

February 27, 2017

Royal BC Museum receives translations of Douglas Treaties into two local Indigenous languages

Victoria, BC—Saturday, the Royal BC Museum gratefully accepted the gift of translations of the Douglas Treaties, the only treaties signed in southern BC, produced in the years 1849 to 1864.

The translations are in two local **Indigenous languages: SENĆOTEN (Saanich) and Lekwungen (Songhees)**, translated by Elder John Elliott of the Tsartlip First Nation and Elder Elmer George of the Songhees First Nation (native speakers of, **respectively, SENĆOTEN and Lekwungen**).

The translations were commissioned as part of the **past weekend's** symposium, *First Nations, Land, and James Douglas: Indigenous and Treaty Rights in the Colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, 1849-1864*, presented by the Songhees Nation and the **University of Victoria's Faculty of Law** and Department of History.

"We gratefully accept these translations into the BC Archives, where they will provide welcome context and act as a companion for the original Vancouver Island (Douglas) Treaties, especially for Lekwungen and SENĆOTEN speakers," said Royal BC Museum COO and Deputy CEO **Angela Williams**. **"The Royal BC Museum is honoured to be a trusted partner with Indigenous peoples of BC, and making these translations available in our collection will assist researchers in understanding the treaties through the voice of First Nations themselves. These translations are an important legacy for this and future generations of British Columbians and Canadians."**

"The Indigenous translations of the Douglas Treaties are a great legacy from the symposium this weekend and will be available now for generations to come," says John Lutz, chair of UVic's Department of History and a member of the symposium's organizing committee. **"What the translations also provide is a much better understanding about what the Douglas Treaties really meant to the Coast Salish and Straits Salish ancestors who lived on these territories all those years ago."**

The translations will be kept in the BC Archives in perpetuity for the people of BC, alongside the treaties themselves. For many years, researchers, First Nations community members, lawyers and historians have all visited the BC Archives to view and study the Douglas Treaties. Within the next 12 months the translations will be scanned, digitized and uploaded to the BC Archives collection search (search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/), making them accessible to the public.

The Douglas Treaties are 14 treaties negotiated with local First Nations by Vancouver Island governor James Douglas. They are the only formal land title agreements made between First Nations and settler communities during the colonial era in this region. You can find more information about the treaties in our online gallery entry in *One Hundred Objects of Interest*: royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/100/object/vancouver-island-treaties/.

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO is starting a National Memory of the World register this year. The Royal BC Museum will be submitting the Douglas Treaties for inclusion in this register.



About the Royal BC Museum

The Royal BC Museum explores the province's human history and natural history, advances new knowledge and understanding of BC, and provides a dynamic forum for discussion and a place for reflection. The museum and archives celebrate culture and history, telling the stories of BC in ways that enlighten, stimulate and inspire. Looking to the future, the Royal BC Museum will be a refreshed, modern museum, extending its reach far beyond Victoria as a world-class cultural venue and repository of digital treasures.

- 30 -

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