

INDIGENOUS VOICES

A Report on Indigenous Community Engagement
on the Modernization of the Royal BC Museum



Wawaditla – Photo: Marcia Dawson

October 2019

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FINAL REPORT

Prepared for: Indigenous Collections and Repatriation
Royal British Columbia Museum
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Territorial Acknowledgement

The Royal BC Museum is located on the unceded territories of the Lekwungen (Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations). We extend our appreciation for the opportunity to live and learn in this territory.



Hych'ka Siem, Haw.aa, Toyaxsiy'nism, Gilakas'la

Territorial Welcome

Clarence “Butch” Dick, Songhees First Nation

Indigenous Communities and Participants

Angie Bain, Union of BC Indian Chiefs
Amelia Rea, Student, Camosun College
Anne Crocker Stz'uminus First Nation
Augie Sylvester, Penelakut First Nation
Alva Bob-, Pauquachin First Nation, Councillor
Butch (Clarence) Dick, Songhees First Nation
Bradley Dick, Songhees First Nation
Carleen Thomas, Tseil Waututh First Nation
Cecilia Thomas, Songhees First Nation
Diana Jules, Tk'emlúps te Secwepemc
Deanna Eustache, Lower Nicola Indian Band
Dorothy Hunt, Yuquot First Nation
Deb Williams, Hiiye yu Lelum Friendship Center
Dianne Hinkley, Cowichan Tribes
Edward Johnson Jr, Huu ay aht First Nation
Elroy White, Heiltsuk Integrated Research
Florence Dick, Songhees First Nation
George Shaughnessy, Kwakwaka'wakw
Joshua Watts, Nuu-Chah-Nulth
Kolin Sutherland-Wilson, University of Victoria
Lorena White, Heiltsuk Tribal Council
Miah O'Neil Simpson, Treaty 8, TARR
Melissa Adams, Union of BC Indian Chiefs
Milly Modeste, Esquimalt First Nation
Mavis Underwood, Tsawout First Nation
Ron Rice, Victoria Native Friendship Center
Richard Lucas, Hesquiaht First Nation
Robert Sam, Penelakut First Nation
Rupert Jeffery, Gitxsan/Tsimshian
Russ Chipps, Scia'new First Nation, Chief
Samantha Touchie Yuułuʔiłʔatḥ First Nation
Shayli Robinson, Lyackson First Nation
Tania Muir, University of Victoria
Tyler Timothy, Kwantlen First Nation
Tyler James, Lyackson First Nation
Vanessa Hunt, Namgis First Nation
Wedlidi Speck, K'omoks/Kwakwaka'wakw, Chief

Wawaditla (Mungo Martin) Bighouse

permission from Chief David Knox and Mabel Knox

Province of BC

Brian Jonker, Executive Director
Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture
Arts and Cultural Development

Royal BC Museum

Jack Lohman, Chief Executive Officer
Joanne Orr, Deputy CEO and Vice President
Collections, Research and International Programs
Mischelle vanThiel, VP Advancement
[RBCM – Indigenous Advisory Council](#)
Andy Everson, K'omoks First Nation (in person)
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Leslie McGarry, Indigenous Exhibitions
George Shaughnessy, Wawaditla Fire Keeper
Erika Stenson, Head of Marketing, Communications
Dr. Genevieve Hill, Collections Manager,
BC Archeology Collections
Genevieve Weber, BC Archivist
Janet MacDonald, Head of Learning
Kim Gough, Learning Program Developer
Chris O'Conner, Learning Program Developer

Logistical Support: Charlene Everson, K'omoks

Every effort was made to ensure all individuals who participated were acknowledged, and correct spelling of names, nations or titles, apologies for any unintentional omissions or errors

Executive Summary

On Feb. 12, 2019, the speech from the throne announced the government's intention to modernize the Royal BC Museum (the Museum), to protect its historic holdings and provide better access to its collections. The Indigenous Collections and Repatriation (ICAR) department, with the support of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, engaged with First Nations communities and Indigenous people from across BC to obtain advice, guidance, and input regarding the modernization of the Museum from an Indigenous perspective and how the Museum can be of service and benefit to Indigenous people.

In September 2019, a diverse group of 40 representatives participated from Indigenous communities across BC including Songhees First Nation, Esquimalt Nation, Tsawout First Nation, Victoria Native Friendship Center, and Hiiye Yu Lelum Friendship Center among many other First Nations communities and Indigenous organizations. This report captures the voices of the Indigenous representatives and participants who toured the museum and archives, and engaged in critical dialogue regarding the modernization of the Museum in an Indigenous context.

Information provided in this report is framed within the context of the ancestral and inherent rights of Indigenous people which have been affirmed by various government and international processes. The report is prefaced with excerpts from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (TRC Calls to Action), the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP), as well as the Report on the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples and the Rod Naknakim Declaration adopted by the BC Museums Association.

The report is designed to illuminate the voices of the Indigenous people, with information organized in the following thematic categories: a) Indigenous Laws, Rights, and Treaty Rights; b) Living People; c) Cultural Requirements and Protocol; d) Capacity Strengthening; and e) Facility and Operations. These are followed by recommendations, from the consultant, informed by the dialogue and interviews.

A key recommendation that emerged from the dialogue was the importance of respecting the territory of the Lekwungen People whose land the Museum is located to ensure the visibility and inclusion of the Lekwungen people in a more fulsome and authentic way. Participants agreed that staff of ICAR are doing a great job however more needs to be done to address the needs and priorities of the Indigenous communities who are working hard to address Nation building, and the resurgence of their cultures and languages. Echoed consistently was the need for the Museum to work with Indigenous people to accurately portray the history of Indigenous people through an Indigenous lens, including the truth of the negative impacts of colonization. Inclusion of all Indigenous people, elimination of the homogenization of the distinct cultures and languages, and highlighting the strengths and resilience of Indigenous people were also indicated as important. Recommendations call for changes at the systems level, and include the requirement for significant investment to realize the goals, requirements and recommendations articulated in this report.

