

LUCY BELL

Beginning the Conversation Towards Repatriation

A year ago, the Royal BC Museum welcomed **Lucy Bell** to the team as the Head of the First Nations and Repatriation Department. Lucy came from the Haida Nation with a wealth of experience in repatriation, language revitalization and community curatorship.

Lucy Bell's aim is to serve BC's First Nations communities through repatriation.

The department's first big task was hosting the Repatriation Symposium, bringing together 200 First Nations members, museum and government staff to discuss the complexities of repatriation. The three main repatriation recommendations from the symposium were: to repatriate all ancestral remains and burial goods; to assist communities to locate cultural heritage in global museums; to repatriate intangible heritage, including traditional songs and stories. The Royal BC Museum dedicated funds to hiring a repatriation specialist and two people to work on digitizing archival photographs and audio recordings as well as creating a repatriation handbook.

The department also focused their energies on preparing ancestral remains currently in the collection of the Royal BC Museum for return. Being ready to repatriate 700 ancestral remains in a respectful and timely manner has been a daunting task but one well-done by the archaeology team, Grant Keddie and Genevieve Hill. Besides organizing old paperwork and sorting the ancestral remains by nation and storing them in a more respectful manner until their return, the team has also been working with the Archaeology branch to think about preventative ways to ensure ancestral remains do not end up in museum collections in the future. The department is also actively preparing for the repatriation granting program.

The First Nations Advisory and Advocacy Committee for the museum was also formed bringing together eight indigenous leaders from BC who will advise the Museum and advocate for the Museum and the indigenous communities in BC.

Besides repatriation, Lucy is also a part of the team working on the First Peoples gallery refresh. Much of the First Peoples gallery has not been updated in decades and is need of more Indigenous voices and con-

temporaneity. The first intervention is to update the Chilkat weaving section. In winter 2017, Master Weaver William White of the Tsimshian nation came to the Museum to weave a raven's tail and Chilkat apron for a new display and to co-curate the new installation. The next installation is updating the Skedans village model. Lucy had the opportunity to visit the ancient Skedans village with Guujaaw and his nephew Tian Wilson where they sang Haida songs and where Guujaaw taught Tian about his ancestral village. The new installation will include a video of this incredible trip.



Project Organizer:

Lucy Bell, Sdaahl K'awaas comes from the Tsiits G'itanee Eagle clan of the Haida Nation. Lucy has a BA in Anthropology, a Masters in Indigenous Language Revitalization, a Cultural Resource Management Diploma and is a graduate of the Aboriginal Cultural Stewardship Program. Lucy is a recipient of the BC Achievement Foundation award for leading the repatriation of over 500 Haida ancestral remains and is the recent recipient of the UVic Distinguished Alumni award.

Photo: Lucy Bell at the Royal BC Museum.
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