

# **Cable Natural History Museum Code of Ethics**

*Approved by the Cable Natural History Museum Board of Directors on August 21, 2014*

## **Statement of Purpose**

The mission of the Cable Natural History Museum is connecting people to Northwoods nature through educational experiences that inspire wonder, discovery and responsibility. The Cable Natural History Museum Code of Ethics is a reflection of the Museum's concern for its role as a leader in our community in the area of natural history and environmental education and as a model for ethical behavior.

## **I. The Museum in Society**

The Museum has an ethical obligation to be a good citizen in our community. As an institution that has served the the Cable Area and Northwest Wisconsin for nearly 50 years, the Museum strives to maintain ethical relationships with individuals, families, organizations, and businesses in our area.

## **II. Board of Directors**

The words Board and Board of Directors are used interchangeably in this Code to mean the Board as a whole and its individual members.

The Board of Directors of the Cable Natural History Museum has the duty to ensure and carry out the Museum's mission and its educational purposes.

The Board should fully and faithfully carry out this duty:

- with loyalty to the Museum's mission and purpose;
- with integrity and honesty; and
- by sharing the Museum's commitment to serving the public interest.

To do so, Board members should ensure that they are:

- active, contributing members to the Board and its committees;
- knowledgeable of the Museum's mission and purpose;
- knowledgeable of the basic documents that provide for the Museum's establishment and governance; and
- prepared to carry out Board member responsibilities at each Board or Committee meeting.

Board members should carry out their responsibilities with the highest degree of care and should be faithful to their fiduciary obligations to the Museum and its members, staff, collection, and other assets. This means that Board members should:

- not act or purport on behalf of the Museum beyond their actual authority to do so;

- avoid all impropriety and appearance of impropriety in carrying out Board member responsibilities;
- not undertake personal or professional actions that are contrary to the mission or purposes of the Museum;
- except for lawfully allowed tax benefits related to charitable contributions or donations to the Museum, not attempt to derive any personal financial or material advantages from their connection with the Museum or otherwise take advantage of information received during service as a Board member.

Board members should not attempt to speak for the Board as individuals.

All actions should be taken as a Board or committee or otherwise in conformation with the bylaws or applicable resolutions and policies.

Board members with special areas of interest should understand that advocacy for those interests should be advanced only within the framework of the Museum's interest as a whole.

Board members should maintain Museum information in confidence when it concerns the administration or activities of the Museum and when it is not generally available to the public. A Board member should not take personal advantage of information received during service to the Museum. Any actions that might impair the reputation of the Museum also must be avoided.

Board members hold the ultimate fiduciary responsibility for the Museum and for the protection and nurturing of its various assets: the collections and related documentation, the plant, financial assets, and the staff. They must develop and define the purposes and related policies of the Museum and ensure that all of the Museum's assets are properly and effectively used for public purposes.

When Board members seek staff assistance for personal needs, they should not expect that such help would be rendered to an extent greater than that available to members of the general public in similar circumstances or with similar needs.

Whenever a matter arises for action by the Board or the Museum engages in an activity where there is a possible conflict or the appearance of conflict between the interests of the Museum and an outside or personal interest of a Board member or that of a person close to him or her, the outside interest of a Board member should be made a matter of record. If the Board member is present when a vote is taken in connection with such a question, he or she should abstain. If a case arises in which neither disclosure nor abstention appears to be sufficient, the only appropriate solution may be resignation.

The Museum finances will be completed by the Board Treasurer and the Bookkeeper.

### **III. The Board/Museum Director and Programming Relationship**

The Board of Directors has the authority and obligation to define the limits, powers, and duties of the Museum Director (known as Director throughout the remaining of this document) of the Museum and to provide timely and appropriate direction. The Director is the Board's chief

executive officer in all administrative matters. The Board and Director should communicate openly and with candor.

The Director has an obligation to bring before the Board any matters involving policy questions not already determined and to keep them informed on a timely basis of all other significant or substantial matters or intended actions affecting the institution.

