



Vegreville Regional Museum

DEACCESSIONING

Presented to Vegreville Town Council
July 15, 2025

Acknowledgment

This report outlines the careful and considered process undertaken by the Town of Vegreville to deaccession the Vegreville Regional Museum. Recognizing that the stewardship of cultural assets carries deep responsibility, this project was approached with great care, respect, and reflection.

Deaccessioning a museum is not a decision that falls within the typical scope of municipal operations, nor one taken lightly. It required thoughtful consultation, rigorous process, and a shared commitment to honouring the legacy of the collection and the community's connection to it.

We extend our sincerest gratitude to Councillor David Berry, whose steadfast leadership and unwavering commitment were essential to the completion of this project. His guidance throughout every stage ensured that the process was both principled and respectful. Without his vision and dedication, this undertaking would not have been possible.

We also acknowledge the support of the Mayor and Members of Council, as well as the contributions of Town of Vegreville staff and community stakeholders who engaged in this process with professionalism, care, and integrity.

Thank you to all of the museums and organizations who assisted in the deaccessioning process. Your expertise and willingness to preserve Vegreville's artifacts and history ensured these important pieces found respectful new homes where they will continue to educate and inspire future generations:

- Vegreville Agricultural Society
- Vegreville Cultural Association
- Royal Canadian Legion Branch No.39
- St. Joseph General Hospital
- Vegreville RCMP Detachment
- Royal Alberta Museum
- Alberta Provincial Archives
- Ukrainian Heritage Village
- Reynolds Museum
- Alberta Railway Museum
- Basilian Fathers Museum
- Chauvin Museum
- Dewberry Valley Museum
- Fort Heritage Precinct Museum
- Friends of Battle River Railway
- Glenbow Museum
- Holden Museum
- Innisfree Prairie Bank Museum
- Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta
- La Crete Heritage Centre & Museum
- Lloydminster Museum & Archives
- Moscow School Society
- Musée Héritage Museum
- Musée Morinville Museum
- Musée St. Paul Museum
- Nanton Grain Elevator Museum
- Romanian Pioneer Museum of Boian
- Smoky Lake Museum
- St. John's Cathedral Library
- St. Paul People's Museum Society
- St. Paul & District Arts Foundation
- Strathcona County Museum & Archives
- Ukrainian Museum of Canada, Alberta Branch
- Viking Historical Museum
- Willingdon Museum

This project reflects our shared commitment to preserving heritage thoughtfully, while making responsible and sustainable decisions for the future.

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Background

In 2021 the Vegreville Regional Museum Society dissolved and closed its museum. The closing of a museum generally results in the disposing (deaccessioning) of all artifacts. However, all items and collections, and the responsibility of deaccessioning, were left to the Town of Vegreville. In March 2024, the Honourable Minister Tanya Fir, responsible for Arts and Culture, including museums, granted the Town of Vegreville the authority to deaccession the collections of the Vegreville Regional Museum “as it saw fit”. Undertaking the deaccessioning of the museum was a disheartening task considering the local history represented by many of the artifacts. Sensitivity and respect throughout the process was essential. The Policy on Disposition of Museum Collections and Objects provided by Province of Alberta (1996), and outlined by the Alberta Museum Association, was utilized to establish an Administrative Directive on April 8, 2024. This Administrative Directive outlined the Vegreville Museum Deaccessioning process in alignment with the 1996 policy with minor modifications.