Overall, the participants echoed their appreciation for the opportunity to tour the collections, to learn more about ICAR operations and looking forward to an ongoing positive strengthened relationship.

Gathering People and Voice

Background: Indigenous Collections and Repatriation department

The Royal BC Museum is home to thousands of spectacular photographs, films, recordings and objects showcasing the many Indigenous cultures in BC. These items represent up to 10,000 years of history from across the province, celebrating the diversity and resilience of Indigenous peoples. The Royal BC Museum is honoured to care for these extraordinary collections, which provide an invaluable resource for research and public programming.

For visitors, these collections broaden and evolve understanding of Indigenous cultures. The Museum has permanent First Peoples galleries, and an award-winning *Our Living Languages: First Peoples' Voices in BC* exhibition. Researchers can access thousands of records documenting First Nations communities in the BC Archives, including the Vancouver Island Treaties and recordings from musicologist Ida Halpern. Online, visitors can learn about the Indigenous languages in BC on the Learning Portal or immerse in videos about First Nations in BC on the Royal BC Museum Channel.

Since established, the Indigenous Collections and Repatriation (ICAR) department has accomplished a number of initiatives, changes, and projects:

- In March 2017, hosted a Repatriation Symposium and followed through with the recommendations received from the Indigenous participants.
- Begun the work for the digitization of thousands of cultural, audio, and visual items.
- Developed an Indigenous Advisory and Advocacy Committee (IAAC) comprised of Indigenous representatives from across the province.
- In 2017, developed a Repatriation program that assists First Nations communities in repatriating ancestral remains, cultural objects and intangible cultural heritage and established an Indigenous Repatriation Specialist position.
- The publication of a Repatriation Handbook in 2019.
- In 2018, provided Repatriation Grants, made possible by the Provincial Government of BC working in partnership with the Royal BC Museum, to fund community-based projects and initiatives.
- Begun the work to refresh the *First Peoples* galleries, working with Indigenous peoples to bring contemporary Indigenous voices to the displays.
- Provide behind-the-scenes tours of the Indigenous collections and BC Archives, as well as community outreach through participation at Indigenous gatherings and conferences.
- Projects include restoration to Wawaditla (the Mungo Martin Bighouse), the creation of a temporary carving studio, and Indigenous Summer Arts Studio and various workshops.

Engagement: Phase one – Indigenous Community Engagement

On Feb. 12, 2019, the speech from the throne announced the government's intention to modernize the Royal BC Museum, to protect its historic holdings and provide better access to its collections. With the

support of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (TAC), the Museum, under the direction of Lucy Bell, head of ICAR, engaged with First Nations communities and Indigenous people from across BC. Marcia Dawson was invited by the Museum to lead the Indigenous community engagement, facilitate community dialogue and develop the report that will inform the business case for the modernization of the Museum.

The scope of the engagement process included two phases. This initial engagement is phase one and was initially specific to the south Vancouver Island First Nations communities. Phase two includes a broader engagement with Indigenous communities across BC. Phase one was expanded to include First Nations communities who received financial resources from the Museum through the repatriation grant funding as well as various Indigenous people with whom the Museum staff had a connection.

The time frame for the initial engagement was from July 22, 2019 to September 3, 2019. First Nations community leaders, Chiefs, administrators, cultural and language workers, Indigenous organizations and museums, artists, and youth were invited to attend two separate engagement sessions. These sessions were held at the Museum on September 5-6, 2019 and September 10-11, 2019.

Through a culturally-based approach, the Museum welcomed a diverse group of 40 representatives from Indigenous communities across BC including Songhees First Nation, Esquimalt Nation, Tsawout First Nation, Victoria Native Friendship Center, and Hiiye Yu Lelum Friendship Center among many other First Nations communities and Indigenous organizations.

The purpose of the sessions was to obtain advice, guidance, and input regarding the modernization of the Museum from an Indigenous perspective, and how the Museum can be of service and benefit to Indigenous people. The information from the September sessions will inform the development of a business case and a broader process of engagement.

Over a total of four days, participants toured the Indigenous Collections and Repatriation departments and BC Archives and partook in a facilitated critical dialogue. The framework for dialogue was organized around four key themes: a) Indigenous Rights and Treaty Rights; b) Cultural, Spiritual, and Protocol; c) Capacity Strengthening; and d) Physical.

As part of the process, a thematic analysis was conducted from the *2017 Repatriation Symposium* transcripts, artist charrettes, and 2019 Summer Artists program. This report does not delve deeply into the technical and larger organizational aspects of the Museum and focused primarily on the voices and perspectives of the participating First Nations communities, Indigenous people and organizations.

Context

The information provided in this report is framed within the context of the ancestral and inherent rights of Indigenous people which have been affirmed by various government and international processes that include the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action (TRC Calls to Action), the Royal Commission on Aboriginal

People (RCAP), as well as the Report on the Task Force on Museums and First Peoples and the Rod Naknakim Declaration adopted by the BC Museums Association.

Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoplesⁱ

In 1994, the Assembly of First Nations and the Canadian Museums Association jointly sponsored a task force who undertook a consultation process between First Peoples and Museums. The mission of the task force was to develop an ethical framework and strategies for Aboriginal Nations to represent their history and culture in concert with cultural institutionsⁱⁱ. The following is a summary of the results of the recommendations outlined in the report, entitled *Turning the Page: Forging New Relationships between Museums and First Peoples*:

- The importance of cultural objects in museum collections: Recognition that the objects represent cultural history and values and are therefore sources of learning, pride, and self-esteem.
- Increased involvement of First Peoples in interpretation: includes all facets of museum administration, research, public program, and exhibition planning, and presentations.
- Improved Access to Museum Collections: physical access to collections for purposes of viewing, research, making reproductions and ceremonial use and also access to funding sources, policy development and implementation, training, and employment in museums and other institutions.
- Repatriation: the return of the human remains and illegally obtained objects along with certain non-skeletal burial materials and sacred objects to First People; to work collaboratively in the maintenance, care, and custody of cultural objects.
- Training: Training in all phases of museology for both First Nations and non-Aboriginal museum personnel, to work in established museums or to develop museums in community, and for strengthened partnerships.
- Support for Cultural Institutions: support for First Peoples to manage and conserve their own cultural facilities in their communities which promote identity, healing, and the realization of socio-economic goals.
- Funding: for First Peoples for projects and for establishing their own museums.
- International Collections: governmental assistance to repatriate cultural objects outside of Canada.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples

In 1996, the Royal Commission of Aboriginal People (RCAP) released its final report consisting of five volumes with 110 pages outlining a summary of recommendations organized into four thematic categories: Health and Healing, Education and Training, Arts and Heritage, and Economic Development. The following recommendations are excerpts from the RCAP summary reportⁱⁱⁱ:

Arts and Heritage:

According to the Commission, the “...legacy of our colonial history bears heavily upon Aboriginal people in the form of cultural stress. It also distorts the perceptions of non-Aboriginal people, sustaining false assumptions and a readiness to relegate Aboriginal people to the margins of Canadian society” (Vol. 3, P.586). To deal with this situation the Commission proposes the following strategy:

- a) Identify and protect historical and sacred sites and safeguard Aboriginal heritage from misappropriation and misrepresentation. Specific measures include the following:
 - museums and cultural institutions adopt ethical guidelines governing all aspects of collecting and managing artifacts related to Aboriginal culture;
 - the federal government ensure that Aboriginal peoples interests vis-a-vis their intellectual property is adequately protected through legislation; and
 - governments ensure that Aboriginal people have effective access to cultural and heritage education and the means to participate in joint undertakings with cultural institutions.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

In 2007, the United Nations passed the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People* containing 46 articles outlining provisions designed to address equity, Indigenous rights, and basic human rights of Indigenous people, which include but not limited to, rights to self-determination and self-government^{iv}. The following is are excerpts from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People^v:

Article 11

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to practice and revitalize their cultural traditions and customs. This includes the right to maintain, protect and develop the past, present and future manifestations of their cultures, such as archaeological and historical sites, artefacts, designs, ceremonies, technologies and visual and performing arts and literature.
2. States shall provide redress through effective mechanisms, which may include restitution, developed in conjunction with indigenous peoples, with respect to their cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent or in violation of their laws, traditions and customs.

Article 12

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to manifest, practice, develop and teach their spiritual and religious traditions, customs and ceremonies, the right to maintain, protect and have access

in privacy to their religious and cultural sites, the right to the use and control of their ceremonial objects and the right to the repatriation of the human remains.

Article 15

1. Indigenous people have the right to the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories, and aspirations which shall be appropriately reflected in education and public information. (UNDRIP, 2008, pp. 6-7)

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) released a report that put forward 94 calls to action to redress the legacy of the Indian Residential Schools, specifically to facilitate systemic and societal change to bring equity for Indigenous people and communities^{vi}. The following is an excerpt from a TRC Calls to Action summary document^{vii}:

Museums and Archives

67. We call upon the federal government to provide funding to the Canadian Museums Association to undertake, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, a national review of museum policies and best practices to determine the level of compliance with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and to make recommendations.
68. We call upon the federal government, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian Museums Association to mark the 150th anniversary of the Canadian Confederation in 2017 by establishing a dedicated national funding program for commemoration projects on the theme of reconciliation.
69. We call upon Library and Archives Canada to:
 - i. Fully adopt and implement the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* and the United Nations Joinet – Orentlicher Principles as related to Aboriginal people's inalienable right to know the truth about what happened and why, concerning human rights violations committed against them in the residential schools.
 - ii. Ensure that its record holdings related to residential schools are accessible to the public.
 - iii. Commit more resources to its public education materials and programming on residential schools.
70. We call upon the federal government to provide funding to the Canadian Association of Archivists to undertake, in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples, a national review of archival policies and best practices to:
 - i. Determine the level of compliance with the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples and the United Nations Joint – Orentlicher Principles as related to Aboriginal people’s inalienable right to know the truth about what happened and why, concerning human rights violations committed against them in the residential schools.

Rod Naknakim Declaration^{viii}

In March 2017, BCMA Council unanimously endorsed the *Rod Naknakim Declaration*. Rod Naknakim of the We Wai Kai Nation presented at the 2016 BCMA annual conference during the plenary session entitled: “Museums and Canada’s First Nations: A Moral and Legal Obligation – The Colonial Legacy.” During his moving presentation Rod discussed the opportunity for museums, archives and Indigenous peoples to work together to realize the goals set out by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. He suggested four specific steps museums, archives and cultural institutions can take to work in partnership with Indigenous peoples:

1. Museums acknowledge the fact that the ownership of First Nations artifacts and remains is in the Indigenous peoples;
2. Acknowledge there is an opportunity for museums to decolonize the museums by partnering with the Indigenous owners;
3. The new relationship must result in a space in which there is greater respect and effect for Indigenous peoples and a more authentic experience for museum goers;
4. Costs for repatriation of artifacts and remains should not be borne by the Indigenous peoples.

Approach for the Report

In this report, the term Indigenous voices is used to replace the term Indigenous perspectives as a mechanism for shifting the discourse regarding the participation of Indigenous peoples in the modernization of the Royal BC Museum to a rights-based dialogue and understanding, and to locate Indigenous people as integral to the museum.

