

The voice of the BC Museums Association

# Roundup

Issue 265 // Summer 2016

## Cultural Connections

Promoting Diversity

### The Many Colours of Islam

Museums and Multiculturalism

### Visit Motivations

Chinese Families in Vancouver

### Revitalizing Japantown

In Vancouver's Downtown Eastside



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The voice of the BC Museums Association

# Roundup

Issue 265 // Summer 2016

**Cover photo:** Vancouver Aquarium's BC Hydro AquaVan allows for an up close and personal encounter.  
Photo Credit: Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre.

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# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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## David Alexander

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This is the best time of year - you've submitted your conference proposal, registered and are thinking about soon re-connecting with your peers at Whistler. At least it's my favourite time of the year; the BCMA conference is when I get to hear what everyone's working on, have space to really think about the future of culture and to soak up all the energy. So many museum brains in one place. It's pretty powerful.

The Conference Committee has come up with a great line up for Conference 2016 including a new rapid fire session to share research and some of the old favourites like Tales from the Trenches. We're in for a treat with the keynote speaker Elaine Heumann Gurian; there are few people that have the wealth of experience she does in museums. Early bird registration has passed but you still have lots of time left to register. And you can't beat Whistler in the fall as a destination!

Sadly though, we will be without a very important BCMA presence at Whistler. Our esteemed Executive Director, Theresa Mackay, has followed one of her passions and has taken a position as assistant professor at Royal Roads University. It is a fantastic opportunity for Theresa and while the BCMA council will miss her (very much) we are all happy for her in this new opportunity. And thanks to the work of Theresa and her staff, the BCMA is in a strong position with refreshed strategic priorities and exciting projects underway. We will start an executive recruitment campaign immediately with the goal of having a new executive director in place prior to the October conference.

In June, we had a great kick off session with the Digital Museum Studies Program at the Centre for Digital Media. A group of culture, digital and academic folks met to examine curriculum and flesh out the program. We're treading on new ground here. We think this is

the only program of its kind and it's exciting and vital as we look to the needs of our museums of the future. Look for more information to come on this program as it moves forward.

Next year is a significant year for Canada as we celebrate the sesquicentennial but it is also a birthday for BCMA: 60 years old and looking better than ever. Our esteemed Past President's Club is the planning committee so expect some interesting events to help celebrate.

See you all in Whistler!

*David Alexander*  
*President, BCMA*  
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# Bye for Now

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## Theresa Mackay

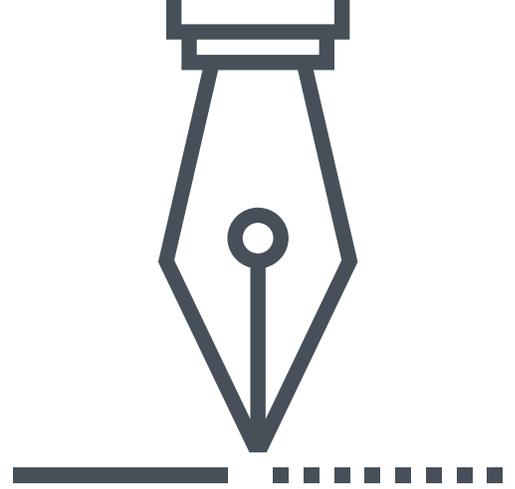
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When my Dad was alive he always used to say “bye for now” rather than “goodbye”. He felt that the latter was so final with such an end that it meant you would never see the person again, so I learned as a young child to always say “bye for now”. It is with these three words that I am departing the BCMA this summer and moving to a position with Royal Roads University.

When I started here two and a half years ago, the BCMA was a different place than it is now. Together we have built a vibrant and exciting association, truly on the edge of great success in this province. We have reinvigorated our connections with our community and reinvented what it means to be a member of the BCMA. Most importantly, we have established, developed, and strengthened our offerings, our brand, and our relationships with stakeholders, creating a BCMA that we can all be proud of.

My many thanks go to the two Councils I've worked with, Heather Jeliaskov, our partners, volunteers and contractors, whose passion, support and willingness to try something new kept me inspired every day. I wish much success for you and BCMA in the future. Finally, to you, our community. I've met many of you during my tenure here and I look forward to seeing you in the future. I know it is only bye for now.

# NOTES FROM THE EDITOR



## Jane Lemke

When we look at our various institutions, many of them began from similar roots: from white, middle-class or wealthy men and women who were interested in preserving culture. While well-intentioned, this inherently resulted in the propagation of their version of “culture”. Historically, museums have contributed to the formation of a society’s colonial and nationalist power structures and society’s constructions of race, citizenship, gender and nationhood.

Recent developments in museum theory have highlighted the importance and power of collaboration that shares authority and intent with the community that is being depicted. Instead of “displaying” a community, museums are providing a venue for that community to speak for itself.

This issue of Roundup highlights the recent initiatives that BC institutions have undertaken to welcome non-dominant communities into their space and how others might follow suit. The modern museum and gallery no longer exists solely for its own sake or the sake of important donors but is primarily accountable to its local populations.

Jane Lemke,  
Managing Editor, Roundup  
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**The role of the museum or gallery in a community can be a dynamic and relevant one for all who claim that community as home.**



# What's **NEW?**

## Formal Apology to Sikh Canadians

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau formally apologized in the House of Commons on May 18th for the Komagata Maru incident in 1914, in which hundreds of Sikh, Muslim and Hindu passengers were denied entry to Canada and forced to return to India. The decision made by Canada to deny entry to the boat's passengers has remained as a dark stain on Canada's immigration record.

## Delta Museum Goes Municipal

Members of the Delta Museum and Archives Society voted in favour of a proposal that would see the municipality assume day-to-day control of the Museum and Archives. Included in the deal is a new facility to be located on the first floor of the former courthouse building in Ladner's civic precinct, adjacent to the existing DMAS' Delta Archives and Edgar Dunning Reading Room. The Museum will be closed for a year during this transition.

## Bruce Naylor Award

Dr. Richard Hebda, Curator of Botany and Earth History at the Royal BC Museum won the Bruce Naylor Award from the Alliance of Natural History Museums.



## CMA Awards of Outstanding Achievement

At the April 2016 Canadian Museums Association conference in Halifax, awards were handed out to recognize exceptional museum projects in various categories. This year, nine Awards of Outstanding Achievement were presented; two won by BC institutions:

### Award of Outstanding Achievement in Exhibitions — Science

*Land of Thundering Snow*, Revelstoke Museum & Archives (Revelstoke, B.C.)

### Award of Outstanding Achievement in Research — Cultural Heritage

*Heaven, Hell and Somewhere in Between: Portuguese Popular Art*

Museum of Anthropology at UBC (Vancouver, B.C.)

**Above:** Cathy English (right) of the Revelstoke Museum and Archives receiving the CMA's Award of Outstanding Achievement in Exhibitions. Photo Credit: Tim Collin.

# Success *by* Association



Whether an institution or governing organization, a mid-career professional, volunteer, or student on the brink of a career, membership in your professional association comes with lots of benefits. Here are three that BCMA members take full advantage of:

## Networking

Seek advice. Share. Build your professional network. Kickstart your career. BCMA offers myriad opportunities to meet successful, connected and respected people in the museums, galleries and heritage community. Through our annual conference, workshops, seminars, listserv and by serving on committees, BCMA provides ample opportunity to connect with others who have years of experience.

## Professional Development

BCMA keeps you informed about the sector's news and developments and can provide resources and advice to help you overcome challenges. Our workshops and seminars, access to online training and resource materials, as well as Roundup magazine, all give you the tools to build and improve your resume.

## OWL Card

Issued to all Individual and Institutional members, the OWL Card provides free admission to museums, galleries and heritage sites across B.C. A list of participating institutions is available on our website: [www.museumsassn.bc.ca](http://www.museumsassn.bc.ca).



## Join the BCMA

Membership in the BCMA is open to organizations and individuals, with benefits designed specifically for each membership category. Museum volunteers are invited to join the Association in either the Individual or the new Student/Volunteer category. Individuals who earn income through contracts or service provision or other commercial activities for museums, galleries, heritage organizations or related cultural institutions are invited to join BCMA in the new Affiliate Member – Individual category. [Visit our website](#) for an outline of benefits by category.



**Above:** Manda Maggs and Cuyler Page collaborate at the 2015 BCMA Conference in New Westminster. Photo Credit: Design Nerds.

## Who accepts the BCMA OWL Card?

Planning your summer vacation? Consider visiting some of the outstanding museums, galleries and historic sites in BC! Present your OWL card, with picture ID, to the following institutions for complimentary admission during regular operating hours:

- Art Gallery of Greater Victoria
- BC Farm Museum
- Britannia Mine Museum
- Craigdarroch Castle
- Creston & District Museum and Archives
- Cumberland Museum
- Doukhobor Discovery Centre
- Fraser River Discovery Centre
- Fort St. John North Peace Museum
- Gulf of Georgia Cannery National Historic Site
- Haida Gwaii Museum
- Kamloops Art Gallery
- Kilby Historic Site
- Museum of Vancouver
- Nanaimo Museum
- Nelson & District Museum of Art and History
- Nisga'a Museum
- North Pacific Cannery National Historic Site
- Nuyumbalees Cultural Centre
- Osoyoos Museum
- Quesnel & District Museum and Archives
- The Exploration Place
- UBC Museum of Anthropology
- Vancouver Police Museum
- White Rock Museum & Archives
- Yale Historic Site

If you are a student or volunteer member and would like to change your membership category to access OWL card benefits, email: [members@museumsassn.bc.ca](mailto:members@museumsassn.bc.ca).

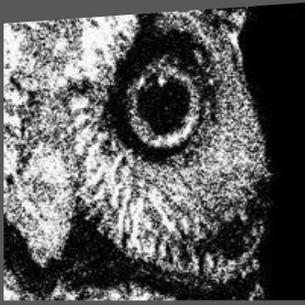
## BCMA Welcomes New Staff

The BCMA welcomes Paula Krisch as the Association's new bookkeeper. Krisch joins the BCMA with a wealth of experience in the Special Events not-for-profit sector including as the Operations Manager for the BC Festival of the Arts. Krisch is also currently the Administrator for Praxis Architects Inc.



## Welcome to New Members:

- Dr. Kit Grauer
- Rebecca Clarke
- Andrea Lucy, UBC
- Sandra McKinney, SFU
- Richmond Olympic Experience (ROX)
- Finger Labyrinth Museum, Bethlehem Centre
- Rob Destrube, Destrube Photography
- Anissa Paulsen
- Sylvia Gropp
- Jeanette Taylor
- Sue Bryant
- Amanda Shatzko
- Port Clements Museum
- Catherine Ouellet-Martin



# Whoo's News

The Museum of Vancouver's Board of Directors announces that CEO **Nancy Noble** will be leaving MOV at the end of July to take the helm of the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. Noble has taken the Museum of Vancouver on an exciting journey in the last decade and the MOV looks to the future and the opportunity to once again redefine the Museum and its role in Vancouver's cultural life. Over the past ten years, Noble led the organization to the creation of a new vision, values, direction and brand. Under her direction, the Museum has grown in attendance and won numerous awards.



**Wilf Lim** is the new Education Programs Coordinator at the Gulf of Georgia Cannery National Historic Site. Lim has an archaeology and an education degree from Simon Fraser University. He has previously worked in tourism at the Burnaby Village Museum, the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Chinese Classical Gardens, among other museum institutions.

**Carla-Jean Stokes** is the new Curator at Historic O'Keefe Ranch. Stokes holds a MA in History and a MA in Photographic Preservation and Collection Management.

**Sandra Parrish** is the newly appointed Executive Director of the Museum at Campbell River. Parrish's career journey has been dedicated and passionate at the Museum at Campbell River over 32 years. Over the years she took on the role of registrar, collections/exhibits manager, associate director, acting director - under several different Boards of Directors. Parrish believes in the role of the museum, she believes in the value of what she is doing, and she believes in her career choice.

**Manda Maggs** is very pleased to be taking on the new position as Executive Director of The Oliver Museum and Archives. Manda has been at the Penticton Museum and Archives for almost 4 years, where she has worked with many amazing and knowledgeable people and been part of many exciting projects. She is delighted to be part of the team in Oliver and is looking forward to new challenges.



**Pam Copley**, Heritage Planner with BC Heritage Branch, has retired after many years of service. Copley's positive energy, her great team spirit and her in depth knowledge of the ins and outs of local government will be hard to replace.



Beaty Biodiversity Museum at UBC welcomes **Amy Gibson** to the role of Marketing, Communication & Events Coordinator. Gibson was previously the Marketing and Communications Manager for UBC Recreation.

The last few months have seen a number of staffing changes in the BC Heritage Branch in the Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations:



**Berdine Jonker**, former Senior Heritage Planner, is now Manager of Heritage Programs and Services. Jonker plays a leading role in the branch's recognition, commemoration and celebration programs.

**Ursula Pfahler**, former Heritage Planner, is now the new Senior Heritage Planner working closely with Jonker on policy and major projects.



**Roger Tinney**, urban planner and consultant, became the new Manager of Stewardship and Historic Place Operations. This role has been expanded to include broad historic environment stewardship beyond the previous focus on Provincial Historic Properties.

**Carla Jack** is the Provincial Toponymist in the Geographical Names Office that moved from GeoBC into the Heritage Branch in early 2015. Jack is responsible for the planning, management and delivery of the province's Geographical Naming Program and for the maintenance of the BC Geographical Names Information System, publicly accessible from the Heritage Branch's website.



**Elisabeth Deom**, Senior Stewardship Officer, Paleontology, moved from Land Tenures Branch to Heritage Branch. Deom is responsible for fossil management in BC.

**Theresa McFarland** joined the branch as the new Heritage Stewardship Officer, Register and Collections working with Registrar Susan Green on the BC Register of Historic Places and the Stewardship team.





# The Many Colours of Islam: Museums, Multiculturalism and Canada's 150th

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**Anissa J. Paulsen**

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As preparations for Canada's 150th anniversary get underway, questions arise about what it means to be Canadian and the role of museums, historic sites and cultural centres to represent the "great Canadian story." Here on the west coast, we have also been reflecting on how our unique British Columbian identity fits in this context and what legacy our museums and cultural centres should leave for future generations.

I participated in the BCMA's Canada 150 forum in May 2016 where over 140 participants online and in person discussed these important questions. It seemed there was no shortage of participants claiming that Canadians (and British Columbians) pride themselves on being known for our "celebration of multiculturalism," "inclusivity," and our ability to "be peacemakers," "be tolerant" and "care for others."

Few people would argue with these ideals, but according to a new survey conducted by The Environics Institute, at least one segment of our Canadian mosaic still suffers from intolerance and discrimination – those who practice the religion of Islam.

## Muslims in Canada

It is perhaps easy to dismiss prejudice against Muslims, but it is real. Many of us here in Canada shudder at the outright discrimination south of our border against Muslims – indeed against many races – that is being exposed by U.S. Presidential candidate Donald Trump. But as Ali Hassan, comedian and producer of the new one-man show, *Muslim Interrupted*, bluntly stated on CBC's April 27, 2016 edition of *Q*, "Canada is equally as racist, but we hide it better."

The **Environics Institute's** recent "Survey on Muslims in Canada" appears to confirm this sentiment. Results of the survey showed that public concerns about the cultural integration of immigrants (particularly Syrian refugees) are growing and Muslims continue to be viewed with apprehension, if not suspicion, by some non-Muslim Canadians. The survey found that one in three Muslims have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment due to their religion. This discrimination is surprisingly more prevalent among Canadian-born Muslims and the subjects of such discrimination are predominantly Canadian-born Muslim women.

