

North Vancouver museum calling for new plans



Artist's rendering of the new museum's lobby in the pipe shop building

Submitted photo

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Published: September 21, 2012 9:00 AM

Updated: September 22, 2012 10:27 AM

The North Vancouver Museum and Archives is embarking on a two-year overhaul that will dramatically change how the North Shore's history is told in the future.

The who, what, when and where are changing too. Why?

In July, when North Vancouver city council gave the museum its preliminary endorsement "in principle" to move into the former shipyard's repurposed pipe shop at the foot of Lonsdale, all that stood between the museum and its new waterfront home was a plan. Or, rather, two plans.

So last week the museum made two public call-outs to the planning community — one for a business plan to pay for the new museum, the other an exhibit plan overview detailing what should go inside.

"We don't want to be a kind of typical, small community historic museum with a lot of pioneer artifacts," said museum director Nancy Kirkpatrick.

Instead, she's looking for an interactive, engaging and "forward-looking" museum, a stand-alone tourist attraction that can draw people to the waterfront from both sides of Burrard Inlet when it opens in 2015.

So who are these exhibit planners and accountants? It sounds niche but apparently the local talent pool is one of the deepest.

"There's a whole bunch of them in Vancouver and in Victoria, but mostly Vancouver," Kirkpatrick said.

We can thank Expo 86 for that. It was then that the international Themed Attraction Association was formed across the inlet, an organization whose members have since been involved in most major cultural events like the Olympics ever since.

Both the business plan bid and the exhibit overview bid are open to any and all cultural attraction and accounting firms; big or small, local or foreign. That was the point in splitting them up, Kirkpatrick said; to open the bidding up to perhaps those smaller independent planners who maybe do the attraction planning side but not the accounting side, or vice versa.

And while the bids close at the end of September, with the winners likely awarded early in the new year, the museum has already begun a major overhaul of its collection to prepare the move from its Presentation House location.

Museum staff, volunteers and two contract technicians are in the midst of paring down the museum's permanent collection from about 20,000 artifacts to 12,000, deaccessioning and disposing of 8,000 pieces over the next two and a half years.

It's a complicated task, according to collection manager Magdalena Moore. The museum can't just open its doors and throw a garage sale.

"Everything we have is owned by the municipalities [of North Van city and district]," Moore said. "It's public property so council has to approve everything."

Before that can happen, every artifact has to be catalogued, cleaned, photographed and its value assessed against the rest of the collection.

"But," Kirkpatrick added, "it's likely we'll be holding auctions at some point."

Starting in January, visits to the Presentation House museum will be by appointment only as staff are diverted to help with the deaccessioning at the museum's off-site warehouse.

If given final approval, the museum's move to the waterfront is expected to cost an estimated \$9 million, including a museum rebranding campaign. As part of its business plan, the museum may explore taking on a title sponsor and charging admittance fees in an effort to move away from its reliance on [government funding](#).

