservation professional in a position of conflict of interest. The conservation professional shall be especially mindful of the considerable potential for conflict of interest in activities such as authentication, appraisal or art dealing. The potential for conflict of interest also exists when a conservation professional employed by an institution, studio, workshop or similar business engages in freelance conservation work.

**40. Freelance Work**

A conservation professional taking on freelance conservation work when employed by an institution, studio, workshop or similar business shall not trade on the name of the employer and shall make it clear that he/she is acting on behalf of him/herself. He/she shall not solicit or accept offers of freelance work when he/she is acting as a representative of his/her employer. He/she shall inform the employer that he/she is engaged in freelance work.

**41. Laws and Regulations**

The conservation professional shall comply with laws and regulations that have a bearing on his/her professional activity. Among the laws and regulations which may apply, are those which pertain to copyright, sacred and religious material, human remains, excavated objects, stolen property, endangered species, fair business practices, conflict of interest, and occupational health and safety.

**42. Illicit Materials**

When a conservation professional knows, or has reason to believe, that he/she is being asked to work on a cultural property that has been obtained through theft or unlicensed excavation, or that has been imported illegally into Canada, it is his/her duty to make this known to the relevant authorities.

**43. Safety**

The conservation professional shall comply with safety regulations and use techniques and materials in a responsible manner to minimize hazards to people and the environment. He/she shall be aware of the safety issues associated with materials and procedures and adjust his/her work accordingly. The conservation professional shall make this information available to others who may be affected. The conservation professional shall inform the owner of known hazards that are inherent to the cultural property or to its normal use. He/she shall ensure that a cultural property intended for use meets safety and regulatory requirements.

**44. Conduct**

Adherence to the *Code of Ethics and Guidance for Practice* is a matter of personal and professional responsibility. Should a situation arise which is not clearly covered by these guidelines, the conservation professional shall adhere to the intent of the *Code of Ethics*.



## GLOSSARY

### **Conservation:**

All actions aimed at the safeguarding of cultural property for the future. The purpose of conservation is to study, record, retain and restore the culturally significant qualities of the cultural property as embodied in its physical and chemical nature, with the least possible intervention. Conservation includes the following: examination, documentation, preventive conservation, preservation, treatment, restoration and reconstruction.

### **Conservation Professional:**

For the purposes of this document, conservation professional refers to any person who has the education, knowledge, ability and experience to formulate and carry out conservation activities in accordance with an ethical code such as this *Code of Ethics and Guidance for Practice*. The term, therefore, includes practising conservators (who are normally designated according to areas of specialization, e.g. paintings conservator, textile conservator, architectural conservator) as well as conservation scientists, conservation technicians, conservation educators, conservation managers and conservation consultants.

### **Cultural Property:**

Objects that are judged by society, or by some of its members, to be of historical, artistic, social or scientific importance. Cultural property can be classified into two major categories:

1. Movable objects such as works of art, artifacts, books, archival material and other objects of natural, historical or archaeological origin.
2. Immovable objects such as monuments, architecture, archaeological sites and structures of historical or artistic interest.

### **Documentation:**

All of the records, written and pictorial, accumulated during the examination and treatment of a cultural property. Where applicable, documentation includes the examination records and report, treatment proposal, owner consent, the treatment records and report, the recommendations for subsequent care, samples taken from the cultural property and relevant correspondence. The purpose of documentation is:

- to record the condition of the cultural property;
- to record information revealed during examination or other conservation activities that assists in the understanding of the cultural property;
- to record the changes to the property due to conservation activities, and the justification for those changes;
- to provide information helpful to future care and treatment of the cultural property;
- to record agreements or understandings between the conservation professional and the owner; and
- to provide documents that can be made available if and when required for legal purposes.

**Examination:**

All activities carried out to determine the structure, materials, relevant history and condition of a cultural property, including the extent of deterioration, alteration and loss. Examination also includes analyses and study of relevant material, as well as the study of relevant historical and contemporary information.

**Originator:**

For the purpose of this document, the originator is either:

1. The person(s) who designed or created the cultural property, or
2. The person(s) representing the creator or designer of the cultural property by legal, moral or spiritual right.

**Owner:**

For the purpose of this document, the owner is either:

1. The person(s) having legal ownership of the cultural property, or his/her authorized agent, or
2. The person(s), such as the museum director, curator, archivist or librarian, exercising professional custodianship over a cultural property.

**Preservation:**

All actions taken to retard deterioration of, or to prevent damage to, cultural property. Preservation involves management of the environment and of the conditions of use, and may include treatment in order to maintain a cultural property, as nearly as possible, in a stable physical condition. With respect to material valued exclusively for its information content, for example some archival material, preservation may include reformatting.

**Preventive Conservation:**

All actions taken to mitigate deterioration and damage to cultural property. This is achieved through the formulation and implementation of policies and procedures in areas such as lighting, environmental conditions, air quality, integrated pest management; handling, packing and transport, exhibition, storage, maintenance, use, security; fire protection, and emergency preparedness and response.

**Reconstruction:**

All actions taken to re-create, in whole or in part, a cultural property, based upon historical, literary, graphic, pictorial, archaeological and scientific evidence. Reconstruction is aimed at promoting an understanding of a cultural property, and is based on little or no original material but clear evidence of a former state.

**Reformatting:**

All actions taken to transfer onto another medium, the information contained within a cultural property valued exclusively for its information content (for example, archival electronic media).

**Restoration:**

All actions taken to modify the existing materials and structure of a cultural property to represent a known earlier state. The aim of restoration is to reveal the culturally significant qualities of a cultural property. Restoration is based on respect for the remaining original material and clear evidence of the earlier state.

**Treatment:**

All direct interventions carried out on the cultural property with the aim of retarding further deterioration or aiding in the interpretation of the cultural property. A treatment may range from minimal stabilization to extensive restoration or reconstruction.

**French Translation  
of the Terms Defined in This Glossary**

*English*

Conservation  
Conservation Professional  
Cultural Property  
Documentation  
Examination  
Originator  
Owner  
Preservation  
Preventive Conservation  
Reconstruction  
Reformatting  
Restoration  
Treatment

*French*

Conservation  
Restaurateur  
Bien culturel  
Documentation  
Examen  
Créateur  
Propriétaire  
Préservation  
Conservation préventive  
Reconstitution  
Reformatage  
Restauration  
Traitement

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