**Top:** Students interact with "The many Colours of Islam" exhibit through a scavenger hunt.  
Photo Credit: Anissa Paulsen.

**A disturbing finding from the survey is that Muslim youth are more likely to believe the next generation of Muslims will face more, rather than less, discrimination and stereotyping than they face today.**

As the Environics Institute reports: “Muslims represent the fastest growing religious minority in Canada today, but their emerging presence has been contentious. While Canada has yet to experience the type of ethnic violence and terrorist attacks that have taken place elsewhere, Muslims in this country do not enjoy the acceptance of other religious minorities, and are a focal point for discomfort about immigrants not fitting into Canadian society. By global standards, Canada is a welcoming multicultural society but the Muslim community<sup>1</sup> faces unique challenges with respect to religious freedom, national security profiling and the threat of security detentions abroad.”

Much of the discomfort stems from the fact that Islam is not well understood by non-Muslims. The mainstream media continually portrays simplistic stereotypes emphasizing negative characteristics such as violent extremism and terrorism. Without a more thorough understanding and appreciation of the Muslim religion and a more thoughtful understanding of the similarities across cultures, such stereotypes will continue to exist to the detriment of future generations of Muslim-Canadians and indeed, to the detriment of our desire to be a welcoming, inclusive country.

With the recent arrival of Syrian immigrants into many of our communities here in British Columbia, museums can no longer ignore this segment of our diverse Canadian mosaic.

As a result, it is critical for us all to ask: What kind of legacy do we want to leave in our province? What can we museum professionals do to combat this cultural and religious misunderstanding? How can we be active

<sup>1</sup> The use of the term “Muslim community” in this context refers to the country’s Muslim population which shares a common religious faith. It is not intended to imply that this population is otherwise homogenous, or lacks considerable diversity in other ways.



**Above:** Self portrait by Riri, age 15.

participants in building a strong, positive community that is truly inclusive, tolerant and representative of our multiculturalism?

## Museums as Community Builders

Museums are safe and accessible environments for citizens to discuss challenging issues such as cultural misunderstanding. Museums are uniquely positioned to help reverse stigma and discrimination because they are popular, neutral sources of information. They can attract a diverse cross-section of people and provide shared experiences through interpretive exhibits and programming. By exposing adults and children to unfamiliar ways of life (such as Islam) in such a setting, museums can go a long way to create bridges of understanding and build positive, welcoming and inclusive communities.

The Environics survey discovered (not surprisingly) that opinions about Islam are closely tied to the degree of personal contact non-Muslims have with Muslims.

Non-Muslims who have frequent contact with Muslims reported much higher positive impressions than those with limited contact with this religious group. Education is the key to tolerance, diplomacy and cross-cultural understanding. Without education and opportunities for positive interaction, stereotypes persist, and fear and misunderstanding about Islam and Muslims will continue to proliferate in our province and country.

*The Many Colours of Islam* traveling exhibit is one exhibit that tackles this important issue. The exhibit has traveled to museums, schools and cultural centres across the United States for the past six years. It has impacted thousands of children and adults alike and challenged them to think differently about Islam and Muslims – a way of life and a people with whom they may not be familiar.

In the exhibition, self-portraits by young Muslims are accompanied by literary pieces in their own words about their lives, values and what Islam means to them.

*The Many Colours of Islam* focuses not on the differences between religions, but instead seeks to explore ways in which Islam is similar to other religions and cultures that exist in North America. The artwork and writings demonstrate that Islam is a vibrant and diverse religion and culture that share similarities with many of our western ideals. Thus, countering the sometimes negative and one-sided media representations regarding Islam.

### Let's do it for our Children

One of the reasons this exhibition has been so successfully received is due to its point of view. The exhibit was purposefully created by – and for – youth and tells the stories of individual children and their firsthand perspectives of Islam. For a complex subject matter such as religion, this intimate perspective allows their stories to resonate more readily with child visitors and their families. Children and adults alike can learn a lot from another child's honest and apparently simplistic approach to storytelling.

"This exhibit will go a long way in building a better world for our children!"  
– Visitor

"Let's work for Peace – I see it in these pictures by children."  
– Visitor

"The exhibit is about thinking over all connections. It's all centered on cultural understanding and peace. [The young artists in the exhibit] sound like your next door neighbor talking. These [Muslim] children are just like my daughter – just like the kids in Iowa City." – Executive Director, The Iowa Children's Museum

"The exhibit was so well received by my staff and patrons alike. It was really great to see parents reading the labels to their kids and really learning more about Islam themselves. It's definitely something everyone could use right now." – Staff, Garden State Discovery Museum (New Jersey)

## Opportunities for Engagement

*The Many Colours of Islam* exhibit is designed to be a catalyst for engagement and community building in any community<sup>2</sup>. There are ample opportunities for museums to engage with their local communities – both Muslims and non-Muslims – when hosting this exhibit.

Opportunities for community engagement vary from community to community but so far museums have worked with their local Muslim communities to co-create supplementary exhibit components as well as to develop informative public lectures, cooking demonstrations and musical performances to celebrate the rich diversity of Muslim culture.

The Iowa Children’s Museum sought direct participation from neighboring schools to create additional hands-on interactive elements relating to Islam and artistic representations of mosque styles around the world. A museum in Washington, DC, partnered with Grade 6 teachers to curate a parallel exhibit of their students’ self-portraits as a way to showcase the diverse identities and heritages represented in their classrooms.

The new **BC curriculum** to be introduced this Fall provides incentive for British Columbia’s museums to develop and/or host such exhibits. One of the competencies of the new BC curriculum is the Positive Personal and Cultural Identity competency. This competency focuses on the “awareness, understanding, and appreciation of all the facets that contribute to a healthy sense of oneself. It includes awareness and understanding of one’s family background, heritage(s), language(s), beliefs, and perspectives in a multicultural society.”

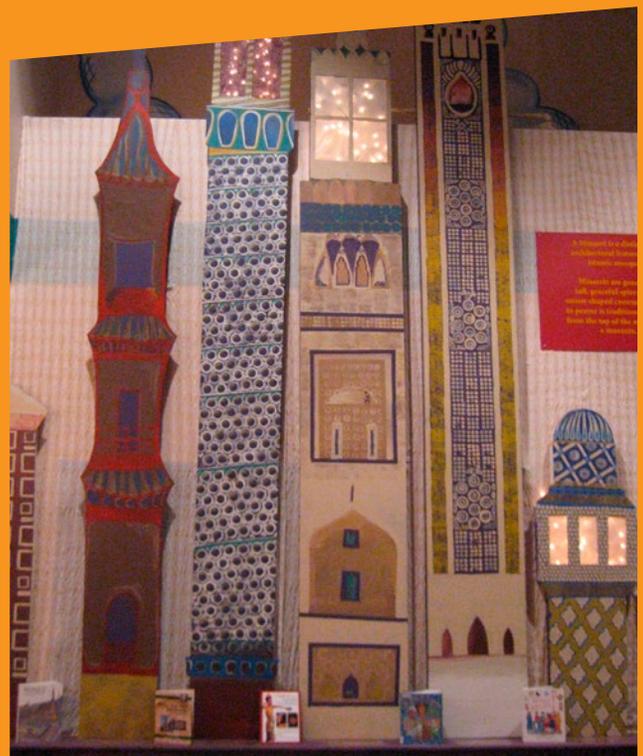
<sup>2</sup>Although the exhibit is centered around Muslim children in Indonesia, it is an appropriate framework for understanding that the Muslim community in British Columbia is not monolithic, it is incredibly diverse and represents Muslims from many regions and continents, including Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

**Right:** Illustrating diverse architectural styles of mosques around the world at the Iowa Children’s Museum.  
Photo Credit: Anissa Paulsen.

## About *The Many Colours of Islam* exhibit

In 2004, children from four prominent art organizations located in Indonesia were invited to participate in *The Many Colours of Islam* exhibition project. The Indonesian Muslim children were asked to create their self-portrait and invited to write a personal anecdote about themselves. Over 100 Indonesian children (ages 5-16) enthusiastically participated. This exhibition of children’s artwork and stories thus provides a window into their world: their lives in Indonesia, their values and beliefs as well as their traditions for celebrating Islamic holidays such as Idul Adha and Idul Fitri.

The exhibit illustrates our common humanity while demonstrating the individual and diverse characteristics that make the Islamic culture unique. *The Many Colours of Islam* is available for rental in Canadian Museums and is your chance to begin the conversation and help to create a future that is peaceful for all our children.



**Keeping an open mind to working with your local Muslim community, as well as your local teachers and schools, will further encourage engagement, build community and promote tolerance toward Islam.**

## The Many Colours of our Canadian Mosaic

Returning to Canada's 150th, as we consider programming at our British Columbian museums, historic sites and cultural centres, we must challenge ourselves to ensure these programs take into account opportunities for representation from, and engagement with, a wide range of diverse segments in our mosaic. It is not enough to talk about our willingness to embrace difference - we need to be willing to act.

But why should we care? Why should we take action? Isn't it someone else's responsibility? As Nina Simon,

author of the Participatory Museum and the [Museum 2.0 blogpost](#) writes, "There are many important problems that touch the museum field: building stronger communities, the need for creative play and inspiration...education about global issues. And so on."



**Right:** Artwork by Nasia, age 14.



**Above:** Traditional prayer clothes for boys and girls.  
Photo Credit: Anissa Paulsen.



**Above:** Lukman - in the process of creating his self portrait for the exhibit.  
Photo Credit: Anissa Paulsen.

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**Tackling an important question – no matter which one it is – is the only way we will ever change the world and make our province and our country a better, stronger place to live.**

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Even if your museum does not choose to reach out to this segment of society, or tackle this particular social concern, we should all consider opportunities to create powerful, educational opportunities at our respective museums that will help to truly celebrate our multiculturalism, involve and welcome diverse members of our community at our museums, and celebrate the rich diversity of stories that make up our great Canadian mosaic.

I'll close with a quote from US President Barack Obama while he was visiting Cairo in June 2009:

*"If we choose to be bound by the past, we will never move forward. And I want to particularly say this to young people of every faith in every country. You more than anyone have the ability to re-imagine the world, to remake this world.*

*All of us share this world for but a brief moment in time. The question is whether we spend that time focused on what pushes us apart or whether we commit ourselves to ...a sustained effort to find common ground, to focus on the future we seek for our children and to respect the dignity of all human beings.*

*It's easier to start wars than to end them. It's easier to blame others than to look inward. It's easier to see what is different about someone than to find the things we share. But we should choose the right path, not just the easy path."*

Creating powerful exhibits and programs in our museums to stimulate curiosity, discover similarities, and encourage positive interactions between diverse visitors is not always easy, but it is essential.

Let's work together now to create our legacy for Canada 150. Let's make a commitment to develop programming and exhibits that allow visitors to our museums – particularly children and youth – to leave equipped with new knowledge that enables them to carry on as positive, citizens in our great country today and in the future.

***Anissa J. Paulsen is an independent museum consultant. In 2003, Ms Paulsen received a grant from the United States Indonesia Society (USINDO) to travel to Indonesia and conduct research for this exhibition project. Over the past 18 years, she has worked in the museum field in a broad range of positions and institutions including the Smithsonian Institution, California Historical Society, the University of Victoria and most recently as the Director of Exhibits and Visitor Engagement at the Maritime Museum of British Columbia.***



# VISIT MOTIVATIONS

## A Case Study of Chinese Families in Vancouver

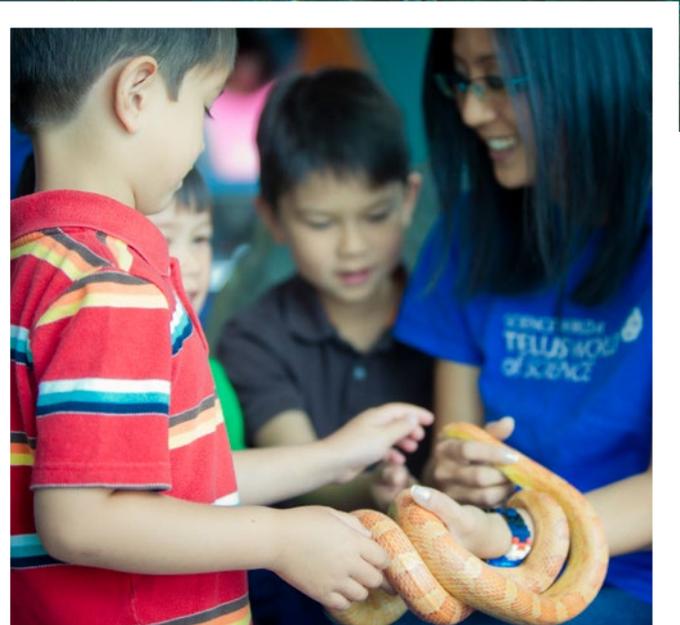


**Above:** A diver interacts with visitors and marine life in Vancouver Aquarium's Strait of Georgia exhibit. Photo Credit: Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre.

### Jiao Ji and David Anderson

Visit motivation has a very significant influence on family groups' museum visitation and experiential outcomes. In visitor studies, understanding visit motivations of audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds can arguably help museums to better serve audiences with various needs, aspirations, and expectations. Such understandings in turn, further help museums to more effectively fulfill their educational missions and social responsibilities.

Visit motivation is influenced by visitors' previous life histories, personal interests, and social relationships, as well as the values they hold about museums, education and learning. As a result, visitors driven by different motivations can make meaning of their museum visit from a plethora of different perspectives. The contemporary literature on this topic has provided a number of varied perspectives or categories of visit motivations.



John Falk's *Identity and the Museum Visit Experience* classified visitors into five groups:

- the explorer: being curious about exploring the attractiveness of exhibitions
- the facilitator: taking care of other family members
- the professional/hobbyist: satisfying personal interests and professional needs
- the experience seeker: collecting visit experiences
- the recharger: having physically, emotionally, and intellectually recharging moments

In Jan Packer's 2004 study with visitors in science museums, she identified visit motivations in terms of learning and discovery, passive enjoyment, restoration, social interaction, and self-fulfillment. Although these studies suggest different structures of visit motivations, there

**Top Right:** Children explore the world of nature in Telus World of Science's Search Gallery. Photo Credit: Science World British Columbia.

still exists some common ground. That is, visitors often come to museums for the opportunities of education, entertainment, social interaction, personal interest, as well they are influenced by other practical issues such as weather conditions.

**It is worth noting that the vast majority of the published literature in regard to visit motivations has been conducted with visitors from Western culture contexts and in museums situated in Western countries.**

However, given differences in cultural rules, norms, and values, across ethnic boundaries, it seems reasonable to question whether those from non-Western cultural backgrounds, and in the case of this study, Chinese visitors, hold the same visit motivations as those suggested by the current literature. Consider, for example, Tlili, Cribb, & Gewirtz's article, "What Becomes of Science in a Science Center?", in which they view that museums should be a public sphere where visitors may initiate dialogue, discussion, and debate with family members, general audiences, and/or museum educators. On the surface, and from a dominantly Western world view, there seems little reason to question such a statement of virtue. However, according to the traditional hierarchical culture in China that advo-

cates respect to the authorities and keeping mian zi (面子, face, a kind of self-reputation in society), social interaction may not be a common phenomenon in Chinese museums or among visitors with Chinese heritage. Our general assumptions about visitors and their visit motivations are important to scrutinize – particularly in the light of cultural identities of visitors.

