
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2022PREM0030-000747
May 13, 2022

Office of the Premier
Ministry of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport
Royal BC Museum

Historic investment to build modern, new RBCM, safeguard collection

VICTORIA – A new state-of-the-art and seismically safe Royal BC Museum (RBCM) is coming to Victoria and will be more accessible for all British Columbians.

The new museum will reflect the experiences and perspectives of all who contributed to B.C.'s history, providing a cultural legacy for generations to come. The new museum is made possible through a \$789-million investment from the Province.

“For decades, people from British Columbia and around the globe have come to the Royal BC Museum to learn about our special corner of the world. For just as long, the stories told here have failed to accurately reflect our colonial history or include everyone, and priceless collections are now being put at risk in an aging building,” said Premier John Horgan. “That’s why today, we are making this historic investment to build a safer, more inclusive and accessible modern building. Once complete, the new museum will be a flagship destination for tourism and a place where generations to come will learn about the richness and diversity of B.C.’s history.”

Like the Royal BC Museum’s collections and research building in Colwood, the new museum will be built to achieve high efficiency for all its HVAC systems. Both buildings will incorporate mass timber construction to leverage B.C.’s strengths in building innovation and support good jobs. These approaches will deliver significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and energy costs.

The new museum will also be one of the first government projects of this size that partners with local First Nations on the project team, participating in both project development and delivery, including design influence to reflect the Lekwungen peoples, and members of the Songhees Nation and Esquimalt Nation.

“Our government is working hard to build B.C.’s museum for the next generation. We are turning the walls inside out to create a dynamic and engaging space that will be the province’s flagship historical centre, inclusive of all the stories of the people who have shaped B.C.,” said Melanie Mark, Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport. “Museums are more important than ever to be a canvas for our history and inspiration for our future. Our partnership with the local First Nations to guide us to this stage is truly reconciliation in action. From the exhibits and programs to the employees and building itself, we are bringing the people’s museum into the 21st century.”

The new museum will reflect the input from consultations with British Columbians and Indigenous communities captured in the report What We Heard. It will broaden existing

cultural displays and content to reflect B.C.'s authentic history in a respectful way that demonstrates broader perspectives and inclusivity, including the voices and experiences of all communities, and will be a catalyst to building relationships throughout the province.

It will be a museum for everyone in British Columbia. Museum exhibitions and content will be accessible to communities outside the Capital Regional District through travelling exhibitions and digital content, such as 3D tours and online programs.

The new buildings will also ensure modern accessibility standards are addressed, removing physical, sensory and cultural barriers. The museum's design will support Indigenous territory recognition and incorporate ceremonial, cultural and celebratory spaces.

"The way in which we share and learn from the truths and lived experiences of our past is fundamental to how we build our future and strengthen the fabric of our communities," said Alicia Dubois, CEO, Royal BC Museum. "Museums have a unique responsibility to promote understanding, inspire growth and change, and give hope to future generations. The work to modernize the Royal BC Museum is a legacy project that will enrich, inspire and continue to benefit British Columbians and Indigenous Peoples for generations to come. Everyone in the province will have access to a modern museum like never before."

Continued robust engagement with British Columbians, local businesses and Indigenous communities will inform the exhibitions and programming for the new state-of-the-art museum.

British Columbians and visitors will be able to experience the collections and exhibitions at the downtown Victoria site until September 2022, when the museum will close.

While the museum building is closed, the Royal BC Museum will extend its presence and engage with communities throughout British Columbia. Provincewide travelling exhibitions, regional satellite displays and an interactive walking tour in Victoria will help make the museum accessible to all British Columbians. Unique events, community programs and learning experiences will be offered throughout the province, along with innovative virtual programs and digital tools available to all.

The museum will work with local partners to create a presence in the Royal BC Museum Plaza and throughout Victoria to continue to support tourism in the region.

RBCM will contribute to the modernization project through its fundraising campaigns.

The museum will close its doors on Sept. 6, 2022. BC Archives services will not be disrupted and will remain open at the downtown site until it moves to its new permanent home at the collections and research building in 2025. Imax Victoria, the museum's gift shop and the food trucks located at the museum will stay open through early 2023.