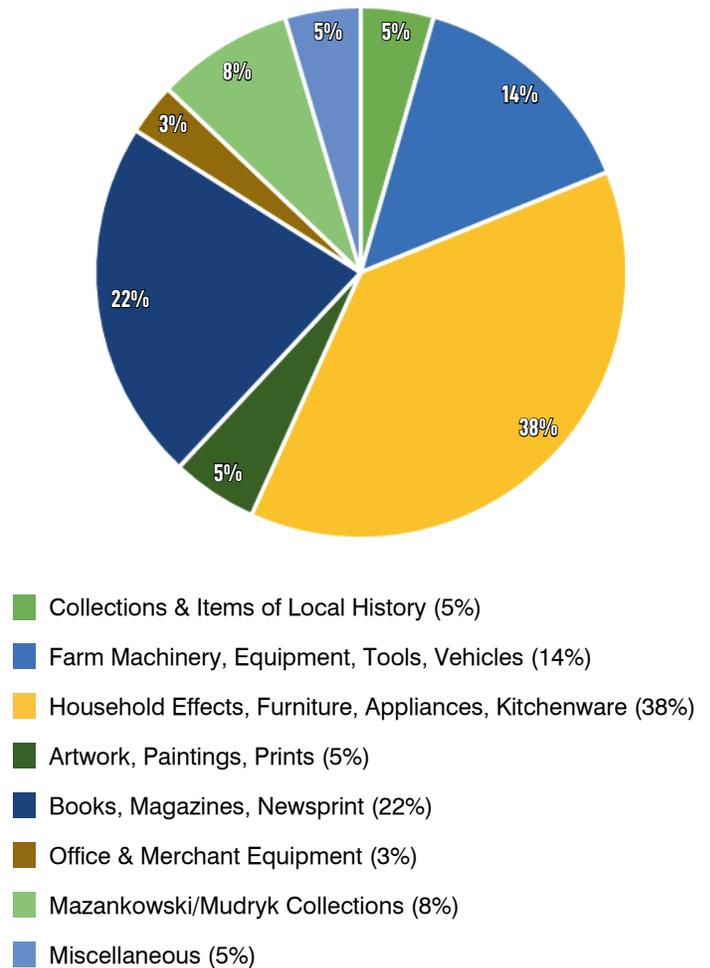
Tracking artifacts to record dispersal was time consuming and difficult. During the 1980s and 1990s, record keeping was accomplished by various volunteers preparing handwritten paper files, often with pencil sketches of items. Although the records were diligently maintained, the custodial history (provenance) of items was frequently lacking. In more recent years, paper files were transcribed into a computer ledger, still with limited descriptive information. Consistent nomenclature was not initially practiced. While one volunteer might call knives and forks, cutlery; to another it was dinnerware, and to another silverware. Moreover, every spoon, knife, and fork, was given an individualized, unique number; while a small collection might be listed with a single number followed by a, b, c... The numbering scheme repeated for all classes of items---every bowl, cup, plate; every book, magazine, newspaper; every dress, hat, shawl; every drill, saw, wrench... Indeed, the museum housed a vast array of items from a bubble gum wrapper to a player piano, from scythes to combines, and more.

Not everything was housed together in a single area. In some cases, parts of the same collection were separated into different displays or placed into storage. In fact, many items were found stored in cabinets, in rooms upstairs, and in sheds out behind the building. Most stored items had not seen the light of day in years – forgotten duplications like 16 typewriters and 33 mannequins upstairs, or 19 small engines in a shed out back. Newspapers, magazines, and photos were archived; however, no area of the museum was climate-controlled resulting in deterioration of items over time. A few items listed in the ledger were not located within the museum, while a few items found in the museum could not be

identified in the ledger. A few discrepancies were bound to occur during three and half decades of accumulating, recording, and maintaining artifacts. In addition, the museum ledger included only some of the items donated by Don Mazankowski, while a separate ledger recorded items donated from the former International Police Museum (Mudryk). After a very lengthy period of searching and sorting, it was only feasible to estimate the starting number for the deaccessioning process at 7041 accessioned items.

The accessioned items were classified into eight categories, subjectively, to view the museum contents in some detail (Figure 1). Household Effects (kitchenware, appliances, furniture, clothing, jewellery, music...) made up the largest portion of the collection at 38%; followed by Printed Materials (books, magazines, catalogues, newspapers...) at 22% and Farm Items (machinery, equipment, tools, vehicles...) at 14%.

