

Museum Brings History to Life

July 15, 2013

Laxgalts'ap, BC — The Nisga'a Museum announced today that it plans to create a full-scale replica of a button blanket from the Laxgibuu (wolf) tribe of the Nisga'a Nation. The original blanket was repatriated to the Nass Valley in 2010 from the Royal British Columbia Museum as part of the historical Nisga'a Treaty. It is currently at the Canadian Conservation Institute in Ottawa being cleaned and repaired so that it can be put on display at the Nisga'a Museum alongside other priceless artifacts for visitors to experience and enjoy.

"The replica will be an important addition to the museum's new education collection," notes director Darrin Martens. "This object will be utilized in exhibitions as well as public and school programs over the years to inform individuals about the cultural importance of these types of blankets, their history, and the skill that it took to design and create them."

The history and narrative behind the original button blanket are unique. According to one of Charles S. Newcombe's notebooks, located in the Royal British Columbia Museum archives, the blanket was originally sold to Dr. Newcombe in 1911 from Henry Smart of Gingolx. The transaction occurred sometime in 1911. The story behind the object is owned by the Laxgibuu Pdeek (tribe) and cannot be reproduced or told without permission.

In discussions with Sim'oogit Duuk, (Bill Moore) of the Laxgibuu (a descendant of Smart and symbolic owner of the image and its story) approval was granted to create a replica of the original button blanket. Fran Johnson, the museum's manager, also a member of the Laxgibuu, will lead the project, and states, "We want the blanket to like the original piece, so therefore we are using a three point grey Hudson Bay blanket, red melton wool fabric and mother of pearl buttons. Also, to ensure the blanket is pretty close to the original piece, the design and all buttons will be hand sewn. A lot of work will go into the blanket and we're quite excited to see the end product".

Stefanie Haldane and Kaitlyn Stephens, two Young Canada Works sponsored summer students will be assisting Fran with the project.



Public engagement with the button blanket team is encouraged over the summer months. Members of the team will be working on the project in the museum's education room **Monday through Friday between the hours of 1:30 and 3 pm.**

Gwiis-ganm'ala'a (button blanket), circa 1900
Laxgibuu, Nisga'a
180 x 130 cm
Red, blue and black wool blanket with red fabric and pearl buttons.
Nisga'a Museum 2000.018