

TOWARD AN INTANGIBLE HERITAGE INVENTORY OF VICTORIA



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SITUATION BRIEF # 11

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The UNESCO World Heritage Site Cultural Landscape category focuses as much on intangible as tangible heritage. In this it is unique in recognizing that the narrative of human contact and occupation of the landscape is as important as the material impacts on the landscape. Intangible heritage includes therefore a wide-ranging legacy of memories, events, creative expressions, and personalities that survive as evidence of human survival in the landscape.

From time immemorial, the inhabitants of Comosack/Victoria have flourished in the benign, sub-Mediterranean climate of Southern Vancouver Island. With the migration of various peoples, especially those within the Pacific Rim, came settlements and patterns of kinship which manifested themselves in community organizations, religious congregations, cultural and ethnic organizations, fraternal organizations and service clubs. The establishment of the Pacific Station of the Royal Navy in the mid-1800s was followed by the creation of military regiments. Hence the combination of climate—enabling year round festivals—and the richness of the evolving cityscape provided a magnificent backdrop for the display of activities we now recognize as Camosack/Victoria’s intangible heritage.

The following list illustrates the current expression of Victoria's intangible cultural legacy. A forthcoming project will expand this inventory dramatically.

Marine and Maritime Intangible Heritage

1. Gorge First Nations Canoe Races (since the 1870s)
2. Gorge Waterway Swimming events 1890s to the 1930s
3. The Thermopylae Club of retired mariners. (founded 1932)
4. The Royal Victoria Yacht Club
5. Swiftsure Yacht Race since 1930
6. Annual Classic Boat Festival
7. S.A.L.T.S. Sail and Life Training Society
8. Polar Bear New Year's Day Swim
9. Shipbuilding and Ship Chandlery



Cultural and Ethnic Festivals

10. First Nations community ceremonial events
11. Chinese New Year's Celebration: Dragon Dance Parade
12. Chinese Benevolent Association; Lantern Festival
13. Ma-Buhay Filipino Festival
14. Indigenous Games
15. Victoria Highland Games & Celtic Festival 1863
16. Saanich Agricultural Fair since 1868 or '69
17. Indigenous Games Esquimalt, Songhees and Saanich First People's ceremonial celebrations (surviving from the traditional Potlach gatherings)
18. Caledonian Benevolent Association formed 1863 (first Games 1864)
19. 159th Victoria Highland Games in 2022 (Association founded 1938)
20. Victoria Golf Club (founded 1893) Royal Colwood (1913), Uplands (1922)

Civic Festivals, Observances and Celebrations

21. Greater Victoria Festival Society
22. Visits by Monarchs and Governors General,
23. State visits by Royalty: first visit to Canada by reigning monarch, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, 1939, others in 1958, 1967, 1971, 1982, 1986
24. Victoria Day Parade since 1898
25. Remembrance Day Parade and Ceremony The series of Centennials celebrated in Victoria - probably a bigger cluster of 100th birthdays than any other place in the world: 1958, 1962, 1966, 1967, 1971, 2021.
26. Ceremonial Opening of the Provincial Legislature
27. Esquimalt Buccaneer Days circa 1960
28. Vancouver Island Regional Science Fair since 1961
29. Oak Bay Tea Party founded circa 1962
30. Victoria Flower Count since 1975



31. The Great Victoria Bike Ride since 1984

Armed Forces and Military Heritage

32. 5th (BC) Field Regiment RCA oldest military band in Western Canada
33. Military parades; Freedom of the City
34. Presentation of Regimental Colours
35. Remembrance day commemorative ceremonies
36. Church Parades
37. Admiral Nelles Cross Country Run since 1948

Arts and Culture

38. Coast Salish weaving and knitting traditions
39. Oak Bay Sketch Club (plein-air w/c painting - origins in the Island Arts and Crafts Society 1870s)

40. Indigenous artists carving demonstrations: millennia old Coast Salish artistic tradition
41. Victoria Symphony since 1941
42. Victoria Choral Society since 1934
43. Arion Male Voice Choir 1893, one of the earliest in Canada
44. Victoria Gilbert and Sullivan Society since 1945
45. Visits and sojourns by literary figures: e.g., Rudyard Kipling, Malcolm Lowry, Immanuel Velikovsky, Malcolm Muggeridge
46. Activities, art, and literature of artist Emily Carr
47. Victoria as a feature film location, from 1930s forward
48. Victoria Film Festival
49. Regional architectural styles: Macluresque Arts-and-Crafts, Colonial Bungalow, West Coast Modern.
50. Lekwungen peoples' oral histories (multi thousand-years heritage)



51. Rich literary history: Works of Robert Service publishing here in 1901, D. W. Higgins, Clive Phillips Wolley, Emily Carr, Agnes Deans Cameron, to Nellie McLung, Patrick Lane, Jack Hodgson and others to the contemporary Victoria Writers Festival.

Fraternal Organizations and Service Clubs

52. Fellowship societies: Masonic Lodges, Odd Fellows, Chinese Tongs, Knights of Pythias
53. Alexandra Ladies Club, founded 1894
54. Union Club Victoria, founded 1879
55. Victoria Riding Academy (McCleave Riding School and Saddle Horses early 1900's)
56. Victoria Fish and Game Protective Association (founded 1919)

Faith communities

57. Coast Salish spiritualism, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Orthodox Christian, Jewish, Methodist, Sikhism, Buddhist, Muslim observances and many others
58. Outdoor worship events, such as Easter Sunrise Ceremonies
59. Eid Celebrations

Observations

- Municipalities should incorporate intangible heritage in their commemoration, interpretation and conservation programs. A good start would be by designating events, personalities, cultural expressions of historical significance to the life of the community.
- Coast Salish oral histories and spiritual traditions, often imbedded in the

- features of local landscape, need to be respected and marked.
- Local heritage foundations and trusts could animate public recognition of local intangible heritage by conducting surveys and compiling inventories of examples: aspects of culinary arts, settler folk traditions and music, Indigenous arts and ceremonies, sporting celebrations, surviving traditions skills and trades, friendly societies.
 - Arts and culture grants programs such as the CRD Arts and Culture fund could identify a category of funding for support for historic/traditional expression in the arts.

