

June 5, 2020

## The Royal BC Museum digitizes an historic ledger documenting decisions by the Indian Reserve Commission

**VICTORIA, BC**– The Royal BC Museum has acquired and digitized a rare book from 1876 that documents decisions between the Joint Provincial and Federal Indian Reserve Commission and Indigenous Elders and Chiefs on lands that were later designated as reserves on the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island.

“This volume, which reflects the process of colonialism, is the official record of meetings and dates of decisions at each community,” said **Prof. Jack Lohman**, CEO of the Royal BC Museum. **“The Royal BC Museum anticipates the volume will be of great interest to Indigenous communities in BC documented within, and we will ensure all British Columbians have access to the contents.”**

“It is an interesting read, providing new insight into the work of the Joint Reserve Commission,” said Dianne Hinkley, research director for the Cowichan Tribes and a member of the Royal BC Museum’s Indigenous Advisory and Advocacy Committee.

**“Library and Archives Canada (LAC) wishes to acknowledge the importance of the Museum’s acquisition of Volume 1 of the *Journal of Proceedings* of the Indian Reserve Commission,”** said Leslie Weir, Librarian and Archivist of Canada. **“To mark the occasion, LAC has digitized Volume 2 as part of its We Are Here: Sharing Stories initiative and acknowledges the significance of these two volumes for recognizing the history of First Nations in British Columbia. LAC aims to increase access to Indigenous-related content in its collection as part of its commitment to move forward on the path toward reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation.”**

The Joint Indian Reserve Commission was established in 1875 by the governments of Canada and British Columbia to fix the boundaries of Indian Reserves in BC.

The Royal BC Museum believes that no other copy of Volume 1 of the *Journal of Proceedings* of the Indian Reserve Commission exists.

The volume comprises daily entries, from November 1876 to June 1877, by the three-person committee (Alexander Caulfield Anderson, Archibald McKinlay, and Gilbert Malcom Sproat) who met with Indigenous communities on the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island to discuss the creation of reserves.

The **volume’s** core information is preserved elsewhere in official records, but the document was not microfilmed or digitized until now, by the BC Archives.



Staff have photographed, digitized and described the contents (i.e. captured, collated, analyzed and organized the information), and the digitized version of the journal is available to the public at [search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/joint-indian-reserve-commission-journal-of-proceedings-volume-i](http://bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/joint-indian-reserve-commission-journal-of-proceedings-volume-i).

A finding aid, listing all the Indigenous communities visited by the Commission, is also available at [https://search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Document/Finding\\_Aids\\_Atom/GR-3501\\_to\\_GR-4000/GR-3732.pdf](https://search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/Document/Finding_Aids_Atom/GR-3501_to_GR-4000/GR-3732.pdf).

Additionally, a comprehensive webpage about this volume is available at: [royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/100/object/joint-indian-reserve-commission-journal-of-proceedings-vol-i/](http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/100/object/joint-indian-reserve-commission-journal-of-proceedings-vol-i/)

Library and Archives Canada (LAC) holds a copy of Volume 2, and a digitized version is available at: <http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.redirect?app=fonandcol&id=2034768&lang=eng>.

The first quarter of Volume 1 contains several small coloured ink drawings of reserves on the mainland. The few maps that do occur for Vancouver Island are more roughly sketched in black ink, likely by a different person. At various points in the volume, correspondence and accounts of statements by Indigenous peoples, settlers, and personal letters have been placed between pages.

The Royal BC Museum purchased the ledger for \$15,000 from a private seller in late 2018.

### **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 histories, 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.**

- 30 -

#### **Media contact:**

Royal BC Museum Media Inquiries  
[news@royalbcmuseum.bc.ca](mailto:news@royalbcmuseum.bc.ca)

 @RoyalBCMuseum  [royalbcmuseum](https://www.instagram.com/royalbcmuseum)  [RoyalBCMuseum](https://www.facebook.com/RoyalBCMuseum)