
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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May 9, 2023

Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport

RBCM's Old Town reopening with new approach

VICTORIA – The popular Old Town gallery will once again be part of the Royal BC Museum (RBCM) experience for visitors when it reopens on July 29, 2023.

“Old Town is beloved by hundreds of thousands of visitors. I know people miss it, are passionate about it and want access to it,” said Lana Popham, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport. “We have heard you. The reopening of Old Town is exciting news for many who have fond memories of previous visits there, and for visitors who will experience it for the first time.”

Visitors to Old Town will see favourite spaces such as the garage, train station, hotel, saloon, parlour, kitchen, print shop and Chinatown preserved as they were. Some spaces, such as the drapery shop, have been emptied to create opportunities for visitors to reimagine the storefront with a new perspective. The Majestic Theatre will not feature its Hollywood silent film rotation and, instead, will present historical footage showcasing the diversity of B.C.'s voices and stories.

“We look forward to welcoming visitors back into Old Town with this new approach,” said Alicia Dubois, CEO, Royal BC Museum. “We’re committed to increasing inclusivity and accessibility to the museum through extensive engagement and co-creation of exhibits with communities, and inviting people back into this space allows further opportunities to do that.”

Visitors to Old Town will now see new contextual panels throughout the gallery that provide background and historical reference. These panels will encourage critical thinking and ignite imagination, encouraging visitors to consider additional stories that could be shared.

The reopening of Old Town is the first phase of a multi-year project to transform RBCM. Each phase will be informed by public engagement that invites people and communities to consider how spaces like Old Town and the First Peoples' Gallery can be more relevant, inclusive and engaging.

Several areas of the third floor will not be accessible to visitors, such as the Becoming BC Gallery that includes the ship, the gold mine, the farm and the cannery. The First Peoples' Gallery is closed as the space is being used to host engagement sessions with Indigenous communities. The area that had the Century Hall and Our Living Languages exhibits will be used to host SUE: The T. rex Experience that will be open June 16, 2023.

Learn More:

More information about the Royal BC Museum: <https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/>

A backgrounder follows.

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BACKGROUND

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Old Town, RBCM transforming

- Old Town, part of the former Becoming BC modern history gallery, was closed in January 2022 as work began to engage with communities to share a more comprehensive and diverse telling of B.C.'s story and increase inclusivity at the museum.
- Since January 2023, the museum has been engaging with communities throughout British Columbia.
- As of April 15, 26 dialogue sessions have taken place in person and online.
- More than 1,300 British Columbians participated.
- Progress updates are available on the museum's website.
- The feedback received will inform future development and changes to make exhibits more relevant, inclusive and engaging.
- Beginning June 2, 2023, RBCM will be extending its open hours on Fridays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. until 10 p.m.

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