

Rainbow Story Hub Foundation

Policy on the Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence in Heritage Work

Applies to: Rainbow Story Hub Foundation, yegqueerhistory.ca, and all RSHF projects, publications, exhibits and presentations

Version: 1.0

Approved: August 27, 2026

Effective: September 1, 2026 — applies to work produced on or after this date (see *Effective Date and Existing Materials*)

Next review: Annual AGM

Contact for questions or concerns: contribute@yegqueerhistory.ca

Public Statement

The Rainbow Story Hub Foundation uses artificial intelligence tools the way we use scanners, microphones and cameras: as equipment that helps a small volunteer organization do preservation work at a scale we could not otherwise reach. AI helps us transcribe oral histories, read damaged newsprint, index thousands of pages, and repair scratched photographs.

Our research rests on real collections — the City of Edmonton Archives, the Provincial Archives of Alberta, the Edmonton Journal through Edmonton Public Library's ProQuest access, and the volunteer-digitized records that so much community history depends on. AI helps us search those collections and cross-check what we find in them. It is not one of them, and it never stands in for them.

It does not write our history for us, and it never invents it.

We do not create images of people, places or events that did not exist. We do not put words in anyone's mouth. We do not use material we do not have the right to use. Where we have the means to pay an artist, we pay an artist — we do not use AI to take paid work away from our community's creators. Every fact we publish is traceable to a source a person can check, and every item we publish is the responsibility of a named human being.

Why This Policy Exists

Our community has real reasons to be cautious about this technology. Generative tools have been trained on work taken without permission or payment. They displace paid creative labour. They can fabricate convincing images of things that never happened — a serious danger for any archive, and a particular danger for a community whose history has already been erased, distorted and disputed.

Those concerns are the reason this policy exists rather than an objection to it. An organization whose purpose is preserving the truth of 2SLGBTQ+ lives in Edmonton has more at stake in getting this right than almost anyone. This document sets out what we do, what we refuse to do, and how anyone can hold us to it.

First Principles

These five rules govern everything below. Where any specific practice conflicts with them, these rules win.

- 1. The archive is not machine-made.** No AI-generated content is ever accessioned into the archival record. AI outputs are working products — drafts, transcripts, indexes, derivatives — and are never presented as, or mistaken for, historical records. The distinction between *the record* and *our interpretation of the record* is absolute.
 - 2. No synthetic history.** We do not generate images, audio, video, documents or quotations depicting real people, places or events. We do not create anything that could be mistaken for a photograph, recording, film or document from the past, and we do not produce synthetic footage or audio of any person, living or deceased.
 - 3. Human authorship, human accountability.** Every published item has a named person responsible for it. "The AI produced it" is never an explanation for an error. Nothing reaches the public without human review.
 - 4. AI is never a source.** An AI tool cannot be cited. Every factual claim we publish rests on a primary or documented secondary source that a reader can independently examine.
 - 5. Rights before use.** We do not put material into these tools that we do not own, licence, or have permission to use. We do not publish outputs that reproduce anyone else's protected work.
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What This Actually Makes Possible

Community publications are where much of Edmonton's queer history survives, and they were never indexed. Finding a single name, venue or event across long runs of *Times.10*, *Womonspace News*, ISCWR Coronation programs and similar material has traditionally

meant reading page by page. Once we have digitized and text-recognized that material, AI tools let us search it, follow a name across years of issues, and surface connections between people, organizations and venues that would otherwise take months to notice.

The same is true elsewhere in our work. Oral history interviews that would sit untranscribed for years become searchable. Photographs too damaged to publish become legible again. Collections too large for a volunteer to catalogue by hand get indexed.

None of this is work that was being done and is now being taken away. It is work that would simply not get done at a volunteer organization our size. That is the case for using these tools, and the sections below are the limits we place on them.

Permitted Uses, by Category

DISCOVER — AI Research & Search

We also use AI to help search the online holdings of institutions such as the City of Edmonton Archives, the Provincial Archives of Alberta, newspaper databases, and the wide range of other online historical, genealogical and community-digitized databases we draw on to build and verify our references. The tools suggest search terms, alternate spellings, period vocabulary and likely record types — they help us frame the search. The searching happens in those institutions' own systems, and the records come from them.

We use it to: generate search strategies and terminology; identify which archives, collections or publications may hold relevant material; search and cross-reference digitized text within our own collections; summarize secondary literature; suggest research leads and connections between people, venues and organizations.

We never: treat AI output as a finding. Every lead is confirmed against the actual record. Citations, dates, names and publication details produced by an AI tool are verified to exist before they are used — these tools fabricate plausible references, and we assume they have.

