

# **Stewart Indian School Cultural Center and Museum Institutional Code of Ethics**

## **Introduction**

### **Compliance with Laws**

Museums in the United States are grounded in the tradition of public service. They are organized as public trusts, holding their collections and information as a benefit for those they were established to serve. Their members of the governing authority, employees, and volunteers are committed to the interests of these beneficiaries. In policy and in practice, the staff and volunteers of the Stewart Indian School Cultural Center and Museum (SISCCM) follow all applicable local, state, federal, and international laws and regulations, including US copyright law incorporated in Title 17 of the US Code and all subsequent legislation pertaining to copyright and other issues of intellectual property.

Any articles, policies, forms, research, and other writings done by museum staff members or volunteers while performing museum tasks is the property of the Stewart Indian School Cultural Center and Museum.

### **Adherence to AAM's Code of Ethics**

The Stewart Indian School Cultural Center and Museum recognizes and adheres to the American Alliance of Museum's Code of Ethics (adopted 1991, amended 2000) and bases its own Code of Ethics thereon, a copy of which is attached here to and made a part of this Code.

### **Governance and Statement of Authority**

Working relationships between the Nevada Indian Commission (NIC) state agency (herein referred to as NIC), museum staff, student interns, and volunteers are based on equity, honest, and respect. The museum is governed by the Nevada Indian Commission state agency and the State of Nevada Department of Tourism and Cultural Affairs (NDTCA). The Stewart Indian School Cultural Center and Museum is also advised by a volunteer Advisory Committee comprised of former students and employees of Stewart Indian School. It is the responsibility of the above parties to ensure that the operations of all cultural center/museum staff, student interns, and volunteers adhere to the mission and strategic plan of the museum. They regularly review and revise as needed both of these documents and other relevant policies on an as-needed basis, supplied by the museum director. The NIC and staff of the NDTCA respect the professional expertise of the museum staff, who have been employed because of their specialized knowledge, experience, and authority in aspects of

museum operation. Descriptions of these responsibilities and work performance standards are attached to this document.

### Museum Director

The Museum Director is directly accountable to the NIC and to the NDTCA for the overall administration and management of the museum, including all programs and business operations. He/she encourages the professional development and intellectual growth of the staff and fosters a positive working environment based on equity, honesty, and respect. He/she exercises his/her judgment in assigning professional development and intellectual growth to various staff members. Description of these responsibilities are included in the attached job description and work performance standards.

### Staff

All other staff members are directly accountable to the Museum Director and are responsible for the day-to-day tasks and projects for their respective departments. Specific responsibilities and guidelines for personnel are found in the Stewart Indian School Cultural Center (SISCCM) Employee Handbook, and/or in each staff member's job description, essential functions, and work performance standards.

### Volunteers

Volunteers are under the direction and supervision of the museum director unless otherwise stated. They also follow the SISCCM Volunteer Handbook and receive training before beginning their volunteer positions.

### Student Interns

Student interns are under the direction and supervision of the museum director unless otherwise stated. They also follow the SISCC Student Intern Handbook and receive training before beginning their intern positions.

### **Confidentiality**

Each staff, student intern, and volunteer member accepts the responsibility and requirements of confidentiality in relation to information given and accessible to him/her in the course of his/her role at the museum. It is considered a breach of confidentiality to share any privileged information, which is not to be openly available to the public, with other organizations or individuals outside the museum without prior approval from the museum director.

Because such information is the property of the museum, it remains museum property after any person ceases to be a staff member, intern, or volunteer. By signing this Code of Ethics, the staff member, intern, or volunteer acknowledges the museum's property

rights and grants to the museum the right to recover its property and seek redress, including resulting damages caused by a breach of confidentiality held by the museum.

## **Transparency**

The SISCC staff will serve the public good by promoting and practicing excellence, honesty, and transparency in all professional activities.

## **Professional Conduct**

All staff members, interns, and volunteers agree to act in a manner that upholds the integrity of and respect for the museum at all times and in all situations in which they are representing the museums or can be assumed to be doing so.

No staff members, intern, or volunteer shall use his/her position at the museum for personal gain or benefit at the expense of the museum, its mission, its reputation, and/or the community it serves; may misuse or misrepresent the museum and/or its name; and/or may use the museum for personal gain from access to museum property, resources, finances, or other assets.

Staff members, interns, and volunteers interact with each other and with visitors in a respectful, polite, and non-discriminatory manner. Such behavior also applies to phone calls, e-mails, and other interactions with each other and with the public.

Appropriate and respectful attire is also expected during work hours, museum events, and in other situations in which the museum is being represented.

## **Conflict of Interest**

Conflict of interest may be actual, potential, or perceived, each of which can be damaging to the mission and reputation of the museum. Staff members, interns, and volunteers avoid conflicts of interest, including but not limited to receiving personal gifts or tips, personal collecting, and/or using the museum's name or property or other resources in order to benefit personally. Museum staff may accept gifts to the institution but may not benefit personally by accepting a gift.

SISCCM staff may not collect or deal in areas similar to the museum's mission and collecting policy. Museum staff must not develop a personal collection that in any way compromises or is in conflict with the credibility or interests of this museum. Museum staff may not be active dealers in the museum's area of interest. Guest curators are expected to operate within the same institutional guidelines that govern the behavior of staff in the areas of personal collecting and dealing.

Museum staff may not establish the monetary value of objects or authenticate objects for any reason. Museum staff should refer the public to professional appraiser's societies or qualified appraisers. All referrals should be made without endorsement.

