

Canada 150 Provincial Forum: Museums, Heritage, Arts and Culture

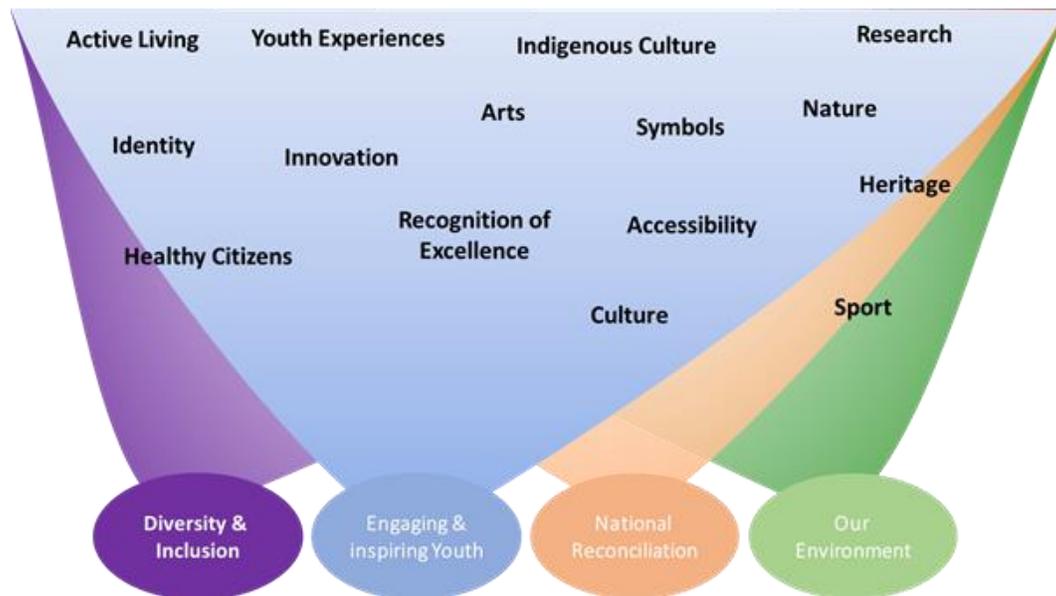
FINAL REPORT

On Friday April 22, 2016, the **BC Museums Association** (BCMA) and **Royal Roads University** (RRU), in partnership, ran a day-long provincial forum for museums, heritage, arts and culture in British Columbia to discuss the marking of Canada's sesquicentennial in 2017. The day was sponsored by the **BC Heritage Branch**, the **BC Historical Federation** and the **Archives Association of BC**. More than 140 people attended, both on-campus in Victoria at RRU and online across the province. The day started with Canadian songs performed by members of the Westshore Community Band, including O Canada, and was broadcast online via live stream. What follows is the final report outlining the context, purpose, agenda, feedback and next steps.

Context

To prepare for Canada's sesquicentennial in 2017, the forum organizers developed an opportunity for provincial dialogue on how to best mark the event. Aimed primarily at the museum, gallery, archive, cultural centre, and heritage agencies in British Columbia, the event explored directions, plans and opportunities to honor, recognize, reconcile and celebrate Canada's sesquicentennial in 2017. The forum enabled British Columbians working in these and related fields, including Indigenous and cultural groups and communities, to network, share ideas and plans as well as to help shape the provincial response to 2017. Our hope was that agencies and individuals would come away from the event with planning momentum for the anniversary in their community.

Leading up to the event, it was clear to the organizers that it was important to ensure a diverse audience attended to acknowledge the range of voices and perspectives in Canada as well as their different experiences over the past 150 years. In this way, we were sensitive that for some communities Canada 150 was not solely about celebration, in particular for indigenous populations and also for Japanese Canadians, Chinese Canadians, and Ukrainian Canadians, to name a few. It seems that this issue is reflected in the federal government's four guiding themes, recently announced:



Source: Canadian Heritage

- Diversity and Inclusion
- Engaging and Inspiring Youth
- National Reconciliation
- Our Environment

Whereas funding opportunities are based on these themes, the provincial government agencies have no particular stance as yet regarding themes nor is it clear that it needs to do so. However, from the flow of conversation and input received, it was clear that the federal government themes could be viewed as a synthesis of views heard in the forum.

The forum agenda was organized to provide participants with information from key perspectives – federal, provincial, open mic – along with an analysis of the approach and legacy of the 1967 Centennial. Throughout the day, facilitated group discussions occurred to evolve our understanding of guiding principles, brainstorming ideas, legacy, and critical success factors. To support province-wide participation, forum attendance was either face-to-face in Victoria or by distance through the Royal Roads University online learning platform that enabled facilitated online discussion in small groups. The event was also live streamed. In-person attendees used Padlet technology to compile thoughts from the table discussions, allowing the results to be compiled quickly. In advance of the event, participants and non-participants alike were asked to share their plans for Canada’s sesquicentennial in order to create a database and a provincial overview of activities.

