



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 15, 2016

PROJECT OF HEART COMMEMORATION CANOE FEATURED AT THE LANGLEY CENTENNIAL MUSEUM

"Imagine that you are five years old. A stranger comes to your home village and seizes you from your mother's arms. Imagine he takes you hundreds of miles away to a place where white people in black robes cut off your hair and take away your clothes, the ones your mother made especially for you.

They also take away your name - you get a number instead. They separate you from your brothers and sisters, and forbid you to speak to one another in your native language. Imagine being silenced with shouts."

Project of Heart: Illuminating the Hidden History of Indian Residential Schools in BC

A unique, thought-provoking work of art that has come to symbolize healing and recognition will be on display at the Langley Centennial Museum this summer.

The Commemoration Canoe was created by First Nations carvers and adorned with tiles made by students to reflect what they have learned about residential schools. The canoe has been featured at the U'mista Cultural Center in Alert Bay, BC for a year, and is scheduled to arrive at the Museum in Fort Langley during the week of June 20. It will be on public display until September, then will travel to various schools throughout the Langley School District.

"We are honored to host the Commemoration Canoe at the Langley Centennial Museum," said Arts and Heritage Curator Jasmine Moore. "The canoe, which was created in response to the Project of Heart initiative, represents an important shift in the way students learn about, understand, and appreciate the experience of First Nations peoples in British Columbia and Canada."

The Project of Heart was founded in 2007 by teacher Sylvia Smith when she discovered there were only 64 words relating to residential schools in her students' history text book. Through the Project of Heart, thousands of children across the country have learned about residential schools directly from residential school survivors.

Residential schools operated in Canada for more than 150 years. Aboriginal children were taken from their homes and placed into residential schools in accordance with government policy which sought to assimilate Indigenous peoples. There were at least 22 residential schools active in BC operated by Roman Catholic, Methodist, Anglican, Presbyterian, and United Churches of Canada.

"This is a part of our history that is not represented in the textbooks we use to teach social studies. That's why the Project of Heart canoe is so important, so that as Canadians we understand it and share that knowledge, because that is where the healing starts," said Charlene Bearhead, Education Lead at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

In BC, students were asked to reflect on their experiences after speaking with residential school survivors and design a tile based upon what they learned. Tsleil-Waututh carver Derrick George and his sons carved the Commemoration Canoe, which was adorned with the wooden tiles created by the students. Tahltan-Tlingit artist Una Ann Moyer designed the layout, weaving the stories across the surface of the canoe.

Moyer is also one of six artists participating in *Tradition and Innovation in First Nations Art*, an exploration of the design traditions and modern innovations in Coast Salish and Northwest Coast Art, which is running at the Langley Centennial Museum until July 17.

For more information, visit museum.tol.ca or call 604.532.3536.