The new museum will bring significant economic and social benefits to the region, supporting more than 1,950 direct construction jobs, as well as more than 1,050 associated jobs, which will all contribute to B.C.'s COVID-19 economic recovery.

The new modernized provincial museum is expected to open in 2030.

Learn More:

Visit the Royal BC Museum: <http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/>

View the Royal BC Museum travelling exhibition schedule:
<https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/visit/exhibitions/travelling-exhibitions>

Follow the Royal BC Museum on Twitter: https://twitter.com/RoyalBCMuseum?s=20&t=Ym7uzAmJ-wJyxG4zbOaD_A

Three backgrounders follow.

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BACKGROUND 1

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What people are saying about a new Royal BC Museum (RBCM)

Chief Ron Sam, Songhees Nation –

“Songhees Nation is pleased to support the much-needed improvements to the Royal BC Museum, which sits in our traditional homelands, unceded Lekwungen Territory, alongside the Province of British Columbia. Not only will the new site provide additional exhibit and learning space, it will create more job and economic opportunities for our people and add to the growing tourist attractions in the provincial capital. We thank the Province for its support for these exciting enhancements, and we look forward to seeing the completed work that will draw many visitors and guests to the region.”

Chief Rob Thomas, Esquimalt Nation –

“The Lekwungen people are excited to rebuild our presence in the inner harbour with this extraordinary project. We have a strong partnership with the Province and RBCM, and together we will design and build a remarkable landmark that will represent our shared history and promising future.”

Murray Rankin, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation –

“Today’s commitment to modernize the Royal BC Museum in partnership with the Lekwungen people is a meaningful and pivotal moment in our history. For the first time, in the Royal BC Museum we will be telling our province’s authentic history in a way that includes, from the beginning, the consultation and participation of Indigenous Peoples. This is what reconciliation can look like and it represents an opportunity to reset the relationship between the museum and Indigenous communities throughout B.C.”

Brenda Baptiste, chair, Indigenous Tourism BC –

“Indigenous Tourism BC welcomes a new Royal BC Museum in a time of change, truth and reconciliation. Resetting the relationship between the Royal BC Museum and Indigenous Peoples in B.C. is an important step in having the Indigenous voices write and create our own narratives, exhibitions and learning programs. We all have a responsibility for a new approach to learn about and share the stories, know the history and the living, resilient Indigenous cultures, languages and people in B.C. The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act allows us to move forward with intention, and the resetting of the Royal BC Museum function is a key change to systems and status quo. This will be a place of learning and will provide lifelong impacts through storytelling for locals and visitors. There is a dark past for Indigenous Peoples in B.C. and there is an incredibly rich and diverse history in B.C., and these stories need to be told.”

Ryan Hunt, executive director, BC Museums Association –

“The BC Museums Association commends the Province of British Columbia for investing in the modernization of the Royal BC Museum and helping to ensure that visitors and British Columbians alike have world-class access to innovative and thought-provoking arts, culture and heritage experiences. Strong museums build vibrant communities, and we urge the Province of B.C. to ensure that all museums, galleries and heritage sites across the province have the resources they need to thrive.”

Grace Lore, MLA Victoria-Beacon Hill –

“It is a great honour to represent Victoria-Beacon Hill during this exciting time – to be part of creating a true and lasting bond with the Lekwungen people of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations and to welcome a new, modernized museum into this community. It’s an immense privilege to have a world-class museum as one of the gems in our inner harbour. Now the rest of B.C. will have greater access to even more treasures, stories and educational opportunities from the Royal BC Museum – treasures and history accessible to everyone.”

Richard Porges, president and CEO, Destination British Columbia –

“The Royal BC Museum has long been a signature attraction in British Columbia, appealing to locals and visitors alike. Now more than ever, travellers are looking to connect on a deeper level with the places they visit, actively seeking opportunities to learn and further reflect on the history, the nature and the people that are the fabric of a destination. While B.C. vies for visitors in an increasingly competitive travel marketplace, attractions like the new Royal BC Museum will help us to compete fiercely on the global stage.”

