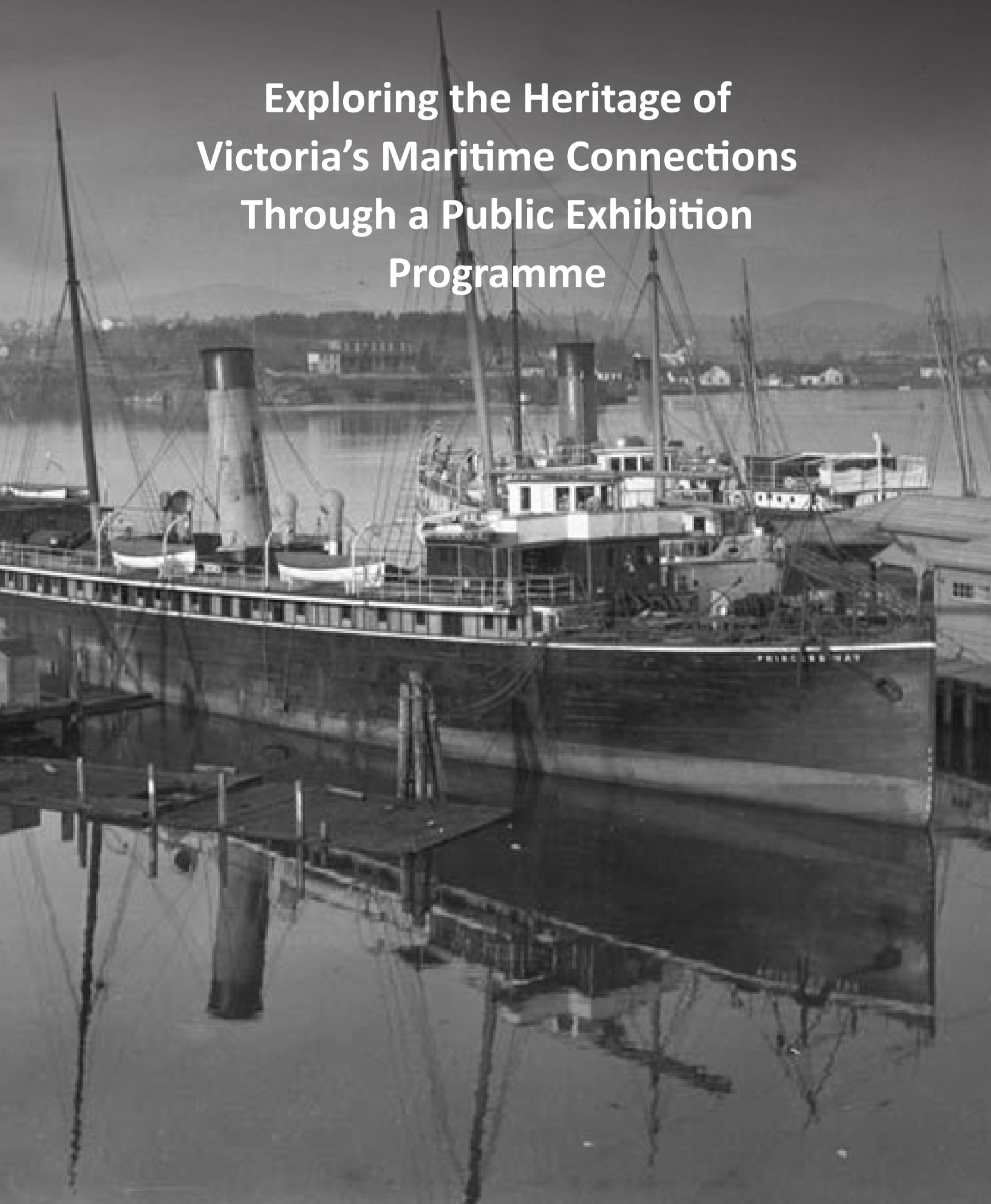


**Exploring the Heritage of
Victoria's Maritime Connections
Through a Public Exhibition
Programme**



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SITUATION BRIEF # 12

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The development of the Victoria region shares a classic pattern with other historic ports on the Indo-Pacific. Geography, environment and peoples intersected over time, and the evidence of their interconnected networks, fueled by travel, commerce, trade, territorial ambition, political hegemony, cultural exchange and population migrations, survives to the present day.

This statement of **Global Commemorative** Significance prompts myriad themes or narratives which together start to paint the larger tableau of Victoria's long history on the world stage.

Eventually these could be explored in a dedicated on-site visitor interpretation centre. Preliminary to this, and in parallel, our major local museums (Royal British Columbia Museum, Art Gallery of Greater Victoria , British Columbia Maritime Museum, University of Victoria Legacy Galleries, Esquimalt Naval and Military Museum, Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site and local house museums such as Craigdarroch Castle and O'Reilly House etc.) could be engaged by developing thematic exhibitions exploring both Pacific Northwest and wider the Indo-Pacific regional/international connections in our cultural history.