Museum staff may estimate insurance values for loans or other internal uses and should document the sources for these estimates.

Staff members, interns, or volunteers may not use the museum's name or affiliation with the museum to secure special consideration from dealers or sellers.

Museum staff may serve as a volunteer on an outside organization's board of directors as long as the mission of that organization does not conflict with the SISCC.

As a condition of employment with the museum, staff members agree not to accept other employment that directly competes with the museum in collecting and/or fundraising, whose reputation may adversely affect that of the museum, or whose schedule may substantially take away from museum time to which they are obligated.

## **Collections**

The distinctive character of museum ethics comes from the ownership, care, and use of the objects in a museum's collections. This stewardship of the collections is held in the public trust and reflects rightful ownership, permanence, care, documentation, accessibility, and responsible disposal.

The Collections Management Policy of the museum states the following, "The museum is responsible for seeing that collections in its stewardship are 'lawfully held, protected, secure, unencumbered, cared for, and preserved' (AAM, 1991, amended 2000). The staff, interns, and volunteers follow the American Alliance Museums' Code of Ethics."

As the museum holds its collection in the public trust, all activities surrounding the acquisition, documentation, care, storage, display, use, and disposal of the collection must meet professional museum industry standards and are outlined formally in a Collections Management Policy. All actions occur in accordance to the guidelines found in the Collections Management Policy.

The collections housed by the museum are held in the public trust and are supported by the mission and vision statements. These collections are protected, secure, unencumbered, cared for, and preserved for future generations. The collections are documented and access to them is permitted and regulated. 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.

Disposal of collections through donation to another cultural organization, sale, trade, or research activities is solely for the advancement of the museum's mission, and use of proceeds from the sale of collection materials is restricted to the acquisition of collections. The staff, volunteers, and interns recognize the sacred nature of human remains, funerary and cultural patrimony objects and follow the legal requirements and the spirit of the Native American Graves and Protection Repatriation Act of 1990. In

addition, the Collection Policy includes a Sensitive Care Policy for the preservation and stewardship of cultural items.

Collection-related activities promote the public good rather than individual financial gain.

### **Interpretation/Education Programs**

Museums serve the public by sharing and interpreting their collections through exhibitions, research, scholarship, publications, and educational activities. These programs further the museum's mission and are responsive to the concerns, interests, and needs of the public it serves.

The programs at the museum support the mission and the public trust responsibility. These programs are founded on current and accurate scholarship and presented with quality and professionalism and intellectual integrity. All programs are accessible and encourage participation by all residents of Nevada, as well as the public at large. Subject matter and artifacts contained within exhibitions are interpreted with sensitivity to relevant cultures, people, places, and organizations.

All loans accepted for the purpose of exhibition are in keeping with the intellectual integrity of the exhibition. Care and security of loans are a top priority. Any loan of artifacts are documented in a written loan contract.

Any revenue-generated programs that involve relationships with external entities are compatible with the museum's mission values and support the public trust responsibility. Programs promote the public good rather than individual financial gain.

### **Electronic/Digital/Social Media Presence**

Staff, volunteers, and interns who interact with each other and/or with the public via electronic/digital social media means must act in a manner that upholds the integrity of, and respect for the museum at all times and in all situations in which they are representing the museum or can be assumed to be doing so. All guidelines found under Professional Conduct within the Code of Ethics apply to electronic/digital interactions as well. All content created for an electronic/digital presence is the property of the Stewart Indian School Cultural Center and Museum.

### **Financial Responsibilities**

The museum staff, volunteers, and interns and the museum policies and procedures conform to and comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, and all applicable international treaties. The staff act on behalf of the best interest of the museum and not for personal financial gain.

The museum director, working closely with the Executive Director of the Nevada Indian Commission, is the primary solicitor of funds from individuals, foundations, and

corporations. All financial assets are handled confidentially, securely, and with the strictest attention to detail in a format approved by the museum and the NIC executive director. All restricted funds are maintained and used for their designated purposes only, unless and until those designations are changed by the donor and/or approved by NIC executive director. All records, documents, and other materials created in relation to fundraising is confidential. All purchases for materials, equipment, travel and other purposes appropriate for museum use are approved by the museum director and the NIC executive director. Purchases shall not be made from vendors, organizations, or other sources whose reputations may adversely affect the museum. Staff, volunteers, or interns may not borrow money from the museum or use the museum's credit worthiness in any manner.

### **Museum Store**

The museum store carries only high quality merchandise that supports the mission of the museum. No de-accessioned artifacts are sold in the museum store, nor merchandise that may give a false impression to customers that pieces from the collection are being sold.

### **Implementation**

This Code of Ethics is provided to each individual at the beginning of his/her service to the museum. All updates and revisions are shared promptly with interested parties. All museum staff, volunteers, and interns are familiar with and comply with the Code of Ethics. The museum does not tolerate retaliation of any kind directed toward any staff members, volunteer, or intern who reports concerns about unethical behavior. Questions or a violation regarding this Code of Ethics can be directed to the Executive Director of the NIC. Disciplinary action, up to and including termination, may follow.

### **Review Schedule**

This Code of Ethics is reviewed on an annual basis by the museum director and the executive director of the NIC. Suggested revisions must be approved by the museum director and the executive director of the NIC. The Revised Code of Ethics is shared promptly with all staff members, volunteers, and interns.