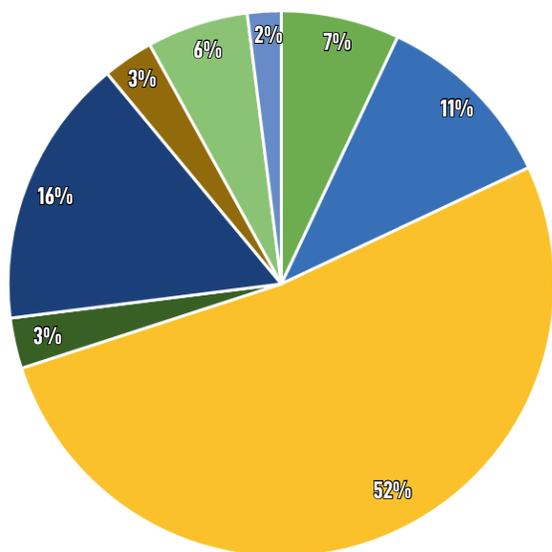
Figure 1
Accessioned Items by Category



The 1996 policy on disposition of collections requires that: “Before any deaccessioned object or collection is considered for sale, it will first be offered at no cost to other appropriate Alberta public non-profit or government custodial institutions”. Therefore, provincial museums were the first invited to select artifacts that were suitable additions to their collections. The Royal Alberta Museum, Ukrainian Heritage Village, Reynolds Museum and the Provincial Archives received approximately 948 items. Next, all other museums within Alberta were invited to select artifacts. In all, twenty-one museums; including Boian, Chauvin, Fort Saskatchewan, Holden, Innisfree, Smoky Lake, St. Paul and Viking; selected 618 items to be retained and displayed in their museum collections.

Although not required by law, the Town’s Administrative Directive deviated from the policy by inviting original donors, or their heirs, who were able to specifically identify items of significant family heritage to contact the Deaccessioning Committee and formally request return of such items. An estimated 126 items of family heritage were returned to 23 individuals and groups, while another 15 individuals were informed as to which museum specific items had been transferred.

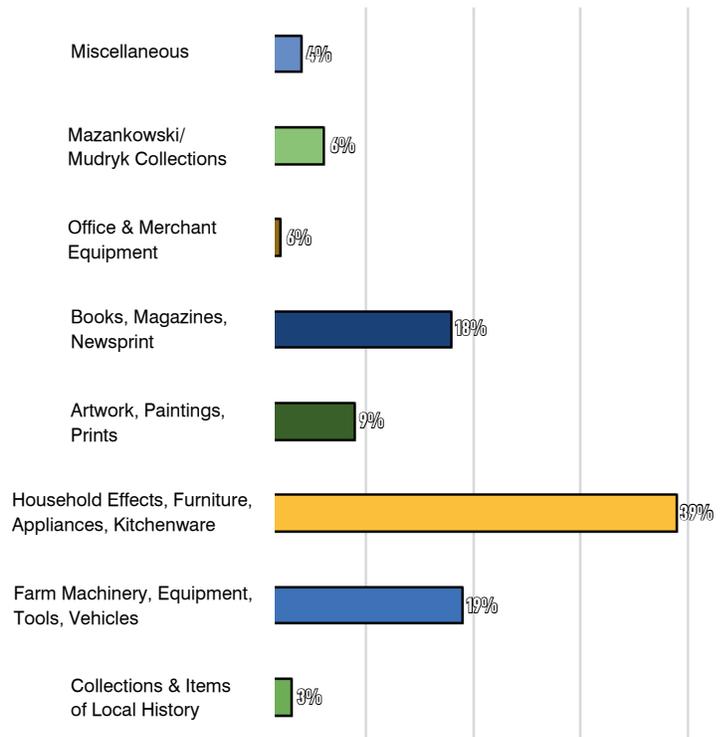
Figure 3
Deaccessioned Items by Category



