

ACCOMPLISHMENTS 1886-2007 ROYAL BRITISH COLUMBIA MUSEUM CORPORATION

With a commitment to access, research, education, and public involvement, the Royal BC Museum Corporation secures its place amongst the finest institutions in the world. The BC Archives, Helmcken House, the Netherlands Carillon, Thunderbird Park, St Ann's Schoolhouse and the Royal BC Museum come together as the Royal BC Museum Corporation, creating a unique cultural precinct.

Since its beginnings 122 years ago in a small room in the provincial Legislative Buildings, British Columbia's provincial museum has had an incisive and constant role telling the stories of a remarkable land and its people. Over 30 million visitors have been through this renowned museum since its present exhibit building was opened in 1968.

The BC Archives was formally established in 1908 with the appointment of a Provincial Archivist, but the acquisition of significant historical records began in 1888. Legislative Librarian E.O.S. Scholefield reported in his 1907 annual report that United States historian H.H. Bancroft obtained invaluable manuscripts from the pioneer residents of the province, to assist him in compiling his history of British Columbia. The BC Archives obtained microfilm or transcribed copies of some of these private papers, most notably, some of the personal diaries of Sir James Douglas, 1907.

Here are a few highlights from each of our departments regarding our accomplishments.

THE COLLECTION

- The RBCM staff cares for millions of objects and records in our collections. The catalogue records list more than 7.5 million objects, but the total is somewhat higher as some catalogue entries contain multiple samples.
- The conservation of the collection is of primary importance since it will survive as evidence of significant components of life in British Columbia for current and future generations to learn from, reflect and enjoy
- The BC Archives includes a vast amount of government and private sector records in all formats; private historical manuscripts and papers; maps, charts and architectural plans; photographs; paintings, drawings and prints; audio and video tapes; film; newspapers; and an extensive library of publications with a strong emphasis on the social and political history of British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest.
- The Human History collection is considered under three components: a) Ethnology; b) Archaeology and c) non-aboriginal history.

- The RBCM's remarkable First Nations collections date back to the late 1800's when they were originally collected to prevent loss of cultural heritage to other areas of North America and overseas.
- The natural history collection encompasses plants, animals, fossils and geological specimens that provide information about nature in British Columbia
- The collection enhances the knowledge of the province's natural history by providing primary documentation of species that are endemic to the province, reach the limits of their ranges in the province or are newly invading species can. DNA analysis and studying the geographic distribution of species can provide evidence of where species may have lived in the past, with implications for the future.
- On an annual basis over 5,000 natural history specimens are loaned to museum researchers throughout the world. The loans result in scientific papers being published that show how the flora and fauna of BC fits within a world context.
- The Public Documents Committee and Legislature approve which records shall be deposited in the archives of the government. These records are from the executive branches of government.
- The BC Archives holds the largest public collection of Emily Carr's art works, writings and other documentation. These original works of art and archival collections offer people the chance to acquire an immense understanding of Emily's connection to the people and the land she loved.
- The collection will continue to grow in size and importance. In addition to the fundamental core acquisitions that are enabled by existing resources, new emphasis will enhance the collection and improve its significance to British Columbia through the acquisition of artifacts and records in the following areas:
 - the Legislative Assembly
 - corporations of significance to the province
 - dominant public figures
 - society groups
 - private broadcasters with significant reach throughout British Columbia
 - significant objects relating to ethnic groups in the province
 - plants, insects, marine invertebrates, non-commercial marine and freshwater fishes, and earth history specimens
- What's the value of everything in our collections? It's impossible to estimate because so many items are irreplaceable--which means they are priceless. The most recent figure for insurance purposes is \$200 million.

ACCESS TO THE COLLECTION

Although collecting artifacts and archives was started immediately after the creation of the two agencies almost 120+ years ago, public access to the collections did not occur until after 1915. Although the earliest researchers would have been specialists and academics seeking out information on British Columbia's natural and human history, today's research community

includes family historians and genealogists, academics, government researchers, school students (classes and individuals), First Nations researchers and legal teams working on a variety of cases.

As a Corporation, the commitment to public accessibility to the provincial collection and the documentation supporting the collection continues and remains one of our priority services.

An expansion of the services provided to the researcher community occurred in January 2008 when the Reference room began to provide service to researchers seeking information on the artifacts and specimens contained in the human and natural history collections. Working with archivists, curators and collection managers, the Corporation can offer the facilities of the reference room to researchers studying the Ethnology; Archaeology and non-aboriginal history as well as the plants, animals, fossils and geological specimens of British Columbia.