The members of the Board must act as a full Board in appointing or dismissing a Director, and the relationship between the Director and the Board must reflect the primacy of institutional goals over all other considerations. The Director must attend all Board meetings and important committee meetings. Any directives given to the Director must be given through official board channels—either the full Board or its committees.

No member of the Board should deal with the Director in a manner that undermines the ultimate authority of the Board or any policy or directive provided by the Board. Similarly, the Director should not deal with a Board member in a manner that undermines the ultimate authority of the Board or any policy or directive provided by the Board.

Once the Board has established a policy or provided a directive to the Director, it should allow the Director to carry out the policy or directive to the best of the Director's ability and professional expertise.

The Board should avoid giving directions to, acting on behalf of, communicating directly with, or soliciting information from staff personnel, unless such actions are in accord with established procedures or the Director is apprised. Staff members should communicate with the Board through the Director, but staff personnel may bring grievances directly to the Board following procedures established in the Museum's Employee Handbook.

#### **IV. Ethics for Staff and Volunteers**

The words Staff and Employee are used interchangeably in this Code. The word Volunteers may refer to volunteer Board members or the Museum's general volunteers.

Employment by a museum is a public trust involving great responsibility. This public trust is reflected in the government's perception of the institution as an educational resource worthy of tax exempt status; it is reflected in our donors' belief that their financial support is wisely spent in the furtherance of our stated mission; and in our Board's, staff members', and volunteers' belief that their efforts for the Museum are well-spent. The Museum itself holds the public trust of the community in its role as educator and curator and its presentation of its materials with accuracy, honesty and sensitivity.

This very important issue of public trust demands that in all activities Museum staff must act with integrity and in accordance with the most stringent ethical principles as well as the highest standards of objectivity. All museums enjoy high public visibility and their staffs a generous measure of public esteem. To the public, the Museum staff is never wholly separable from its institution. Any Museum-related action by the individual may reflect on the Museum or be

attributed to it. Staff members must be concerned not only with true personal motivations as they see them, but also the way in which such actions might be construed by a casual observer.

### **Conflict of Interest**

Museum staff should never abuse their official positions or their contacts within the museum community, compete with the Museum, or bring discredit or embarrassment to the Museum or their profession in any activity, museum related or not.

### **Gifts, Favors, Discounts, Dispensations**

Any Museum employee or volunteer Board member who is authorized to spend Museum funds should do so with impartiality, honesty, and with regard only to the best interests of the Museum. Museum employees and others in a close relationship to them must not accept gifts, favors, loans, or other dispensations or things of more than trifling value that are available to them in connection with their duties for the Museum. Gifts include discounts on personal purchases from suppliers who sell items or furnish services to the Museum, except where such discounts are regularly offered to the general public. Gifts can also include offers of outside employment or other advantageous arrangements.

### **Responsibility to Museum Property, Real and Intangible**

No Employee or Board member should use, off Museum premises or for personal gain, any object or item that is a part of the Museum's collection or under guardianship of the Museum or use any other property, supplies or resources of the Museum except for the official business of the Museum. Exceptions may be made for the benefit of developing partnerships with community agencies and organizations.

### **Outside Employment**

Certain types of outside employment including teaching, lecturing, writing, and consulting can benefit both the Museum and the Employee. Such activity should not interfere with the Employee's regular duties, and the individual should not take advantage of his or her Museum position for personal gain or appear to compromise the integrity of the Museum.

The staff member should recognize that when an outside activity is directly related to regular duties for the Museum, he or she should discuss with his or her supervisor all aspects of that activity, including but not limited to the amount of time such activity involves.

The Employee should complete a disclosure form outlining the details of the outside employment, if it is related to the functions performed for the Museum.

In order to avoid any appearance that outside employment is related to the staff member's function at the Museum, the name of the Museum and the staff member's connection with it should be used sparingly, if at all, in connection with outside employment.

Ownership of any materials written, designed or produced, and financial remuneration for the sale or lease of such materials created while the staff member is paid by the Museum and is on official Museum time is the property of the Museum (see Management Section, 'Ownership of Scholarly Material'). Therefore the staff member should discuss with his or her supervisor the ownership of or remuneration for materials created outside of the regular staff time before beginning to work on such materials.

