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Jonathan Hunt House and Our Living Languages reopen to visitors at the Royal BC Museum

VICTORIA, BC — The Royal BC Museum is reopening two exhibits in the First Peoples Gallery to visitors starting today. Jonathan Hunt House, a museum installation and real ceremonial house, and a version of *Our Living Languages*, an exhibit created in partnership with the First Peoples' Cultural Council, have been updated and refreshed in advance of the openings.

"The museum is honoured to once again open the doors to Jonathan Hunt House and *Our Living Languages*," says Tracey Drake, CEO of the Royal BC Museum. "These spaces on the museum's third floor share important Indigenous stories and this work is a reflection of the museum's continued commitment to the *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* by delivering unique experiences for British Columbians."

The third floor of the museum originally closed to the public in January 2022, when work began to update and expand the cultural narratives of the museum's third floor galleries, which were originally created in the 1960s and 1970s. Old Town reopened with a new approach in July 2023, and the reopening of *Our Living Languages* and Jonathan Hunt House are the first thoughtful and collaborative steps towards fully reopening the First Peoples Gallery.

"The Jonathan Hunt House and *Our Living Languages* are integral to our shared history, and we know people are excited to experience some of the Indigenous languages of BC and the important ceremonial house of the late Jonathan Hunt once again," says Lana Popham, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport. "It's exciting to see the Royal BC Museum continue to reopen exhibits that tell the stories of our province's history."

For the remaining areas of the First Peoples Gallery, including Totem Hall, the museum has brought together representatives from First Nations and Indigenous communities across the province to partner on the gallery's future. The committee currently consists of representatives from six of the seven major First Nations language families in BC.

The museum is fully committed to ensuring significant thought and attention is given, working alongside communities to reopen the gallery to the public.

About the Jonathan Hunt House

This ceremonial house and museum installation allows visitors to enter a recreation of the house of Chief Kwakwabalasami, the late Jonathan Hunt, a Kwakwaka'wakw chief who was born and lived his life in the community of Tsaxis, near Fort Rupert, BC.

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To refresh the space, the museum brought in master carver and artist Richard Hunt, Jonathan Hunt's grandson, who helped his father with the original installation in 1977.

"I have great memories of working at the Royal BC Museum because all I ever wanted to do was work with my dad, Henry Hunt, and my wish came true," says Richard. "When I was made my dad's assistant, he decided it was time for him to leave because he had fulfilled a commitment he had with Mungo Martin to always have a Kwagwiltz carving at Thunderbird Park. It was great to be back working at the museum and it was an honour to restore these family treasures."

With help from Jason Hunt, Richard's nephew and grandson of the late chief, this is the first time the space has been repainted since it first opened. Included in the repainting are the house posts, chief seats, dance screen, log drum and welcome figure.

About *Our Living Languages*

Developed in partnership with the First Peoples' Cultural Council, *Our Living Languages* shares the history of First Nations languages in BC, the beauty and complexity of these languages, and the people working tirelessly to document and revitalize them.

"*Our Living Languages* celebrates the incredible diversity of First Nations languages in British Columbia and acknowledges the language revitalization work of the First Peoples of this land," says Tracey Herbert, Chief Executive Officer with the First Peoples' Cultural Council. "BC is a global hotspot for language diversity, with over 50 per cent of Canada's Indigenous languages located here. The language data included in the updated exhibit is a demonstration of the innovative work of the BC First Nations language champions who are acknowledged in Canada and around the world as leaders in community-based language revitalization models and strategies. We invite visitors and people from BC to learn more about this important work and the First Nations languages of this land."

The exhibit, which was originally developed in consultation with First Nations communities, first opened to the public in 2014 and was followed by the creation of a number of smaller travelling exhibitions that began touring the province in 2017.

The *Our Living Languages* exhibit has been redesigned in a new space and features updated information about the resurgence of First Nations languages in BC, including the addition of two languages that have recently been recognized. These include pentl'atch, which has moved from a sleeping to a living language, and Klallam, to bring the list of BC First Nations languages to 36. Data has also been updated for all languages to reflect the findings of the First Peoples' Cultural Council's 2022 *Report on the Status of BC First Nations Languages*.

The First Peoples' Cultural Council is a First Nations-led Crown Corporation with the mandate to support the revitalization of First Nations languages, arts, cultures and heritage in BC.

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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 territory of the *ləkwəŋən* (Lekwungen) peoples, known today as the Songhees and Esquimalt 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](#)

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