

June 25, 2021

## Royal BC Museum publishes new book about the life of a Cowichan elder

VICTORIA, BC—The Royal BC Museum has published *What Was Said to Me: The Life of Sti'tum'atul'wut, a Cowichan Woman*, by linguist Ruby Peter, in collaboration with Helene Demers.

*What Was Said to Me* blends memoir, oral history and ethno-autobiography into a narrative of resistance and resilience, spanning seven decades in the life of an advocate for Indigenous language preservation.

**"This first-person oral history is the first of its kind published by the Royal BC Museum,"** says Mischelle vanThiel, Vice President of Inclusion and Community Engagement at the Royal BC Museum. "It is a remarkable narrative about a remarkable person who dedicated her life to maintaining and sharing her language."

*"What Was Said to Me* is a beautiful and generous gift our Aunty, **Sti'tum'atul'wut, has shared with us,"** says Samaya Jardey, Director of Language and Cultural Affairs, Squamish Nation. "It is rich with teachings from beginning to end. It is an example of the love she had for the people."

*What Was Said to Me* documents a period of profound social change through **the lens of Sti'tum'atul'wut**—also known as Dr. Ruby Peter—a Cowichan elder **who made it her life's work to share and safeguard Hul'q'umi'num'**, the language of her people.

**Sti'tum'atul'wut mentored hundreds of students and teachers and helped thousands of people to develop a basic knowledge of the Hul'q'umi'num'** language.

She contributed to dictionaries and grammars, and helped assemble a valuable corpus of stories, sound and video files, with more than 10,000 pages of texts **from Hul'q'umi'num'** speakers. **Sti'tum'atul'wut** was the associate editor of *The Cowichan Dictionary*.

In 1997, Vancouver Island University anthropologist Helene Demers recorded **Sti'tum'atul'wut's life stories over nine sessions**. She prepared the transcripts for **publication in close collaboration with Sti'tum'atul'wut' and her family**.



Although **Sti'tum'atul'wut** passed away on January 8, 2021, just a few months before her book rolled off the press, she consulted closely on every stage of editing and image collection. Royalties from the book now go to **Sti'tum'atul'wut's family**.

*What Was Said to Me* retails for \$24.95 as a trade paperback and \$11.99 as an ebook. The 224-page book is available through local bookshops, the Royal Museum Shop and online at [rbc.ca/books](http://rbc.ca/books).

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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 Royal BC Museum's **Publishing department**: Since the first publication in 1891, the Royal BC Museum has released hundreds of works on diverse subjects, bringing the human and natural history of our province to life in exciting, innovative and personal ways.

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