- Collections & Items of Local History (7%)
- Farm Machinery, Equipment, Tools, Vehicles (11%)
- Household Effects, Furniture, Appliances, Kitchenware (52%)
- Artwork, Paintings, Prints (3%)
- Books, Magazines, Newsprint (16%)
- Office & Merchant Equipment (3%)
- Mazankowski/Mudryk Collections (6%)
- Miscellaneous (2%)

The eight categories of deaccessioned items are represented in Figure 3, representing the 2500 items transferred to Provincial Museums, other Museums/Societies, and Donors/Heirs. Household Effects made up the largest portion of items selected by receiving institutions at 52%, indicating a distinct preference for these items compared to Printed Material at 16% and Farm Items at 11%.

Figure 4
Accessioned Items Sold at Auction



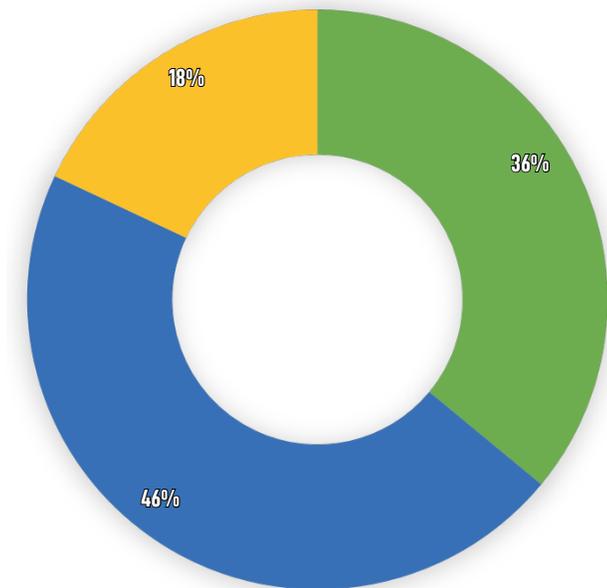
Offering the remaining items for sale by auction was accomplished by contracting an experienced company specializing in the staging and online auctioning of estates, antiques and collections. An estimated 3241 accessioned items were sold at auction. The auctioned items separated into eight categories is presented in Figure 4. Household Effects made up the largest portion of items sold at 39%, followed by Farm Items at 19% and Printed Material at 18%.





Many items contained in the Vegreville Regional Museum were not unique to the area, which reduced interest in acquiring those items. Whereas items depicting pioneer life of the area were sought-after and quickly acquired. Estimated numbers of items removed by transfer, auction and disposal are shown in Figure 5. Items removed by Auction was estimated at 46%, followed by Transfer at 36%. Fortunately, disposal of items (18%) was reduced to items having limited historical importance, and were mostly items of disrepair, deterioration, or unsellable.

