



## Media Release

### **Charting a New Course for the Maritime Museum of BC**

The Maritime Museum of BC has been in the process of re-structuring its organization since moving out of the old Bastion Square Courthouse location in December 2015. Thanks to the ongoing generosity of our donors, sponsors, patrons and landlord, Wottrich Holdings Ltd., the Maritime Museum of British Columbia has been able to maintain a steady course during these turbulent times. Not only has the Museum been able to financially survive thanks to all of this generous support, but it also has been able to establish several new educational and public outreach initiatives plus create new signature events including the Victoria Day Block Party, in addition to taking over the operation of the Victoria Classic Boat Festival. Furthermore, the Museum regularly hosts onsite workshops and special events such as the new Nautical Nights guest speaker series and has been able to significantly grow its membership.

In 2014, it was announced that the Museum was to dramatically downsize operations when the Bastion Square building fell into a major state of disrepair. David Leverton, the Executive Director of the Maritime Museum of BC, pointed out that “it was a real blow to the organization to lose its long-term home of 50 years and not be offered another location to be able to publicly display our extensive maritime collection for the benefit of BC residents and visitors to the capital region. Our much smaller location only allows us to offer temporary exhibits on a rotational basis and greatly limits what we can showcase and interpret for the public at any one time.”

The collection, which has been safeguarded by the Maritime Museum of BC since its inception in 1955, contains 3 sailing vessels of historic significance to BC, 35,000 artefacts, 8,000 library books including rare publications, and an extensive archives collection, which includes textual documents, ships’ plans, and maps and charts. The majority of the collection is stored in an off-site climate controlled facility provided by the province of BC; however, there is only limited time remaining on the lease for this space. There is also an additional off-site storage location of almost 3,000 sq/ft that is not climate controlled, which poses significant risks to this portion of the collection.

The Maritime Museum of BC has been working with their local provincial representative, MLA Carole James, and federal representative, MP Murray Rankin, to try and find positive, long-term solutions that both preserve the collection and allow it to be properly displayed and interpreted for the public. Don Prittie, the President of the Maritime Museum of BC, stated that, “We have the opportunity to deliver an important museum attraction of national significance that recognizes the last ten thousand years of our west coast marine heritage and culture, but it requires a lot of political will, similar to the effort that is going into the proposed development of a new Arts Hub in our old Bastion Square location.” The Museum would like to see the establishment of a joint federal/provincial working group to assist in



coordinating ongoing planning with each of the government departments who have a vested interest in any future land and building development projects. There are currently six provincial ministries that need to be involved in any decision making process.

The Maritime Museum of BC previously received regular provincial government support, but that was slowly reduced over the years. Now, any funds the Museum receives from all three levels of government are only gained through grant applications.

Leverton stated that, “We want to design a new purpose-built Museum that displays our maritime history and culture and recognizes our ongoing relationship with the ocean.” Canada does not have a national maritime museum and the Board of the Maritime Museum of BC is hopeful that a new arrangement can be worked out with Ottawa and the province to showcase and educate the public about our west coast maritime heritage for the benefit of all Canadians. “The vision is for an informal learning centre that not only features exhibits about our history and coastal environments, but also provides classrooms, research and lecture space. We want more space so we can continue to build on the successes we have achieved in our small space at Nootka Court. We want to engage more with our BC community and have a positive impact in more people’s lives. But in order to do so, we do require a significantly larger location.”

The Maritime Museum of BC would like to be in a more permanent setting by 2021, which is the 150th anniversary of BC’s entry into confederation.

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## **Background Information**

### **Current Activities of the Maritime Museum of BC**

Since moving out of the Bastion Square Courthouse in December 2015, the Maritime Museum of BC has been focused on redeveloping and redefining their operations. While maintaining its dedication to the promotion and preservation of BC maritime heritage and culture, and to engage people with this ongoing story, the Museum has had to rethink how best to approach their main activities of programs and exhibits from a much smaller location.

The Museum has been able to achieve their public engagement goals through a number of programming opportunities including the following activities:

### Education programs for children and youth for ages 4-15

These education programs are targeted to Greater Victoria regional school districts. They are curriculum based and multidisciplinary, covering areas such as history, science, math, and social studies. The Maritime Museum of BC is the only museum in Victoria to offer all of our education programs both as outreach (inside the schools) and as in-house programs at the Museum. This flexibility allows the teachers to pick the option that works best for them and their classes, making it easy for them to build these programs into the framework of their lesson plans.



### Maritime Memories programs for seniors



These programs are targeted to seniors but are also available for local community interest groups. The program is designed to spark memories and lively discussion. This program aims to support strong mental health in our community's seniors, as reminiscing is proven to fight loneliness and depression amongst senior citizens. Maritime Memories is also offered as an on-site and off-site program.

### Museum Tots programs for children ages 3-5

This program is offered inside the Museum once a week on Saturday mornings during September-May, and Sunday mornings from May-August. Program staff lead participants through a series of activities including a brief, educational introduction to the topic, crafts, and song and dance. The program gets the children moving and having fun while being introduced to our maritime heritage, culture, and the environment.



### Nautical Nights Speaker Series



This speaker series runs once a month during our off-season, from September to April, with the exception of December. Each month features a different speaker on a different topic, including everything from historic steamships, marine biology, and ocean focused art. These talks are targeted to an adult audience and are held at the Museum where we have a 40 seat capacity.



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### Walking Tours of Victoria's Inner Harbour

Our walking tours are offered to the general public daily during our summer months (May - August) and weekly on Saturdays during our off-season (September - April). The walking tours are targeted to people of all ages and are kept to areas of full accessibility for everyone to enjoy each part. These are popular for tourists and locals alike.



### Craft workshops for ages 12+

The Museum offers craft workshops on Saturdays and Sundays during our summer months (May to August), and on Saturdays during the off-season (September to April). We currently offer 8 different kinds of craft workshops that we rotate each week. These are popular amongst the local community, but also with tourists who get to bring home a unique souvenir.

### Signature Events

The Museum currently runs three major events annually: the Massive Marine Garage Sale, the Victoria Day Block Party, and the Victoria Classic Boat Festival. All three events celebrate unique parts of BC's maritime heritage and culture, and attract thousands of visitors each year.



Photo Courtesy of Tom Sztanek

### Exhibits

In addition to these public activities, the Maritime Museum of BC has been able to redesign our exhibits. Our exhibit space is currently 2,880 sq/ft. The space is split between the following sections: a permanent exhibit on CPR steamships on the BC coast, a permanent interactive knot board, a media room featuring different maritime related films for visitors to select and watch, an art gallery where we feature contemporary BC marine artists and sell their work on consignment, and a temporary exhibit space. The art gallery and the temporary exhibits change 2 to 3 times a year.

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*Entrance to the CPR exhibit*



*Interactive Knot Board*



*Launch Event for Tony Grove's Art Show*



*Refugium Art Show*

We have also been able to travel our *SS Princess Sophia* exhibit with the support of the Museum's Assistance Program through the Canadian Department of Heritage to communities like Port Alberni, Tofino, and Vancouver. We will continue to travel our other exhibits to coastal communities up and down the BC coast.



*SS Princess Sophia* exhibit in Port Alberni



*SS Princess Sophia* exhibit in Tofino