Carole James, board member, Royal BC Museum and former B.C. minister of finance –

“Growing up in Victoria, as a parent and as a grandparent, the museum has always played a large role in my life. I have seen first-hand the ability museums have to unite, to build bridges, to teach, to feed curiosity and to ignite imaginations! This great provincial commitment will open the doors to more British Columbians and is a major investment for generations to come.”

Paul Nursey, president and CEO, Destination Greater Victoria –

“The Royal BC Museum has been and will continue to be a vital and essential demand driver for the visitor economy in Greater Victoria. At Destination Greater Victoria, we are excited about this significant capital investment downtown on the inner harbour in the heart of the capital city. We believe this investment will elevate the Royal BC Museum experience to become globally competitive. We also acknowledge the years ahead during construction will have challenges to overcome, but we are also hopeful that the strategy that Royal BC Museum has put in place will help to mitigate these temporary impacts. We are a forward-looking city and organization, and we look forward to what is to come.”

Kris Foulds, curator, The Reach –

“RBCM travelling exhibitions allow local museums like The Reach to draw on resources outside our own collections and resources and give community museum curators opportunities to

present a broader view of significant historical themes. I believe travelling exhibitions are the best way for the RBCM to meet its mandate of enhanced accessibility and access to its collections, exhibitions and educational programs by situating them throughout the provincial community it serves.”

Jasmine Marshal, exhibitions, Kelowna Museums –

“The travelling exhibits from the Royal BC Museum have allowed us to share stories with our community that deepen their personal connections to the place they call home, their own histories, and to learn about both the struggles and successes of people around them.”

Alison Pascal, Squamish Lil’wat –

“Bringing the Our Living Languages exhibit in has been a huge success at the Squamish Lil’wat Cultural Centre. We’re the place in Whistler to come and learn about Indigenous Peoples and the truth and reconciliation process. We’ve had many local Sea to Sky residents visit us, along with the increasing international visitors. It’s extremely impactful to hear all the languages and learn of the work to keep them alive.”

Walt Judas, CEO, Tourism Industry Association of British Columbia –

“The Royal BC Museum has been an iconic tourism fixture in B.C. for decades, attracting visitors from all over the world. The new Royal BC Museum is poised to be an incredible attraction that draws all those people back again – and more – to experience B.C.’s whole history and make lifelong connections with our province. This is a legacy to First Nations, and indeed to all British Columbians, as well as to all those seeking a unique and meaningful visitor experience in B.C.”

Ingrid Jarrett, president and CEO, BC Hotel Association –

“Museums hold a unique power to reflect and shape our society, addressing key social issues to transform how we see the future. B.C. has a distinct and often painful history. To have a space that is a true reflection of the incredible complexity of B.C.’s landscape and its people will be foundational to education and growth, while also being a key economic driver for our hospitality and tourism community. A world-class museum that is inclusive of all British Columbians will keep B.C.’s tourism industry competitive, promoting exploration across our province.”

Grace Wong, chair, Chinese Canadian Museum –

“A new, inclusive Royal BC Museum representing all people who contributed to building this province is a magnificent step in recognizing diversity, giving the people of B.C. and all its visitors a meaningful experience to enrich their own lives. The Chinese Canadian Museum was established to share the history, culture and living heritage of Chinese Canadians and we look forward to working closely with the new RBCM.”

Lisa Helps, mayor, Victoria –

“This is a tremendously exciting day for the City of Victoria. The Royal BC Museum is a key institution in the cultural landscape of Victoria as the capital city. The significant investment the Province is making to build a new museum and the reconciliation-based approach they are taking to this project will ensure that the diversity of experiences that make up British

Columbia's history will be foregrounded and that the First Peoples of the province will be held up and honoured throughout this exciting redevelopment project."

Rob Martin, mayor, Colwood –

"The investment by the provincial government into a modernized museum with a new Collections and Research Building in Colwood will play a vital role in deepening our understanding of B.C.'s full history. Together, these new buildings will bring people together, enhance cultural awareness, foster lifelong learning and reinforce the importance of environmental stewardship. It's exciting to see the Province's commitment to these shared goals, and we're excited to see the museum continue to play an important role in enriching the lives of residents and visitors."