A visitor centre/interpretative centre would be essential for a UNESCO site. It could complement and coordinate with museums in the area without being competitive. An interpretation centre would be more wide-reaching than the mandates of any of the museums, and less artifact-based. It could provide linkages to the many designated sites in the region. There isn't a Victoria Museum as such, while the RBCM is provincial in its focus, and the "UNESCO Visitor Centre" could provide some of that Victoria Museum function and focus.

An alternative would be expanding the role and focus, along with a new facility, of the British Columbia Maritime Museum.

A UNESCO designation celebration/interpretation could be part of the anticipated restructuring of exhibitions at the RBCM. This could include, in special exhibit form, a concentrated focus on the area of the UNESCO designation.

There are many interesting themes that could make meaningful exhibits in local museums and historic sites, so here are just a few, some overlapping. Among other themes the following could be explored:

- What is a UNESCO world heritage site? What are some examples of different types (wildlife areas; ancient cities; ancient agricultural areas; architectural centres/structures... and so on)? How does Victoria compare to other UNESCO historic city-port sites?
- Why Victoria's harbour and its environments? What are the linkages?
- What are the characteristics of this region in terms of climate, ecosystems/species and its relationship with the Pacific Ocean and coastal waters? How has this changed? Ecosystems and species at risk; possibilities for restoration or conservation?
- What was the region like in pre-European contact times and what were the lives of First Peoples like in pre-Contact times? How have their lives changed since that time? How have they adapted to and changed the post-glacial environments of the region?



- Who are the peoples involved over different eras? Where did they come from? How did they get here and what were their travel conditions like? What made their travel here possible (shipbuilding/waterscraft/navigation etc.)?
- How were arriving peoples treated, and what were the consequences over generations? What were their opportunities and what were their daily lives like? This could address issues of racism, cultural dominance, religious freedoms,

language adoption and suppression, labour history, minority rights, women's issues and freedoms, etc.

- What are the traditions of people coming to this region (as in the commemorative significance): music, art, languages and how have they been influenced/stimulated/changed/challenged by this place?
- Can we identify “tipping points” in the human history of this area and their impacts on all the people and the environments of the area? Some of these might be:



- First evidence of human habitation, land and resource uses then ongoing intersections with Settler peoples.
- First Contact between First Nations and Europeans; first settlements by Europeans and other connections on the Pacific Rim
- Establishment of Fort Victoria and first European agricultural crops; relationships with Ft Langley and other early trading centres; introduction and impacts of smallpox and other disease epidemics;
- Early arrivals of peoples from Asia; the Gold Rush of 1858 and becoming a colony of Britain; the Douglas Treaties with First Nations; the coming of

overland transportation (the CPR in 1885-86);

- BC becoming a province of Canada; settlers from Europe and the expansion of European agriculture, dairies, etc. in the pre-WWI days;
- Schools and introduction of the public education system;
- Introduction of invasive species, and impacts on ecosystems and First Nations (this impacted large areas of western Canada); World Wars and the Great Depression;

Any of those themes or questions could be developed using the collections at the RBCM and other institutions in the areas (or on loan from elsewhere, for early contact times, for example). Involving many cultural communities, First Nations, specialists in many fields, would make exciting and welcoming exhibits or programs.

Observations

- We need to define what is meant/is included by Indo-Pacific in the context of the proposal. According to Google, it seems to focus mostly on the Indian Ocean and the western Pacific: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indo-Pacific>. Important links to South Asia, China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam and other countries and regions need to be fitted in with that term and the connections clarified.
- Before the CPR was opened in 1886, Victoria was a key entry point for immigration, governance and trade with Europe, via either Cape Horn or Panama (via the pre-canal railway or roadway after the early 1850s), and the Canal after 1869, also via San Francisco. Victoria as a focal point is broader than trans-Pacific or Pacific Coastal connections. We want to be inclusive of peoples, cultures and their origins, as it all connects with the UNESCO region. Many voices could and should tell these stories most effectively and appropriately in exhibits or orientation interpretation panels at various historic sites of the region.

- The foregoing presumes a new series of major research initiatives to fill in the missing narratives of region as remembered and told in the voices of First Nations.

Resources

For instance:

John Lutz. 2020. "Preparing Eden: Indigenous Land Use and European Settlement on Southern Vancouver Island," (Chapter 7) in Nancy J. Turner (ed.) *Plants, Peoples and Places*, McGill Queens Univ. Press, Toronto, 2020.

World Heritage Sites: A complete Guide to 878 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. UNESCO Publishing, 2008.

Hugh J. M. Johnston (Gen. Ed.) *The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia*. Douglas & McIntyre, 1996.

John F. Boshier. *Vancouver Island in the Empire*. Lumina Press, Tamarak, 2012.

David Armitage & Alison Bashford. *Pacific Histories: Ocean, Land, People*. Palgrave Macmillan, N.Y. 2014.

