

**Groundbreaking B.C. First Nations–led research reveals the history of repatriation in B.C. and the path to bring thousands of Ancestors and Belongings home**

**Media Backgrounder**

**June 25, 2025**

**About *From Stealing to Healing: Repatriation and B.C. First Nations***

The First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC) identified a need for the development of a comprehensive study on the current state and future needs of B.C. First Nations repatriation. It engaged K'yu Enterprise Corporation, a Haida consulting company that brought together a team of experts in repatriation and cultural revitalization to carry out this work. The report draws on the methodologies of collaboration and engagement with B.C. First Nations and colonial institutions, an advisory and peer review committee, survey results, case studies, inventory research and literature review.

*From Stealing to Healing: Repatriation and B.C. First Nations* explains that the majority of B.C. First Nations' Ancestors and Belongings held in mainstream institutions were acquired when Indigenous populations suffered a massive loss of population, territory and self-determination due to colonialist actions. It provides a repatriation timeline spanning first contact to the present day and details the history of repatriation efforts from the early days of community mobilization to its current state. This history shows that First Nations and the province, through recent increased support, are nationwide leaders in repatriation resulting in many successful outcomes.

The report also provides a breakdown of the different phases involved in repatriation work, demonstrating the complexity of work involved at each stage. Each community's approach reflects their own laws, protocols, capacity, timelines, resources and aspirations. Since each community also differs in size, geography and the number of Ancestors and Belongings held in institutions, there is no "one size fits all" approach to repatriation. While community engagement is often required at every phase, there are myriad other tasks to be undertaken, including, but not limited to

- research
- inventory work
- building relationships
- negotiating agreements
- travel
- provenance confirmation
- welcoming home
- planning and management of community cultural space

To demonstrate that repatriation initiatives are just as diverse as their budgets and solutions, the report developed 16 case studies. The case studies share the story of each community's repatriation journey and the successes and challenges experienced along the way.

*From Stealing to Healing: Repatriation and B.C. First Nations* concludes with seven key milestones that B.C. and Canada should strive to meet for B.C. First Nations repatriation work to be successful going forward.

**COMMITTED TO THE REVITALIZATION OF B.C. FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES, ARTS, CULTURES AND HERITAGE**

**Key data and findings:**

- 2,500 Ancestors and nearly 100,000 Belongings were identified to be held in 229 institutions worldwide. The actual number of holdings is likely to be much higher.
- Over \$1 million – the amount 60% of B.C. First Nations and colonial institutions surveyed say they have each spent on repatriation to date.
- \$1 million – the amount 50% of B.C First Nations surveyed will each need for repatriation activities over the next 3-5 years.

Research carried out for the *From Stealing to Healing* report reveals how much more work there is to do to locate, fund and properly care for repatriated Ancestors and Belongings.

**About the *Repatriation Cost Analysis: A Framework and Model***

The *Repatriation Cost Analysis* is a companion report to *From Stealing to Healing: Repatriation and B.C. First Nations* and was developed by FPCC to address the need to document the costs of First Nations repatriation. It describes the steps taken to delineate repatriation tasks and costs and provides a framework and flexible cost model that can be used by B.C. First Nations and funders to understand the costs of repatriation. This information is critical to advocating for and securing comprehensive funding and support for this important work. The *Repatriation Cost Analysis* draws on such methodologies as secondary research, the identification of examples of similar frameworks and cost models, budget data review from past repatriation grants, database creation to cost out repatriation tasks and peer review.

**Key data and findings:**

This research will be looked back on as a benchmark of progress and illustrates the enormity of the work before us. This is where we are at now and in 5-10 years, we will compare to see the results of what has been invested. These are estimated costs of repatriation and is not a funding request, nor do they reflect an expected scale or timeline for repatriation in B.C. Rather, it is the result of a “scaling up” exercise to test the flexibility of the cost model, and to identify gaps where further data is needed.

- \$3 million – estimate to fully fund a medium-to-large sized First Nation fully engaged in repatriation over five years.
- \$663 million – the estimated five-year cost to fully fund repatriation for all 204 B.C. First Nations if they were all to complete the work over a five-year period.
- 60% – First Nations in B.C. at the beginning stages of their repatriation journey.

The *Repatriation Cost Analysis* is focused on the repatriation of Ancestors and Belongings by First Nations in B.C., though the framework and model developed may be of interest to Indigenous Peoples across Canada and internationally.

**TRC Calls to Action and UNDRIP**

TRC Calls to Action 67, 68, 77 and 78 relate to actions that support repatriation of tangible and intangible heritage, and UNDRIP Articles 11, 12, 31 and 39 speak to the rights of Indigenous Peoples to repatriate and control their cultural heritage, with financial and other support from States.

**COMMITTED TO THE REVITALIZATION OF B.C. FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES, ARTS, CULTURES AND HERITAGE**

### **Research Supporters**

Research and development of *From Stealing to Healing: Repatriation and B.C. First Nations* and the *Repatriation Cost Analysis: A Framework and Model* was made possible with funding from the Province of British Columbia through the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation.

