



**WE'RE NOT THE MUSEUM WE WANTED TO BE, AND NOT THE MUSEUM WE SHOULD BE:
DANIEL MUZYKA, CHAIR, ROYAL BRITISH COLUMBIA MUSEUM**

VICTORIA, BC (June 29, 2021): The Chair of the Royal British Columbia Museum, Daniel Muzyka, today apologized to Lucy Bell and all those who were mistreated by the 135-year-old provincial museum.

“To be frank, these two reports show that we are not the museum we wanted to be ... and we’re not the museum we should be,” explained Muzyka as he released the Museum’s 33-page Report to British Columbians. The report highlights the findings of the Public Service Agency’s (PSA) evidentiary investigation into reports of racism and racial discrimination by Lucy Bell, Head of Indigenous Collections and Repatriation, and the results of an internal inclusion and psychological safety audit.

Initiated by the Museum, the combined findings of the PSA investigation and the staff audit conclude:

- There have been acts of racism and discrimination at the Museum, with Indigenous team members subjected to acts of discriminatory behaviour;
- Museum leadership did not effectively handle the behaviour and conditions that fostered these acts.
- The Museum did not move fast enough to apply the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) to every aspect of the organization, from governance and staffing, to collections and exhibits;
- Equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility principles were not given the necessary priority and resources;
- Core human history exhibits are outdated and narrowly focused on the province’s European colonial past;
- The museum is viewed by many staff as a toxic workplace characterized by a culture of fear and distrust.
- The Museum is under-resourced given the requirements of the Museum Act, its mandate from government, and management’s stated goals. This mismatch made matters worse.

“If there is any place where every person in British Columbia should feel welcome and acknowledged it should be right here in their museum, the place where everyone’s story and history should matter,” added Muzyka. “Regrettably, that has not been the case, and Lucy Bell’s truth telling has gone a long way to showing just how much work we have to do to earn back the trust and confidence of the people and communities we serve.”

Muzyka said the Museum cannot outrun its colonial past or the way it treated people but can use it to build a better future.

“What happened at the Museum is not about one incident or a single individual, it is an issue for the entire Museum and that’s where the responsibility belongs,” explained Muzyka. “The Museum’s current redevelopment and modernization plans are a chance to make systemic changes, including talking with different communities about how to share all the stories of the peoples in BC.”

The Museum’s Board of Directors is committed to making things right, and some of that work has already started. Ongoing and upcoming modernization changes at the Museum include:

- Ensuring the Museum’s operations are aligned with the province’s commitment to the principles of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA);
- A new state-of-the-art Collections and Research Building in Colwood will house the Museum’s research department, BC Archives, and collections, providing community increased access to the Museum’s holdings which exceed seven million in number and many kilometres of archival materials;
- Recruiting a new CEO and filling other vacancies in the executive team;
- Embedding equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility goals, protocols and reporting into all areas of the organization;
- Replacing outdated core galleries with new exhibits and galleries that include the voices and history of all the peoples in today’s British Columbia;
- Modernizing the museum site downtown, while the full scope of project hasn’t been determined yet, it is expected to have a decision later this year.

“Since its creation in 1886, the Museum has been a colonial organization that has inadequately showcased the whole story of the peoples of BC,” acknowledged Muzyka. “Modernization, with the support of the provincial government, community stakeholders, and the people we serve, will help us make the necessary changes that will shape us going forward.

“We need to bring British Columbians into the conversation about the future of their museum. After all, the story of this region belongs to all of us, and we should tell it together.”

Full report: <https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/about/focus-change>

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