Staff members who are involved in employment of any kind that is unrelated to the work that they perform for the Museum are not required to complete disclosure forms.

### **Outside Volunteer Activities**

Staff members are encouraged to participate in voluntary outside activities with community groups or public service organizations. If a staff member volunteers for an organization or museum and could appear to be acting in an official capacity as a member of the Museum staff, disclosure is recommended to avoid possible misrepresentation.

When a member of the Museum staff speaks out on a public issue, he or she should make sure to do so as an individual.

### **Volunteers**

Volunteers play an active and important role in the Museum. It is incumbent on the paid staff to be supportive of volunteers, receive them as fellow workers, and willingly provide them with appropriate training and opportunity for their intellectual enrichment.

Volunteers have a responsibility to the Museum as well, especially those with access to the Museum's collections, programs and privileged information. Access to the Museum's inner activities is a privilege and the lack of material compensation for effort expended on behalf of the Museum in no way frees the volunteer from adherence to the standards that apply to paid staff. Volunteers must work toward the betterment of the institution and not for personal gain other than the natural gratification and enrichment inherent in museum participation.

Although the Museum provides special privileges and benefits to its volunteers, volunteers should not accept gifts, favors, discounts, loans or other dispensations or things of value that accrue to them from other parties in connection with carrying out duties for the Museum. Conflict of interest restrictions and gift policies placed upon the paid staff of the Museum must be explained to volunteers and observed by them. Volunteers must respect the confidentiality of any inside information to which their volunteer activities give them access.

### **Youth**

The Museum recognizes that youth are an essential part of the local and world community, especially when it comes to matters concerning our environment and natural resources. Young people will one day become policy and decision makers in the future. The Museum has an ethical responsibility to be supportive and encouraging of youth in its programming and operations.

## **V. Museum Management**

### **Professionalism**

The members of the Museum's staff and Board should respect the professional expertise of others on the staff, and the resolution of issues involving professional matters should incorporate the opinions and professional judgments of relevant members of the staff.

### **Personnel Practices and Equal Opportunity**

In all matters related to staffing practices, the standard is ability in the relevant profession. The Museum recognizes that diversity is a significant force within its own social fabric and in the community and encourages employment opportunities and accessibility at the Museum for all people. In these matters, as well as Board selection, management practices, volunteer opportunities, collection use, and relationship with the public at large, decisions cannot be made on the basis of discriminatory factors such as to race, color, religious belief, age, national origin, sexual orientation, or gender.

### **Ownership of Scholarly Material**

The objects in the Museum's collection, their documentation and all additional documentation developed subsequent to their acquisition are the property of the Museum. Any and all materials or items developed, written, designed, drawn, painted, constructed or installed by staff while carrying out their responsibilities as employees of the Museum are considered to be the property of the Museum with the Museum having the rights to all said property.

The Museum has the right to copyright or patent any and all such materials produced by its staff while carrying out their job responsibilities as employees of the Museum when it deems it appropriate, to do so. The Museum is entitled to receive any and all fees, royalties or honoraria earned in conjunction with any and all materials produced by staff while carrying out their responsibilities as employees of the Museum.

The Museum staff may not duplicate materials developed at the Museum by them or by any other staff or contractor to the Museum for the purpose of resale or personal profit. The Museum's ownership of such intellectual property that was created while an individual was an employee of the Museum continues after she or he leaves the Museum for any reason, including retirement.

### **Fundraising Practices**

Staff, Board members, and volunteers involved in raising money or soliciting other contributions or gifts-in-kind on behalf of the Museum must do so with honesty as to the need for such contributions and must use donations only for the donor's intended purposes. Staff and volunteers should hold confidential and leave intact all lists, records and documents acquired in connection with their fundraising efforts on behalf of the Museum.

## **Inter-Institutional Cooperation**

The Museum should respond positively and welcome appropriate opportunities for cooperative action with similar organizations, even if the short-term advantages are few and it will not significantly increase its own holdings or enhance its image.

