

Curator separates artifact from fiction for new museum

Jeremy Shepherd / North Shore News
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Seen here with the likeness of Lynn Valley pioneer Walter Draycott, curator Karen Dearlove is sifting through a trove of artifacts to determine which items will stand the test of time. file photo Paul McGrath, North Shore News

What do you keep and what should you throw out?

That's the question facing the North Vancouver Museum and Archives as curator Karen Dearlove sifts through pieces of past in a bid to determine what's history and what should be history.

“Do we know anything about the artifact?” she asks.



“Was it made in North Vancouver or used in North Vancouver. Is it too big to store? Too corroded to maintain? And perhaps most importantly, “whether the artifacts that were in the collection were really representative of North Vancouver history and the stories that we wanted to tell,” Dearlove says.

While some tough decisions have been made, such as parting ways with the 1,000-pound 1973-era [Aquarius 1 model submersible](#), Dearlove has also retained some gems.

There’s a paddle carved by Squamish artist Joseph Delmar, which she called a “wonderful example” of an artifact that will help illustrate Indigenous stories and perspectives.

Dearlove also spoke enthusiastically about a letter opener, an item that might have seemed less than spectacular on first glance.

But this particular letter opener was fashioned by Lynn Valley pioneer Walter Draycott out of artillery shells and “other found materials” from the trenches of the First World War.

“Those are the stories that are most compelling,” she says, explaining it’s a way to view history from a particular point of view.

Selecting the artifacts is “one of the last pieces of the puzzle,” in determining what the new museum will look like, Dearlove says.

“I’m in the process of deciding what artifacts are going to be exhibited in the first exhibits that open up in the new museum,” she says.

The exhibits are slated to be “regularly refreshed,” Dearlove says, explaining the



museum will rotate which artifacts are on display and which stories are told.



The new museum, is set to feature a restored streetcar and exhibits that unearth North Van’s Indigenous history and chronicle its transformative logging boom.

The city has allocated \$6.1 million to the creation of the museum.