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## The Royal BC Museum acquires china set once owned by Captain James Cook's widow, Elizabeth Cook

**Victoria, BC** — In 1778, when British navigator Captain James Cook and his crew landed at the Mowachaht summer encampment in Nootka Sound called Yuquot, they were the first recorded Europeans to set foot on what we now commonly refer to as Vancouver Island.

**Reflecting Cook's preeminence** as a colonial explorer, seaman, and cartographer of the west coast, the Royal BC Museum has a number of artifacts related to Cook in its collections, which in their entirety help outline a rough character sketch of the man.

Today, the Royal BC Museum adds more colour and context to this portrait, as it gratefully accepts the transfer of a **20-piece set of dessert china, once owned by Cook's widow, Elizabeth Cook (née Batts)**, from the City of Victoria.

"As the Royal BC Museum heads into its 130<sup>th</sup> year, we continue to add remarkable treasures, like this china set, to our collections, helping tell the story of British Columbia from all dimensions," **says Prof. Jack Lohman, CEO of the Royal BC Museum.** "We know volumes about Captain Cook, but it is important to consider, question and explore our assumptions about his domestic life – and this china can be a window into this colonial history."

"It has been said that Elizabeth Cook's life was measured out in tragedy as her husband's life was celebrated in achievement and accolades," **says Mayor Lisa Helps from the City of Victoria.** "At the age of 50 she had outlived all of her six children. She went on to live for another 43 years. The china collection serves as an interesting reminder of the expected role of women less than two hundred years ago, **notwithstanding their formidable courage and character.**"

The acquisition builds upon the **Royal BC Museum's** strong collection of artifacts and archival records relating to Captain Cook, including medals, a model of his ship the *Endeavour*, a copy of his second voyage draft log and even the dagger reputedly used to kill him.

One of the more interesting items is a "Book of Polynesian Cloth Samples Collected on **Cook's Voyages**", a rare volume held in the BC Archives, containing cloth collected **during Cook's voyages** in the South Seas (1776-1780). The volume is featured in the **Royal BC Museum's online gallery, 100 Objects of Interest:**

[royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/100/object/book-of-polynesian-cloth-samples-collected-on-cooks-voyages/](http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/100/object/book-of-polynesian-cloth-samples-collected-on-cooks-voyages/).

### 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. Looking to the future, the Royal BC Museum will be a refreshed, modern museum, extending its reach far beyond Victoria as a world-class cultural venue and repository of digital treasures.

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