

RESEARCHING INDIGENOUS COLLECTIONS

AT THE ROYAL BC MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES



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The Royal BC Museum and BC Archives together make up the Royal BC Museum Corporation, located in the traditional territories of the Lekwungen peoples. At the museum and archives, we are committed to meaningful and respectful relationships and partnerships with Indigenous nations; co-management, physical and digital repatriation of cultural materials; the return of ancestral remains; and the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action, and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

At the Royal BC Museum, you can access extensive and diverse resources related to the cultures and histories of Indigenous communities, families and individuals in British Columbia.

These resources include objects of tangible and intangible heritage: cultural belongings, historical photographs, audio and visual recordings and documents. They can be viewed online at royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/indigenoucollections, in the exhibitions and also by scheduling visits to the many collections that are not on display.

This guide outlines the collections in the museum and archives, how they can be accessed online and in person and who to contact for advice and assistance. We invite you to review this guide and then visit the museum’s website, royalbcmuseum.bc.ca, to get started (see the Indigenous Collections and Repatriation section and the BC Archives section).



Where are the collections in the museum and archives?

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Royal BC Museum Indigenous Collections and Repatriation department			BC Archives	
Indigenous Collections	Indigenous Audiovisual Collection	BC Archaeology Collection	Government Records	Private Records
Historical and modern cultural objects and related documentation	Photographs; field notes; sound, film and video recordings and transcriptions	Cultural belongings; field records, photographs, maps, faunal material and soil samples, petroglyph rubbings	Provincial and colonial government records	Private, community and business records, which include paintings, photographs, maps, publications, correspondence, diaries, sound and film recordings

Cover: Tsilhqot’in basket, RBCM 2800

Top: Camosun College Indigenous studio arts student Christine LaVallee (*right*), instructor Peter Morin (*centre*), and Royal BC Museum Indigenous collections manager Brian Seymour (*left*) in the Indigenous collections research area.

Right: Indigenous audiovisual collection photo index cards, organized in drawers by cultural linguistic group and location.

MUSEUM COLLECTIONS



The Royal BC Museum Indigenous collections are cared for by the Indigenous Collections and Repatriation (ICAR) department. Staff members in this department are listed at the end of this section.

INDIGENOUS COLLECTIONS

The Indigenous collections consist of approximately 15,000 cultural objects from Indigenous cultures and communities across the province, as well as any related documentation. This includes both historical and modern cultural materials of many kinds, including regalia and ceremonial items, textiles, domestic utensils, traditional clothing, carvings, basketry, prints and other artworks. This extensive collection can be searched online at search-collections.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/indigenoucollections.

For more information about the Indigenous collections, assistance using the database and/or to schedule a visit, please contact Brian Seymour, Indigenous collections manager, or Sheila Sampson, collections assistant.

INDIGENOUS AUDIOVISUAL COLLECTION

The audiovisual collection consists of photographs, audio recordings, films, videos and related documentation.

Photos

This collection contains more than 65,000 images from the 19th and 20th centuries related to Indigenous nations in and around British Columbia. Prints on index cards are organized by community for easy viewing. The collection will be online soon, and visitors can take their own photographs of index cards for personal reference.



To schedule a visit, please contact one of the Indigenous Collections and Repatriation department collection managers.

