



huu ay aht

ANCIENT SPIRIT, MODERN MIND



November 18, 2016

### **Huu-ay-aht Citizens to Witness Return of Nations' Cultural Treasures and their Display at Anacla Government Office**

ANACLA, BC – Huu-ay-aht First Nations is preparing for the return of 17 artworks and cultural treasures that have been in the Royal BC Museum's collections and on public display for more than a century.

On Friday, November 18, as part of the historic [Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement](#), completed in 2011 with the governments of British Columbia and Canada, the Huu-ay-aht will reclaim some of their cultural heritage and art from the Museum in a physical and legal transfer.

The 17 Huu-ay-aht cultural treasures (one of which has 37 individual components) will be brought home from the Royal BC Museum for a ceremonial welcome and will be displayed for Huu-ay-aht citizens at their annual People's Assembly in Port Alberni, November 18 - 20, 2016. The cultural treasures will then be taken to the Nation's traditional territory for permanent public display at the Huu-ay-aht Government Office in Anacla, near Bamfield, B.C., on the West Coast of Vancouver Island.

When the items arrive they will be officially handed over to Huu-ay-aht and a cleansing ceremony will take place. This is an important and historic moment for the Nation.

It has been more than 100 years since some of these cultural treasures left Huu-ay-aht's territory, and it is with excitement that the Nation will re-awaken the treasures and bring them home.

"The return of these cultural treasures is a clear sign of reconciliation that will not only help us heal our ancient spirit, but it will also revive it," explained Huu-ay-aht Chief Councillor Robert J. Dennis Sr. "As a Nation, we look forward to the treasures coming home."

It is also an exciting time for the museum, marking the end of a journey for these historic items.

"The Royal BC Museum has held these treasures in trust for their rightful owners, who are now taking them back to their place of origin and deepest meaning, their cultural home," said Royal BC Museum CEO Prof. Jack Lohman. "We hope that this act of repatriation will inspire other museums to do the same in the spirit of reconciliation."

This is the first transfer of artifacts to be completed under the terms of the Maa-nulth Final Agreement. In total, 51 Huu-ay-aht cultural treasures from the Royal BC Museum collections catalogue are named in the Maa-nulth Final Agreement for return to the Huu-ay-aht.

Of the 51 cultural treasures identified, the other 34 will remain at the Royal BC Museum until the Huu-ay-aht First Nations request their transfer.

“The Province is committed to work with First Nations, community by community, to create positive economic and social change,” explained John Rustad, Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation. “Huu-ay-aht First Nations’ cultural treasures play an integral role in the continuation of their culture, values and traditions, and the Province is committed to doing everything it can to reunite interested Aboriginal peoples with their cultural belongings.”

The attached backgrounder provides photographs and descriptions of the 17 cultural treasures that are planned for return to the Huu-ay-aht People’s Assembly on Friday, November 18, 2016. We invite you to attend the ceremony being held at the Alberni Athletic Hall on Saturday, November 19, 2016 from 12 – 2 p.m.

### **About the Huu-ay-aht First Nations**

Huu-ay-aht First Nations is a self-governing Nation, whose lands are located in the Barkley Sound at the entrance to the Alberni Inlet. Huu-ay-aht First Nations is a member of the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council and one of the five First Nations signatories to the Maa-nulth Final Agreement, the first modern-day treaty to be concluded on Vancouver Island, which came into effect April 1st, 2011.

Of the approximately 750 Huu-ay-aht citizens, 15 per cent reside around the village of Anacla, the Nation’s principal community close to Bamfield. The remaining 85 per cent live in Port Alberni, the Vancouver area, across Vancouver Island and beyond. The Huu-ay-aht have full ownership and jurisdiction over more than 8,200 hectares of land within their territories and continue to have rights throughout their ḥahuuḥi (ha-houlthee - traditional territories).

Huu-ay-aht is governed by a modern electoral system that includes a Chief Councillor and five councillors. In addition to honouring its Modern Mind, it continues to respect its Ancient Spirit by involving their Ḥawiiḥ (Hereditary) Council in all decision making.

For more information about Huu-ay-aht First Nations, visit [www.huuayaht.org](http://www.huuayaht.org).

### **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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