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The Royal BC Museum offers a new tool for genealogical researchers

VICTORIA, BC – The BC Archives has long been a go-to destination for serious genealogists, as it holds birth and death records that confirm milestone events in many BC family histories.

Now the Royal BC Museum has added another tool to the BC Archives database: 9,705 Pioneer Medallion applications, all scanned, digitized and easily searchable at search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/pioneer-medallion-application-forms-2.

In 1971 the BC government launched a project to celebrate the centennial of **BC's entry into Confederation**. BC residents who were either born or living in Canada before 1897 were encouraged to complete applications to receive what government called Pioneer Medallions.

“The digitization of the Pioneer Medallion applications is simply the most recent in a long and continuous line of services the BC Archives offers BC citizens,” **says** Royal BC Museum COO and Deputy CEO Angela Williams. “**Just** last week the BC Archives updated its genealogy search website to include the Death Registration index and images for the 1994 and 1995 Vital Statistics **release.**”

Access to digitized scans of these kinds of records can help British Columbians discover hitherto unknown **details of their ancestors' lives**. For example, the Pioneer Medallion application forms can include details as varied and revealing as the name of the “pioneer”, date and place of birth, maiden names of wives and mothers, and the names of brothers and sisters.

The forms are often a rich source of previously unknown family names that can then be used to search for further information on **the BC Archives' Genealogy** database (search-collections.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Genealogy).

Despite the decidedly colonial nomenclature of the Pioneer Medallion program, the database suggests First Nations peoples submitted applications. The forms indicate that **the concept of a “pioneer” may have been** surprisingly fluid and welcoming in 1971.

Investigating genealogy, and helping BC residents understand the tools available to them at the BC Archives, will be a feature of the Royal BC



Museum's feature exhibition, *Families: Bonds and Belongings*, opening June 2, 2017.

Prior to his retirement, provincial archivist Gary Mitchell initiated a project to scan the Pioneer Medallion application forms with two dedicated volunteers but the sheer volume of the project kept it from completion. Starting again recently, the BC Archives team pressed forward with finishing this massive project.

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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