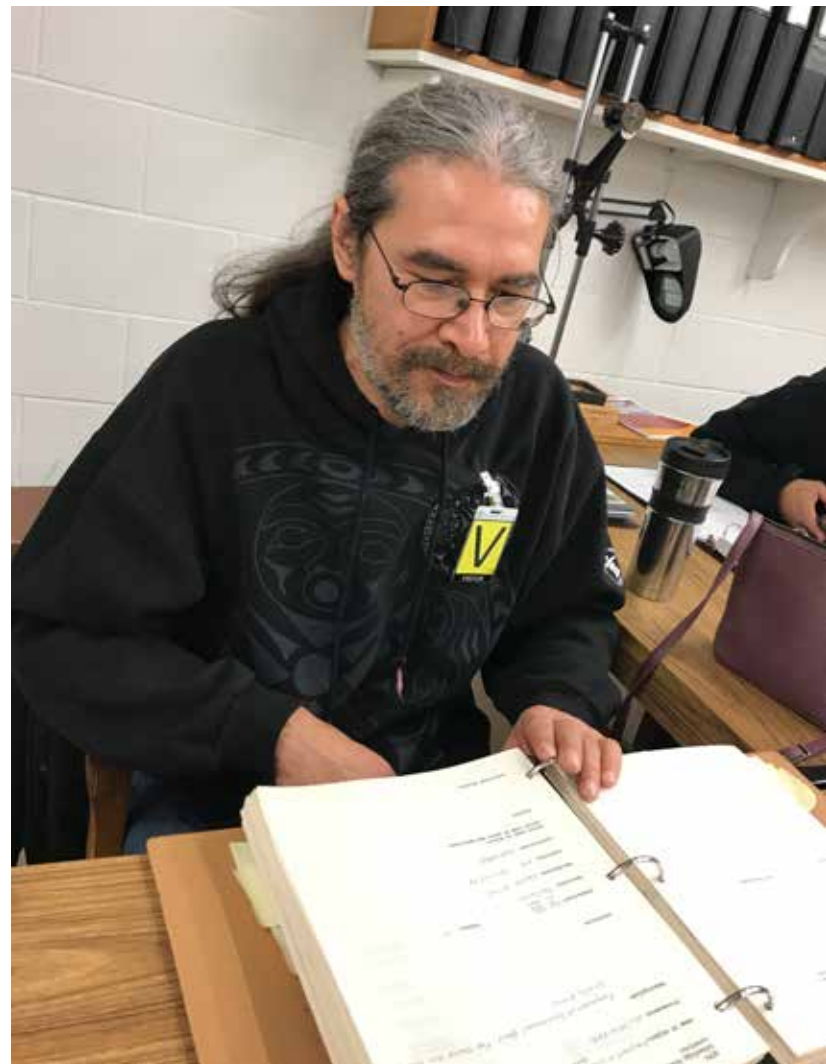
Audiotapes

This collection consists of approximately 3,600 recordings made between the 1950s and the present of Indigenous songs, stories, language teachings, conversations and gatherings. For access to catalogue descriptions of the tapes, please contact any of the Indigenous Collections and Repatriation department collection managers. We will be happy to send the catalogues via email.

Once you have looked through the catalogues and identified any recordings of interest, you can listen to them at the museum by appointment, or order an mp3 or CD copy. If the recordings require written permission from the recorders, speakers or their families, we will let you know how to request this.

Left: Royal BC Museum co-op student Kolin Sutherland-Wilson listening to family recordings of Gitxsan place names in the archives reference room.

Right: Oliver Windsor reviewing Wuikinuxv cultural documentation in the Indigenous audiovisual research area.



Film, Video and DVDs

There are more than 125 film reels, 200 videotapes and 50 DVDs with Indigenous subject matter in the Indigenous audiovisual collection. The majority are available for reference only due to copyright restrictions.

For inquiries related to film, video and DVDs, please contact an Indigenous Collections and Repatriation department collections manager.

BC ARCHAEOLOGY COLLECTION

This collection includes more than 215,000 cultural materials recovered from archaeological sites across the province, as well as field notes, photographs, maps, reports, faunal material and soil samples which have been recovered under permit, and found artifacts that were brought to the museum over the past 130 years.

Most archaeological objects are made from stone, bone, shell and antler, but some are made from wood, plants, leather, glass and metal. The most recent date from the early 20th century; the oldest are more than 9,000 years old. Some of this collection can be searched online at search-collections.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/BCArchaeology.

For help searching the online catalogue, contact Dr. Genevieve Hill, archaeology collections manager.