DOCUMENT — AI Document & Archive Analysis

We use it to: perform OCR and handwriting recognition on scanned community newspapers, newsletters, programs and correspondence; extract names, dates, venues and events from large runs of material; identify patterns across collections too large to read manually; translate material where needed.

We never: alter a scanned original. The master scan is preserved unmodified. Machine-produced transcriptions are labelled as such and marked *uncorrected* until a person has checked them against the source image.

ORGANIZE — AI Knowledge Bases

We use it to: propose metadata and subject headings; build indexes and cross-references; detect duplicates; draft finding aids and collection descriptions for human editing.

We never: allow a tool to overwrite community language. Historic terms used by our community about ourselves are retained as they appear in the record. We do not permit AI systems to sanitize period vocabulary, or to apply contemporary identity labels to people who did not use them. Descriptive decisions about how community members are named are made by people, in consultation with the community, and where possible with the individuals themselves.

INTERPRET & WRITE — AI Writing / Story Development

We use it to: draft, structure and edit our own interpretive writing; produce plain-language and accessible versions of existing text; prepare grant applications, reports and administrative documents; draft social media and promotional copy.

We never: write in the voice of a real person. We do not generate quotations, testimony, recollections or first-person narrative attributed to anyone. Oral history narrators' words are reproduced as they spoke them or not at all. Where AI has made a substantive contribution to published interpretive text, we say so.

VISUALIZE — AI Image Creation & Restoration

This category carries the greatest risk, and we hold two different activities to two different standards.

Restoration and conservation of images we hold rights to — permitted. Dust and scratch removal, tear and crease repair, fade and colour-cast correction, noise reduction, deskewing, stabilization.

- The original master file is never overwritten. Every restored image is a derivative, retained alongside the untouched original.
- Restoration repairs what is present. It does not invent what is absent. We do not use AI to reconstruct faces, sharpen features into detail the negative never held, or "upscale" in ways that manufacture information. An AI-enhanced face is a guess, not a record.
- We do not add or remove people, objects or elements from a historical image.
- Colourization, where used, is clearly labelled as interpretive and never presented as the original colour of the scene.

Generation of new imagery — tightly restricted. Permitted only for clearly non-documentary graphic elements: abstract backgrounds, textures, decorative and layout components.

- Never used to depict real people, real venues, real events, or any recognizable historical subject.
- Never used to produce anything that could be read as a photograph, artifact or archival image.
- Never used in place of a commission we have the funding to make, and never substituted for work already commissioned or contracted (see *Artists and Creative Labour*, below).
- Always labelled where published.

Speculative and imaginative imagery — permitted, with conditions. Our work is not only about the past. Community celebrations, anniversaries and commemorations look forward as well as back, and imagined futures have long been part of how our community pictures itself. Imagery depicting a future, an imagined scene, or an explicitly symbolic subject makes no claim about what happened and therefore does not engage the concerns that govern historical material. It is permitted, subject to the following:

- **The speculative frame must be unmistakable.** Dating, titling, context or content must make clear that the image depicts something imagined rather than recorded. Where that is not obvious from the image itself, it is stated on it.
- **No real individuals.** Figures are invented. We do not depict identifiable people, living or deceased, in imagined scenes.
- **Real places may appear in imagined futures.** A recognizable landmark in an image of a future or symbolic scene is not a claim about that place's history, and is permitted. The same landmark may not be inserted into, or removed from, an image presented as historical.
- **Never presented as record, never accessioned.** Speculative imagery is interpretive and commemorative work. It does not enter the archival record, and it is not used to illustrate historical claims.
- **Labelled where published.** Standard credit line below.
- **Reviewed by a person before use.** Generated imagery is checked for unintended content, misleading detail and anything that misrepresents a real place or organization.

PRESERVE — AI Audio, Video & Transcription

We use it to: transcribe and timecode oral history interviews; identify speakers; reduce noise, hum and damage in degraded recordings; repair and stabilize deteriorated film and video; generate captions and subtitles; index audio and video collections.

We never: synthesize or clone the voice or likeness of any person, living or deceased. We do not generate, alter or simulate video of anyone saying or doing anything they did not say or do. We do not create synthetic footage of historical events. The master recording is never altered; restored audio and video are derivatives, retained alongside the untouched original.

Transcripts are verbatim, not tidied. AI transcription is a first pass, corrected by a person against the recording. Automated transcription tends to smooth speech — dropping false starts and repetitions, regularizing grammar, normalizing dialect, and standardizing names and terms it does not recognize. In oral history that is a distortion of the record, not a convenience. Our transcripts retain disfluencies, repetitions, period and community vocabulary, camp and court terminology, and the narrator's own phrasing. A finished transcript reflects what the narrator said and how they said it.