The report is designed to illuminate the voices of Indigenous representatives who participated in the community engagement sessions. The following principles guide the approach for this report:

Principles

- Respect diversity: the report will not homogenize the First Nations communities but will respect their diverse history, cultures, geographic locations, capacity, specific needs, pressing priorities and experiences;
- Solutions-focused: the purpose is to acknowledge challenges and issues as a mechanism to identify what can be improved and offer solutions, ideas, and recommendations;

- Bridge relationships: strong working relationships are fundamentally important to address the complex and cultural considerations regarding Indigenizing and modernizing the museum to reflect a culturally responsive organization and service.
- Strengths-based: to build on what's working while acknowledging what more needs to be done.

How this Report is Organized

The following thematic categories formulate the framework for this report outlining pragmatic recommendations provided by participants:

- a) Indigenous Laws, Rights, and Treaty Rights
- b) Living People
- c) Cultural Requirements and Protocol
- d) Capacity Strengthening
- e) Facility and Operations

The report closes with recommendations from the consultant, drawing from the voices of the Indigenous participants and Indigenous Advisory Council members and from her experience working with Indigenous people in BC.

Indigenous Voices

The following information reflects what was heard from the Indigenous representatives and members of the Indigenous Advisory Council.

Indigenous Laws, Rights and Treaty Rights

Local Lekwungen Territory

For Indigenous people, the protocol of acknowledging and respecting local territories is a foundational teaching and strict Indigenous law that is integral to the practice of all Indigenous people and is inextricably linked to governance. Echoed consistently was the need to acknowledge, respect and include Lekwungen people, territory, knowledge, and cultures, and participants agreed that the Lekwungen people should be prominently visible at the outset to respect their historical and present-day connection to the land and territory where the Museum is located.

What we heard:

- Work with Lekwungen people and communities to discuss appropriate inclusion and acknowledgement within the Museum.
- Embed in Museum policy and practice the requirement for inclusion of and respect for Lekwungen people, cultures, language, histories, territories, and protocols across all departments in the Museum.

- Recognize, understand and ensure that Lekwungen relationships to south Island Coast Salish nations are reflected to respect familial and cultural connections.
- Territorial acknowledgement should be reflected through all aspects of the museum: entrance, at the beginning of all tours not just the Indigenous gallery tour, and visible on all brochures, pamphlets and website.

Quotes

- *As Coast Salish, I don't see myself when I walk into this museum, there's the welcome video then we're gone, I brought my daughter here, she looked around and asked, "where are we, daddy?"*
- *As an Indigenous visitor to this lands, it is important practice for me to acknowledge the local territory and we don't even know who it is when we walk into the museum, there is not enough presence or information*
- *Copies of our Treaty should be on display when you enter with a map to show our territory*
- *The Lekwungen Welcome video should be at the entrance to the museum*

Ancestral and Ceremonial Rights

Inherent within the cultural items stored and collections displayed at the Museum are ancestral rights, intellectual property rights, and ceremonial rights that continue to exist for Indigenous people. It is fundamentally important for the Museum to not only honour and respect these in their policies and practice but also should be visible, apparent, and made clear to the Museum staff and guests.

What we heard:

- It must be understood and embedded into Museum policies and practice that Indigenous people are the sole authority over the cultural items stored and displayed at the Museum.
- Create policies to acknowledge Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination in Museum practice requiring the inclusion and involvement of Indigenous people regarding all aspects of the Museum.

Quotes:

- *The items are tied to our rights and the rights of our identity*
- *It needs to be the nations who decide how they are represented in the museum, it is nothing about us without us*
- *Lineage rights still exist in community through song, lands and ceremony*
- *Indigenous people are the sole authority when it comes to our stories*
- *Nations have their own rights since prior to contact*
- *In UNDRIP, it's very clear that Indigenous people have the right to practice and protect culture*

Diversity

Linked to the rights of Indigenous people is the diversity of their cultures, teachings, practices, ceremonies and knowledge systems which must not be homogenized within the display and storage of the cultural items in the collections. Indigenous communities, clans and nations were impacted by colonization and assimilation where their names were either anglicized, changed completely or eliminated by the settler governments. Indigenous communities have begun to reclaim their identities as tribes, clans and nations which are linked to their governance, territories, jurisdictions, laws, resources, and ancestors.

What we heard:

- Establish an accord with Indigenous Nations across the province, one that acknowledges their distinct people, systems, languages and cultures and is a foundational agreement that will guide the relationships and demonstrates shared stewardship.
- In this era of reconciliation, the Museum must work to support the resurgence and reclamation of Indigenous identities by including their correct names, spelling, cultural and linguistic groups, in the storage, catalogue and display of the cultural items.
- All Indigenous communities in BC should be included in the galleries, beyond the few which have been featured.
- Respect for diversity within the Nations. For example: Within the Coast Salish culture group are distinct Nations such as Scia'new, Cowichan, Tsawout, Tsartlip, and Lekwungen to name a few.
- The diversity of the Indigenous people, cultures and nations should be explained and made clear at the outset in the Museum galleries using tools such as a map.

Quote:

- *I don't see myself and my culture when I am here in the museum, the totem poles don't represent my culture*
- *It's hard to do research when there's only general information, wrong spelling, and no context*

Living People

The participants in the engagement sessions indicated that the galleries needed a full refresh to demonstrate that the Indigenous people were not extinct, the culture is not static and the people and their culture are very much alive. The Museum collections must reflect the living cultures of Indigenous people from an Indigenous perspective.

What we heard:

- Integrate the history with contemporary present-day information about Indigenous people.
- Build and expand on the refresh that was completed with some displays to incorporate context, story and connection that demonstrates linkage of historical information with the current lives of Indigenous people today.

Quote:

- *The museum has the important job of telling the world that we are still alive*
- *We are still here, we are alive and we still follow our traditions*
- *There should be a very clear connection between the present and the past*
- *Our culture is living, the museum needs to reflect this*

Cultural Requirements and Protocol

Tremendous feedback and recommendations were received regarding the cultural items in the collection and displayed in terms of the accuracy, significance, appropriateness, clarity, correction, relationality, interconnectedness and the importance of language.

