



June 23, 2021

Royal BC Museum and Sisters of St. Ann reach new agreement to facilitate the sharing of SSA records with Indigenous communities

VICTORIA, BC—Today, the Royal BC Museum and the Sisters of St. Ann (SSA) announced that they have signed a memorandum of understanding that will provide enhanced access of the SSA's private archival records to the Royal BC Museum and to the Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre (IRSHDC) at UBC.

"All archives from organizations that were involved with residential schools can play a role in the process of truth-finding and reconciliation," **says Dr. Daniel Muzyka**, Board Chair and Acting CEO of the Royal BC Museum. "**Expediting** access to the SSA records to Indigenous communities is a positive step along this path."

"**We affirm our commitment to collaborate in finding the truth and will assist in the process in whatever way we can,**" **says Sister Marie Zarowny**, President and Board Chair of The Sisters of St. Ann. "**It is of the utmost importance to us to contribute, in any way possible, to transparency and accessibility, and participate in activities that can lead to healing and reconciliation.**"

The MOU identifies that Indigenous community needs are at the centre of the process of reviewing the SSA records.

A priority is making Indian Residential School¹ records and associated records that contain information about SSA involvement at residential schools accessible to Indigenous communities—including goals to share the records digitally. **This MOU will make the SSA records accessible to Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc**, as requested.

Staff at the BC Archives will work with the IRSHDC, as a neutral third party, to begin the process of auditing the SSA holdings soon after July 1, 2021, when the MOU will take effect.

¹ The term *Indian Residential School* is the formal descriptor as used by the federal government. Although outdated, we have chosen to retain *Indian* to differentiate schools intended for Indigenous children from other boarding or residential schools where the Sisters of St Ann served.

The MOU will remain in effect until all the work of reviewing and processing the records is complete and the SSA archives are transferred to the BC Archives at the Royal BC Museum.

Both IRSHDC and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) will work with the signatories to ensure transparency and support access.

Underpinning the MOU is an acknowledgement by both signatories to undertake this work in the spirit of and according to the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, the United Nations Joint-Orentlicher Principles and the B.C. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act.

Finally, the MOU acknowledges both parties' desire to accelerate the complete transfer of the SSA archives to the BC Archives in 2025 when the Collections and Research Building opens. The transfer of all records held by the SSA Archives was originally scheduled to occur in 2027.

You can read a copy of the MOU at royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/assets/MOU-signed-by-RBCM-and-Sisters-of-St-Ann_June-21-2021.pdf

Photos of the MOU signing are available at www.flickr.com/gp/36463010@N05/5Xa1a4

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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 traditional territory of the Lekwungen (Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations), we are a hub of community connections in BC—onsite, offsite and online—taking pride in our collective histories.

About The Sisters of St. Ann: The Sisters of St. Ann were founded in 1850 by Blessed Marie Anne Blondin in Vaudreuil, Quebec and have served in the Pacific Northwest since 1858. After their arrival, the Sisters staffed over 30 schools and opened 10 hospitals throughout BC, the Yukon and Alaska. Their history parallels

that of British Columbia, which is what led to the deposit and planned transfer of their archives to the BC Archives at the Royal BC Museum.

Media contacts:

Royal BC Museum: news@royalbcmuseum.bc.ca

Sisters of St. Ann: trisha@replab.ca