

May 2, 2023

Witness the resurgence of a lost tradition with *Sacred Journey* at the Royal BC Museum

VICTORIA, BC — Beginning May 5, visitors of the Royal BC Museum are invited to experience the rebirth of Indigenous canoe culture through the *Sacred Journey* travelling exhibit.

An ancient tradition nearly lost to history, *Sacred Journey* tells the story of the repression and resurgence of ocean-going canoes and their vital link to the Indigenous Peoples of the Pacific Northwest.

As told by leaders in today's canoe resurgence, the exhibit shares First Nations and Native American Tribes stories of their healing journey from the harms caused through the colonization of the lands and waters they've called home for millennia.

"The *Sacred Journey* travelling exhibit shares our collective story of how the ocean-going canoe brought sickness and death to our people through epidemics and disease transfer during early colonial period," says Ili Sr. Advisor and Heiltsuk Hereditary Chief, **łáłiyá**, Frank Brown.

"Now as we decolonize, the canoe serves as a vessel of youth and community empowerment that connects us to our culture, language and traditions including moving ourselves towards health and wellness."

Sacred Journey combines art, immersive audio, video displays, and interactive experiences for a breathtaking showcase of the strength and determination of Indigenous culture. The exhibition's centrepiece, a striking canvas canoe with four prominent Heiltsuk clan crests painted by Heiltsuk artist KC Hall, is accompanied by work from two other Heiltsuk artists, Chazz Mack and Ian Reid. Mack designed house posts and paddles to accompany the canoe, while Reid's carved eagle-to-human transformation mask is perfectly poised to greet visitors as they enter the exhibit.

"This project represents an important opportunity to honor First Nation communities by sharing our traditional ways of the canoe journey while respecting each Nations land and culture," says Chief Ron Sam of the Songhees Nation. "The exhibit offers a unique opportunity for audiences to learn and engage with the rich history and ongoing practices of coastal Indigenous communities near and far. Participating in this exhibition is a significant step towards healing for Indigenous communities, and we are proud to be involved."

Featured alongside *Sacred Journey* will be a photo series on **Bákvlá**, a Heiltsuk word that loosely translates as "gathering and harvesting food for winter." The **Bákvlá** photos are interpreted by Heiltsuk elder and residential school survivor Margaret Brown, one of the last fluent Heiltsuk-language speakers in the world.

MEDIA RELEASE

The series is co-produced by the Heiltsuk Nation and co-curated by Frank Brown, Ayla Brown, and Vina Brown, of the Heiltsuk Nation, and William Knight of the Canada Agriculture and Food Museum.

A traditional opening ceremony between members of the ocean-going canoe community and the local First Nations, the Songhees and Esquimalt peoples, is set to take place May 4. Paddlers will journey across Victoria's Inner Harbour before being received by members of the Songhees and Esquimalt nations. A private cultural exchange of words and gifts will also take place at the Royal BC Museum before the exhibit is blessed and opened to the public.

Members of the public and media are welcomed to view the ceremonial paddle journey and welcoming of paddlers onto Songhees and Esquimalt lands, through the cultural exchange and exhibit blessing will be private to the nations. More information on times and locations will be provided closer to the date.

Sacred Journey is produced by SeeQuest Development Co, Greencoast Media, and Heiltsuk Tribal Council, and is open to the public, free of charge, at the Royal BC Museum May 5 through October 29.

— 30 —

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. Located in Victoria on the traditional territory of the Lekwungen (Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations), we are a hub of community connections in BC—on-site, off-site, and online—taking pride in our collective histories.

For tickets to IMAX® Victoria and the Royal BC Museum, including combo tickets for both attractions, visit: [Tickets](#)

Save with early bird pricing when you purchase a membership before April 30: [Membership](#)

For information about visiting the Royal BC Museum, visit: [Plan Your Visit](#)

Media contact:

Sam Rich

Director of Marketing, Communications and Business Development

250-208-9148

srich@royalbcmuseum.bc.ca

Amanda Richardson

Communications Specialist
250-208-8846
arichardson@royalbcmuseum.bc.ca