Editing may shorten. It may not reassemble. Condensing a long interview into a finished piece is ordinary practice, and we do it. What we do not do is reorder a speaker's sentences, splice separate answers together, or cut within a statement in a way that changes its meaning — whether by hand or with AI-assisted, transcript-driven editing tools. Where a cut removes material from the middle of a passage, it is visible as a cut. Where an interviewee's meaning depends on context we have removed, we restore the context or drop the passage. The full interview is retained in the collection.

Restoration recovers; it does not invent. Stabilization, dust and scratch repair, denoising, colour and exposure correction, and audio cleanup are permitted on material we hold rights to. AI upscaling, frame interpolation and detail enhancement manufacture information that was never recorded — an interpolated frame depicts a moment the camera did not capture, and an upscaled face is a guess. These are not used on historical footage presented as record. Where any such processing is applied for accessibility or presentation reasons, it is labelled and the unprocessed original remains available.

Captions and subtitles are machine-generated as a first pass and corrected by a person. Names, venues, community terminology and period vocabulary are checked, not left to a tool's best guess.

VERIFY — AI Fact-Checking / Source Verification

We use it to: cross-check dates, names, spellings and sequences against our own documented sources; flag internal inconsistencies; surface contradictions between accounts that warrant investigation.

We never: let a tool settle a question of fact. AI identifies things worth checking. People do the checking, against the record. Where accounts genuinely conflict and cannot be resolved, we publish the conflict rather than choose a tidy answer.

Copyright and Intellectual Property

- We place into AI tools only material we own, have licensed, that is in the public domain, or that we have written permission to use.

- Material donated or entrusted to RSHF by community members is not submitted to third-party AI services unless the donor agreement or the donor's express permission allows it.
 - We do not prompt tools to imitate the style of a named living artist, or to reproduce any recognizable protected work, character, photograph or logo.
 - We do not publish AI output that reproduces another person's work.
 - If any rights-holder identifies their material in our outputs, we will remove it, correct the record, and say publicly that we did. Contact: contribute@yegqueerhistory.ca
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Integrity of the Historical Record

We do not alter imagery, events or facts to depict anything other than what occurred.

We do not fabricate photographs, documents, recordings or quotations. We do not composite people into scenes they were not in, or remove them from scenes they were. We do not adjust dates, sequences, attributions or outcomes for narrative effect. We do not present interpretation as evidence, or a reconstruction as a record.

Where a gap exists in the historical record, we identify it as a gap. We do not fill it.

Where we make a mistake, we correct it visibly, with a dated note, rather than quietly amending the page.

Artists and Creative Labour

RSHF commissions and pays local 2SLGBTQ+ artists, designers, illustrators, photographers, videographers and performers for creative work. We include artist and design fees as a budget line in our grant applications as standard practice, and we spend those funds on artists when we receive them.

We are a volunteer-led organization without core operating funding. Not every project we take on is funded, and some are funded without a graphics allocation. In those cases the realistic alternative is not a paid commission — it is stock imagery, a plain layout, or nothing at all. We will sometimes use publicly available AI image tools to produce functional graphics for unfunded work, and we would rather say so than pretend otherwise.

The following conditions govern that use, and they are not waived by lack of budget:

- **Funding decides, not convenience.** Where a project has funds for creative work, that work is commissioned. AI is not used to underspend a graphics budget, to free money for other purposes, or to avoid the effort of finding an artist.
- **No substitution mid-project.** Work already commissioned, contracted or agreed with an artist is never replaced with AI output, whatever pressures arise.

- **We ask before we generate.** Where a project is unfunded, we approach our community of artists first regarding donated, discounted, credited or profile-building contributions. AI is what we turn to when that does not produce a workable arrangement.
- **Funding found later means work commissioned later.** If a project subsequently receives funding, artwork is commissioned and AI-generated elements are replaced.
- **Limited to functional graphics.** Event and promotional graphics, social media templates, backgrounds, textures and layout elements. Never exhibit artwork, illustration, portraiture, commemorative pieces, or anything presented as an artistic work in its own right — those are commissioned or they are not made.
- **Every other rule still applies.** No depiction of real people, venues or events. No imitation of a named artist's style. No output that could be read as a photograph or archival record. Always labelled.

We would prefer to pay for all of it. Where we cannot, we would rather be transparent about the compromise than quietly obscure it, and we welcome being told when we have the balance wrong.