In recent years, Vancouver is "becoming the most 'Asian' city outside of Asia" (**around 43%** of residents in Metro Vancouver have Asian heritage). More significantly, around 15% of residents' mother tongue is Chinese (including Cantonese, Mandarin, Hakka, Chinese), which constituted the most common non-official language in Vancouver. Since the population of Chinese residents is increasing year by year, the number of Chinese visitors to local cultural institutions, like museums, is also increasing. However, visitor studies have seldom considered this ethnic group as a focus of research investigation. Therefore, it is important to understand visitors from non-Western cultural backgrounds and explore why these visitors, such as visitors with Chinese ethnic origin, come to visit museums. This will further provide information for museums to more deeply understand Chinese visitors, and accordingly tune the museums' educational approaches with this demographic in mind.



**Above:** Children explore the properties of water with ball launchers and water tables. Photo Credit: Science World British Columbia.

## The Study

The data reported here used a survey-based, quantitative approach to identify dominant motivations of Chinese family groups in the Vancouver Aquarium and Telus World of Science, Vancouver<sup>1</sup>. Chinese family groups were identified and the caregivers (parents or grandparents of the children in the group) were interviewed us-

ing a facilitator-led questionnaire at these two research sites. The questionnaire included 15 items covering possible motivations, such as education, entertainment, social interaction, personal interest, and practical issues, which derived from the existing literature.

**Percentage and Ranking of 15 Motivation Items, Comparison of Visiting Motivation between Different Sites**

	Total		Telus World of Science		Vancouver Aquarium		p
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
I want my child/(ren) to have fun here.	198	80.8	120	88.06	78	73.12	<.001
I want my child(ren) to learn something here.	183	74.7	107	78.98	76	70.64	<.001
I love doing hands-on activities.	111	45.3	48	35.13	63	59.08	<.001
It is an interesting place.	99	40.4	48	35.62	51	47.25	>.05
It is a good place to improve the relationship among my family members.	81	33.1	45	32.86	36	33.93	>.05
I want my child/(ren) to socialize with others.	80	32.7	52	38.02	28	26.44	<.001
I want to have fun.	75	30.6	33	24.26	42	39.25	<.05
I want to learn something new here.	71	29	37	27.45	34	31.47	>.05
The environment here is attractive.	69	28.2	39	28.83	30	27.85	>.05
I love exploring new things.	65	26.5	35	25.42	30	28.44	<.001
It is a famous tourist attraction in Vancouver.	60	24.5	17	12.68	43	39.96	<.001
I want to relax myself here.	51	20.8	20	14.49	31	29.25	<.05
It is a good place for a social outing.	42	17.1	22	16.18	20	18.34	>.05
It was recommended to me.	38	15.5	17	12.53	21	19.59	>.05
Of weather.	34	13.9	15	10.80	19	18.05	>.05

<sup>1</sup>This study was part of a larger project that compared Chinese family groups' visit motivations to science museums between Vancouver and Beijing (Ji, Anderson, Wu, & Kang, 2014).

Participants selected five dominant motivations according to their actual thoughts and needs at the time of their visit. The number and percentage of each selected visit motivation item were calculated, and the motivation differences between Telus World of Science and Vancouver Aquarium were compared.

The top five motivations perceived by visitors and reported in Table 1 included:

“I want my children to have fun here” (80.8%)

“I want my children to learn something here” (74.7%)

“I love doing hands-on activities” (45.3%)

“It is an interesting place” (40.4%)

“It is a good place to improve the relationship among my family members” (33.1%)

It is interesting to note that the top two dominant motivation items demonstrated a highly children-centered approach for Chinese families when they made decisions to visit science museums. This result was consistent with several previous studies, which also supported “acquiring knowledge” and “[to] have fun” are two main reasons for visiting science museums. The compatibility of visitors’ expectations for learning and fun can be described as “Edutainment”.

## What Does this Tell us?

The data illustrates that social interaction in science museums was not strongly recognized as an important motivation for Chinese visitors. The percentage of participants who selected items in relation to social interaction motivation was less than 35%. It is interesting to note that, in another study conducted by Jiao Ji in 2015, museum educators in mainland China also reported their difficulty in engaging Chinese visitors socially in educational activities.

In general, facilitating visitors having social interactions with family members, other visitors, and museum staffs is a goal pursued by many museum educators. However, this study and Ji’s study do not strongly support a strong valuing of social interaction in museums among Chinese visitors in family groups – a finding consistent with much of the contemporary studies conducted among Western visitor demographics. Such inconsistency provides reason to question the universality of such a visit motivation and leads to questioning why visitors of Chinese ethnic origins demonstrate a relatively low recognition on social interaction motivation in museum context. These findings also afford an opportunity for museum educators to reflect on the ways to encourage Chinese visitors to value the social interactive function of museums more deeply.

This study revealed differences in motivation profiles between visitors in Telus World of Science and Vancouver Aquarium. Compared to Vancouver Aquarium, more participants in Telus World of Science selected children-centered motivations, such as seeking education, entertainment, and socialization opportunities for their children. On the other hand, more participants to Vancouver Aquarium selected motivation items that represented their own needs and preferences, such as seeking relaxation and fun for themselves at the Aquarium.

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**Although both sites strive to fulfill educational missions for visitors at different age groups, in this study, compared to Vancouver Aquarium, families visiting Telus World of Science were more oriented towards satisfying their children’s needs.**

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Comparatively, visit motivations at Vancouver Aquarium were seen to be not only for their children but also oriented towards their own preferences.

The research findings provide insights for museum practitioners to better understand the characteristics of Chinese family groups in Vancouver museums. In this study, the background of visitors with Chinese origin in Vancouver were complicated with regard to their immigration (year of residence in Canada) and educational history. However, traditional Chinese culture and educational philosophy in which these caregivers were enculturated likely still impacts their views and perspectives about education and museums.

The outcomes of this study may further help museums to tune their programs and pedagogy for this particular audience demographic, and also raises interesting issues to consider in future research on the topic of visit motivations among ethnically diverse cultural groups.

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**David Anderson (david.anderson@ubc.ca) is Professor at the University of British Columbia, Canada. His academic work is situated in the fields of Museum Education and Science Education, and he is the Director of the Master of Museum Education (MMEd) degree program at UBC.**



**Left:** Vancouver Aquarium's BC Hydro AquaVan delivers aquatic education on wheels across B.C. and Alberta. Photo Credit: Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre.



**Image:** Our Eureka! Gallery hosts many hands-on exhibits that explore physics, like the Dyson air wall.  
*Photo Credit: Science World British Columbia.*

# Trans/forming Collections

## The Transgender Archives at the University of Victoria

Lara Wilson

The Transgender Archives housed at the University of Victoria Libraries was formally founded in 2011 to preserve transgender histories for all who wish to know about them, and to promote understanding about transgender people, the challenges they face in society, and their successes. The materials we hold come from 17 countries and comprise the largest collection in the world of historical materials on trans people and their activism (approximately 320 linear feet / 98 linear meters, and growing).

### Definition of terms: transgender/trans

The following definitions are useful in order to understand the scope of experiences potentially documented in the Transgender Archives:

**trans-**, *prefix*: With the sense ‘across, through, over, to or on the other side of, beyond, outside of, from one place, person, thing, or state to another.’

**transgender**: “an umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.”

**Right:** *Takarazuka Revue* magazine, University of Ulster UK TGA Collection, Transgender Archives, UVic.





**trans\*** (also without the \*): those people who transgress (binary) (western) gender norms, many of whom face human rights issues as a result. Trans people includes those people who have a gender identity which is different to the gender assigned at birth and/or those people who feel they have to, prefer to or choose to – whether by clothing, accessories, cosmetics or body modification – present themselves differently to the expectations of the gender role assigned to them at birth. This includes, among many others, transsexual and transgender people, transvestites, travesti, cross dressers, no gender and genderqueer people.

### Mandate

Although known as Transgender Archives, the materials we hold are a mixture of archival records in multiple media (textual records, photographs, audio histories, video recordings), rare monograph and journal materials, ephemera and objects, art works, motion pictures and music recordings (both mass market and self-published).

As word got out that UVic was acquiring trans materials, we realized we needed to articulate our acquisitions/collections mandate.

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**We decided to limit our acquisitions to “documents, rare publications, and memorabilia of persons and organizations that have worked for the betterment of transgendered people.”**

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Individual narratives of transition are not sought specifically, but they are frequently found in the archival fonds and rare print collections received.

Materials in our holdings are evidence of transgressive environments in which trans people have lived their lives, beyond or outside of the binary-based mainstream, and, not uncommonly, risking their lives by choosing to express their true gender. Our goal for this archival and

rare print collection (as with all of our holdings ) is that it may serve many communities: trans people and allies, secondary and post-secondary students, teachers and academics, the general public, journalists, writers and film-makers, and researchers from many areas of study.

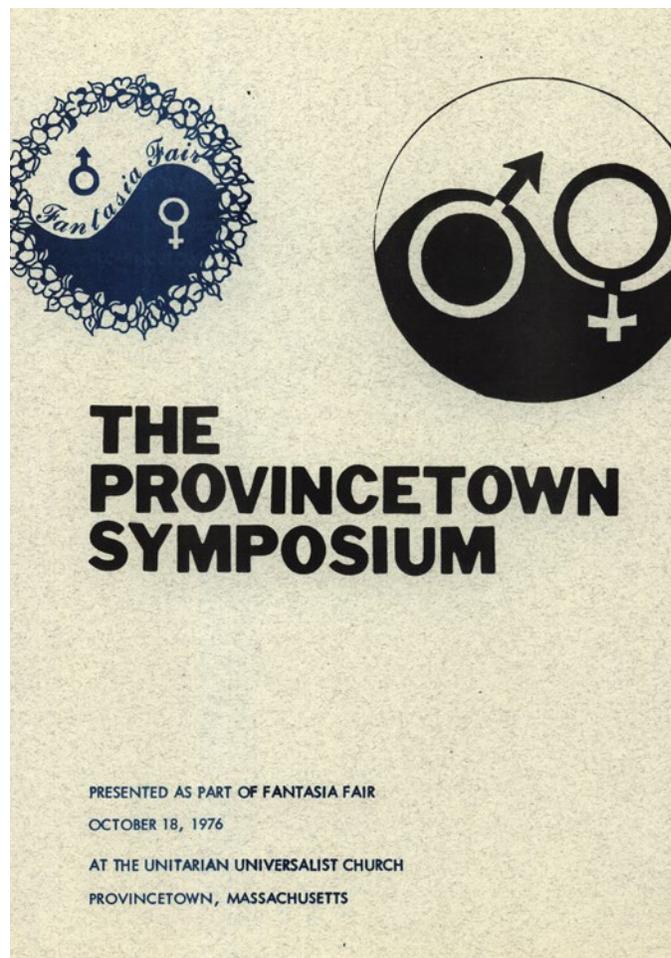
The Transgender Archives' mandate and acquisition activities, and promotion of the collection, is conducted in partnership with Dr. Aaron Devor, Chair in Transgender Studies, Founder and Academic Director of the Transgender Archives, professor of sociology, and UVic's former Dean of Graduate Studies. Dr. Devor's publications include *Gender Blending: Confronting the Limits of Duality*, *FTM: Female-to-Male Transsexuals in Society*, and *The Transgender Archives: Foundations for the Future*.

## Origins

The Transgender Archives began with a 2007 gift to UVic of the Rikki Swin Institute (RSI) research library and archives. Established in Chicago, Illinois, in 2001, the Institute had four objectives: the housing of a library and archives; conference co-sponsorship; digital video education; and research. RSI closed in December 2004. Rikki Swin offered this material to UVic via Aaron Devor. In addition to RSI's own organizational records and research materials, there was a reference library of mass-market publications, rare books, newsletters, and a sample collection of 20th century erotic periodicals, and the archival fonds of leading American trans activists and organizations, such as Virginia Prince, Ariadne Kane, the Fantasia Fair transgender conference, and the International Foundation for Gender Education.

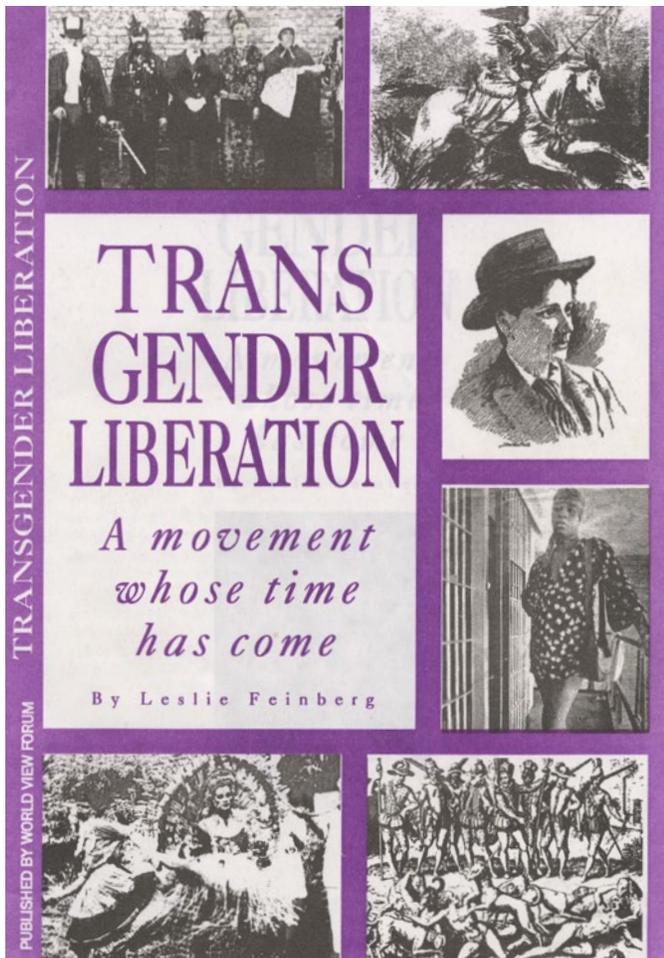
## Acquisitions

In addition to the RSI collection, UVic was offered more American material: Reed Erickson's personal and business papers, newsletters and pamphlets. Erikson was founder and president of the Erickson Educational Foundation (EEF). EEF helped to support many aspects of work being done in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s in the field of transgenderism/transsexualism. The



**Top:** *Fantasia Fair Symposium programme, 1976, Rikki Swin Collection, Transgender Archives, UVic.*

**Below:** *Unidentified participant, Fantasia Fair, undated, Rikki Swin Collection, Transgender Archives, UVic.*



EEF funded many early research efforts, including the creation of the Harry Benjamin Foundation, and the early work of the Johns Hopkins Clinic.

The Transgender Archives received from Vancouver lawyer Barbara Findlay, Q.C., the Canadian court records from the Kimberly Nixon v. Vancouver Rape Relief human rights tribunal: Nixon was a trans woman whose offer of volunteer work as a rape counsellor was refused by Vancouver Rape Relief because she was trans. As well, author and activist Stephanie Castle donated the records and newsletters of the Vancouver-based Zenith Foundation, which made submissions in the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal regarding trans woman Synthia Kavanagh who sought the right to undergo sex reassignment surgery while incarcerated.

In late 2013, we received the University of Ulster UK TGA collection, donated by Professor Richard Ekins. Founded in January 1986, it was the first such collection in the world to be housed within a university setting. The collection is focused on understanding how attitudes and representations of transgender people have developed and changed over time. It includes a considerable amount of material relating to gender expression in popular culture and includes fiction and nonfiction books, magazines, newspaper clippings, scholarly papers, mass market and self-published audio and video recordings, photographs, and ephemera.