## **Environmental Stewardship and Consideration**

Environmental stewardship refers to responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices. The Museum has an ethical responsibility to not only inform the public of sustainable practices, but to incorporate these practices as a role model for other institutions. The Museum will incorporate, whenever feasible, best practices in environmental stewardship in its facilities and programs.

## **Museum Shop and Commercial Activities**

The Museum Shop and other commercial activities in the Museum, as well as publicity relating to them, should be in keeping with the Museum's mission.

## **VI. The Collections**

### **Public Trust**

The Cable Natural History Museum's collections are maintained as a public trust. The Museum has a unique obligation to its collections and the value they hold for society. Because of this responsibility, the Museum must strive to make sure its collections are maintained under the highest ethical standards according to best practices and national standards.

### **Management, Maintenance and Conservation**

Museums generally derive their mission from their collection; a museum's obligation to its collection is paramount. Each object in the collection also includes a body of information that establishes its proper place and importance and without which the value of the object is diminished. The maintenance of this information in orderly and retrievable form is critical to the collections and for their general and special maintenance.

The physical care of the collection and its accessibility must be in keeping with professionally accepted standards and the Museum must provide continuous curatorial and protective care. Failing this, Museum's Board and management are ethically obliged either to correct the deficiency or to dispose of the collection in accord with the Museum's Collections Management Policy.

### **Appraisal and Authentication Services**

Museum staff may not perform appraisals or authentication in any capacity. Occasionally members and visitors will bring in found objects (such as feathers, minerals, arrowheads, etc.) and ask for assistance in identification. Museum staff may assist in the identification and classification of such objects, but may not assign monetary values. For more information, please refer to the Collections Management Policy.

## **Acquisition and Disposal**

The Museum's Collections Management Policy is the Museum's policy regarding the acquisitions and disposal of objects.

In the delicate area of acquisition and disposal of museum objects, the Museum must weigh carefully the interests of the public for which it holds the collection in trust, the donor's intent in the broadest sense, the interests of the scholarly and the cultural community, and the Museum's own financial wellbeing.

Members of the Museum staff or Board should not acquire objects from the collections owned by or on loan to the Museum unless such transactions are available through a disposal process that is totally public in nature. The individual and the Museum must also subject any such acquisitions to a formal disclosure procedure.

The Museum and its staff must be aware of their own actions in the acquisition of plants and animals and the potential damage that such acquisitions might have on the population of a species, a community of organisms, or the environment in general. Collecting activities must be conducted within recognized standards that avoid the adverse effects of such activities.

## **Deaccession Proceeds**

If an object in the Museum collections is deaccessioned by sale, proceeds from the sales shall go directly to support and enhance the Museum collections.

## **Availability of Collections**

The Museum may regulate access to its collections. Some parts of the collections may be set aside for the active scholarly pursuits of staff members, but normally only for the duration of an active research effort. The judgment and recommendation of professional staff members regarding the use of the collections must be given utmost consideration. In formulating their recommendations, staff must let their judgment be guided by two primary objectives: the continued physical integrity and safety of the object or collection, and high scholarly or educational purposes.

## **Truth in Presentation**

Museums may address a wide variety of social, political, artistic or scientific issues. Any can be appropriate, if approached objectively and without prejudice.

Museum professionals must use their best efforts to ensure that exhibits, educational programs and materials are honest and objective expressions and do not perpetuate myths, stereotypes or personal bias. Sensitive areas such as ethnic and social history are of most critical concern. Staff must yield promptly to change with the advent of new facts or analysis.



## **Use of Live Animals**

The Museum's educational mission may be appropriately met by the use of live animals. It is understood that the educational impact of live animals can be powerful, and with that power comes responsibility to ensure the humane care and treatment of each animal. The acquisition of animal specimens will adhere to legal and humane standards.

## **Closure Statement**

The Museum and its personnel will strive to comply with all the guidelines outlined in this document. In the case that ethical issues arise that are not covered by the preceding guidelines, they will be brought to the attention of the Museum Director and Board of Directors for resolution.