



PIMA Code of Ethics for Pacific Islands Museums and Cultural Centres

Preamble

The Pacific Islands Museums Association (PIMA) has existed as an Affiliated Organisation of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) since 1998.

PIMA and its members fully endorse and support the ICOM *Code of Ethics*.

In addition, PIMA is proud to produce this specialised code for professional museum work particularly adapted to the values of Pacific Islands Museums and Cultural Centres.

Guiding principles

Pacific Islands Museums and Cultural Centres:

1. are the custodians of collections of cultural and natural history that they hold in trust, foremost for their creator communities and the peoples of the Pacific, secondly for the benefit of people and communities elsewhere¹;
2. have a primary responsibility to assist communities to maintain and safeguard their continuing intangible heritage;
3. build and maintain relations of cultural understanding and mutual respect with the communities they serve;
4. support the reconnection of ex-situ cultural resources, located domestically or internationally, with their creator communities;
5. are advocates for the conservation of cultural diversity, biodiversity and sustainable, culture-centred development;
6. will advocate with governments to provide the appropriate financial and other support they require to discharge their responsibilities;
7. will advocate with governments for the effective implementation of national legislation and international conventions relating to the protection and conservation of cultural and natural resources; and
8. encourage museums from outside the Pacific to support the repatriation of cultural resources to the countries and communities of origin.

¹ The dichotomy of natural and cultural is an introduced concept to indigenous peoples of the world who uphold the holistic and integrated world view where cultural includes what is perceived as natural.

In line with these principles

Pacific Islands Museums and Cultural Centres will:

1. Relate with communities

- 1.1 engage communities in all aspects of the management of museums as well as their own cultural and natural heritage;
- 1.2 assist communities to manage their own heritage by providing training, capacity-building and ongoing support;
- 1.3 build the professional skills of their staff and the communities they serve;
- 1.4 ensure appropriate representation of the creator communities' knowledge and beliefs in all museum activities, public programs and interpretative materials;
- 1.5 maintain an active relationship with communities in the documentation and conservation of historical, cultural and natural places, which can be used in museum exhibitions and educational programs.

2. Provide access

- 2.1 address their responsibilities to provide appropriate access to their premises, collections, research and public programs for all members of the communities they serve;
- 2.2 support the use of local vernacular languages, where appropriate, in public programs, publications and interpretive materials (e.g., labels, wall texts, tour guiding, talks) in addition to the official languages of the respective country or territory.

3. Monitor research

- 3.1 develop and promote guidelines for the undertaking of research on aspects of the cultural and natural heritage, addressing responsibilities of both museums and others facilitating fieldwork and research ('target bodies') and the institutions supporting researchers ('sponsoring bodies');
- 3.2 develop mechanisms to ensure that researchers collect for facilitating museums ('target museums') as well as for their own institutions ('sponsoring bodies').

4. Assess significance

- 4.1 ensure that their personnel are knowledgeable in appropriate processes for assessing the significance of cultural and natural resources;
- 4.2 assess the significance of cultural resources on the basis of the primary importance of the cultural values that they bear for their creator communities, in addition to the secondary values of their authenticity, age or rarity;
- 4.3 refrain as far as practicable from placing monetary values on cultural and natural resources.

Please Note: This Code of Ethics was developed during a special session of the *Pacific Museums in Sustainable Heritage Development* Workshop, held at the Australian National University in Canberra during February 2006. The facilitation was expertly co-chaired by PIMA Executive Board Members, Lawrence Foana'ota (Director, Solomon Islands National Museum) and Ralph Regenvanu (Director, Vanuatu Cultural Centre) with the assistance of Bernice Murphy, (Chair, ICOM Ethics Committee) and Professor Amareswar Galla (Director of Graduate Studies in Sustainable Heritage Development, The Australian National University and Vice President, ICOM). It was developed in direct response to the newly published (revised) version of the *ICOM Code of Professional Ethics* (Paris, 2006), and represents the first region-specific ethics code taking its springboard from the new version of the ICOM Code. The Workshop was convened by the Pacific Asia Observatory for Cultural Diversity in Human Development and the Cross Cultural Taskforce of ICOM. For details visit: www.pacificasiaobservatory.org