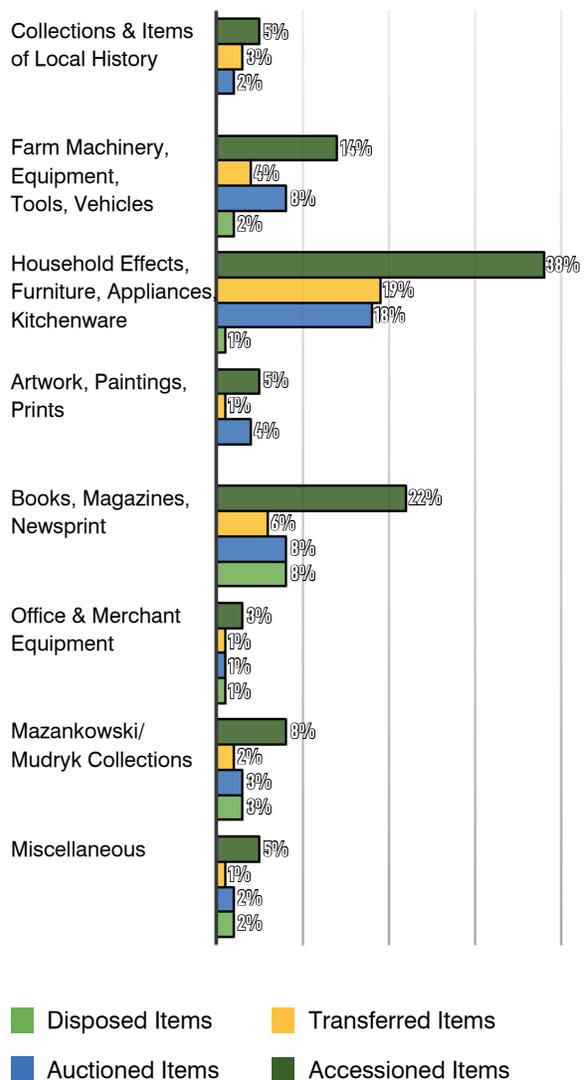
Figure 5
Accessioned Items - Deaccession Process



- Transferred to Receiving Institutions/Donors (36%)
- Sold through Auction (46%)
- Disposed - Damaged, Deteriorated, Unsellable (18%)

The breakdown of accessioned items by percent of items removed from the museum in each of eight categories that were transferred, auctioned and disposed, related to the original museum ledger, is presented in Figure 6. Most of the Household Effects were transferred or sold at auction. More Farm Items were sold than transferred. Printed Material transferred consisted mainly of books and manuals, while many were also sold. The level of printed material disposed was indicative of the difficulty in maintaining the quality of archived printed material, particularly newsprint, magazines and catalogues.

Figure 6
Accessioned Items by Deaccession Process

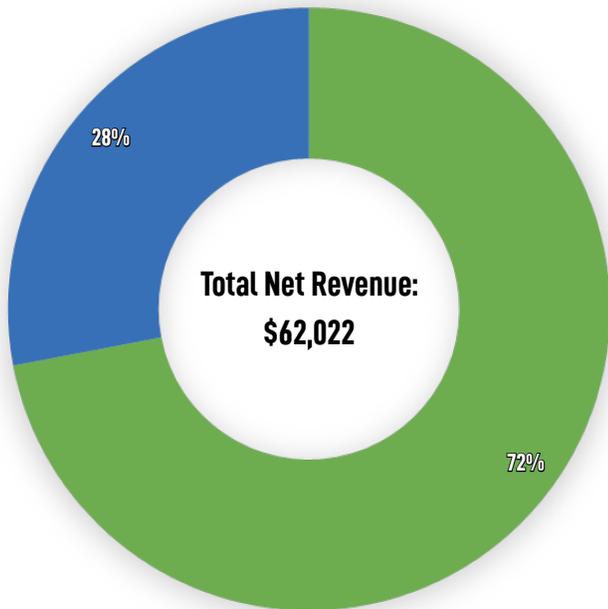


Revenue Summary

The online auction of museum items occurred during October 2024, with 414 lots in session one and 363 lots in session two. The online auction was advertised on the auctioneer's website, social media, the Vegreville News Advertiser and Town of Vegreville social media channels.