ANCESTRAL REMAINS

There are approximately 700 ancestral remains in the ICAR department. The Royal BC Museum is actively repatriating them back to their communities. To learn more about repatriating ancestral remains, contact Lou-ann Neel, repatriation specialist.



Top: Archaeology collection manager Dr. Genevieve Hill looking at photos with Indigenous Advisory and Advocacy Committee member Chief Dr. Ron Ignace of the Secwepemc Nation and RBCM Indigenous advisory and Advocacy Committee.

Bottom: Mark Wedge and Jasmine Gatenby with Tagish/Carcross First Nation examining stone, wood and bone tools in the BC Archaeology research area.

For information on repatriation of cultural belongings, please contact any of the Indigenous Collections and Repatriation department collections managers.

INDIGENOUS COLLECTIONS AND REPATRIATION DEPARTMENT STAFF MEMBERS



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Sheila Sampson
Collections Assistant
250-387-4494
ssampson@royalbcmuseum.bc.ca

To contact any of the listed Indigenous Collections and Repatriation department staff by post, write to

Indigenous Collections and Repatriation department
Royal BC Museum
675 Belleville Street
Victoria, BC, V8W 9W2

BC ARCHIVES COLLECTIONS



The BC Archives acquires, preserves and makes publicly accessible the documentary heritage of the province, including collections of historical photographs, documents, sound recordings, film, maps and publications relating to Indigenous peoples and communities. Some of these records are described in the Indigenous Guides, which can be found on our website at royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/bc-archives/tools/guides-indexes-and-inventories.

Some of the photographs, audio recordings and film, video and DVDs in the museum collections are also held in the BC Archives. For best results in finding audiovisual material related to your area of research, please contact both the Royal BC Museum and the BC Archives.

Many records of interest are government records created by settlers about Indigenous communities and people. A number of records contain first-hand Indigenous accounts, including audio recordings of songs and ceremonies, and transcripts of government interviews with Indigenous people. Relevant records include but are not limited to:

- the Ida Halpern fonds (PR-0847)
- the Vancouver Island ('Douglas') Treaties (MS-0772)
- Records relating to the McKenna-McBride commission (GR-1995; GR-3477; MS-1056; GR-1303; MS-0997; MS-1664); and
- Provincial government records and copies of federal government records
- Genealogy records/vital events



Top: Head of Indigenous Collections and Repatriation Lucy Bell in the Indigenous collections. Photo courtesy of UVic Alumni Relations.
Bottom: Dr. Evan Adams viewing records in the Archives reference room.

Reference Guides

The following research guides are available in the BC Archives reference room or on the website at <https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/bc-archives/tools/guides-indexes-and-inven>.

- Resources for First Nations Genealogy Research at the BC Archives
- Archival Evidence in Aboriginal Rights and Title Cases
- First Nations Research Guide
- Fort Victoria Treaties Guide (Vancouver Island or Douglas Treaties)
- Fort Victoria Treaties Correspondence Guide

ACCESSING THE BC ARCHIVES COLLECTIONS

You can search the BC Archives collections online and view digitized records using the catalogues on our website:

- BC Archives Collection search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/
- BC Archives Library royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/bc-archives/what-we-have/library
- Genealogy Database search-collectons.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Genealogy

If you would like to

- speak to one of the archivists
- find out how to make an in-person research visit to the reference room
- order copies of records
- request a BC Archives orientation for your community group
- invite an archivist to your territory to talk about BC Archives services and the records we hold related to your community

Please call the BC Archives at 250-387-1952, email us at access@royalbcmuseum.bc.ca or write to

BC Archives
675 Belleville Street
Victoria, BC V5W 9W2



An archivist (*left*) speaks with the Haida Repatriation Committee; Nathan Charlie, Ahousaht First Nation and Jeanette Jules, Stk'emlupsemc te Secwepemc Nation.