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**We continue to receive small donations on a regular basis, these include recent publications signed by their authors, small aggregations of research materials, magazines, fantasy fiction, community newsletters, vinyl records, organizational records, lapel pins, and photos.**

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**Top:** *Transgender liberation : a movement whose time has come / by Leslie Feinberg, Transgender Archives, UVic Special Collections call #HQ77.9 F45 1992.*

**Below:** *Transgendered with Attitude, button, undated. University of Ulster UK TGA Collection, Transgender Archives, UVic.*

Presently, the Transgender Archives holds more primary sources about transwomen than about transmen, and largely generated in Anglo-American middle class contexts – such is the nature of the documents, publications and ephemeral materials donated so far. Some potential donors are still using their materials every day, other material is only now being created by activists, advocates, and researchers.

## Challenges and Successes

While the very establishment of The Transgender Archives is a significant accomplishment, we need to be mindful of whether our on-going acquisition, access and preservation activities are meeting the needs of the communities that we serve. Unlike museums and public libraries, archives and rare book units are typically open during weekday business hours and are closed on weekends and evenings, limiting on-site use of materials; such limited hours are a barrier to all people who work those hours and a barrier to awareness about archives and special collections and their services. For many first time users of archival and rare print resources, specialized archival and rare book terminology may intimidate users, who may not be comfortable asking archives staff for explanation of terms.

Other challenges include managing expectations around access and use. Access to archives with sensitive personal information requires users to sign a research agreement identifying the files or items they wish to view. Research agreements typically collect names, contact information, purpose of visit and research project information, and are followed by discussions between researchers and archivists. This can be intimidating for a researcher who does not have a fully formed research plan or who has little experience using archives in a formal setting. Also, copyright or privacy concerns (or other specific restrictions) mean that we cannot digitize everything, and that still surprises many users who are used to accessing all their needed information online.

Major outreach initiatives for the Transgender Archives and the Chair in Transgender Studies have been our Moving Trans History Forward (MTHF) Conferences held in March 2014 and March 2016 at UVic, and book *The Transgender Archives: Foundations for the Future* by Dr. Aaron Devor, published by UVic Libraries.

Both conferences have served to raise awareness of our collections and the research taking place at UVic: MTHF14 focused on issues of acquisition, preservation, and access. MTHF16's theme was "Building Communities - Sharing Connections" and included presentations on a wide variety of topics. Over 175 people from around the world took in 4 days of programming; as well as keynotes from transgender thought leaders Martine Rothblatt and Jamison Green, broad session themes included gender identity in history and literature, current transgender activism initiatives, art performances and exhibits, poetry readings and a film screening.

*The Transgender Archives: Foundations for the Future* is now in its second edition. An overview of our collection, it situates our holdings within the history of trans activism and research. Both editions are available as a free download from the [UVic University Library](#).

The preceding was a brief, and hopefully informative, overview of our holdings. UVic welcomes collaboration and dialogue with trans and allied communities around access and outreach relating to the [Transgender Archives](#), as well as our many other collections.

**Lara Wilson is Director, Special Collections & University Archivist at the University of Victoria. Wilson holds masters degrees in art history and archival studies.**





# Sticky Notes and Food Labels

## Reimagining Multicultural Experiences in the Royal BC Museum

**Janet MacDonald and Erik Lambertson**

The Royal British Columbia Museum works closely with a myriad of different BC communities to celebrate the spectacular diversity and historic richness of our province. As the province's museum and archives, we are responsible for sharing their stories in our galleries, travelling exhibitions and public programs.

Recently, we've been working closely with partners in the Indo Canadian community to tease out some significant stories that we feel will help all British Columbians get a richer, fuller sense of our shared history. Sometimes, the perspectives we hear and the narratives we learn challenge how we've historically depicted historical events, era and contributions.

We *like* encountering challenges. Responding to them helps us build a more inclusive, contemporary and dynamic museum.

Recently, we collaborated with Indo Canadian communities to examine our Logging Exhibit. Like all the exhibits in the Royal BC Museum's permanent galleries, the Logging Exhibit boasts plenty of historically accurate and evocative detail: planks of timber that beg to be touched, descriptive text that provides fascinating background info, tools that look as though they were dropped 10 minutes ago when the crew decided to take a quick coffee break.

What's missing is any mention of an entire group of people who were pioneers in British Columbia's logging industry and—given the Douglas fir-sized importance of timber in our province's development—helped shape modern BC.

The Indo Canadian community has deep roots in British Columbia's forestry industry as workers and logging company owners but this exhibit doesn't mention their existence. However, the Royal BC Museum takes its re-

**Top:** Rajinder Singh Gill and Mr. Gurmail Singh Judge of the Indo Canadian community examining a temporary photographic addition in the Royal BC Museum's Logging Exhibit with Satwinder Kaur Bains, Director of the Centre for Indo Canadian Studies and Associate Professor at the University of the Fraser Valley.  
Photo Credit: Royal BC Museum.

## FEATURE ARTICLE

sponsibility to accurately depict BC history with great seriousness and does its best to update old exhibits. Sometimes this means opening ourselves up to a little scrutiny.

So, on November 21, 2015, the Royal BC Museum invited Indo Canadian communities from the Lower Mainland, the Fraser Valley and Vancouver Island to stage an 'intervention' in the Logging Exhibit. The idea was for participants to reframe the historical record by including their stories and perspectives.

More than 100 participants, from teens to seniors, walked through the Logging Exhibit, examined the display and talked with Royal BC Museum staff and each other. Some of the most meaningful interactions took place within families as youth

expressed appreciation for their elders' stories, thirsty for more history they could claim as their own.

Organized by the Royal BC Museum, the Centre for Indo Canadian Studies at the University of the Fraser Valley and the David Lam Centre at Simon Fraser University, the intervention included multimedia stories told by community members and discussions at 'conversation tables' about what the exhibit might look like—and what messages it might convey—in the future. Armed with sticky notes and challenged to provide the museum with candid observations, participants had plenty to say.

Participants talked about many issues and diverse themes ranging from discrimination to the food

eaten at sawmills, from the role played by Chinese corner stores to the need to tell women's stories better, from sacrifices made during the Great Depression to the importance of talking about the Panama Maru incident.

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### Staging the event in the museum was a powerful symbolic act for the Indo Canadian community.

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The event conspicuously and publicly marked what many community members hope is the beginning of a committed long-term relationship and a defining moment in the provincial correction of past wrongs.

**Below Left:** *Dr Balbir Gurm, Chair of the BC Punjabi Intercultural History Advisory Committee with the Royal BC Museum, in dialogue with community participants in the Modern History Gallery's Logging Exhibition. Photo Credit: Royal BC Museum.*



**Below Left:** *Generations of families watching the oral history video in the Modern History Gallery's Logging Exhibition. Photo Credit: Royal BC Museum.*



Inviting diverse cultural groups to help revise decades-old museum content is not a new concept for the Royal BC Museum, which successfully partnered with the First Peoples' Cultural Council to develop and create the award-winning feature exhibition *Our Living Languages: First Peoples' Voices in BC* in 2014.

The Royal BC Museum has supported other BC government initiatives to correct the historical record, recently developing school outreach kits, website articles and other materials to commemorate the Chinese Historical Wrongs.

The Ethnic Food History Project is another avenue we've developed to help share the stories of our diverse immigrant histories with the rest of BC. The project began in 2012 when the Royal BC Museum conducted research on Chinese Canadian food collections and stories. We showcased some results in the exhibition *Tradition in Felicities: Celebrating the History of Canada's Oldest Chinatown*.

To follow up, the Royal BC Museum began a close re-examination of food packages and container labels in our Modern History Collection. These artifacts reveal significant information about the past, including information about the appetites and consumption habits of multi-cultural groups in BC.

Reflecting the pulls of supply and demand, BC food suppliers have always catered to both mainstream and specialty cultural demand – including sourcing and selling imported and locally produced foods for cultural minority groups. In immigrants' new lives in a new land like BC, culinary practices are oftentimes the markers and carriers of cultural traditions. Food is a reflection of culture, and food labels are tangible clues of cultural habits and values.

But food labels are also easily perishable and few survive long. Happily, the Royal BC Museum's online team is developing a Food Packaging Digital Project – providing an easily-accessible, highly-visual platform to view and

share scanned images from our food packaging collection. The end result? British Columbians will be able to view and learn more about BC's food history.

The Ethnic Food History Project was made possible by funding from The W. Garfield Weston Foundation.

***Janet MacDonald is the Head of Learning at the Royal BC Museum where she oversees all public and school programming activities as they relate to formal and informal learning programs delivered by full-time staff, seasonal staff, contract workers and volunteers. MacDonald holds an MA in Museum Studies from University of Leicester, a BA in Anthropology and Art History from McGill, and has studied Applied Museum Studies, Museum Exhibition and Interpretation at Algonquin College.***



***Erik Lambertson is the Corporate Communications Manager at the Royal BC Museum. Lambertson promotes Executive team initiatives, liaises with government on communications matters, develops the organization's internal and external communications strategy and negotiates filming at the Museum and Archives. He also facilitates media training, writes and edits for the organization and promotes exhibitions and events to media and the public through a variety of channels.***





# Revitalizing Japantown? Exhibit

## The continuous fabric of change, resistance, and the Right to Remain in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES)

**Sherri Kajiwara**

*Revitalizing Japantown?* at the Nikkei National Museum (October 24, 2015 – January 31, 2016) immersed visitors in complex, controversial, and compelling issues that have shaped Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) through over a century of colonialism. The neighbourhood, euphemistically referred to as Japantown, has repeatedly witnessed waves of dispossession and displacement that continue today. The culmination of a three-year Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)-funded research project and academic-community partnership, this multi-layered exhibition interprets the contradictions, co-optations, commemorations, heritage, and redress that have shaped the DTES in a creative re-possession of the human rights legacies of the area.

What was most compelling about *Revitalizing Japantown?* from a curatorial perspective was the question mark. The academic study raised questions such as: How does one revitalize something that has always been vital? What is the actual history of the DTES? How does a citizen of a democratic country espousing social justice reconcile forced displacement and dispossession with urban improvement? How can a neighbourhood be labelled by developers when those within it call it some-

thing else entirely? How do we engage the public in a way that encourages curiosity and dialogue, and elicits questions one might not have even thought to previously ask? How do we make textually dense research appealing to a museum audience? How do we visually translate complex scholarship?

We resolved the exhibit dilemma by working directly with not only the academics on the study, but also the community arts partners and artists from the DTES who were engaged with the study throughout the project.

**We invited enlightened brainstorming with our exhibit design team and cultivated a culture of collaboration.**

In their essay "A Continuous Fabric of Change" from the catalogue *Revitalizing Japantown? A Unifying Exploration of Human Rights, Branding, and Place* that accompanies the *Revitalizing Japantown?* exhibit, scholars Aaron Franks and Jeff Masuda relay the history of the research project behind the exhibit. Beginning in 2010, they posed the question, "what happens when Japanese Canadian history is appropriated into a cultural brand aimed at revitalizing a neighbourhood?". Two years lat-



**Above:** *Dispossession*, original photograph by Greg Masuda (2010).



er, Jeff Masuda and fellow project investigators Audrey Kobayashi, Sonia Bookman, Joyce Rock, and Beth Carter were successful in obtaining a SSHRC Partnership Development grant which brought together six advocacy and cultural organization partners from the DTES and the local Japanese Canadian community. As the project progressed, this grew to eight, including Gallery Gaget, the Greater Vancouver Japanese Canadian Citizens' Association, the Nikkei National Museum & Cultural Centre, PACE, the Potluck Café Society, the Powell Street Festival Society, and the Vancouver Japanese Language School and Japanese Hall. As part of project outcomes, exhibits on human rights and the Right to Remain in the DTES/*Paueru-gai* were held at Gallery Gaget in Spring of 2015 and at the Nikkei National Museum in winter 2015/2016. The Gallery Gaget exhibit featured the re-

**Above Left:** *Button Blanket* project. Photo credit: Kathy Shimizu.

sults of a peer-led *Right to Remain Community Fair* that was open to all and engaged hundreds of DTES residents, Japanese Canadians, and the Metropolitan Vancouver public through more than a dozen events over the course of a year. The Nikkei National Museum's task was to tell the tale of the entire research project, including related arts and community activities. As Franks and Masuda point out,

*the continuous story of exploitation and resistance in the DTES ultimately gives shape to a Right to Remain that is the hallmark of the neighbourhood. This is a right not merely to survive, but to live, create, and ultimately, positively influence the conditions of change that have shaped this tenuous but continuous community....By tying this place's long history of resilience and activism toward a Right to Remain denied and a Right to Remain achieved (time and again) into a singular concept, we seek to take on and displace this reputation by representing its past and present inhabitants not on the basis of their vulnerability but as astute and determined political leaders who have created a national legacy of Human Rights Achievement.*

To articulate all of this, four DTES artists who led workshops in the *Right to Remain Community Fair*, Quin Mar-



tins, Andy Mori, Karen Ward, and Herb Varley, agreed to represent each of the four 'rights' identified by the research study: The Right to Home, The Right to Culture, The Right to Have Rights, and the Right to History. Japanese Canadian artist Greg Masuda, whose artwork and documentary film were pivotal in the visuals of the exhibit, took exquisite portraits of each of these artists in a DTES location of their choice. The results were visually arresting, evocative, and dramatic when installed as 9ft X 11ft wallpaper on the four walls of the gallery. The centrepiece to the narrative was a to-scale abstract interpretation of a current-day Single Room Occupancy (SRO) residence with a 360-degree-view film by Greg Masuda of that same space projected onto one of the walls. A mobile version of the film could be downloaded onto a visitor's smart device to give a complete surround visual experience to a space that was otherwise a blank canvas. The entire structure was white on white, with cubes as placeholders for all of the furniture and possessions depicted in the film. Artwork borrowed from Coast Salish and additional DTES artists, as well as select pieces from the Nikkei National Museum's permanent collection, rounded out the contemporary art presentations woven into the display.

We gave full disclosure of our exhibit plans to Vancouver City planners, from whom we borrowed published development plans and artist renderings of past controversial ideas that were never realized. We scoured BC Archives for authentic photos that supported the narrative of

displacement, to give historical context to the posited contemporary opinions. We created an education portal in the exhibit where visitors could independently peruse related newspaper clippings and resource materials, and listen to excerpts from oral histories collected for this project.

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## We took an inclusive approach to articulating the complex issues presented in the study.

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The cooperative, consultative process that drove the exhibit development carried through to exhibit programming, which included a panel discussion on opening day with scholars Jeff Masuda and Audrey Kobayashi as well as representatives from Gallery Gachet and many of the artists included in the exhibit. Subsequent programming included a screening of Greg Masuda's *Right to Remain* documentary, which also aired on CBC, with a Q&A session including the filmmaker, Herb Varley, and Tom Delvecchio, the resident of the SRO showcased in the exhibit. A final programming event was *Pie Chats*, which brought together many residents from the DTES, the Seeing the Whole Picture project group from the DTES, and the Nikkei National Museum community for conversations over pie.

The Nikkei National Museum is a small museum which is dedicated to honour, preserve, and share Japanese Ca-



nadian history and culture for a better Canada. This exhibit gave us an opportunity to present an inclusive art exhibit that highlighted challenging human rights and current social issues connected to our mandate while presenting an interactive, contemporary audio-visual experience for visitors to enjoy. It was an occasion to educate as well as entertain.