Indigenous Languages

Participants agreed that the *Our Living Languages: First Peoples' Voices in BC* exhibition demonstrated the diversity required - it was interactive and engaging. Language, they explained, is significantly important. Privileging Indigenous languages is critical to accurately articulate the significance of cultural collections and items stored, to Indigenous people, their rights, cultures, and identities.

What we heard:

- Use Indigenous languages in the displays in the galleries for accurate information and depiction of the cultural item.
- Use story and Indigenous languages to provide context and understanding.

Quote:

- *Language is linked to the power, authority, and governance of our people and so this should be reflected in the museum*
- *Show that our languages are here and it is attached to the teachings and the land*
- *It is not enough to just know the item, the language and knowledge provide context and understanding*

Accurate History and Portrayal of Indigenous Peoples and Cultures

Immediately apparent to the Indigenous representatives was the need to address the way Indigenous people are portrayed and how the history of Indigenous people is told. Several recommendations arose in the dialogue to identify key areas that stood out in terms of importance.

What we heard:

- Indigenous women should be portrayed equally to men in the galleries and exhibitions, and should portray the significant roles as leaders and matriarchs of our families and communities.

- Clarify distinction between colonial system of ‘bands’ and traditional system of ‘nations and clans’ both in the galleries and in communicating with Indigenous communities.
- The correct history should be told and through an Indigenous lens.
- The history needs to include the impacts of colonization and assimilation such as the Indian Residential Schools, the smallpox epidemic, the Indian hospitals, the sterilization act, the 60’s scoop, the Indian Act, the reserve system and the ban of the potlatch/ceremonies, as well as social justice issues such as the Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women.
- Address the disconnect between what we see in Archaeology and what is on display, it is important for cultural continuity.
- Address the issue of lack of context for the galleries, without context there’s no story, and story is important to Indigenous people.
- The cultural items on display need to be shown as connected to the land where they come from.
- Relationships between Nations need to be shown and information about the ‘grease trail’ which was integral to the pre and post-colonial trade economy.
- Show the gifts and contributions of Indigenous people have given to the province and their resilience, strength, wisdom and ancestral wisdom.
- Examine the galleries with Nations to ensure displays are appropriate and accurate. For example, Chiefs are displayed as being homogenous not demonstrating different culture group’s governance and leadership, as well as in appropriate placement of the talking stick.

Quote:

- *The museum shows how we lived not why we lived, it is more than that, it is our worldview and it sustained us*
- *Very patriarchal focus and lack of inclusion and portrayal of women*
- *The museum has a responsibility to tell the truth and the real story about our history which would help eliminate the stereotypical perceptions about us, we were not primitive*
- *It’s important to tell the history from our perspective, including the military history and natural history*
- *It is the hereditary chiefs and families who have rights and authority over the cultural items not Chief and Council*

Cultural Protocol Regarding Care, Storage and Display

For Indigenous people, it is an important teaching and practice that individuals, people or Nations cannot teach, talk about or share knowledge, cultures or protocols belonging to another family, clan or culture group nor make decisions or get involved in other Nation’s business. This is out of respect for their authority and jurisdiction over their own people and culture, as well as respect for their right to self-determination and specific cultural and intellectual property rights. Participants echoed this important teaching and indicated that individual Nations will need to determine the appropriate protocols for the cultural items in the collections.

What we heard:

- The Museum needs to work with individual families and Nations regarding the care, storage, conservation and display of the cultural items.
- The storage of cultural items must be from an Indigenous practice to ensure ancestral teachings, protocols, and practices are followed, some with spiritual significance.
- Work with Indigenous communities regarding the cultural safety teachings regarding ancestral remains, and our children that visit the Museum, as there are strict teachings regarding the protection of children.
- Collections should be stored and displayed by Nation e.g. Haida, Heiltsuk, Nuu-Chah-Nulth.
- A viewing guide should be created for each community and culture group.
- Decisions regarding the handling of deteriorating cultural items should be discussed with the Indigenous families and Nations.
- Older items that have begun to deteriorate should consider replicas; the Museum should work with individual artists, families and communities regarding the process of replicating.
- Design a welcoming and culturally safe space for the viewing of the collections in storage, a space that includes room for ceremony, spiritual practice, and reflection.

Quote:

- *Cultural protocol is different for all of us, we need to be careful about this topic*
- *Each family is different, community to community- its different*
- *There will need to be a different level of care for each time, culturally speaking*
- *Specifics need to be understood like the hok-hok mask is meant to be shown then put away*
- *Items in ceremony have a life, they are living objects and have to be treated a certain way*
- *In some cultures, certain ceremonies are sacred and cannot be shared publicly, the photographs should not be shared publicly e.g. online or on display*
- *For many Indigenous people it is a teaching that the items should be allowed to deteriorate*
- *For many people, seeing the cultural items and visual collections is an emotional experience, and a welcoming space for people for self-care, ceremony and reflection*
- *Handling and display of sacred items is important. For us, the rattle is sacred, it is calling our ancestors to witness, or the order of masks is significant, and some beaks on masks should be open and some should be shut, some masks should be only shown in the winter and some should be in a box*

Capacity Strengthening

Indigenous communities across BC are working hard in nation building, revitalizing their cultures and languages. The cultural items displayed and stored are critical components to nation building. The resurgence of cultural practices and languages for Indigenous people, the revitalization of Indigenous knowledge systems, and the reclamation of family and community cultures which have been interrupted and negatively impacted by colonization are all critically important. Many of the representatives at the

engagement sessions shared the various initiatives undertaken by their communities such as development and operation of a cultural heritage center, repatriation, operation of their own museum, research to support land use planning, programming and resource development for language revitalization to name a few.

Indigenous communities have varied capacities to address their goals and aspirations in nation building and cultural resurgence for their families, clans and nations. Indigenous people and communities require the expertise, knowledge, and resources including financial resources (from the Museum) for capacity strengthening across a broad range of needs such as repatriation, repositories, and conservation.