Purpose

The overall purpose of the forum was to

- To share ideas on what BC museums, galleries, archives, history and heritage groups, agencies and jurisdictions are doing with regards to Canada’s sesquicentennial.
- To explore and develop provincial narratives and common threads regarding the anniversary, including what 2017 means to British Columbia.
- To provide a national overview of plans for Canada 2017.
- To explore leveraging and funding opportunities as well as possibilities for partnering.

- To explore ways to collaborate amongst groups and generate public profile.
- To provide an opportunity for provincial dialogue on a national anniversary and provincial approaches to the national anniversary.
- To provide general feedback to the provincial government as to what actions it might consider.

In addition, prior to the forum, a survey generated a database of activities that are planned in communities around the province (see attached).

Agenda

The day started with a welcome from the following representatives;

- **Asma-na-hi Antoine**, Nuu-chah-nulth, Toquaht Nation. Indigenous Education & Student Services Manager, Royal Roads University
- **Katharine Harrold**, Vice President Communications and Advancement, Royal Roads University
- **Richard Linzey**, Director, Heritage Branch, Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations
- **Theresa Mackay**, Executive Director, BC Museums Association

Following the welcome, **Dr. Geoffrey Bird**, Associate Professor, Royal Roads University provided an overview of the day ahead. Working with **Asma-na-hi Antoine**, Indigenous Education & Student Services Manager, Royal Roads University, presented the First Nations perspective and provided context in terms of how we may perceive Canada 150, particularly a perspective that was explicitly inclusive of indigenous peoples.

Dr. Helen Davies, Field Unit Superintendent Coastal British Columbia for Parks Canada, and author of *The Politics of Participation: a study of Canada's Centennial Celebration*, presented the keynote: ***Celebrating Canada: National Holidays, Commemoration and Identity Politics***. This was followed by a table discussion to define the key guiding themes for British Columbia's approach to Canada 150 in terms of museums, heritage, arts and culture.

The Federal and Provincial perspectives were given next with **Stephen Mill**, Manager, Major Events and Celebrations, and Edmonton District Office, Western Region, Department of Canadian Heritage, Government of Canada and **Berdine Jonker**, Manager Heritage Programs and Services, BC Heritage Branch, Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources.

The table discussion that followed focussed on opportunities based on the presentations from the federal and provincial governments, after which an open mic session allowed participants the opportunity to speak on a Canada 150 planning topic of their choice. The legacy for BC and critical success factors for making the most of the anniversary in BC were the final two table topic discussions. The results of the table discussions can be found in the attached files, and represents the 'raw data'.

Feedback from Attendees

- About 19% of those attending responded to the evaluation survey, of which 41% attended the event in person and 60% attended online. Sectors represented included museums, heritage, archives, the arts, tourism. Higher education, libraries and government.
- In general attendees found the relevant speakers, concrete information on grants and their status, as well as the interesting small group discussions, the most helpful. They indicated that they came away with a solid overview of ideas, concerns, and plans from many diverse groups, and a "better" understanding of community priorities. They also noted that they had an improved understanding of the

inclusion of cultural groups, especially First Nations, in their plans. Storytelling was noted as a guiding theme for sesquicentennial plans.

- In terms of improvement for future forums, attendees would have preferred more opportunities during the day for networking and some found the technology behind online participation was a challenge; however they noted “technology ... makes it viable for the smaller more distant organizations to participate.”

Outcomes

A Canada 150 Resources web page was created and is hosted on the BC Museums Association website to house summary documents from the day as well as inspirational videos, links, and materials. It can be found here: <http://museumsassn.bc.ca/professional-development/link/canada-150-resources/>. The advance survey of BC's plans for Canada's sesquicentennial has been posted on this page, as well as the table discussion results. The resource web page will be maintained by the BC Museums Association and updated with new resources as they become available. In the fall of 2016 and during 2017 the BC Museums Association will assist institutions and community groups who responded to the advance survey by promoting their events through the BCMA online channels.

Feedback from the Discussion Groups: key messages and recommendations

The following sections offer a summary of the small group discussions. Responses were collected from Padlet via facilitators.

1. Guiding Principles

Theme/questions for group discussion: Define the key guiding themes for British Columbia's approach to Canada 150 in terms of museums, heritage, arts and culture. What does being Canadian mean to you? What should be guiding themes for marking the milestone and the legacy to follow, in terms of museums, heritage, arts and culture?

The attendees discussed a range of potential guiding principles. Although it was not the focus of the discussion, the feedback validated in effect the federal guiding principles. In addition, what was often advocated was an opportunity for renewal and change through strong storytelling and community partnering. In addition to the federal guiding principles, two other guiding principles came forward in the discussions:

- Identity renewal: co-creating new BC cultural identities with common values that define who we are now while recognizing identities that before now have been lost. Our diverse landscape mirrors our diverse identities; it is constantly transforming.
- Focus on local narratives that illustrate national themes: relationship with First Nations, industry, the environment, and technology.