We were able to produce all of this on time and on budget thanks to a small but dedicated cohort of museum staff and volunteers, designers Kathy Shimizu and Zoe Garred, and the creative collaboration of co-curators Beth Carter and Sherri Kajiwara. In the final week of the exhibit, the former acting deputy mayor of Vancouver came to tour the gallery, and was so inspired and enthusiastic about it that she immediately asked her staff to come see the display before it closed. She has proposed that the City of Vancouver travel the SRO component and main elements of the exhibit to City Hall in the fall of 2016 as part of their Homelessness Action Week. Follow-up meetings have ensued, including discussions of a possible pre-stop for the display at Oppenheimer Park in the DTES during the annual Powell Street Festival.

At the time of publication of this article, the museum has yet to receive confirmation from City Hall, but is encouraged by the prospect, and all of the positive public feedback during and following the exhibit.

**Above Left:** Installation pano 1.  
Photo credit: Sherri Kajiwara.

## One of the best comments this curator received was that the Revitalizing Japantown? exhibit demystified long-held stereotypes and feelings of aversion towards the DTES.

It set aside pre-conceived, reductionist notions of the area being one of sex, drugs, and misanthropes. It not only revealed a complex history, but put a face to the place and made personal what was once merely abstract.

**Sherri Kajiwara, Director/Curator of the Nikkei National Museum in Burnaby, BC, has been a fine arts professional since 1992 as a gallerist, director/owner, writer, editor, and curator. She holds a B.Comm from the Sauder School of Business, UBC, and is a graduate of the Vancouver Board of Trade's Leadership program.**



# BEYOND CREATING, CRATING and COORDINATING

## The New Travelling Exhibits Program of the Royal BC Museum

**Kate Kerr**

The memory of the museum community of B.C. is long. Whenever we are among our provincial museum colleagues we hear about the glory days of travelling exhibitions from “the Royal”. At one point, we’re told, as many as 15 exhibitions from the provincial museum were on the road throughout the province. That program was gradually wound down due to changes in economy and focus.

But the Royal BC Museum’s travelling exhibitions program is being revived. There is a renewed interest in getting exhibits back out on the road, creating more exhibits that are relevant to our province today and strengthening our connection to partner museums and communities throughout B.C.

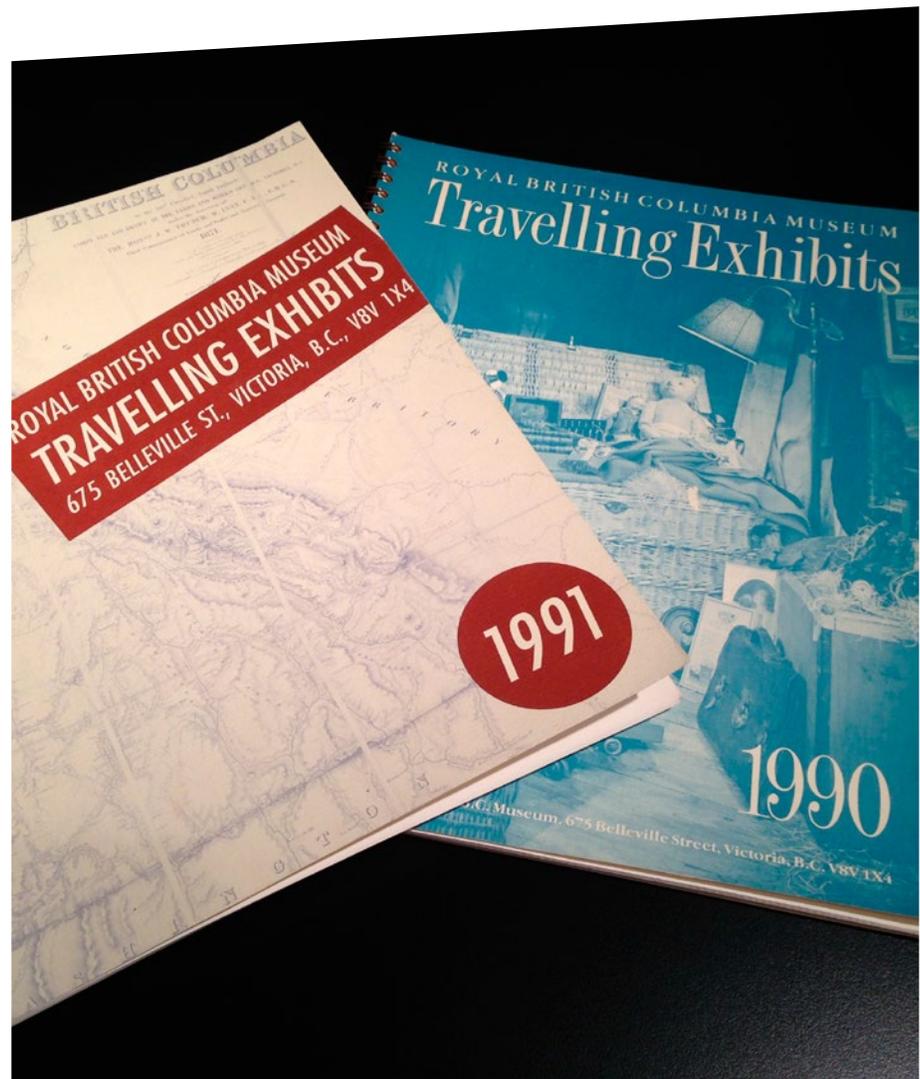
Sounds great, doesn’t it? But, inevitably, the logistics are a little more complicated.

There are issues around storage, shipping costs, artifact security, widespread appeal, adaptable design, and of course, finding the time and money to curate, design and create an exhibit, let alone plan multiple tours. Our task is to come up with solutions for all these issues.

We’re hoping that, by sharing what we’re pondering, the museum community will weigh in and help us with this challenge.

First off, let’s talk storage; a hot topic. Like most of you, we are running into issues of space. Creating something that’s worth keeping needs to

be weighed against finding a nook in which to cram it. In the category of “worth keeping” are our exhibits *Birds of Prey*, and *Aliens Among Us*. Fortunately, we have a booking for the next two coming summers for the ever-popular *Aliens*. *Birds of Prey*, an even larger show, is far too valuable and beautiful a show





to dismantle, so we're looking at refreshing it, updating its content, and sending it back on the road, possibly in smaller groupings, in order to open it up to more venues.

Then there's the challenge of shipping. Trucking is expensive these days and of course, there's the carbon footprint to consider. We are trying to look at ways of creating exhibits that are lighter and easier to move. For our most recent exhibits, *British Columbia's War, 1914-1918*, and *Gold Mountain Dream! Bravely Venture into the Fraser River Valley*, we've developed a new exhibition system that can be assembled on site into an exhibit of colourful panels, lightweight monitors and matching showcases, all on a self-supporting framework. It can easily be left-

ed about, even by those of us who would call ourselves weaklings. Trying to keep the crates minimal, we're considering sports equipment packaging, such as ski cases.

Sometimes skis would come in handy. The weather is a consideration for any travelling exhibition program in B.C. Teeth rattling spring potholes and blinding blizzards that kick up out of nowhere are never fun to encounter when barreling down a highway in a truck loaded with artifacts and showcases. We're pondering longer bookings for the winter months and developing regional networks that could shuttle exhibits themselves, either on a roof rack, in a pick-up truck or with a trailer hitch. Building on the Smithsonian's concept of poster ex-

hibitions, there's potential for keeping infrastructure such as the metal framework, or a set of uniform art frames, within each region and then sending the panels, archival prints or even digital files to be printed out and installed by the venues. That way, the venues of the region could sign on to a series of exhibitions that will fit the same framework each time. More attention could then be devoted to the collaborative development of the content of these exhibitions and local content could be added.

We are keen to move away from the model of creating an exhibit and just pushing it out to the communities. To create relevant and engaging exhibitions, we want to work with the hosting venues from the start. We

used this approach with our recent First World War commemoration exhibition, *British Columbia's War, 1914-1918*, which will be travelling for the next three years. Drawing from individual conversations on site and group consultation at the recent BCMA conference, our curator, Lorne Hammond, incorporated further input gathered through an open call on the BCMA listserve. The result is a 12 panel exhibit that provides the basis for numerous conversations within each host community. But we hope the evolution of the exhibition will continue. Each venue is encouraged to add their own local content, inserted into templates we will provide, and the showcases can be used for local artifacts. Information that is developed at one venue may be seen as significant for other venues and has the potential to be incorporated in the original design or added on. This way the entire province is involved in a responsive exhibit. This eliminates the previous attitude that we, as the provincial museum, are the keepers of all knowledge and resources, and recognizes the remarkable capacity of our partner museums.

We'd like to share the skills we have too. Perhaps there's an appetite in host communities for workshops given by Royal BC Museum staff in areas such as mount making, conservation or exhibit fabrication. If we are travelling to a community with an exhibit, it might be valuable to set up a workshop or consultation at the same time, building on those

regional networks. This way we all get to know the available skills in each region and build upon them. It's not a new idea. The BCMA had a similar program years ago and it's also something we hear fond reminiscences about from my colleagues in the museum community.

We're grateful we haven't lost the memories of these great ideas. Now we're hopeful that we can incorporate them into new approaches that build upon regional skills and networks and make use of adaptable, efficient materials and designs. We're not presenting this as promises. But we do need your input and cooperation. As a community, we hope we can revitalize this travelling exhibitions program in a sustainable, collaborative way.



**Kate Kerr, a former BCMA Board member, is the Travelling Exhibitions Coordinator for the Royal BC Museum, where she has also worked as an Exhibit Fabrication Specialist for the past nine years.**

**Below:** Royal BC Museum's travelling exhibit, *British Columbia's War, 1914-1918*. Photo credit: Royal BC Museum.



# Digital Signage and the Visitor Experience

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## Greg Yellenik

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Exhibit designers are lucky these days. The new and lucrative digital signage industry is giving us a plethora of options for audio and video playback in our exhibits. These digital signs are sometimes called “shelf talkers” as they talk to the shopper, drawing them to the product on the shelf. Due to the competitiveness of the industry there are lots of low cost, easy to use, industrial video playback devices now available. The difficult part is wading through the quagmire of propaganda to choose what is right for you.

Whether creating interactives that are just audio playback or full video, the process is the same and the equipment is basically the same.

- Start with figuring out what you want, or better, what you really need. Don't let the technology drive your choice. It is not about using the latest cool electronic gadget and making it “work for you”. Visitor experience is first and foremost. The action of the visitor has to be totally intuitive. It needs to be easy not just for tech savvy 20 to 40 year olds, but kids and retired folk. If it is too complex, you'll lose people.
- Choose the playback equipment that works for you. You may want to consider investing in something a bit beyond your current needs, just in case you want to use it for something else in the future. For instance I recommend buying video playback devices, even if I only need audio for this particular installation.
- Choose the television monitor and speakers that



you need. This is where you will make the impact with the visitor. This is the physical part they see, so it should look robust yet inviting. Not frail. Keep in mind the public can be hard on things, even malicious. The fewer buttons they have access to the better.

- Create or source your digital material. The better the source material the better the final product. Try to get your file with the highest quality. There are so many different file formats, they all have their place and some work better on some gear. Contact the manufacturer and heed their advice. When putting together a show you don't need huge files, you need the correct files and you need good files.
- Simple is best. Cost effective is important. Reliable is mandatory.

I cannot stress enough the need to use devices designed for the purpose. Equipment manufactured to be in the public, used by the public and abused by the public. If you want to repeatedly, reliably and easily play audio or video for 8 hours a day, seven days a week, you need a hardy industrial device. Retail product is really not the answer when you can buy industrial units to do the same job for less money. An industrial player will continue to work for a decade, not requiring staff intervention and

**Above:** Surrey Museum's Kids Gallery features a stylized 1912 Detroit Electric car as an interpretive theatre. Kids sit in the car, push a button on the dash and a playful video is projected from above onto the windshield. Photo Credit: Greg Yellenik.

more importantly will not require an “Out Of Order” sign.

I had a touring exhibit come in and they had installed iPods into a panel with all kinds of strange plexi covers and special wiring. People who didn't own an i-pod had trouble figuring it out. It worked, but failed weekly, requiring simple but frustrating tinkering by our experienced and well equipped staff.

All equipment has a life. They are limited by their 'duty cycle' and advances in technology. A few years ago I produced a touch screen interactive for a Lego exhibit. This was a year or two after 'swipe technology' became available and I was re-using a five year old standard industrial touch screen. People 20 and under tried to swipe it like a smart phone. When that did nothing, they dismissed it and walked away. The middle aged visitors liked it and found it intuitive, easy to use and interesting. The grandparents walked up to it, clasped their hands behind their backs, smiled and looked around the room for something else of interest. I think that now we are at that phase of things that you need to have swipe technology in a touch screen. And just like the older touch screens, swipe technology will be out of date very shortly.

Swipe technology and touch interactives is another article. For now we are looking at audio and video playback. Remember keep it simple? For the most part there are four things you will likely want to do;

- Play audio in the background. Music or environmental sounds.
- Play audio on demand. Stories or effects by button or motion sensor.
- Play video in a loop. Interpretive material or entertainment.
- Play video on demand. Visitor choice interpretive material by button or motion sensor.

**Right:** We removed the guts from an old television and replaced it with an LCD monitor and a digital video player. It simply plays a loop of a video. This could be done with a standard DVD player.

*Photo Credit: Greg Yellenik.*

Here are some simple ways to use this technology.

- If it is background sound or a video loop you want, why not just use a CD or DVD player? For that matter buy a standard TV with the player built in. You can get these for \$300. I know this contradicts what I said earlier, going all “industrial”, but then you can just keep buying them if they burn out....they are really inexpensive after all.
- Many of the televisions today have USB ports where you can load jpeg files to run as a slideshow. You can export an MS Powerpoint presentation to jpeg, load it onto a USB thumb drive for the television and it runs forever, easily and reliably. These are great to hang over reception to promote upcoming events and programs.
- You can get small digital picture frames to add video to a text panel. Again, it shows jpeg files as a slideshow or loops video. The one thing to look for here



is a unit with a physical, sliding on/off switch, not a power button that you have to physically push each time the power goes off.

- It is really cool to have the video in portrait mode. If you have a historical character on video talking to the visitor. It is very effective. A little warning here, most television monitors will not last too long hanging sideways. The heat vents are designed to work only in one direction. If you want to turn a television monitor on its' end, you should think about buying units designed for that situation.

Where things get a bit more complex is when you want "on demand" playback. Whether a motion sensor or user push button, that takes the project into another realm.

The digital signage industry is changing quickly. I have a lot of experience with many of the common units and

just a few years ago I worked with the R&D department at a prominent digital signage company to develop a new product. That was a complete failure. The units were difficult to program, unreliable and had poor playback quality. After that experience they decided to just stick to what they already have.

The one thing that really bothers me about most units is the lag time from button push to video start. It frustrates the visitor too. Usually this is because the video file is held on an SD card or USB thumb drive. The file access rate is too slow. A unit which loads the file into its' internal drive is the only way to go. I settled on the Videotel VP71. With the addition of their buttons, or their button board, this unit is super easy to use and holds the video on board for quick play upon demand. I really like their intuitive on screen set-up. No need for complex programming. They seem to have good phone support and have great reviews. The unit with a button or two is less than \$600. You can order directly from the manufacturer's website.

That was the easy part...the equipment, then comes the source material. With audio it is commonly an MP3 file. With video the most common is an avi file. Here are things to think about.

- The best is really trial and error. So expect it and don't give up too easily.
- Start with the best quality you can get.
- Be prepared to run the file through an online file converter. There are lots.
- Remember that television monitors are built to show video, they are not computer monitors.
- Don't be afraid to call for help. Most manufacturers are used to it. Remember the other people using this equipment work in retail.
- An HD television monitor is only two megapixels.



