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The Royal BC Museum takes pole position with new carving program

VICTORIA, BC—Today, the Royal BC Museum announced the launch of a new on-site pole carving program, in partnership with the BC Ministry of Health and sponsored by TimberWest.

Artists Tom and Perry LaFortune, brothers and members of the Tsawout First Nation, will be preparing the pole offsite in coming weeks, roughing out its **general shape before bringing the pole to Royal BC Museum's outdoor upper plaza in mid-July.**

The LaFortune brothers will be at the museum until early October, carving the roughly seven and a half metre (25 feet) long piece of timber into a finished pole. Together with the LaFortune brothers, the Ministry of Health selected the **pole's theme, "Crossing Cultures and Healing". The Ministry will raise the pole this October at its Victoria headquarters as a reflection and reminder of the Ministry's belief in supporting reconciliation.**

"At the heart of the Ministry of Health's programs and services is a desire to provide a culturally safe, respectful space for healing," said Health Minister Adrian Dix. **"The totem is a symbol of our shared desire to support reconciliation."**

"It is a tremendous gift to receive such close and constant access to Indigenous artists at work on a complex project," said Royal BC Museum CEO Prof. Jack Lohman. **"The Royal BC Museum is thrilled to invite the public to witness this act of artistic creation."**

"We are honoured to work with the Royal BC Museum and the Ministry of Health in support of the carving program," said Jeff Zweig, President and CEO of TimberWest. **"Visitors come to Victoria from around the world and the Royal BC Museum is a top destination for people seeking to better understand the history and culture of First Nations in BC. The real-time pole carving by renowned indigenous artists will provide the public with an exceptional experience to complement the world-class exhibits in the museum."**

"I'm thrilled that this project is happening at the Royal BC Museum," said Lisa Beare, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture. **"BC is recognized as a world leader in Indigenous tourism. The chance to watch the creation of a new totem pole under the masterful talents of Indigenous artists in our province provides an extraordinary experience for residents and visitors. Projects like this further enhance BC's reputation as a destination for authentic cultural experiences."**

Access to the carving station will be free, and the LaFortune brothers will be discussing their work and providing interpretation. Staff from the Royal BC



Museum will be on hand to answer questions if the LaFortune brothers need to focus and are occupied with carving.

Over the summer, the public will also be able to track the progress of the pole carving on Royal BC Museum social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) and a dedicated webpage: <http://rbcm.ca/pole>. Scheduled carving times will be included on the page in mid-July, closer to the date of the pole's arrival on-site.

The pole was donated by TimberWest and selected by the LaFortune brothers, who were nominated as the program master carvers during early consultations with the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations, on whose traditional territory the museum sits.

The Royal BC Museum is also the **showcase venue for TimberWest's *First Nation Cultural Art Showcase*** program. Artists from Tsaxis, Wei-Wai-Kum, Sechelt and Snuneymux will engage the public in an immersive art experience in the outdoor upper plaza of the Royal BC Museum for a week in mid-July, and showcase their pieces in a two-week art show at the Royal BC Museum in September. Additional details will be forthcoming.

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 TimberWest

TimberWest is certified to the Progressive Aboriginal Relations program of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. The company is also third-party certified under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and has been operating on the BC Coast for over 100 years. TimberWest is a Canadian company owned by two major Canadian public service pension funds.

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