The use of newer technologies has seen accessibility to the collections expanded by use of the World Wide Web, and in the mid 1990s, the then provincial archives used the "new" internet to host its finding aids and library catalogue online as well as thousands of its archival images. The trend continues today as images from the Ethnology collection are now found online.

With the implementation of the new collections management system MAMMOTH in 2008, more information on the artifacts, specimens and archives in the provincial collection will be made more readily accessible to the research community.

In 2007, two major donations were received from field of arts and culture, these being the records of British Columbia film maker, Philip Borsos, and British Columbia musician and song writer, Terry Jacks.

Since 1993 the BC Archives has digitized more than 80,000 historical photographs, providing online access to a vast photographic library of images from our past. These images are used extensively by writers, researchers, publishers, filmmakers and the advertising industry. Many will be seen in print as the province celebrates its 150th birthday.

RESEARCH

- The RBCM strives to explain the material culture history of the Province of British Columbia and is the only institution in BC that assumes this role. Without the RBCM's research, there would not be representative or comprehensive data on British Columbia's history and material culture. The RBCM works hard to share the information with the people of British Columbia, to visitors to the province, and the international community.
- The strength and expertise of the Royal BC Museum Corporation's research program roughly parallels the size and content of the RBCM collection. In general terms, the RBCM has disciplined expertise with advanced academic degrees (Masters or PhDs) in ethnology, archaeology, history, botany, entomology, ichthyology, palynology and marine invertebrate zoology.
- Staff in the BC Archives have Masters level research expertise in standards, data management and retrieval, the organizational history of the Government of the Province of British Columbia, and the capacity to conduct historical research on British Columbia topics.

- The following categories summarize the general lines of research inquiry at the RBCM:
 - We study nature of BC through identifying and documenting species that exist in the province to enhance public knowledge, often with a focus on understanding endangered species or those species that exist nowhere else in the world.
 - We document species distributions and fossil evidence to understand early BC history and to show what changes have occurred and what the future may hold (e.g. climate and climate change)
 - We provide an ongoing record of the First Peoples in collaboration with aboriginal people
 - We research locations and document communities and industries in BC, how and why they have changed, and what it means for the future
 - We study social trends in the province throughout the years

- The BC Archives is a valuable resource for researchers. It is one of the major information sources for BC's human history and a vital element of BC's culture. The BC Archives provides research access to records of enduring value to the province for both the provincial government and the public.

- In 2007 - 2008 there were multiple projects underway relating to the human history and natural history of British Columbia and the conservation aspects of museology. 45 articles produced by RBCM experts; 6 books published by the RBCM publishing department and 3 issues of the Discovery magazine; in addition to numerous articles and web site publications.

EXHIBITIONS and VISITOR EXPERIENCE

The RBCM believes that the visitor experience starts as soon as a person contemplates a visit to the RBCM or indeed to its web site. There are many parts to the visitor experience – though the ones that most people encounter are the RBCM's remarkable exhibitions and school or public programs.

Exhibitions

There are three types of exhibitions: galleries, feature exhibitions and touring exhibitions.

The RBCM's tradition of looking back, looking inward and looking forward is brilliantly captured in its galleries of the province's natural and human history. Through three unique permanent galleries, the RBCM showcases the human and natural history of British Columbia, and features periodic exhibitions of international renown. Highly realistic and inviting displays, such as the Ice Age and Coastal Forest dioramas, provide visitors with a sense of having truly experienced real places in different times.

In recent years, the RBCM has added several new gallery experiences: in 2005, *Living Land, Living Sea* took on the very topical subject of climate change. In fact, the gallery deals with the nature of climate change not only now, but in the past as it takes visitors over the shifting terrain of British Columbia for more than 90 million years – from the subtropical damp of the Cretaceous Period to the chilly winds of the last Ice Age.

To compliment *Living Land, Living Sea*, the Royal BC Museum unveiled the world's first three-dimensional map of British Columbia. Generated solely from satellite images, exceptional in

detail and dramatic in size, the map provides a never-before-seen perspective of the province. Coupled with a dramatic cinematic overlay, the map demonstrates an exciting new way to tell the stories of British Columbia and its people. Since its opening three films have been produced to play on the big map: *First Peoples*, *Climate Change*, and *Water*.

Late in 2005 we added *Building BC* – a tribute to the people and trades who literally built British Columbia. In 2006, another addition to the natural history gallery was the delightful undersea *Ocean Station* – a Discovery Room for children [and adults] exploring coastal marine environments from a Jules Verne submersible.