What we heard:

- The Museum should provide training for Indigenous people and communities across a broad range of topics as determined by the Indigenous communities (in collaboration with the Museum); which may include policy development, digitization, curating, storage, the development of our own museums and repositories as well as preservation techniques for audio and visual items and archival training.
- Develop partnerships with governments, post-secondary institutions and Indigenous communities to offer opportunities for co-op students, interns and mentoring.
- Host more gatherings for sharing of knowledge and best practices in museology.
- Museum staff in various areas of technical expertise should provide outreach support to Indigenous communities to support in-community capacity strengthening.
- Continue to support Indigenous communities with repatriation.
- Bring back the Stewardship Training Program, which was offered in the 1990s, a cohort model.
- Support the research component of the Comprehensive Community Planning for Indigenous communities.

Quotes:

- *Our community has our own cultural centre and we hope to have our own museum, we've updated our repatriation policy, and RBCM can assist with safekeeping for example*
- *Support from RBCM after repatriation will be helpful, with information such as how to put exhibits together*
- *We need information about the staff, who they are and ways they can help us with our research and community priorities*
- *Generally, there is a lack of knowledge of what the museum has and can offer, the behind the scenes is unknown*
- *Ultimately, we want our own museum centers*

Facilities and Operations

Overall the participants provided positive comments regarding their interactions with staff from ICAR and the BC Archives. The feedback and recommendations are focused on systems-level change designed to improve the support and responsiveness to the needs of Indigenous people and communities.

There was strong agreement that the Museum requires significant space and transformation to better reflect Indigenous people and meet their capacity strengthening needs in a culturally relevant and culturally responsive way. Additionally, representatives explained that Indigenous cultures and heritage cannot be “modernized” and the use of technology cannot replace Indigenous people and voices.

The ICAR department has extremely limited resources to respond to the needs of the Indigenous communities. This lack of resources impacts the Indigenous community capacity-strengthening efforts (as a result of the lack of staff, space, and appropriate and modern technology.)

What we heard:

- Increased staffing is required to meet the needs of Indigenous people and to implement the required changes outlined in this report.
- Recruitment and increased diversity in staffing is required to include more Indigenous people in all departments and operations of the Museum.
- Technology should be used to create a more dynamic, engaging, experiential learning experience such as the use of digital tours and interactive technology but not replace Indigenous people for the tours.
- Increased number of Indigenous people from diverse Nations for the tours to appropriately respect Indigenous knowledges and protocols.
- Improve technology and use modern technology such as 3-D printers to create replicas and support learning.

- Address gaps in technology such as the lack of ability to listen to audio files, digitize or make copies in-house or restore poor quality photographs and create high resolution images.
- Install barcodes beside plaques and other displays that can be scanned to learn more information and connect codes to databases.
- Make more digitized content available online.
- Tap into the wealth of knowledge and expertise of long-term staff by establishing mentoring opportunities and job shadowing positions.
- Room is needed to listen to audio and view the photographs and cultural items, there's currently no space for this.
- Acknowledge that Indigenous Nations are experts in their own culture and embed this in museum practice and policies.
- Work with Indigenous communities to make improvements to the Gift Shop to ensure authentic, local and Indigenous arts and culture are appropriately included and represented.
- Establish linkage, connection and inclusion of Indigenous people in other galleries and exhibitions to demonstrate the role and contributions of Indigenous people in the history of the broader society, and to demonstrate that Indigenous people exist in the historical and modern society.
- Align policies and collections between departments to eliminate differing and conflicting policies.
- Provide training and orientation for all staff in cultural safety to address issues of racism and discrimination experienced by visitors to the Museum, to improve cultural competencies and cultural acumen of staff working with Indigenous people and communities in a broad range of areas such as cultural protocol, spiritual and cultural significance of collection items.
- Create more welcoming and culturally safe spaces overall in the entire Museum to improve the look and feel and reduce the institutionalized feeling.

Quotes:

- *More staffing is required at the museum, more funding and more opportunities for our communities to step forward to do the work*
- *RBCM is able to assist with artifacts in community, how to collect and handle them in house*
- *If an Indigenous person is not there for the tour, there is no knowledge and no context then it becomes a different experience*
- *The tour is great but without that person, it's not the same*
- *When I call up, I know who can help me, the staff are very good*
- *Staffing response time is slow due their workload and demand as well as the time it takes to provide the requests*
- *The audio records aren't digitized so I couldn't search online for myself*
- *Copying from archives can be expensive*
- *The Museum needs to show how our lives intersect with non-Indigenous people, they need to eliminate the silos and separation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the rest of the galleries*

Accessibility

Access to the cultural collections is critical for Indigenous people to support their goals and efforts for decolonization across a broad range of issues that include governance, family and community development, identity, and healing.

Catalogue system : inefficient

- More digitization would increase and improve access to the collections that are currently not available to Indigenous communities online.
- An increased number of Indigenous people should be employed at the Museum to ensure accessibility, a welcoming environment, and improved services.
- Streamline the storage of photographs in the collections and archives to reduce duplication, misinformation, and confusion for locating and researching resources.
- Establish an outreach component where the Museum collections can be brought to the Indigenous people, families, clans and Nations who have limited resources to access the collections.
- Establish a regular newsletter to share information with Indigenous communities to keep them apprised of new developments and information.
- Improve physical spaces to ensure accessibility for Elders, seniors and people with disabilities such as wider walk way, wheelchair accessibility, and resting areas.
- Improve lighting for galleries and reduce areas that are too dark.

Relationship with Indigenous People

Indigenous participants echoed the need for the Museum to strengthen the relationship with Indigenous people across the province to effectively address the range of issues articulated in this report. Strengthened relationships will support the improvement of the ongoing operations of the Museum and the modernization project.

