



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

October 14, 2010

Sechelt Nation and Museum of Vancouver to Complete Historic Repatriation of Sacred Stone Figure

(**Vancouver, BC**) Chief Gary Feschuk of the Sechelt Indian Band (shíshálh First Nation) will lead a delegation to Museum of Vancouver (MOV) to reclaim a prehistoric stone sculpture of enduring spiritual significance to his people, Friday October 15.

“The Sechelt Image was created from deep within our past and prior to the extensive changes that occurred within our community as a result of contact with Europeans,” says Feschuk. “The image was recovered from the heart of our territory in close proximity to one of our most important town sites. It is part of our collective heritage and should be appreciated by our entire community.”

The stone sculpture was purchased by the Museum in the 1920s, and became part of the City of Vancouver’s collection of artifacts conserved and maintained by the Museum. Earlier this year representatives of Sechelt Indian Band and curators at MOV reopened a dialogue about repatriating this important sculpture to its home. The group worked closely with City of Vancouver staff to prepare to repatriate the Sechelt Image. Following a blessing ceremony at the Museum on October 15, curators and museum administrators will bring the Sechelt Image to the *tems swiya* museum in Sechelt – an event to be marked by a community celebration on Saturday October 16.

The Sechelt Image depicts a large figure that clasps to its front a much smaller figure, and has been described by Sechelt people as a mortuary stone commemorating a mother and child – the wife of a chief who had drowned herself when their only son was killed.

Formed of igneous rock, the image is 51 cm high, 30 cm wide, weighs about 32kg, and is widely considered one of the finest pieces of prehistoric sculpture in Canada. Oral histories and archaeologists have estimated it to be up to 3000 years old.

“We have done our best to care for the Image with respect and consideration during its decades at the Museum. We understand now that the Sechelt Image is far more than simply a beautiful piece of art. We look forward to journeying with the Image to the traditional territory of the Sechelt First Nation and completing the final step of repatriation,” says Nancy Noble, CEO of Museum of Vancouver.

This repatriation takes place in the midst of ongoing repatriation processes at museums globally. Most recently the Nisga’a Nation repatriated a collection of artifacts from the Royal British Columbia Museum and the Canadian Museum of Civilization including masks, headdresses, rattles, blankets and a totem pole.

-30-

For more information please contact, Jessica Casey, Museum Coordinator, *tems swiya* museum, Sechelt Nation 604-885-2273 or Amanda Gibbs, Director of Audience Engagement Museum of Vancouver , 604-328-6670 City of Vancouver Corporate Communications, 604-871 6336