The RBCM shines the spotlight on BC stories in its special temporary exhibition. Over recent years, highlights include *Out of the Mist: Treasures of the Nuu-chah-nulth Chiefs* (1999/2000), *Emily Carr: Eccentric, Artist, Author, Genius* (2001/2002), and *Treasures of the Tsimshian: From the Dundas Collection* (2006). In 2008, the RBCM launches its a ground breaking project: *Free Spirit: Stories of You, Me and BC*. Created in celebration of the province's 150th Anniversary, *Free Spirit* is an exhibition and much more. It breaks new ground by harnessing the power of 6 innovative elements to explore the subject of the BC story: an exhibition in Victoria, an exhibition touring by train, a web project (*The People's History Project*) that invites British Columbians to contribute their stories, a book, a year long program of community events and an exhibition/community liaison tour in partnership with BC Hydro.

The RBCM boasts one of the most active and ambitious touring exhibition programs. In the last 12 years, we have become the venue for some of the world's finest touring exhibitions, including: *Empires Beyond the Great Wall: The Heritage of Genghis Khan* (1995), *Leonardo da Vinci: Scientist, Inventor, Artist* (1998/1999), *Circus Magicus* (2000/2001), *Dragon Bones: When Dinosaurs Ruled China* (2003), *Eternal Egypt: Masterworks of Ancient Art from the British Museum* (2004), *Giant Robotic Insects* (2003/2004), *Tibet: Mountains and Valleys, Castles and Tents* (2005), *Linda McCartney's Sixties: Portrait of an Era* (2005/2006), *Speed and Fore! The Planet* (2006), *Fatal Attraction* (2006/2007), *Treasures of the Tsimshian* (2007), and lastly, one of the most successful presentations in our history: *Titanic: the Artifact Exhibition* (2007).

Public and School Programs

The Public Program department brings the RBCM's work to life to the public and to school students and teachers. To a great degree it is our programs that animate our exhibition presentations as well as ensure that there is always something new to see. The mediums used to do this are incredibly varied: lectures, film festivals, community events, interpretive theatre, tours, and much more.

The Programs department has a storied past with many ground-breaking museum programs such as *Echoes of Ancestry* - First Nations carving program, *Underwater Safari* – live television broadcasts to schools around the world, *Astronomy Day* – bringing amateur astronomers and professionals together to explore the universe.

The RBCM has a remarkable history of innovative programming to animate major exhibitions. Highlights include a junior Egyptologist summer camps, circus performance, an introduction to Tibetan medicine, the essential of cooking with bugs, and interpretive theatre programs for *Circus Magicus* and *Titanic* exhibitions.

Currently, we present a host of ongoing special programs: *Remembrance Commemoration* recognizing the role of Canadians in peacekeeping and world conflict around the world, *Christmas traditions*, regional *Heritage Fair* for children, *Discover* - daily presentations by staff

revealing the work of the RBCM behind the scenes, *Adult and Junior gallery docents* animating the galleries and touring visitors through the highlights of the RBCM.

For schools, the RBCM has been a vital resource for more than 30 years – both as a destination for a field trip and as an educational resource via the web. These programs consistently receive a high [98%] satisfaction rating by teachers. Each year thousands of school students – especially from kindergarten to grade 7 – participate in the RBCM's curriculum-directed school history and environmental programs.

DEDICATED STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

The success and reputation for excellence enjoyed by the Corporation depends on the passion, expertise and commitment of its people. It takes a talented leadership team, an engaged workforce and volunteers with unparalleled generosity of spirit to create the visitor experiences and share the stories of British Columbia that are found here.

The Corporation is devoted to creating a workplace that values innovation, creativity and sharing on the part of its staff and volunteers. The RBCM made significant advances last year with the completion of a holistic corporate human resources plan – a People Plan. The People Plan's multiple modules addresses the recruitment, retention, orientation of employees; and ensures employees have the knowledge and tools to do their jobs well through a comprehensive employee development program, including leadership development; training in "in-demand" careers (finance and trades); and post secondary education through our Masters/PhD funding program. The People Plan also recognizes the knowledge and skills that existing team members have to share through their participation in an RBCM mentorship program; establishes performance goals through a performance management framework; rewards excellence through a recognition and reward program; and includes a succession-management plan to guide the future of the people that make all the difference at the museum and archives.