**Left:** Visitors can choose from a selection of oral histories which they listen to on a typical telephone handset. The audio is played back on a multi-file digital player. Photo Credit: Greg Yellenick.

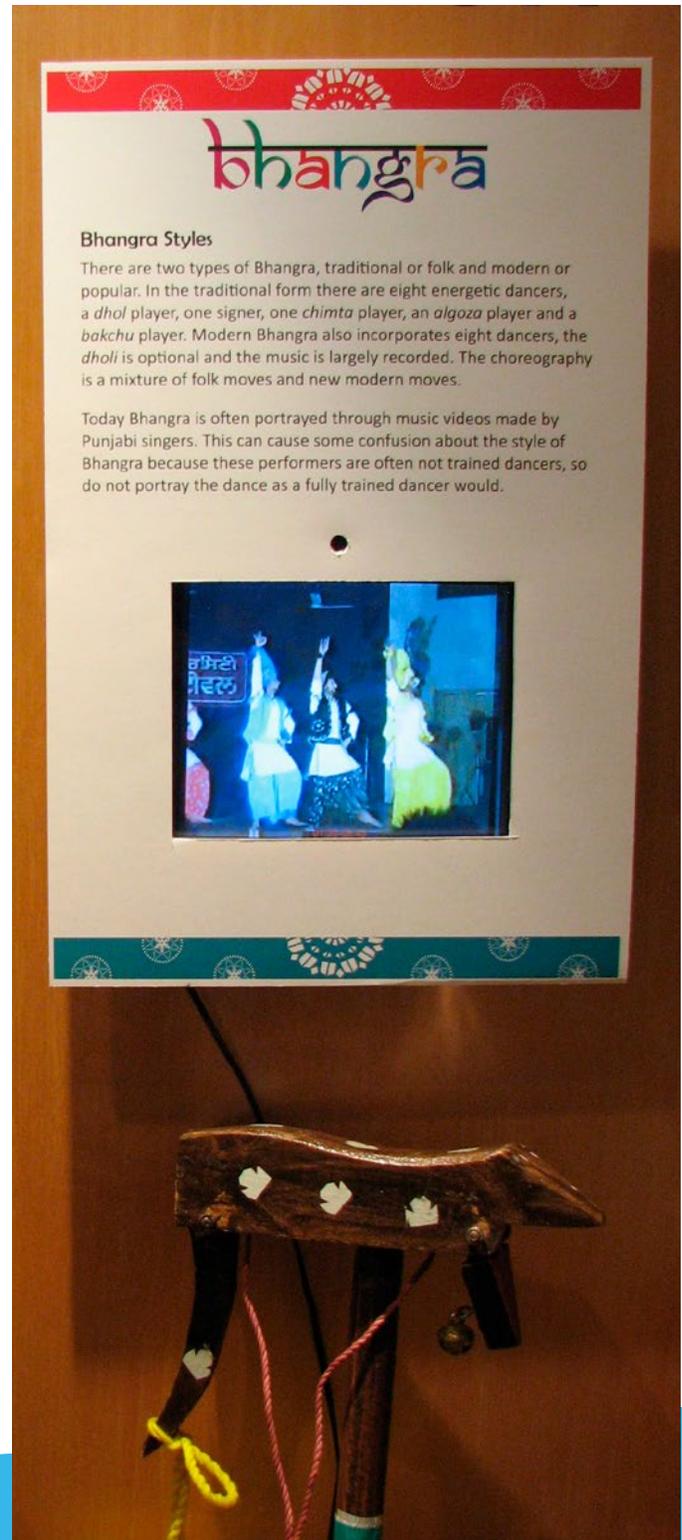
Even my old Blackberry will do that! But everything we do is sent through algorithms to convert into the scanning video image.

- Television monitors are meant to be viewed from a distance, not too close. The pixels are very large and that makes for chunky imaging.

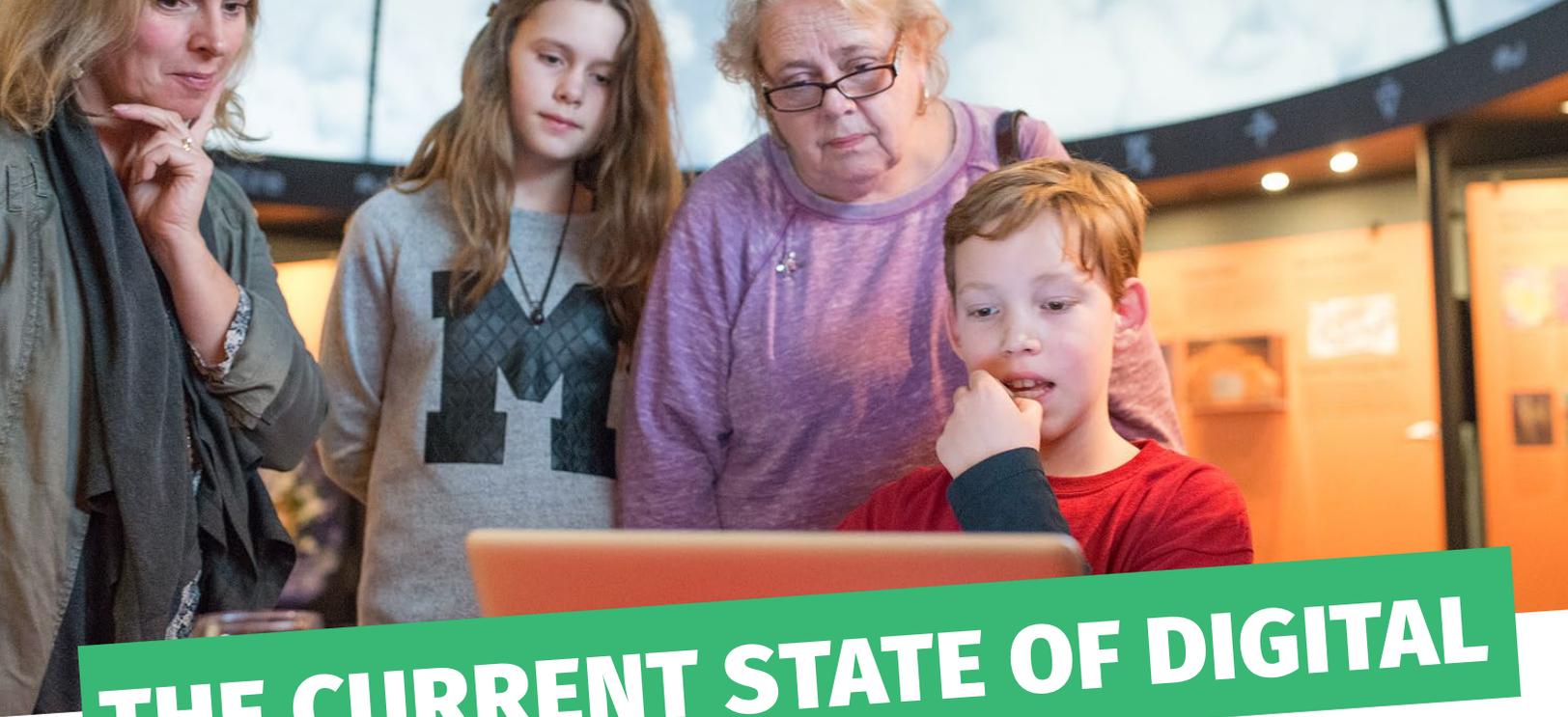
To get a feel for what the algorithms do, take a simple graphic image on a sheet of paper. Divide the page up into 1" squares. Now throw out 30 of them in a specific pattern, like every third one. Try to rearrange the left over 50 and still keep the image. That is the issue of conversion. Overly simplified. Each manufacturer uses different math to calculate the conversion. Some do it better than others. Video formats can make a big difference, as they have different pixel resolutions, pixel shapes and aspect ratios....a million issues can arise.

Because of these issues, files that look great on your small computer monitor may look horrible on a large television monitor. The trick is to keep calm, keep trying and don't be afraid to call for help.

**Greg Yellenik is the Curator of Exhibits at the Surrey Museum. Greg has been working in the entertainment and attraction industry for over 30 years, specializing in automation and systems design. He has held positions in sales, project management, consulting and ran his own design firm prior to joining the City of Surrey eight years ago. For over 25 years he has been teaching audio, multi-media, film/TV and special event courses at Douglas College.**



**Above:** A small digital picture frame from London Drugs is velcroed behind the foamcore text panel. There are three videos that play in a loop on the player.  
Photo Credit: Greg Yellenik.



# THE CURRENT STATE OF DIGITAL

**Above:** A digital learning program for museum visitors.  
Photo Credit: Royal BC Museum.

## Or How I Learned to Love Process

**David Alexander**

Earlier this year, a team at the Royal BC Museum and I went through a unique process. Over the space of a year and with the help of some outside voices, we crafted the organization's first comprehensive, cross-departmental digital strategy. It stemmed from one of the museum and archive's five strategic priorities: to strengthen our digital infrastructure and reputation. And it involved both internal and external consultation. We talked with thousands through an online survey, spent an afternoon with a group of young people, brought in First Nations voices and interrogated our own staff about the current and future state of digital. That, plus a scan of what others are doing both in the **GLAM** and private sector provided fodder for a one-day workshop where a dozen of us drafted a vision, mission and goals. Throughout, an advisory panel with representatives from the Museum of Vancouver, the City of Vancouver, the University of Victoria and a Victoria technology company helped provide perspective.

It was a long process but an exhilarating one and well worth the time. In the end, the strategy charts digital

initiatives for museum and archives into the next five years. It allows us to meet our strategic goals and plan our resources thoughtfully. For those interested, the strategy is **available online**.

A byproduct of the process was the questions it sparked for me about BC museums and the state of digital - what are we doing, where are we going and what can we do together as a sector. The first question is easiest.

### What are we doing?

The quick answer is we are doing some really cool things. We're not a huge sector; none of us are rolling around in money, so it's nice to see that we actually carry our weight and then some.

A few of the recent initiatives that I know about (and I suspect this is the tip of the iceberg, there is much more going on): digital exhibitions like Revelstoke Museum and Archive's *Land of the Thundering Snow* and MOA's *Voices of the Canoe* push the exhibition experience past the walls. The Museum of Vancouver's neon app, *The Visible City*, moves the collection to the city streets. And

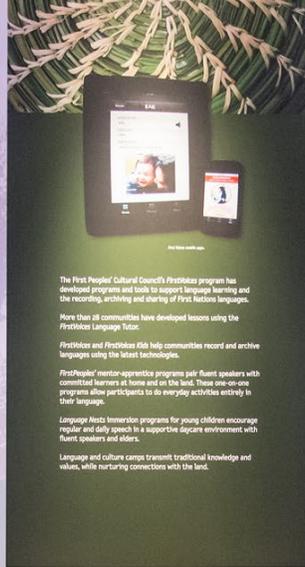
## There are challenges.

Many communities have just a few fluent speakers of their First Nations language, and learners lack the support they need to practice and retain our languages.

Many language recordings are old, un-archived and have poor sound quality. Only about 31 per cent of our communities have language recordings.

People lack opportunities to hear and develop fluency in their language. Children rarely hear First Nations languages in public school. Aboriginal people in urban areas may be isolated from their communities and lack opportunities to hear and learn their language.

Education policy in Canada does not support First Nations language fluency. Investment in language immersion programs would help languages thrive.



## But we are making progress.

Despite many challenges, we are healing our families, revitalizing our languages and looking to the future. Many people throughout our province are doing what they can to be champions of language and culture rejuvenation.

Community members and individuals use their own resources and dedicate their lives to passing on language. Cultural groups learn, teach and sing their songs. Families bring forward their ceremonies and cultural practices to reinforce teachings, governance and ancestral lineage. Some schools and universities are supporting language revitalization through classes and degree programs.



the Vancouver Maritime Museum's interactive wheel helm of the St. Roch transforms the visitor's experience, providing an opportunity to navigate a ship.

There are some interesting province-wide projects taking place. The Provincial Digital Library Initiative, at this point primarily led by libraries and a project still very much in its infancy, envisions a single portal where a user can access "a range of materials that may enrich the intellectual and leisure life of a citizen." It was sparked with a government announcement in 2014 and has gradually built some traction. It seems like a perfect opportunity for museums, archives and libraries to collaborate and build a one-stop-shop for our audiences interested in the province's collections and research.

The BCMA, in partnership with the Centre for Digital Media, is embarking on the creation of a Digital Museum Studies Program. By the time this goes to print, a group of culture folks, academics and technology people will have met and started fleshing out the curriculum. The idea is to set up a digital training centre for culture professionals, one of the first of its kind.

And at my own institution, we have a few interesting projects we've launched this past year and a couple that will be completed this coming year. We've made our archives collection more searchable with a crowd-sourced transcription project called Transcribe. We've launched a province-wide portal aimed at educators appropriately named the Learning Portal. And this year, two initiatives will launch: an augment-

ed reality experience paired with our iconic Mammoth (affectionately called Woolly). It will allow the visitor, via their smartphone or tablet and an animated overlay we've created, to see a whole new side of Woolly. We are also completing a two-year project to replace our proprietary collection management system with a completely home grown open source one. This is a labour of love (and tears) for all of us involved and in the end, the system will include a host of new features that currently don't exist in other systems and will be a useful tool for both human and natural history collections.

## Where are we going?

Such a wide open question. There is no doubt that our audience is going to demand more of an online experience from all of us as demographics

change and consumers are offered more content choices online that they increasingly turn to their tablets and smartphones to consume. As well, we can assume that visitors will look to our onsite exhibitions to mirror that online experience they are used to: interactives, easily consumed video and short chunks of text that provide a deeper dive online. Transforming that in-person visit to an online relationship is going to be key in order to cement that important bond with a visitor and ensure they either come back to the museum over and over again or perform some action online – donate, shop, volunteer or otherwise engage.

There are some technologies that are exciting, partially because they are low cost in terms of entry. We are a sector that includes some large institutions, but also some very small museums and galleries that don't have much by way of resources. Crowdsourcing is one of those technologies – having an audience do the work for you is pretty enticing. At the Royal BC Museum, we've had success harnessing users to transcribe digital archival collections to make the data searchable both within our site but also by Google. But I have also seen crowdsourcing used in museums to raise money and mobilize an audience to help create an exhibition.

Physically, multitouch tables and VR (virtual reality) are adding a new dimension to exhibitions. Multitouch tables – or walls – allow a user or multiple users to interact with a surface. Think giant tablet. This allows users to access content in entirely new ways. The technology is old enough now that the price is inching closer to something manageable for museums.

VR is also getting close to becoming a reality in museums. VR allows, with the use of a helmet and gloves, a user to experience and interact with a simulated environment. There are a number of commercial products such as Samsung's Oculus that have just launched and some of the bigger national museums like the Science and Technology Museum are beginning to experiment. Way out of the realm for most of us, but as the technology evolves and spreads, the entry price will lower.

All of these play to the relevance of museums in an increasing digital world. We provide our visitors with a tight connection to history and learning, giving context to communities and the province. I increasingly see that visitors are demanding more of their institutions; they want that experience to extend in the digital realm and like our library and archives siblings, we'll need to meet those expectations.