### **About the First Peoples' Cultural Council**

FPCC is a First Nations-run provincial Crown Corporation with a mandate to support the revitalization of First Nations languages, arts, cultures and heritage in B.C. The organization provides funding and resources to communities, monitors the status of First Nations languages, develops policy recommendations for First Nations leadership and government and collaborates with organizations on numerous special projects that raise the profile of First Nations arts, languages and cultural heritage in B.C., Canada and around the world. Through project support, policy research and other collaborations, FPCC has been directly connected to B.C. First Nations efforts to repatriate Ancestors and Belongings. FPCC understands that repatriation is a crucial act of reconciliation. For more information, visit [www.fpcc.ca](http://www.fpcc.ca)

### **About the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation**

The Foundation is an Indigenous-led registered charitable organization that provides funding to the First Peoples' Cultural Council (FPCC) to support the revitalization of the languages, arts and heritage of B.C. First Nations. Foundation funding provides resources to FPCC for the delivery of grants, technology development, training, programming and resources to B.C. First Nations communities to elevate their efforts to protect and rebuild their cultural systems. The Foundation partners with donors and allies who are committed to reconciliation and taking meaningful action. The Foundation's goal is to secure stable, long-term funding that supports intergenerational cultural revitalization of B.C. First Nations communities. To learn more visit [www.fpcf.ca](http://www.fpcf.ca)

### **About K'yuu Enterprise Corporation**

K'yuu Enterprise Corporation (est. 2018) is a Haida-owned company located at Skidegate, Haida Gwaii. K'yuu specializes in creating original and sustainable pathways for unique projects and niche markets in Haida Gwaii and beyond. For this FPCC repatriation study, K'yuu assembled a powerful core team of Haida professionals who bring a vast range of repatriation, museology, decolonization and Indigenization, research, and heritage management expertise.

### **How you can support**

Did you know there is a way you can support repatriation? Donate to the First Peoples' Cultural Foundation to support revitalization projects in B.C. such as the [First Peoples' Cultural Heritage Fund](#). Visit [fpcf.ca/take-action/ways-to-give](http://fpcf.ca/take-action/ways-to-give)

**COMMITTED TO THE REVITALIZATION OF B.C. FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES, ARTS, CULTURES AND HERITAGE**

***From Stealing to Healing: Repatriation and B.C. First Nations Case Study Participants***

The table below is a list of case study participants in the order they are featured in the report, pp. 60-81.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Project Description</b>
U'mista Cultural Society	'Namgis Nation	Vancouver Island	U'mista Cultural Centre (Kwakwaka'wakw) Brings Home Their Potlatch Collection
Ucluelet First Nation	Ucluelet First Nation	Vancouver Island	Ucluelet First Nation Creates a Cultural Library
Scnəwips Heritage Museum	Westbank First Nation (Okanagan/Syilx Nation)	Thompson/Okanagan	Scnəwips Heritage Museum: Collaboration Is Key
Alberni Indian Residential School Survivors	Port Alberni	Vancouver Island/Coast	Children's Art of the Alberni Indian Residential School
Haida Gwaii Museum, Haida Heritage and Repatriation Society, Haida Repatriation Committee	Haida Nation	North Coast	Haida Nation: Bringing Home Our Ancestors and Belongings with Yahguudang (Respect)
Stó:lō Nation/SRRMC/ Stó:lō House of Respect Care-taking Committee	Stó:lō Nation	Mainland/Southwest	The Stó:lō Xyólhmet S'olhetawtxw Sq'éq'ip Cares for Their Ancestors and Belongings on Their Own Terms
Musqueam Nation	Musqueam Nation	Mainland/Southwest	x <sup>w</sup> məθk <sup>w</sup> əyəm (Musqueam) Solutions to Urbanization
Nisga'a Lisims Government	Nisga'a Nation	North Coast	Nisga'a: Rematriation through Treaty and the Ni'isjoohl Pole
Gitxaala Nation	Gitxaala Nation	North Coast	Gitxaala Nation: Ha'amwaal Łagyigyet (Belongings of Our Ancestors)

**COMMITTED TO THE REVITALIZATION OF B.C. FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES, ARTS, CULTURES AND HERITAGE**

Tse'k'wa National Historic Site	Doig River, Prophet River, & West Moberly First Nations	Northeast	Tse'k'wa National Historic Site: Preserving Indigenous Heritage and Archaeological Treasures
Saanich Native Heritage Society W̱SÁNEĆ Leadership, Council and SFU museum	Territory of the W̱SÁNEĆ Nation	Vancouver Island	SDÁLNEW: Saanich Stone Bowl Saved from Export through the Canadian Cultural Property Export + Import Act
Museum of Vancouver	X̱w̱məθḵw̱əy̱əm, S̱ḵw̱x̱w̱ú7mesh s̱əlilw̱ətaɫ Nations	Mainland/Southwest	Museum of Vancouver: Repatriation Starts with Relationships
Quatsino Nation	Quatsino Nation	Vancouver Island	Filling Up the Quatsino Treasure Box
Maiyoo Keyoh Society	Fort St. James	Nechako	Maiyoo Keyoh Society: Return of the George A'Huille Family Headdress
Tla-o-qui-aht Nation	Opitsaht	Vancouver Island	Tla-o-qui-aht Potlatch Items Return Home
Haítzaqv	Bella Bella	Central Coast	Haítzaqv Members Vote on Care of Repatriated Items

### FPCC Repatriation Grant 2022–23 Recipients

The Repatriation Grant provided up to \$50,000 in funding each to 16 B.C. First Nations for repatriation of Ancestors and cultural treasures.

