

February 18, 2015

Royal BC Museum reveals significant newly restored artifact for Chinese New Year display

VICTORIA, BC – In celebration of Chinese New Year on Thursday, Feb 19, the Royal BC Museum will display a newly restored artifact significant to the story of Chinese in British Columbia.

A magnificent lion's head from a traditional dance costume will be on display for the first time ever in the third floor lobby of the Royal BC Museum.

The changing styles of lions dance costumes in historical Victoria and Vancouver **Chinatowns over the past century exemplify the persistence of BC's transpacific connections and the Chinese traditional practice of lion dance for celebratory occasions.**

Likely made sometime between the 1940s and the 1970s, the mask's style dates to the early 20th century. The mask is thought to have been originally made in Hong Kong and used in Vancouver's Chinatown, and is part of a dance costume that was formerly owned by the Vancouver Chinese Freemasons Athletic Association.

The mask was acquired by the Royal BC Museum thanks to Thomas E. Stark and Joyce K. Piercy, owners of the Out of the Mist Gallery.

The lion head was in poor condition when received by the Royal BC Museum, owing to its fragile nature and long history of use. Much of the bamboo frame was broken, bent and twisted and the paper, textile and fur were soiled, torn, and missing parts. The lion head could not even be safely stored in this condition.

In May 2013 the Royal BC Museum sent the lion head across the country to Ottawa for treatment at the Canadian Conservation Institute.

Almost two years later and through the efforts of almost a dozen conservators and interns, the Chinese lion head has returned to British Columbia in magnificent shape. Not only is it stable and complete once again, but it has emerged from behind a thick layer of dirt to reveal brilliant colours and glistening fur trim.

The mask will be on display from February 19 to March 6.

Along with the display of the lion head, visitors to the Royal BC Museum on Chinese New Year can enjoy a specially decorated Chinatown in the Old Town gallery, and take part in a 30-minute tour of the Modern History Gallery with a focus on the contributions of the Chinese community to the history of our province.

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, by 2017 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.


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