There are a couple of publications that are like Christmas for me when they come out, worth a read to delve further into where museums and digital are going:

- The American Alliance of Museum's Trendwatch ([www.aam-us.org/resources/center-for-the-future-of-museums/projects-and-reports/trend-watch](http://www.aam-us.org/resources/center-for-the-future-of-museums/projects-and-reports/trend-watch))
- The NMC Horizon Report Museum Edition ([www.nmc.org/publication/nmc-horizon-report-2015-museum-edition/](http://www.nmc.org/publication/nmc-horizon-report-2015-museum-edition/))

## What can we do together?

So, bright future. But perhaps it can be brighter. Individually, many of us are doing interesting things. Collectively though, we have the power to do even more.

There are big players and small players in our sector, this isn't news to anyone. We're fortunate, at the Royal BC Museum we have a leadership that sees the value in the digital realm and we have a small team that is able to experiment and think about digital. At the other end of the spectrum is a whole host of BC museums that are run by volunteers with big hearts and zero extra time or money.

How do we marry the two and make an experience that benefits all? And is there value to it? Digital shouldn't be digital for digital's sake. It needs to be useful to the institution. And to the user. And it shouldn't supersede our basic needs as a museum or gallery: care of the collection and keeping the lights on.

But perhaps we can look at combining our resources, to

# ARE YOU CONNECTING WITH YOUR VISITORS?

Good design makes things simpler, smarter, clearer, more helpful, more beautiful and more fun. **What can we design for you?**

build something that brings all of our collections together – the collections of British Columbia - into one federated search. Tack on an online gift shop, and we have some revenue to flow back into museums and to keep the venture going. In a province with a host of different collection management systems, no budget and no resources, it's a tall order, but one that could start small with a few collections under one umbrella. And perhaps this is what the Provincial Digital Library initiative will morph into. Or perhaps we look at a homegrown system.

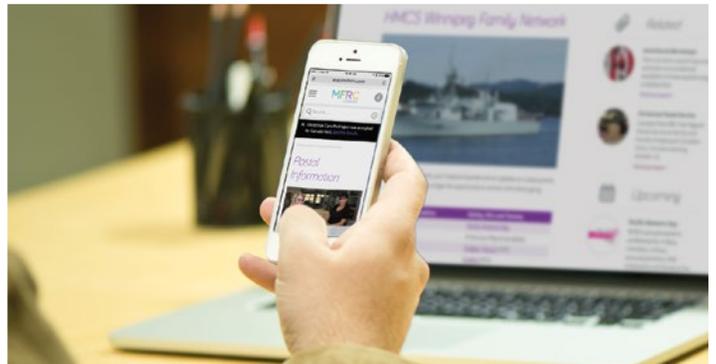
Or maybe we start smaller and look at shared buying. The library world has done this well with shared database subscriptions that save all the institutions money. Are there digital products or subscriptions that we many of us buy into that we can share costs on? Is there a role for the BCMA to administer this?

Or maybe we start really small and just share knowledge. This is easy, knowledge is free. We all sometimes struggle and instead of re-inventing the wheel, let's share. As well, there is an opportunity for the bigger institutions to provide the smaller institutions with some of their knowledge in a structured way. Think digital mentoring.

The point of this article is to start a dialogue. There seems to be a nice alignment right now of provincial digital projects happening, it's time to ask bigger questions. As a sector, let's start talking about what our needs are, what our audiences want and then develop something together.

I'll be putting forth a conference session talking about some of what I mention here, for those attending the Whistler conference, let's start this conversation and see what happens.

***David Alexander is the Head of Archives, Access and Digital at the Royal BC Museum. Pursuing passions for museums and the digital world, Alexander oversees an integrated department at the Royal BC Museum that includes the archives, physical and digital access to collections and preservation and digital services and initiatives.***



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# What's the Future of Digital for Museums?

I asked a few thought leaders what they see as the future of digital and museums.

**Megan Richardson, Director, Virtual Museum of Canada, Canadian Museum of History**

*As the e-reader hasn't replaced the physical book, digital technologies won't supplant the experience of the real museum object any time soon. Rather, digital provides an evolving array of tools for museum professionals, enabling them to conceive of and do their work in useful new ways. For visitors, digital can broaden access, build community, and deepen engagement. Museums, large and small, work best when they view digital not as something separate, but as an integral part of their work and their visitors' lives. Equally important is not losing sight of what sets museums apart from other leisure experiences, and of what visitors' value most about them – the things they show and the stories they tell. The biggest challenge facing museums is to find that sweet spot between keeping up with the times and staying true to themselves.*

**Dr. Richard Smith, Director, Centre for Digital Media, Professor, School of Communications, Simon Fraser University**

*In our fast paced technology-driven world there is a temptation to see some of the latest developments - artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and neural-net and machine learning driven robots - as imposing further barriers between people and the world around them, separating them from their past and present and immersing them in a fantasy world. While all of that is possible, there is also great potential in all of these technologies to “augment” our experiential world.*

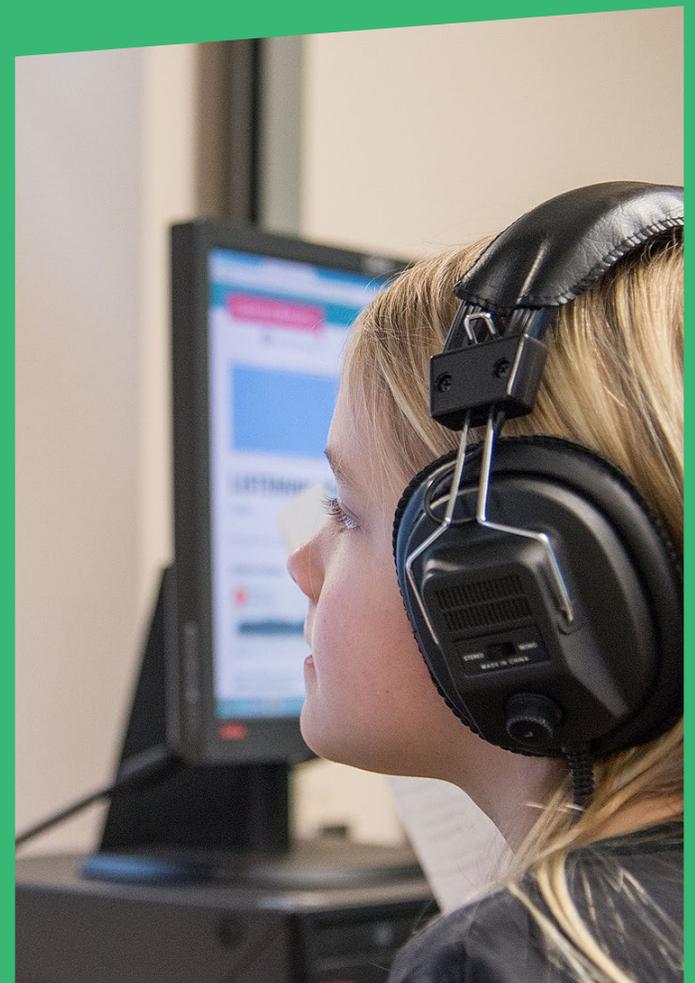
*Museums and galleries already engage in augmentation, and lead the world in some ways, with docents, didactics, displays, curation and collections. There is no reason why they shouldn't take this expertise, experience, and mis-*

*sion to lead the world in the effective and appropriate implementation of human-machine partnerships that help us better understand and appreciate our past, present, and future.*

**Thomas Hepburn, Principal, NGX Interactive**

*Digital media in a museum cannot be technology for technology's sake. Technology changes too quickly for the latest gadget to have staying power on its own. Instead, the hook has to be the story. Visitors can use the digital media to capture their imaginations and unlock content in a new way.*

*Digital media can be utilized to let visitors touch what they cannot otherwise touch, whether to explore a 3D virtual model of an artifact or flip through a digitized journal. In this way, the digital media is not a separate unrelated element from the collection, but a way to make the collection more accessible to visitors.*



**Right:** An elementary-school student exploring the Learning Portal.  
Photo Credit: Royal BC Museum.

# A Musing



**Columnist: Mairin Kerr**

*This column explores how cultural institutions can encourage visitor interaction through new media, technology, and exhibitions. I will seek to uncover the innovative ideas within our provincial institutions, across the country, and internationally.*

## This is our story, what's yours?

You would think a museum dedicated to one cultural group wouldn't be held up as an example of cross-cultural perspectives. You would be wrong. The Jewish Museum and Archives of BC (JMABC) is "dedicated to the collecting and sharing of community memories of Jewish life in British Columbia." It achieves this by "...build[ing] bridges with the diverse communities of BC..." Working with different cultural groups is at the core of this organization.

The JMABC is a museum without a physical location. Rather than having the lack of space be a handicap, the JMABC uses this to strengthen ties with different cultural communities around the province. But how? Through their robust program of online and travelling exhibitions. I spoke with Michael Schwartz, Coordinator of Programs and Develop-

ment, to find out more.

### Why Collaborate?

It comes down to what we believe a museum's role in society is. Schwartz explains that the JMABC believes "Museums are sites of dialogue - places where people of diverse backgrounds can come together and learn from one another's experiences." What this essentially drills down to, as Schwartz puts it, is that museums essentially are here to say, "This is our story, what's yours?"

### Common Stories

Museums are also places to "remind us of the common experiences we share," according to Schwartz. Common experiences such as immigration, entrepreneurship, and social justice. "Many of the recurring top-

ics and community values among Jews both in BC and internationally, are experiences that our neighbour communities have equally experienced, or continue to wrestle with today." These commonalities build relationships that are mutually beneficial. Schwartz explains, "We strengthen our society by creating opportunities for the Jewish and non-Jewish communities to learn more about one another."

### Open Dialogue

So what is the key to success when working with other cultural communities? Open Dialogue. JMABC starts with a rough idea of how they want to work with a particular group and approach them. Schwartz describes this process - "It's a balance: sometimes people are very busy and want to know very clear-

ly what contributions you're looking for; other times the initial idea gets them thinking and they come up with all sorts of ideas that you'd never come up with yourself. That's a really fruitful collaboration, when you can bounce off of each other and build something great."

## Authenticity

Another key ingredient to a successful cross-cultural collaboration, or really any collaboration, is authenticity. This isn't just another buzzword. Schwartz breaks it down:

"Listening is really the key to authenticity. You always want to be sure that everyone involved feels accurately represented, that their views and memories aren't being paraphrased beyond recognition. This means putting in the time to getting it right and being willing to accept that it'll take a few rewrites to do that. But the end result will be so much stronger, so enjoy the process."

## Exhibits as Tool for Collaboration

The JMABC's website hosts a range of [online exhibitions](#). These exhibitions highlight the stories of the Jewish community, stories that share commonalities with other groups. The [travelling exhibition](#) recently on display at the North Vancouver Museum & Archives, Up Close and Far Away, uses the history



**Top:** *High Steel Men Working on the Port Mann Bridge Above the Fraser River. Coquitlam, BC; February, 1962. Photo by Otto Landauer. Jewish Museum and Archives of BC. LF.02057.*

**Bottom:** *Second Narrows Bridge Under Construction (proof), North Vancouver, BC; November, 1959. Photo by Otto Landauer. Jewish Museum and Archives of BC. LF.01060.*

**Photo:** *Unidentified Woman, Buenos Aires, Argentina; ca.1953. Photo by Fred Schiffer.  
Jewish Museum and Archives of BC. L.23956.*



of bridges to literally create a bridge between the diverse cultures present within the north shore community and the Jewish community.

Schwartz explains why not having a permanent exhibition space is a strength for the JMABC:

“Not having a permanent exhibition space has pushed us to more actively seek partners for our various projects. This has yielded really wonderful and unexpected results. Partnerships allow you to see things differently, through someone else’s eyes. It also frees your programming from being defined by your space.”

## Example – Lives in Photos

How does collaboration using common stories, open dialogue, and authenticity actually work in practice? Schwartz explains using the JMABC’s *Lives in Photos* exhibition.

“As with any good relationship, you want each party to be in the circle because they bring something unique, because they have strengths or assets that the others lack. You also want to be sure you’re not asking too much from any of your partners. *Lives in Photos*, our exhibit about the life and work of Fred Schiffer, is a great example of this dynamic working successfully, as it involved many partners.”

Schwartz elaborates how each partner contributed.

*“The JMABC provided the photographs, the research, the coordination and general curatorial direction. **Make** provided their gallery space, which was perfect; **Capture** helped us spread the word through their festival catalogue and various media channels, and acted as match-maker providing initial contact to Make. **MacGregor Studios** contributed the printing of the photographs and the countless hours necessary to touch up the scanned negatives. The list goes on. The essential point is that each organization contributed something distinct. An equally essential component is that there is one person or group coordinating all the moving parts, and all involved have no doubt who that is. In this case, it was the JMABC.”*

## Long Story Short

My colleague has a quote up on the wall in our office from Jack Lohman’s book *Museums at the Crossroads?*: “Change the prism, and you change the content.”

Museums are a collection of things that can be viewed any number of ways. By working with diverse groups from different cultures and communities we can reactivate our collections and see them in a new light. They can be tools to help us see our commonalities and promote understanding and appreciation for different communities.

**Mairin Kerr is the Communications Specialist at the Royal BC Museum and a Blogger at [edgital.org](http://edgital.org). Kerr previously worked at the Beaty Biodiversity Museum, V&A Museum in London and the J. Paul Getty Museum in LA. She has a Masters of Museum Studies from the University of Toronto.**



**Above:** Jack Wasserman, Vancouver, BC; October 1966. Photo by Fred Schiffer. Jewish Museum and Archives of BC. L.24846.



**BC MUSEUMS  
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## Elaine Heumann Gurian

*Ms. Gurian is a consultant/advisor to museums, writer and lecturer to many museum studies programs worldwide. She is one of 100 Centennial Honor Roll members of the American Association of Museums, and received a Distinguished Service to Museums Award, the most prestigious recognition in the American museum profession.*

*Ms. Gurian has served as the Deputy Director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, as Deputy Director for Public Program Planning for the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution and as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Museums at the Smithsonian, providing oversight for all 14 Smithsonian museums with a combined annual Federal appropriation of approximately \$120 million. She is the author of *Civilizing the Museum*, and *Institutional Trauma: Major Change in Museums and Its Effect on Staff*.*

*Ms. Gurian's presentation is generously sponsored by the Royal BC Museum.*

# FEATURED SPEAKER

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*We gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance of the Province of British Columbia.*

# I'm Still KNOCKING...



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**Columnist: Sarah Sewell**

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In the search for the elusive full-time career in the museum field, making sure you have the right education and skill-set is no easy feat. Whether you are trying to find that first job, or looking to update your skill-set as a mid-career professional, professional development is key at all stages. But where does one go to get those skills? What skills should you be getting?



This column will seek to address these concerns from my perspective, (a determined museum professional, with 4 different part-time jobs, only one actually in a museum), but I hope professionals at all stages of their careers will be able to learn something here as well. After all, one of the great things about our field is the collaboration and sharing of information that occurs.

## Getting More Than a Foot in the Door

In the last issue, I shared the thoughts of two professionals well into their careers. Now, I have spoken with two up and coming professionals about their experiences and what they are doing to make themselves stand out. I've asked Mary Elizabeth Harrison and Sandra Borger to be as honest as possible, knowing that their current and future employers would be reading this article. Both shared some great insights and experiences many of us 'up and comers' can relate to.

Going into this process, I thought there would be a gap between what employers were looking for and what potential employees had to offer. I think something different came out of the discussion, which I hope you will see too.

**Mary Elizabeth Harrison:** "After graduating from the University of Victoria with a BA in Art History in 2010, I've worked in and out of the arts sector trying to secure a position that's more than just an entry-level job. Today I work for the Vancouver Maritime Museum as their Collections Associate and Visitor Services Assistant. I also work at the Vancouver Art Gallery in visitor services. A few other places I've worked and volunteered for are: the Arts Council of New Westminster, the Delta Museum and Archives Society, the Federation for Canadian Artists, Art Relief International, the Arts Club Theatre Company, and the Van Dop Art Gallery."