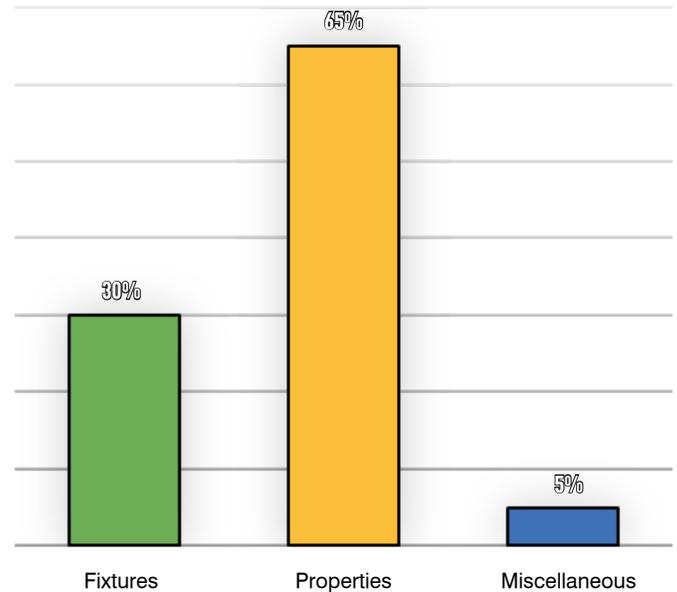
In addition to accessioned items, several fixtures and unaccessioned items were sold at auction. The total net revenue (gross revenue minus commission, fees, GST, and additional advertising), rounded to the nearest dollar, came to \$59,067. Separate from the auction, a number of display cases and bookshelves were sold directly to museums for a total of \$2,955, bringing the net revenue from all sales to \$62,022. Of the net sales revenue, an estimated 72% (\$44,656) came from accessioned items (Figure 7).

Figure 7
Net Revenue from Accessioned & Unaccessioned Items



- Net Revenue from Sale of Accessioned Items (72%)
- Net Revenue from Sale of Unaccessioned Items (28%)

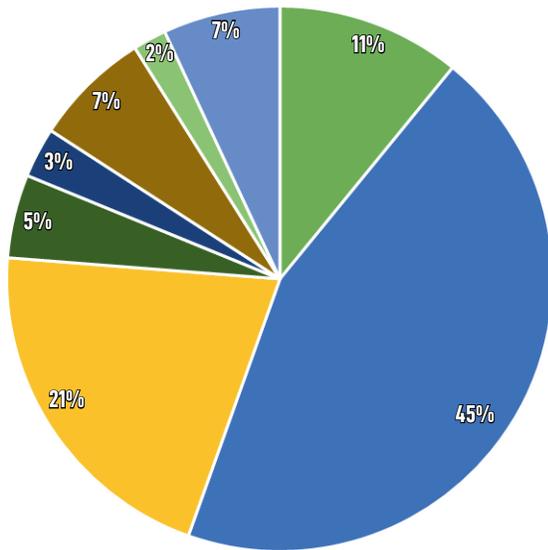
Figure 8
Net Revenue Unaccessioned Items



Roughly 28% (\$17,366) of the revenue came from unaccessioned items, of which 65% consisted of properties purchased by the museum for demonstrations and displays, and to promote the museum at special events (Figure 8).



Figure 9
Net Revenue Accessioned Items



- Collections & Items of Local History (11%)
- Farm Machinery, Equipment, Tools, Vehicles (45%)
- Household Effects, Furniture, Appliances, Kitchenware (21%)
- Artwork, Paintings, Prints (5%)
- Books, Magazines, Newsprint (3%)
- Office & Merchant Equipment (7%)
- Mazankowski/Mudryk Collections (2%)
- Miscellaneous (7%)

Farm Items (machinery, equipment, tools, vehicles) dominated sales by generating 45% of the revenue from accessioned items (Figure 9), followed by Household Effects (furniture, appliances, kitchenware) at 21%, and Collections & Items of local history at 11%.

In alignment with the Policy on Disposition of Museum Collections and Objects (1996), all remaining revenue from the sale of accessioned items will be allocated to the support of restoring the previous museum grounds and buildings, restoring and maintaining artifacts which remained within the Town of Vegreville, and creating new displays for remaining machinery in different areas of Town.

Any revenue derived from the sale of unaccessioned items (\$17,366) will be transferred to Town of Vegreville general reserve to be used on future municipal projects.



This Rumely Steam Tractor, for example, will be relocated to Vegreville Pysanka Park for preservation and display. Additional artifacts will be locally on display at the Vegreville Recreation Centre, Vegreville Agricultural Society, and Vegreville Cultural Association.

