

March 29, 2017

**The Royal BC Museum and First Peoples' Cultural Council host
First Nations Repatriation Symposium**

Syilx Territory, KELOWNA, BC - Today, on the traditional lands of the Syilx (Okanagan Nation) People, the Royal BC Museum and the First Peoples' Cultural Council will convene an international audience to discuss the subject of the repatriation of Indigenous ancestral remains, sacred objects and intangible cultural heritage.

For the Royal BC Museum, the symposium is an opportunity to listen to the perspectives of First Nations in BC, learning what their priorities are regarding repatriation.

"This is the time to sit down with First Nations from across the province and hear the full range of experiences, expectations and desires about repatriation," said Royal BC Museum CEO Prof. Jack Lohman. "Additionally, we have assembled a dynamic group of repatriation experts from BC and around the world that we hope will be a resource for Indigenous communities mapping out their repatriation plans."

"We are excited to come together at this event to talk about the First Nations point of view on heritage and repatriation," said Tracey Herbert, CEO at the First Peoples' Cultural Council. "We hope that the outcome will be very forward-thinking and allow policy makers to respond to the unique needs of First Nations in BC. Our knowledge-keepers are the experts and we look forward to receiving their direction on what investments should be made in order to protect and revitalize our cultural heritage."

"The Province remains committed to supporting Indigenous peoples seeking the return of their ancestral remains and belongings of cultural significance," said Hon. Peter Fassbender, Minister of Community, Sport and Cultural Development. "By bringing together delegates with deep experience and a range of perspectives, this symposium is an important step in the healing journey of repatriation in B.C."

Attending the symposium might be the first step for some First Nations communities considering repatriation, and may facilitate the development of a systematic approach to repatriation. For other Indigenous communities in BC, it's a chance to share their experiences as repatriation trail-blazers.

Symposium attendees include Indigenous organizations, cultural practitioners, scholars and international museum and archives professionals.

45 different Indigenous leaders, museum professionals, First Nations artists and repatriation specialists will speak at a number of plenary sessions and presentations. These include Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, Aroha Mead from the National Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, artist Lou-Ann Neel and Jennifer Carpenter from the Heiltsuk Cultural Education Centre.

The symposium comes a week after the Royal BC Museum signed an MOU with the Czech National Museum, a collaboration that, in part, allows the Royal BC Museum and Indigenous partners to explore the full range of the Czech collections of "Canadiana."

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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