Key recommendations that would leverage these guiding principles include:

- Celebration of landscape, the challenges of the land, and legacy of place: culture; transportation infrastructure.
- Celebration of multiculturalism; LGBTQ communities; and reconciliation with First Nations
- Celebration of Journeys: The Immigrant Experience; Hyphenated Canadian Identities; The Urban/Rural Experience; The Social Mosaic; Caring for Canadians and Community through Inclusiveness; Peacekeepers and Peace-Loving British Columbians; Our BC 'quirkiness'.

2. Ideas

Theme/questions for group discussion: Brainstorm opportunities for museums, heritage, arts and culture, either provincial or community based, based on the presentations from the Federal and Provincial Governments. What opportunities for museums, heritage, arts and culture does Canada 150

represent for BC? What kinds of things could be done? How can a community or an agency get started? What are you going to do in your community?

Attendees acknowledged a tone of “celebration” but at the same time more of an emphasis on other themes such as “honour”, “educate”, “recognize”, ‘reconcile’ and “envision” in Canada 150 events for BC. They recognized that the story of today’s British Columbian is important to document for the future, especially through archives and storytelling. Attendees expressed the need to:

- Build the collective memory: record cultural events with the youth demographic; and engage with newly-arrived immigrants.
- Make our celebrations relevant, not just celebratory
- Hear from unspoken voices: youth, First Nations, gender and LGBTQ
- Hear voices on the future: technology and academics
- Redefine the history of BC acknowledging past communities that were not acknowledged

Examples of notable ideas included:

- Intercultural theatre productions, pop-up performances and exhibitions using empty retail space in communities
- Producing exhibits that challenge dominant narratives
- A film: ‘What does it mean to be British Columbian?’
- Connect BC communities in the celebration of 150: 150 food tours; 150 youth in music; 150 street festivals
- Encourage ‘meet ups’ by way of livestreaming of academic, for profit and non-profit discussions and leadership
- Place marking for tangible and intangible heritage
- Support for research and different ways to be culturally competent
- Encourage matching provincial-private funding
- Youth focus – travel around the province
- Brand celebrations as “150+” so that it indicates we are looking forward
- Access BC: setting targets for accessibility; the most accessible province
- Urban Gardens: balancing urban space with rural pop-ups
- Digital Cross-Canada Pen Pals: a marriage of Expo 67 pen pals and today’s technology

3. Legacy

Theme/questions for group discussion: Imagine the date is 2027 and we are talking about the great legacy of Canada 150. What is the legacy for BC and what does it look like? What do we want to achieve?

Attendees suggested a range of ideas with regard to legacy. Legacy from Canada 150 would look like more financial support for cultural organizations, to recognize their economic and social value in communities throughout the province. Other themes reflecting what attendees wanted to see achieved were: a stronger sense of community unity, a sense of ‘feeling at home’, inclusivity and respect for diversity in society; a sense of duty/responsibility; the guiding principles of the national effort: strong youth engagement, reconciliation, diversity and inclusion, healthier environment.

Key recommendations to achieve legacy included:

- Legacy of financial support for local museums and cultural organizations, perhaps some central sites
- Free access to museums and cultural events
- Something tangible, in the form of built heritage
- Activities that support the value of immigrants

- Investment to achieve quality performances and exhibits, and other forms of cultural representation.

4. Critical Success Factors

Theme/questions for group discussion: Identify the key ingredients for success in 2017 in terms of, for example, approach, resources and support in order that communities and museums, heritage, arts and culture sector agencies make the most of this anniversary. What are the key ingredients for success? What do we need for communities and agencies to do great things in 2017? How will we unleash innovation for Canada 150?

Attendees discussed a range of important critical success factors:

- Provincial and local leadership
- Local stakeholder involvement/people stepping up to participate
- Following through on ideas from this session
- Following federal guidelines
- Provincial funding
- Other ideas included accessing more funding from corporate sponsors

Conclusion and Recommended Next Step for Key Branches and the Government of British Columbia

The sheer number of participants was our first indication that there was province-wide support and interest in marking Canada 150. Whereas a number of communities are either ready or fully engaged in planning, a number are in the early stages. We were unable to assess where communities/individuals were in their planning journey but it was clear that there was a strong interest in learning about funding opportunities and ways to create legacy. In conclusion, Canada 150 represents a seminal opportunity for the Province of British Columbia to enact policy and initiatives which support the museums, heritage, arts and cultural sectors.

In terms of a next step, the branches, divisions and ministries such as the Heritage Branch, Strategic Initiatives for Arts, Culture, Gaming Grants & Sport Division, Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat and possibly the Ministry of Education should consider meeting to coordinate an overall approach to Canada 150 for BC. This recommendation is aimed specifically at the museums, heritage, arts and culture sectors. However, more agencies may be involved if we take into account the larger scope represented in the federal government's guiding principles of Diversity and Inclusion, Engaging and Inspiring Youth, National Reconciliation, Our Environment.

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Archives Association of BC
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