What we heard:

- The Museum has a responsibility to include the history of how the cultural items were acquired and the role of the Museum, in the galleries. In the era of Truth and Reconciliation, the truth must be told.
- Any new buildings installed, now and in the modernization process, should be discussed with the Lekwungen people.
- Establish protocol agreements with Indigenous communities that outlines relationship agreements.
- The Museum needs to expand and improve outreach to Indigenous people and communities (this includes more staff), to support a working relationship, cultural understanding and improve accessibility of collections, information and resources.

- The Museum needs to travel to communities to share information about what resources are available.
- Financial resources need to be made available for Indigenous communities to support community priorities.
- Financial resources need to be allocated to support Indigenous community engagement.
- A relationship must be built with all Indigenous people and communities not just those located geographically close to the Museum.
- Establish Cultural Liaison positions to support the relationship building process between the Museum and Indigenous people and communities.
- Establish clear plans for the inclusion and involvement of Elders in the Museum.

Recommendations from the Consultant

The following recommendations build on the voices of First Nations communities, and interviews from the Indigenous Advisory and Advocacy Committee. An overarching recommendation is for the Museum to examine the current operations and the modernization project within the context of the following frameworks:

- Indigenous Rights
- Reconciliation
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

Building on current work being undertaken and relationships established thus far, the recommendations provided here offer an initial framework for the Museum to begin the process of addressing improvements and changes at the systemic level as a mechanism for sustainable systems, policies, and practice, and strengthened relationships for working with and supporting Indigenous communities.

The Museum should work with the Indigenous Advisor and Advocacy Council to:

1. **Establish an Accord:** One that is developed with Indigenous people, that outlines principles and agreements for the relationship that honours Indigenous rights and self-determination as foundational; to embed the commitments at systems level in Museum governance and operations.
2. **Create a Balanced Approach:** Identify mechanisms that ensure there is a balance of the negative history and the truth of the impacts of colonization and assimilation, with the recognition for the strength and resilience of Indigenous people, culture, and teachings.
3. **Work with Indigenous people to examine the intersection of Indigenous Laws with Museum collections.**
4. **Privilege Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Indigenous Languages** as mechanism for equalizing Indigenous technologies with western knowledges; for example, learning about Indigenous conservation methods.
5. **Increase diversity in staffing in senior roles and various levels:** The Museum should recruit for Indigenous senior management positions in the Museum and increase the diversity of staffing to include a greater number of Indigenous people in various roles and levels of the operations.
6. **Establish the Museum as a Learning Institution:** Design curricula with Indigenous people that can be utilized to educate the public, and provide training for staff and Indigenous people, schools and organizations.

7. **Invest Financial Resources:** To address the capacity needs of the Museum internally and the capacity strengthening requirements of the Indigenous communities.
8. **Develop joint projects and commission new work:** New initiatives will strengthen relationships with Indigenous people and demonstrate the living culture of Indigenous people today.
9. **Develop a Communications Plan:** A strategic approach is required to improve communications with communities; the Museum should work with First Nations to develop a plan that is, at a minimum, founded on principles of Indigenous protocols and values, to improve and strengthen relationships with Indigenous people and communities, as well as with community partners.
10. **Strategic Cultural Agility and Cultural Humility for Change Management:** Facilitating a change in behaviours and attitudes that are conducive to working with Indigenous communities in a culturally appropriate and sensitive way, will require a planned approach over the next several years with key outcomes identified. Change will not occur immediately and not everyone will understand the changes; others will be resistant to the change. People will require training, education, and support to implement the changes sincerely and authentically. This training will provide them with the cultural agility and cultural humility competencies required to work with and service Indigenous communities. The Museum should work with Indigenous communities to develop this strategic approach and associated outcomes. The process should build on existing resources developed by the First Nations Health Authority (Cultural Humility) and the Public Health Service Agency (PHSA, San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training). The Museum should also develop museum specific training curricula.
11. **Fund Indigenous Forums:** The Museum should provide funding for annual forums designed to support capacity building for Indigenous communities. The forums could: Bring together governments, partners, and First Nations communities; share information, address gaps and policies, and provide local and regional examples of best practices and success stories.
12. **Review and update the Museum's Strategic Plan to include Indigenous communities, priorities, and deliverables.**
13. **Conduct a review of operational policies and documents :** The Museum should work with Indigenous Advisory and Advocacy Council to review and revise policies with a lens that incorporates UNDRIP and reconciliation.

About the Consultant

Marcia Dawson is Gitxsan and a member of the Dzawada'enuxw Nation. She is from the Lax Gibuu (Wolf clan) and Wilps Haisimsque (house of Chief Haisimsque), her ancestral name is 'Naa-mehl which loosely translated means "to tell" as in "messenger". Marcia holds a Master's Degree in Leadership from Royal Roads University and a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from the University of Victoria.

Marcia has extensive experience in Indigenous governance, community development, and Indigenous community engagement, working with a diverse range of Indigenous organizations, public agencies, non-profit organizations, governments, and post-secondary institutions in BC. She has the political and cultural acumen to navigate and respect the diversity of Indigenous people, histories, cultures, and communities.

Drawing from over twenty years of experience working with Indigenous people and communities as well as with non-Indigenous organizations at the community, provincial, and national levels, Marcia works to advance Indigenous people and equalize Indigenous knowledge systems through bridging Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships. She has recently been offered a job at the Royal Roads University, currently teaches at the University of British Columbia and has taught at the University of Victoria and North Island College in governance and leadership programs. Marcia's work is innovative, strengths-based, action-oriented, and solutions-focused. She is a highly sought-after speaker, trainer, and facilitator. Marcia lives in unceded Lekwungen territory with her four grown sons.

For more information about Marcia visit www.marcia-dawson.com

Appendix A: Invitation Letter to Indigenous Communities

August 13, 2019

Re: Museum Modernization

On behalf of the Royal BC Museum, I extend an invitation for you to join us in dialogue about the modernization of the museum.