**Sandra Borger:** "I am currently the Education Specialist at the Surrey Museum, and so I deal with students coming for field trips to the Museum, as well as summer day camps in July and August. Previously I worked at the Surrey Museum as the Public Programmer. In between these two positions, I went off to have a child and a year of maternity leave. When my mat leave was nearing the end, the person in the education department was about to

retire, and I thought it would be a good chance for me to do something different. Previous to that, I worked part time for the Maple Ridge Museum and the Pitt Meadows Museum, mostly with tours, research and some exhibit work.”

**What education (museum and otherwise) do you have?**

**Mary Elizabeth Harrison:** “Besides my Bachelors Degree, I am currently enrolled in my second year of studies with UVic’s Cultural Resource Management Degree.”

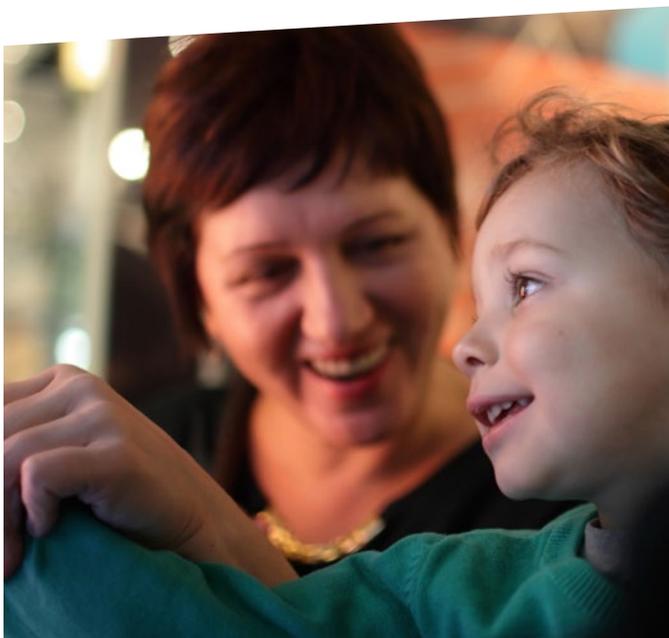
**Sandra Borger:** “I have a BA from Simon Fraser University, as well as a MA in History from Simon Fraser. I also have a Certificate in teaching adults from SFU, and am almost done my Diploma in Cultural Resource Management at UVic.”

**What have you done to make yourself stand out to potential employers?**

**Mary Elizabeth Harrison:** “What I’ve realized in the museums world is you must take advantage of every opportunity you are given, volunteer or paid, because any skill you can master is transferrable and will give

you an edge. You need to start teaching yourself how to do a mail merge, or watching tutorials of Photoshop and using E-Tapestry, because the more you know the more valuable you are. Plus, your day will run smoother and you will build your confidence. In short, being a team player and being efficient are skills I’ve built up to secure a job.”

**Sandra Borger:** “While there are museums with bigger budgets and more staff in BC, so many are small and run by historical societies. In these places, there are only one or two staff who have to be the curator, the archivist, the programmer, the janitor, the marketing person and so forth. Early in my career I tried to get as much varied experience as possible, so that I could say confidently in an interview that I have experience in all those aspects of museum work. I’ve gone out of my way to ask supervisors to work on projects that are outside the realm of my experience to gain that knowledge. Any time that I could not get paid for those experiences, I went looking to volunteer work that would help me fill the void. For example, I have now been volunteering with the Langley Heritage Society for five years. I’ve been on the board of directors, the editor of their monthly newsletter, helped



**Above left and right:** Museum visitors explore exhibits.  
Photo credit: Getty images.

with school program planning and lined up speakers for monthly meetings.”

***Do you feel that the museum specific courses you have taken adequately prepared you for the job? Or is there a lot of on the job training that takes place?***

**Mary Elizabeth Harrison:** “Yes, I think they do put you ahead of the game. What I’ve found tricky is sometimes what I am learning in school about how an ideal museum operates isn’t always welcome in an organization that is just trying to stay afloat. I think on the job training depends on a lot of factors: funding; when you were hired; how organized your predecessor was; the mentality and mission of the organization, etc. The best thing to do is connect with other museum and art professionals, take classes, go to conferences and read a lot. If you are truly someone who sees museums as a catalyst for dialogue, community togetherness and you want to grow and get ahead, don’t wait for someone to show you the ropes.”

**Sandra Borger:** “The courses that I have taken in museum studies have been great for thinking about museums, what they are, what they stand for, how they are evolving and how they generally run, but overall, I would say that most of my job training has taken place at the museums I have worked in. Each museum is so different, and has different ways of doing things, that you are often learning the same type of thing, such as accessioning, but in a different way (one museum might use excel as their database, another will use MINISIS, and so forth).”

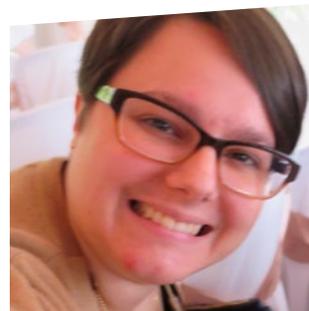
***Finally, is there anything you would like to share with the readers about your experience in the field so far?***

**Mary Elizabeth Harrison:** “Network, network, network! A lot of organizations will promote from within, and you will therefore not see a posting so reach out to HR and ask to be put on a waitlist if possible. George W. McDaniel wrote an essay in 1999 entitled “At Historic Houses and Buildings: Connecting Past, Present and Future”, which really hits a lot of issues, topics, and trends that I think about on a daily basis. One of his most interesting

suggestions will save you a lot of exasperation: when you go for your interview, ask the director and staff how they feel about their mission statement and the actions they’ve taken to uphold it. The answers they give you will tell you everything you need to know about the organization’s growth, mentality and innovation.”

**Sandra Borger:** “Making connections is really important in this field. The more conferences and meetings you can go to, the better you will be, especially when you are first starting out. Meeting people and making a good first impression on managers who may interview you for a job in the future puts you ahead of other candidates before you walk through the door. If you are in a small building with only one other staff member, you may need to reach out to other museums and museum professionals to ask for help and advice. I have yet to meet someone who works in a museum that does not want to help their peers. We are a small and tight knit community. I can’t imagine doing anything else with my life!”

I would like to thank Harrison and Borger for their time and honesty. It is quite clear getting a job in our field takes time, hard work and patience. I think it can be easy for many people, myself included, to become disheartened while searching for that elusive job. Positions are hard to come by, and the competition is stiff. But that also gives me hope for the museums of the future. A very well educated and dedicated group of professionals are getting in place to take our museums into the future – As long as those already well into their careers keep sharing their knowledge and employers keep giving people a chance and also make themselves open to new ideas.



**Left:** Sandra Borger



**Right:** Mary Elizabeth Harrison

# OUTSIDE THE BOX



Promoting and highlighting the innovative projects, processes, and ideas that come from British Columbia's museums, galleries and archives.

## Bringing New Forms of Interaction Into The Museum Space

### Darren DeCoursey

Contemporary museums often use innovative technologies to engage visitors with history and culture. Interactive displays, touch tables, and holograms have the potential to increase visitor interaction and enliven the traditional museum space.

In this spirit of innovation, six students from the Centre for Digital Media, with backgrounds in business, design, user experience, software and hardware development came together to build a new exhibit for Vancouver's Museum of Anthropology. Specifically, we designed, prototyped and tested an interactive loom that simulates the process of weaving African cloth known as Kente. Our team pushed the limits of the tactile experience, and built something that hints at a new approach to installation design.

In the spring of 2015, we met with Mawuena Glymin, the IT Manager at the Museum of Anthropology. He was eager to collaborate and support our plans for developing the exhibit. Our UX designer, Tim Fernandes, originally pitched the idea of building a series of interactive workstations, each portraying a different aspect of textile production. However, with only three months until delivery, our group eventually agreed that building one station would be best. After getting approval from the museum staff and curators, the idea was fleshed out more and became a seated, tabletop interactive. The purpose: to simulate the complexity and skill involved in the weaving process, without making visitors spend hours weaving an actual cloth from scratch.

Our project manager decided to incorporate management techniques from a practice called Agile. In Agile development, teams iterate ideas, sketch out designs, and plan development cycles based on short sprints. In our case, designing, building and testing overlapped quite a bit so that we could revise our project quickly if need be.



**Above:** Tim Fernandes (left) and Gandhar Tannu prototype a rough version of the loom with cardboard, tape and metal pieces. Photo credit: Darren DeCoursey.

The quality of our user experience was paramount. With poorly thought out interaction design, visitors could become irritated or confused, and walk away before completing their woven patterns. Therefore, we tested for engagement by dividing the experience into smaller tests with select individuals. We scripted out the emotional journey that participants might take, using storyboards and experience maps, in order to account for surprise, delight and even moments of frustration. Low fidelity mockups were made so users could engage with a physical proxy. While testing, we discovered that a tutorial was necessary to ease people into the experience, and scripted out dialogue that would later be recorded as a voice-over.

The form factor was influenced by real Kente looms, but we repurposed only the mechanisms that made sense in the context of our exhibit. Visitors can lift threads, tap objects and slide a handle along metal rails; however, we avoided using foot pedals because they require a steeper learning curve. Our electrical engineer spent many long days and nights sourcing the right switches and sensors for the project. He had to make sure that hardware and electronic components were enclosed or hidden from the visitors' line of sight. He used conductive paint to transform touchable objects into input devices and rare earth magnets to secure the metal slider into place. However, our thread-lifting mechanic became the biggest challenge to execute. Several members of our team spent weeks attempting to source specific electronic parts and switches before settling on a workable solution. We designed the physical appearance of the loom using 3D software, but MOA's carpenter completed the final fabrication to ensure consistent quality with their other exhibits.

Meanwhile, throughout the project our software developer worked in tandem with our user interface designer in order to complete the digital experience for the loom's main screen. Our developer used a browser-based HTML5 game framework in order to program the on-screen interactions as well as designed what we call the "community quilt": a large television next to the loom

that displays a beautiful patchwork of patterns generated by other participants. When the software and hardware components finally came together, we transported our exhibit to the museum's workshop and provided the staff with a user guide.

With our virtual loom currently housed at the Museum of Anthropology, our team is immensely proud to have finished our project on time. We used cutting edge tools and management techniques borrowed from the software industry in order to develop this unique exhibit. After using our virtual loom, participants will hopefully come away with a deeper appreciation for the complex and intricate practice of weaving actual Kente cloth.

***Darren DeCoursey has worked in media production for over a decade, crafting visual effects and animation for film and television series. He currently resides in Vancouver, B.C., developing interactive experiences for museums and knowledge centres as part of his company, Sensate Digital. This project would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of my fellow teammates: Archana Ananthanarayan, Tim Fernandes, Omar Juarez, Zijing Liu and Gandhar Tannu.***





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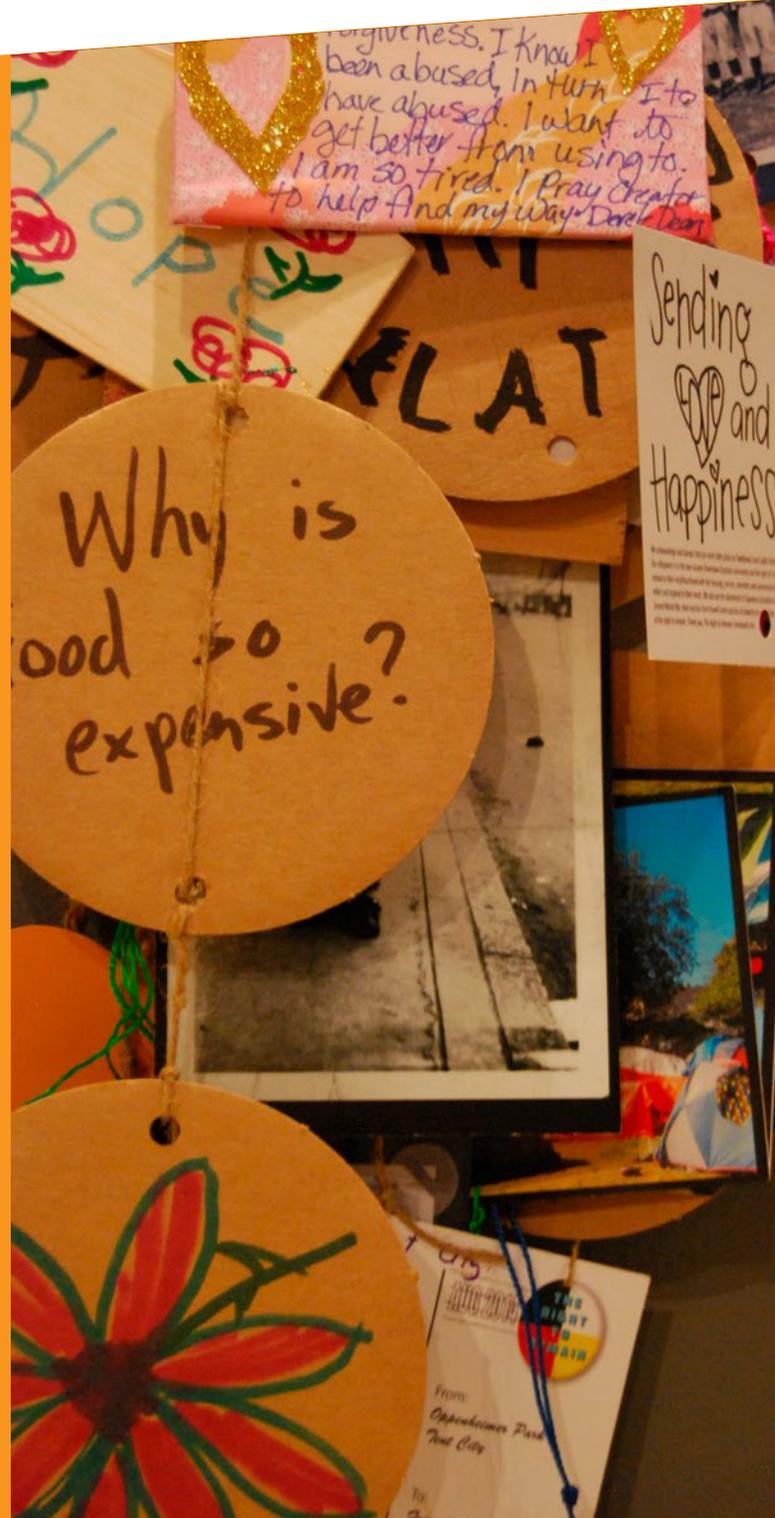
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Roundup is distributed to all BCMA members and to subscribers. Ad rates available upon request.

**Editorial Policy:** Roundup is the quarterly publication of the BC Museums Association, providing a forum to highlight BC museums and galleries, and best practices relevant to museum and gallery professionals in the province. Quarterly themes are established by an editorial committee, who direct the managing editor to solicit related content. It is recommended that people contact the managing editor before submitting unsolicited content. Unsolicited content is reviewed by the editorial committee for suitability for the issue. Though the content published in Roundup does not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the BC Museums Association, the BCMA reserves the right to reject or require edits to content at any point in the publication process due to suitability or space restrictions.

**Right:** Community art project cards.  
Photo Credit: Kathy Shimizu.

We gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance of the Province of British Columbia.



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