Recipient	Community Affiliation	Region	Project Description
Cheslatta Carrier Nation	Cheslatta Carrier Nation	Nechako	This project involves the repatriation of archaeological materials from the University of British Columbia: just under 3,000 lithics and other culturally significant artifacts.

**COMMITTED TO THE REVITALIZATION OF B.C. FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES, ARTS, CULTURES AND HERITAGE**

Doig River First Nation	Doig River First Nation	Northeast	This project will digitize, organize and repatriate treaty land entitlement claim archives from Vancouver to Edmonton and Doig River.
Gitxaala Nation	Gitxaala Nation	North Coast	This project involves the repatriation of 32 cultural belongings from the Royal British Columbia Museum, the Museum of Anthropology and the Museum of Vancouver; community and archival research; and an exhibition at the Museum of Northern British Columbia and the Gitxaala Cultural Centre.
Haida Gwaii Museum Society	Haida Nation	North Coast	This project will repatriate and re-inter Ancestors from the Canadian Museum of History, the UCLA Fowler Museum and the American Museum of Natural History, including research and negotiations for the return of Belongings and capacity building/training of youth.
Haida Heritage & Repatriation Society	Haida Nation	North Coast	The project will research northern Haida Belongings in museums, writing a repatriation accession policy and developing a feasibility plan for a northern Haida repatriation and research centre.
Heiltsuk Tribal Council	Heiltsuk Nation	Vancouver Island/Coast	This project will develop a repatriation policy for ancestral remains, burial objects and other cultural items. We will also create a repatriation committee for long-term policy development, research and action.

**COMMITTED TO THE REVITALIZATION OF B.C. FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES, ARTS, CULTURES AND HERITAGE**

Kanaka Bar Indian Band	Nlaka'pamux	Mainland/Southwest	We wish to repatriate a skull from the Burke Museum and hold a reburial ceremony. We will also research other Nlaka'pamux Belongings at the museum.
Lax Kw'alaams Band	Tsimshian	North Coast	This project will research Lax Kw'alaams and Tsimshian Ancestors, Belongings and documents in museums; research culturally appropriate storage of ancestors and belongings; create a catalogue; and identify strategies for repatriation.
Little Shuswap Lake Indian Band	Secwepemc	Thompson/Okanagan	This project involves the research and repatriation of Ancestors, Belongings and documents in B.C. and Canada, and later the United States, including the creation of guidelines and strategies for repatriation.
Maiyoo Keyoh Society	Nak'azdli Whut'en	Nechako	This project involves documentation of a repatriated headdress from the Royal Ontario Museum and creation of a video series about the validation of our laws, responsibilities, authority, caretaking practices and protocols, Keyohwhudachun meanings and cultural purposes.
Nunwakola Cultural Society	Dzawada'enuxw First Nation	Mainland/Southwest	This project involves repatriation of cultural Belongings and documents from institutions and private collections to maintain traditional epistemology in resistance to colonization.
Semiahmoo First Nation	Semiahmoo First Nation	Mainland/Southwest	This project will repatriate and re-intern over 70 Semiahmoo ancestral remains from Simon Fraser University's Department of Archaeology.

**COMMITTED TO THE REVITALIZATION OF B.C. FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES, ARTS, CULTURES AND HERITAGE**

Sncewips Heritage Society	syilx / Okanagan	Thompson/Okanagan	This project will repatriate the Okanagan Heritage Museum's entire collection of syilx/Okanagan Belongings, with ceremonies and questioned Belongings analysis.
Stó:lō Service Agency	11 Member First Nations of the Stó:lō Service Agency. 17 Member First Nations of the S'ólh Téméxw Stewardship Alliance	Mainland/Southwest	We will hold a repatriation workshop with recording and transcription, do research on repatriated Ancestors and hold a repatriation ceremony that was postponed due to COVID-19.
Tse'k'wa Heritage Society	Doig River, Prophet River, & West Moberly First Nations	Northeast	This project involves policy development and repatriation of the Tse'k'wa site archive from Simon Fraser University to the Tse'k'wa National Historic Site.
Tsilhqot'in National Government	Tsilhqot'in National Government	Cariboo	This project will repatriate cultural Belongings from the Museum of Vancouver to six Tsilhqot'in member communities and the office in Williams Lake.

Any media inquiries for case study participants or grant recipients listed above should be directed to Emmy McMillan.

**Media Contact:**

Emmy McMillan  
 Senior Communications Officer  
 The First Peoples' Cultural Council  
[Media@fpcc.ca](mailto:Media@fpcc.ca) | (250) 883-4077

**COMMITTED TO THE REVITALIZATION OF B.C. FIRST NATIONS LANGUAGES, ARTS, CULTURES AND HERITAGE**