On Feb. 12, 2019, the speech from the throne announced government's intention to modernize the Royal BC Museum, to protect its historic holdings and provide better access to its collections.

With the support of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, we will be engaging with First Nations communities and Indigenous people from across BC in a two-phased approach. The first phase is the initial engagement in September 2019 and a broader engagement later in the year.

The following dates are two options available for you to participate in this dialogue:

Date: September 5-6, 2019

OR

Date: September 10-11, 2019

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. both days

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. both days

Location: Royal BC Museum

Location: Royal BC Museum

The purpose of the sessions is to obtain advice, guidance and input regarding the modernization of the museum from an Indigenous perspective and how the museum can be of service and benefit to Indigenous people. The information from the September sessions will inform the development of a business case and broader process of engagement.

A detailed agenda will be provided upon confirmation, and includes a tour of the Indigenous Collections and Archives.

To assist us with our planning, please confirm your acceptance on or before August 23, 2019. Please send your RSVP to:

Marcia Dawson

E: marcia@marcia-dawson.com M: 250.813.2572

For any questions, please contact:

Lucy Bell, Head of Indigenous Collections and Repatriation

lbell@royalbcmuseum.bc.ca

Lou-ann Neel, Repatriation Specialist

Indigenous Collections and Repatriation

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APPENDIX B: Indigenous Community Engagement Agenda

Museum Modernization – Indigenous Community Session

September 5 -6, 2019 and Sept 10-11, 2019

Wawaditla – Mungo Martin Bighouse

Royal BC Museum

Traditional Territory of the Lekwungen (Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations)

675 Belleville Street, Victoria, BC

9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

AGENDA – Day 1

Time	Activity
8:30 a.m.	Arrive, Refreshments: Wawaditla
9:00 a.m.	Welcome and Blessing
	Welcome and Opening Comments – Overview of Museum Modernization
	Welcome and Opening Comments – Overview of Indigenous Departments
	Introductions and Overview of the Two Days
9:30 a.m.	Overview of RBCM - All Departments
	Overview of Indigenous Collections Dept
	Overview of Repatriation
.	Presentation: Indigenous Exhibitions
.	Presentation: Learning Center
10:15 a.m.	Health Break: Wawaditla
10:30 a.m.	Tour: Indigenous Exhibitions
	Tour: BC Archeology Section
12:30 p.m.	Lunch Break: Learning Center
1:30 p.m.	Dialogue: Feedback, Advice and Input
2:30 p.m.	Health Break
2:45 p.m.	Dialogue: Feedback, Advice and Input

3:45 p.m.	Overview of Day 2
3:55 p.m.	Closing Comments

Agenda- Day 2

Time	Activity
8:30 a.m.	Arrive, Refreshments: Wawaditla
9:00 a.m.	Opening Prayer
	Overview of the Day
9:05 a.m.	Tour: Audio-Visual Collections
10:00 a.m.	Tour: Indigenous Collections (Ethnology)
11:00 a.m.	Tour: BC Archives
12:00 p.m.	Lunch: Learning Center
1:00 p.m.	Dialogue: Feedback and Input
2:30 p.m.	Health Break – move to Wawaditla
2:45 p.m.	Dialogue: Recommendations
3:15 p.m.	Next Steps and Closing Comments
3:30 p.m.	Closing Circle

APPENDIX C: Questions for Dialogue

Museum Modernization – Indigenous Community Session

September 5-6, 2019 and September 10-11, 2019

Wawaditla – Mungo Martin Bighouse

Royal BC Museum

Traditional Territory of the Lekwungen (Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations)

675 Belleville Street, Victoria, BC

Questions for Dialogue

Physical

Cultural, Spiritual, Protocol

Service and Access

Capacity Strengthening

Indigenous Rights / Treaty Rights

Questions: Day 1

1:30 (40 minutes)

- Q1 what is your role and interest in the RBCM
- Q2 – HOW IS RBCM CURRENTLY SERVING YOUR NEEDS OR YOUR COMMUNITIES NEEDS?
- Q3 – HOW CAN RBCM BETTER SERVICE YOUR INDIVIDUAL or Nation/Organizational needs? within the context of improved services and access

2:10 (20 minutes)

- Q4. What should the look and feel of RBCM be to reflect Indigenous people, cultures and nations?

2:30 Health Break (15 minutes)

2:45 (60 minutes)

- Q5. What Protocol considerations should RBCM be aware of, consider and honour?
- Q6. What cultural and spiritual considerations should RBCM be aware of, consider and honour?

Questions: Day 2

1:00 (90 minutes)

- Q7. What are your individual /community priorities and how can RBCM support your capacity to address these needs?
- Q8. How can RBCM better support repatriation, what is needed and what can be improved?

2:30 Break (15 minutes)

2:45 (30 minutes)

- Q9. In terms of Indigenous Rights, UNDRIP, Treaty Rights and Reconciliation, what should RBCM understand and consider (20 minutes)
- Q10. What advice do you have for RBCM in the modernization of the museum?

References

- ⁱ Assembly of First Nations, the Canadian Museum Association (1994) Turning the page: Forging new relationships and partnerships between museums and First Peoples. Ottawa, ON. pp. 4-6.
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- ⁱⁱⁱ The Institution on Governance (1997) Summary of the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Ottawa, ON. P. 25.
- ^{iv} Dawson, M. (2019) ła^weyasəns gayułas: Ancestral teachings to reclaim the roles of Kwakwaka'wakw women in governance and leadership. P. 27.
- ^v United Nations (2008) United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. PP. 7-8.
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- ^{vii} The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canadas: Calls to Action. Winnipeg, MB. P. 8-9.
- ^{viii} BC Museums Association (2019) Rod Naknakim Declaration. Indigenous Advisory Council. Retrieved from <http://museumsassn.bc.ca/about-us/council-commitees/indigenous-advisory-council/>