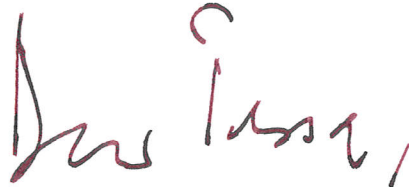


July 14, 2017

Ms. Tessa Graham
Executive Lead
Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development
6th Floor, 800 Johnson Street
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Victoria BC V8W 9N7



RE: KEY FINDINGS OF THE INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES ON REPATRIATION SYMPOSIUM

I am pleased to submit a report on the First Nations Repatriation Program's key findings from the Repatriation Symposium held in Kelowna March 29-31, 2017, in accordance with clause A.4.f of Schedule A of the Shared Cost Agreement (the Agreement) between the Royal British Columbia Museum (RBCM) and the Province of British Columbia represented by the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development (the Ministry). The information contained herein is confidential.

Indigenous Perspectives on Repatriation: Moving Forward Together Symposium

The RBCM, in partnership with the First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC), held a symposium on the repatriation of First Nations objects, intangible cultural heritage and ancestral remains. Over 200 delegates were in attendance and more than 40 presenters spoke.

First Nations participants travelled from all across the province to take part. Representatives from many nations were in attendance including: Kwakwaka'wakw, Coast Salish, Tlingit, Gitksan, Tsimshian, Nisga'a, Haida, Heiltsuk, Nuu-cha-nulth, Dene, Secwepemc and Syilx.

Federal and Provincial counterparts showed a keen interest as well, and many sent representatives to attend the Symposium, including: the Canadian Museum of History, Royal Alberta Museum, UBC Museum of Anthropology, Simon Fraser University, University of Victoria, Library and Archives Canada, Department of Canadian Heritage, Canadian Museums Association, BC Museums Association and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO.

There were also international participants, including: the National Museum of the American Indian, the Autry Museum of the American West, the Association on American Indian Affairs, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

The participants spoke with great emotion on the need for the province and museums to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation's call to action and their recommendations mirrored the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples, and the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and coalesced around the following:

Key Findings of the Symposium

Context

Repatriating institutions and associated government agencies have the following obligations:

1. To promote, recognize and respect the vitality and currency of First Nations.
2. To appreciate that the need for repatriation is not of First Nations' making.
3. To pursue an active program of repatriation – they should not wait to be approached by a First Nation.
4. To ensure that the terms and conditions of repatriation recognize or respect Indigenous customs, practices and laws.
5. To understand that all collections are important to First Nations in some way, be it for determining family history, language revitalization, cultural renewal, community building or youth education.
6. To recognize that First Nations must represent themselves; they cannot be represented, either domestically or internationally, by any third party.
7. To appreciate that First Nations are not one homogenous entity – relationships must be developed with each nation individually.
8. To recognize that for First Nations many cultural materials held in museums are the physical embodiment of their ancestors and hold as much power and meaning as ancestral remains.
9. To appreciate that First Nations understand the challenges faced by repatriating institutions and are willing to invest goodwill to find solutions through collaboration.

Funding

1. There is a lack of funding available for infrastructure (in particular the creation and operation of cultural centers), research (especially regarding ancestral remains and resolution of overlaps), archaeology, and repatriation efforts.
2. Funding should be directed in support of First Nations communities rather than repatriating museums.
3. Funding should cover the cost of providing digital copies of relevant collections.

Capacity Building

1. Many would like to see RBCM's aboriginal training program re-established. Others would welcome support in setting up and operating their own museums and/or cultural centers.

Process

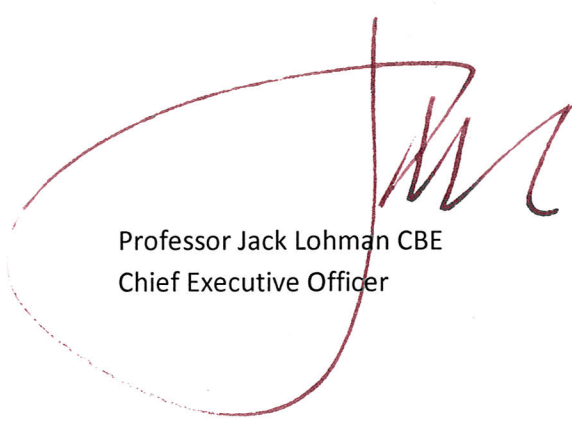
1. A Nation-to-Nation relationship is vital to all primary communications.
2. There is a lack of understanding around the process of repatriation. Whilst some First Nations welcome a defined process many consider what processes there are to be opaque and bureaucratic. Others would prefer to develop their own processes in ways that conform to the Indigenous laws and protocols of their Nation.
3. Trust and mutual respect between First Nations and the returning institutions are essential for successful repatriation. In this respect, museums need to commit to sustained and substantive collaboration with the communities whose objects they house.
4. There is a need to review all relevant policies, but it should be recognized that this can never supplant the important of cooperative relationships built on honesty, trust and respect.
5. Indigenous values must be respected and take precedent over those of the repatriating institution.
6. Objects should be repatriated on an unconditional basis. Only the relevant First Nation and/or hereditary owners can determine appropriate handling, storage, and interpretation.
7. A single resting place for ancestral remains is not supported by all First Nations.

Access

1. First Nations require access to and ownership of intangible culture heritage (in particular audio tapes, photographs, and documents). This is particularly important for those communities that have few cultural objects within museum collections and/or are advancing language and cultural revitalization programs.
2. Artists play an important role in the repatriation of knowledge and require access both to collections and funding sources.
3. Some First Nations may prefer to have easy access to detailed information about cultural artifacts within museum collections rather than undertake full repatriation.
4. First Nations welcome digital access to collections however more work needs to be done to address confusion around the various digital formats, content management systems and repositories.
5. It should be as easy as possible for First Nations to identify the location of their collections through a digital database. Some First Nations support the Reciprocal Research Network as an appropriate platform, others would like to develop their own database, very few support a consolidated inventory housed at a single museum institution.
6. Access to collections should be free of charge – even the perception of cost is a significant barrier to access.
7. Access to collections should be facilitated quickly.

The findings from the repatriation symposium detailed here are informing the strategic plan being developed in partnership with the First Peoples' Cultural Council. This strategic plan will be presented on or before July 31, 2017 in accordance with clause A.4.g of Schedule A of the Shared Cost Agreement (the Agreement) between the Royal British Columbia Museum (RBCM) and the Province of British Columbia represented by the Ministry of Community, Sport and Cultural Development (the Ministry).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Jack Lohman CBE
Chief Executive Officer