Town - Museum Financial History

The Town of Vegreville has provided substantial financial and administrative support to facilitate the operation of the Vegreville Regional Museum. In 1996, the Town allowed the Vegreville & District Historical Society to move its Vegreville & District Museum and a portion of the International Police Museum to that site. Additionally, the Town provided \$25,000 in financial support.

Over the years, the Town has supported museum activities through annual operating grants, which increased over time to \$80,250, as well as by providing in-kind services such as accounting, payroll, utilities, and facility maintenance. In 2000, the museum transitioned from volunteer-led to staffed operations with paid positions, supported by grant funding and municipal assistance.

Despite these efforts, the museum faced ongoing challenges in financial sustainability and visitor engagement. Concerns about long-term viability were noted as early as 2014, and in response, the Town increased its financial support to help address operational pressures. However, regardless of these increased contributions, the museum continued to experience fiscal constraints. Table 2 represents the budgeted allocations to the Vegreville Regional Museum compared to actual costs from 2012-2024.

In 2019, after collaborative discussions and a careful review of options, the Town chose not to renew the lease agreement and discontinued operational funding, which concluded in May 2020. The Vegreville Regional Museum Society formally dissolved in 2021, at which point all artifacts and collections were transferred to the Town, along with the responsibility of managing and deaccessioning the collection.

Through its longstanding support, the Town demonstrated a strong commitment to preserving local heritage while carefully evaluating the responsible use of municipal resources.

Table 2
Town of Vegreville Allocations to Vegreville Regional Museum

	Budgeted	Actual	Over/Under
2012	\$96,920.00	\$97,029.00	-\$109.00
2013	\$96,060.00	\$117,763.00	-\$21,703.00
2014	\$129,773.00	\$143,366.00	-\$13,593.00
2015	\$97,270.00	\$100,852.00	-\$3,582.00
2016	\$99,095.00	\$97,525.00	\$1,570.00
2017	\$100,530.00	\$117,574.00	-\$17,044.00
2018	\$128,126.00	\$118,551.00	\$9,575.00
2019	\$110,902.00	\$97,793.00	\$13,109.00
2020	\$56,867.00	\$72,060.00	-\$15,193.00
2021	\$57,016.00	\$7,018.00	\$49,998.00
2022	\$74,822.00	\$79,448.00	-\$4,626.00
2023	\$49,043.00	\$57,351.00	-\$8,308.00
2024	\$43,426.00	\$55,218.00	-\$11,792.00
Total:	\$1,139,850.00	\$1,161,548.00	-\$21,698.00

TOWN OF
VEGREVILLE
**ADMINISTRATIVE
DIRECTIVE**

TOPIC: Vegreville Museum Deaccessioning
DATE: April 8, 2024
DEPARTMENT: Legislative Services

PURPOSE:

To establish principles and processes for the deaccessioning, and disposal of objects at the Vegreville Museum.

BACKGROUND:

In 2021, the Vegreville Regional Museum Society dissolved and closed the museum. The Society surrendered its Certificate of Incorporation under the Alberta Societies Act, voluntarily revoked its charitable status under the Canada Revenue Agency and cancelled its membership in the Alberta Museums Association. The closing of a museum generally results in the deaccessioning of all artifacts, frequently by public auction. However, all items and collections, and the responsibility of deaccessioning, were left to the Town of Vegreville.

In March 2024, the Honourable Tanya Fir, Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women, stated in her letter in response to Mayor MacPhee: “The Town of Vegreville has the authority to deaccession the collections of the Vegreville Regional Museum as it sees fit.”