Wendy King, vice-chair, Royal BC Museum board –

"The Royal BC Museum has long been recognized worldwide as an innovative, thought-leading institution offering visitors immersive experiences, thought-provoking exhibitions and inspirational programs. As the museum expands beyond the walls of the building and out into the province, there will be greater opportunities for British Columbians to access these resources and to share and learn more about their own stories. These initiatives increase inclusivity which, along with a new sustainable state-of-the-art, world-class museum building and new collections and research building, is a truly progressive new era for our much-loved provincial museum."

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Facts about the new Royal BC Museum

- The Royal BC Museum hosts more than 880,000 visitors to the museum precinct each year (pre-pandemic), including approximately 35,000 children and youth.
- The Royal BC Museum has been at its current location since 1967 and has not been substantially renovated in more than 50 years.
- There are more than seven million artifacts in the Royal BC Museum and 27 kilometres of archival records.
- The Royal BC Museum site encompasses seven buildings over 2.7 hectares. The buildings include the exhibitions building, BC Archives, Imax Victoria, Fannin Building, Wawadit'la Mungo Martin House and Thunderbird Park, St. Ann's Schoolhouse and Helmcken House.
- In 2010, testing indicated the Royal BC Museum is at seismic risk, putting the building and collections below sea level at risk should a seismic event occur.
- The new 23,000-square-metre museum is focused on making the Royal BC Museum a world-leading museum and gathering place. The functional program, indicative design and procurement options have been developed to create a cultural legacy of design excellence for the province. The design will have a strong visual connection to the adjacent inner harbour, causeway and provincial legislative precinct, and will be designed with a singular vision for the entire site, which will include publicly accessible spaces between the buildings, such as Indigenous ceremonial spaces, festival spaces and connectivity with adjacent properties.
- Modernization will include a structure built from mass timber and hybrid solutions.
- The mass timber approach supports the Province's priority to reinvigorate the forestry sector, as well as the Royal BC Museum's priority to have an environmentally sustainable facility and organization.
- Modernization supports the Province's commitment to GBA+ including learning, facilities, human resources, communications, and feedback from the Gender Equity Office. The gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) plan for the museum project provides guidance in both application and decision-making in relation to the infrastructure and functional program of the museum. The GBA+ framework and toolkit will be incorporated at all stages, including infrastructure planning and functional program design, procurement, evaluation and contract delivery.
- The new museum will address engagement and accessibility barriers by considering physical accessibility (ramps, sign language and other interpretation), territory acknowledgment, and gender-inclusive pronouns and facility decisions. The museum will be built to meet the standards in the newest edition of B.C.'s Building Access Handbook.
- The new museum will reflect the Province's commitment to aligning the Royal BC Museum's operations with the aspirations, principles and relevant obligations outlined in the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act and the United Nations

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, particularly articles 12-14 and 21, in addition to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action 67-70.

- To support CleanBC initiatives, the museum will be designed with an energy target to drive energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Modernizing the Royal BC Museum will be the largest cultural investment in B.C. history and will take seven and a half years to complete.
 - This complex, multi-stage project requires extensive planning and consultation, and involves the careful preparation, packing and moving of seven million artifacts and archival records representing 27 linear kilometres of objects across an area of approximately 2.6 hectares (6.5 acres) to the collections and research building and a temporary warehouse.
 - Hazardous materials need to be removed before any construction can start.
 - Programming, procurement, design and construction planning must be done in the appropriate stages and in collaboration with local Indigenous partners and with public engagement.

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Timeline for new Royal BC Museum

Next steps include:

- 2022: Royal BC Museum launches travelling exhibitions, satellite exhibitions, school learning exhibitions and digital experiences
- Spring 2022: adviser procurements released to public
- June 2022: collections and research building design-build contract begins
- Sept. 6, 2022: Royal BC Museum closes with ceremony
- Fall 2022:
 - public engagement sessions begin
 - request for qualifications issued for design-build proponents for the new museum
 - collections and research building groundbreaking ceremony
 - modernization procurement begins
- Spring 2023: exhibition hall contents move to leased warehouse
- Spring 2024:
 - modernization design and consultation begin
 - hazardous materials abatement begins
 - deconstruction of exhibition hall begins
- Winter 2025: Fannin Building contents move to collections and research building
- Winter 2026: construction of new exhibition hall begins
- 2030: new museum grand opening

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