Disclosure and Labelling

We label at the item level, not just in this policy. Anyone should be able to look at a specific image, transcript or article and know how it was made.

Work that carries no AI label is human-authored. That is the default, and it applies to the large majority of what we publish. RSHF keeps internal records of AI use in project documentation. Where a question is raised about how a specific item was produced, we will answer it from those records.

What requires a label. Restored or AI-processed images; AI-assisted transcripts; AI-generated graphic elements; and published interpretive writing where an AI tool made a substantive drafting contribution.

What does not. Editing, proofreading, restructuring, grammar and spelling correction, plain-language rewriting, and formatting of text a person wrote. These are the same functions a word processor, a style guide or an editor performs, and they do not change the authorship of the work. Research use that produces no published output — searching, indexing, cross-checking — is likewise covered by this policy generally rather than by item-level labels, because nothing machine-produced reaches the reader.

Standard credit lines:

Photograph restored using AI-assisted tools. Original scan retained unaltered in the RSHF collection.

Transcript produced with AI-assisted transcription and verified verbatim against the original recording by [name]. Speech patterns, dialect and community vocabulary are preserved as spoken.

Background graphic AI-generated. No depiction of real persons, places or events.

Speculative artwork — an imagined future, not a historical image. AI-generated. No real persons depicted.

This article was drafted with AI writing assistance and edited by [name]. All sources cited are primary or verified secondary sources.

Archival footage restored using AI-assisted tools. No detail has been added. Original transfer retained unaltered in the RSHF collection.

Captions machine-generated and corrected against the recording by [name].

Privacy and Consent

Living community members' personal information, unpublished interviews, and sensitive material relating to health, sexuality, gender history or outing status are not submitted to external AI services. Where a narrator has placed restrictions on their material, those restrictions apply to AI processing exactly as they apply to any other use.

Deceased community members are afforded the same protections against fabrication as the living. We do not generate their likeness, their voice, or their words.

Effective Date and Existing Materials

This policy takes effect on the date shown above and governs all work produced on or after that date.

RSHF has been documenting community history for years, using the tools available at the time and the judgement of volunteers working without a written standard. Some of that earlier work would not meet the requirements set out here. That is the ordinary consequence of adopting a standard: it draws a line that did not previously exist, and some work falls on the other side of it.

We are not withdrawing or disowning that material. It was produced in good faith, for our own community, and in contexts where nobody was misled about what they were seeing. What we are doing instead is this:

- **Existing materials are reviewed against this policy when they are reused.** Where a piece produced before the effective date is republished, incorporated into a new

project, submitted to a funder or partner institution, or proposed for accession, it is assessed against these requirements first.

- **Anything that does not meet the standard is corrected, labelled or withdrawn from further use.** Which of the three depends on the material and the context in which it would appear.
- **Nothing produced before the effective date enters the archival record as a record.** The distinction between our interpretive and commemorative work and the authentic historical record applies to everything, regardless of when it was made.
- **We answer questions about earlier work honestly.** If asked how something was produced, we will say, including where the answer is that we would not make it the same way now.

Adopting a standard means having said clearly what we will and will not do. It does not mean claiming we always met it.

Accountability

Every AI-assisted item is reviewed and approved by a named individual before publication. Records of significant AI use are kept in project documentation.

Anyone — community member, donor, artist, researcher — may ask how a specific item was produced, and will receive a direct answer. Concerns about anything published by RSHF may be sent to contribute@yegqueerhistory.ca, and will be answered by a person.

Where a claim is made that RSHF has used AI in a way this policy does not permit, or has failed to label something it should have, we ask that it be brought to us directly. We will check it against our project records and respond. If we got it wrong, we will say so and correct it. If the claim is mistaken, we will show why. We would rather answer the question than have it circulate unanswered — but we can only do that if it reaches us.

This policy is reviewed annually and whenever our tools or practices change materially.

Definitions

AI-assisted — a human-authored work where AI tools contributed to drafting, editing, processing or production.

AI-generated — content produced primarily by an AI system from a prompt.

Restoration — repair of damage to an existing original: the removal of dirt, scratches, tears, fading and noise. Restoration recovers what is present in the source.

Reconstruction / enhancement — the addition of detail not present in the source. Not permitted on historical materials. In moving image this includes AI upscaling, frame

interpolation and generative detail enhancement, all of which produce information the camera did not record.

Derivative — any processed copy. Always retained separately from, and never in place of, the preserved original.

Speculative imagery — an image depicting an imagined future, an invented scene, or an explicitly symbolic subject. It makes no claim about what occurred and is never presented as, or accessioned as, a record.

The archival record — original materials and their preservation masters. No AI output enters it.