The Town may choose to maintain a selective collection of artifacts; however, with limited space it is necessary to reduce clutter, duplications, and items not directly applicable to the history of Vegreville and its surrounding area.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Emphasis on the display of relevant items that serve to illustrate the story of the early settlers and nature in this community.
- Display trumps storage. The museum should not be a ‘repository’ or place of storage – objects in storage serve little purpose in depicting items of history to the public. Local relevance with documented history trumps items of lesser or unknown pedigree, or items from outside of the region.
- Space dictates the size and quantity of items and displays.
- Condition is of importance.

DEACCESSIONING

Deaccessioning refers to the process of permanently removing museum objects (items or collections). The process should be documented and conducted in a manner that ensures transparency to the public.

DECISION PROCESS

The decision process involves evaluating an object as to its appropriateness in relation to the museum purpose. There are a number of reasons for deaccessioning objects:

- Relevance – the focus of the museum has been refined and the object is no longer relevant.
- Heritage – the historical significance of the object is not clear to demonstrate relevance to the Town or surrounding area.
- Loan – the object is on loan and the lender wishes to have the object returned.
- Provenance – the original owner or family member wishes to have the object returned and the object is not essential to the museum collections.
- Duplicates (redundancy) – the object is a duplicate and not required.
- Space (storage) – the ability to display and/or store the object properly is no longer feasible.
- Damage (deterioration) – the object over time has been damaged or deteriorated beyond value to repair.

DISPOSAL OF OBJECTS

Disposal must not involve the gifting or sale to a staff member or family member or close associate. Objects to be removed must be disposed of in accordance with this directive.

Appropriate methods of disposal include:

- Gift or Transfer to another non-profit museum or public institution – museum, art gallery, heritage centre, society.
- Return to the appropriate original owner, or direct family member.
- Sale at fair market value – sales must be public, generally a publicly advertised auction.
- Destruction – the object should be destroyed and disposed of in a way that no one could retrieve the object.

DEACCESSIONING PROCESS

1. The accessioned articles will be separated from the non-accessioned articles. The non-accessioned articles will be stored separately for disposal during steps 4, 5, and 6.
2. Council will review the accessioned articles in a manner they see fit, to decide what articles, having a significant historical value to Vegreville, should remain for future displays in a different format and/or venue.
 - a. These items will then be separated and stored.
3. Invitations will be sent out to Alberta museums to view the accessioned listing for gifting or transfers. Viewing will be on a scheduled basis over the span of no more than 2 weeks. Articles wanted by another museum will be recorded and removed.
4. After the other museums have gone through the accessioned articles, contributors and/or families will have the opportunity to request donated items be returned to them. This will be done by:
 - a. Advertisements on the Town's social media, website, radio and newspaper, running for a 2-week period asking families to contact the Town in a specific manner.
 - b. Contributors and/or families need to be able to describe, in detail, what was donated. There will not be a public 'walk through' of the museum beforehand.

- c. There will be a 2-week period to collect the artifacts once the advertising is completed and we can confirm the items in the request.
 - d. All removed accessioned articles will be recorded.
5. All remaining artifacts (accessioned and non-accessioned) will be put up for public auction.
 - a. Advertisements on the Town's social media, website, radio and newspaper, running for a 2-week period.
 - b. An auctioneer will be hired to complete the auction.
 - c. All sold accessioned articles will be recorded.
6. Any remaining articles left over from the auction will be destroyed and disposed of.
 - a. All destroyed accessioned articles will be recorded.
7. All deaccession records will be retained as per the Town's Record and Retention Bylaw. (05-2023 Records Management & Retention Bylaw, Schedule B, Legislative Services 6.11 - permanent)



OBJECT DISPOSAL RECORD

Description of Object	Accession Number

Method of Disposal	
<u>Returned to Owner/Family</u> Name: _____ Address: _____ Signature: _____	<u>Gift/Transfer to Museum/Gallery/Society</u> Name: _____ Address: _____ Signature: _____
<u>Sale by Public Auction</u> Buyer: _____ Address: _____ Signature: _____	<u>Destruction of Object</u> How: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Printed Name of Authority: _____

Signature: _____