Through the only active apprenticeship program in British Columbia's public sector, the RBCM hired a second joinery apprentice in 2006 to accompany one hired a year earlier. These two apprentices are enthusiastic, skilled and continuing to develop their talents in cabinet-making, display development, carpentry and fine finishing work. For the Corporation, apprentices provide valuable resources in a challenging trade-labour market and potential long-term employees who will be intimately familiar with the special conservation and artifact-handling needs of a provincial museum and archives. Conversely, this apprenticeship program provides a unique opportunity for tradespersons to ply their crafts in an esteemed cultural institution, and for an audience of hundreds of thousands of visitors a year.

The products of RBCM's apprentices' efforts can also be seen offsite - a vase display case at Government House was constructed by one RBCM joinery apprentice, while a cabinet housing a set of World War I bagpipes in the Legislature was built by the other.

A mentoring program was developed last year for rollout in 2008-2009 across the Corporation's departments. It will ensure knowledge is retained within the organization for the future and shared between employees in a way that promotes team learning and individual growth.

Apprenticeships and mentoring are two key elements of a succession management strategy contained with the People Plan. This strategy will continue to evolve and build on detailed demographic information, employee satisfaction surveys, multiple training programs and educational opportunities, exit interviews and employee performance and development plans.

The People Plan and its components will help ensure the Corporation and its staff move in the same direction and create a stronger organization that can better explore the BC story and share it more effectively with the world.

As a result of everything being done in the area of human resources, the RBCM was named one of the Top 100 Employers in Canada and one of BC's top 40 Employers for 2008.

Supporting the RBCM's staff in that endeavour are hundreds of volunteers from across all social strata who make an invaluable difference. As many as 450 people each year give of themselves in nearly 700 assignments. It is a contribution of 47,000 hours (2007/08) of volunteer time. Acting as tour guides and interpreters, collections and holdings researchers, information-desk volunteers, coat-check workers and more, they are ambassadors to a worldwide community visiting British Columbia's provincial museum and archives and capital city. Many volunteer on a regular basis and over several years.

Volunteers at the RBCM enjoy meeting people, learning and growing, and it's a rewarding experience. But the rewards flow two ways: these volunteers are people with diverse backgrounds, varied educations, a love of teaching and a common desire to give back to their community. They make a difference, creating special memories for visitors and uniquely shaping the culture of the RBCM as an organization.

PUBLISHING & HANDBOOKS

The Royal BC Museum Corporation publishes books on the human history and natural history of British Columbia. We've been publishing since 1891 and began publishing handbooks in 1942 - these are our most popular series of books. In the last 5 years, we have distributed approximately 10,000 books per year. Books are like travelling emissaries of the museum and archives - many people who may not come here will read our books. Our books are highly respected by professionals and the general public, and are valued as a source of reliable, useful and comprehensive information.

The following is a comprehensive list of our publications:

Amphibians & Reptiles of BC
Birds of BC, vol. 1
Birds of BC, vol. 2
Birds of BC, vol. 3
Birds of BC, vol. 4
Brittle Stars, Sea Urchins & Feather Stars of BC
Bromus L. of North America
Buttercups, Waterlilies & their Relatives
Butterflies of BC
Carnivores of BC
Catkin-Bearing Plants of BC
Coal Dust in My Blood
Exhibit Companion

Food Plants of Coastal First Peoples
Food Plants of Interior First Peoples
Free Spirit: Stories of You, Me and BC
Histories, Territories & Laws of the Kitwano
Hoofed Mammals of BC
Indian History of BC: Impact of the White Man
Introducing the Dragonflies of BC & the Yukon
Land Snails of BC
Magic Leaves
Nuu-chah-nulth Voices, Histories, Objects & Journeys
Opossums, Shrews & Moles of BC
Out of the Mist
Plant Collecting for the Amateur
Plant Technology of First Peoples in BC
Pondweeds, Bur-reeds & their Relatives
Ring of Time
Rodents & Lagomorphs of BC
Sea Cucumbers of BC, SE Alaska & Puget Sound
Sea Stars of BC, SE Alaska & Puget Sound
Some Common Mosses of BC
Songhees Pictorial
Surveying Central BC
Systematics of Lasiopogon
Tales from the Attic
Thompson Ethnobotany
Trees & Shrubs of BC
Up-Coast
White Bears
Wild Flowers

ACCOMPLISHING THE FUTURE

It is clear to see that across the Corporation, each department has greatly contributed to the overall success of the RBCM. We are well on our way to accomplishing our goal to transform the museum and archives into the province's pre-eminent cultural and heritage institution.

The vision of "Revealing British Columbia, Inspiring Wonder" is not just a vision; it is a reality that happens here every day due to the efforts of staff and volunteers who work hard at all these accomplishments and many more to come.