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Quw'utsun Repatriation

**“Repatriation is to return something
to its owners or place of origin.”**

In 2018, Cowichan Tribes began a Repatriation Program, with the intent of tracking down, and bringing home our cultural items and ancestor's remains. At the same time, we need somewhere to bring them home to, so our Chief & Council have begun planning for our own Quw'utsun Museum.

Our cultural items include ceremonial items, ancestral remains and associated burial belongings, as well as information in archives and libraries, such as photos and recordings. There are masks, spears, fishing gear, baskets, regalia and much more.



How did Cowichan belongings end up in Museums?

Many of the Indigenous objects in museum collections were acquired during a very dark time in the history of Indigenous Peoples and Canada. Along with the newly arriving settlers came a collecting frenzy of all things Indigenous in the belief that Indigenous Nations and cultures were going extinct. By the 1880s, museums and world fairs wanted to show collections representing Indigenous people and their cultures. They actively collected Indigenous heritage objects, even people, for displays and exhibitions.

The Ancestors and belongings that were taken from Indigenous communities were traded around the world, most to museums and universities, but some are in private collections.



Cowichan Tribes Repatriation & Museum Program

We began by researching museums around the world via the internet, looking for our belongings. To date, we have found over 900 Cowichan artifacts at 50 museums. We have hundreds of museums still to look at. Each museum will have to be contacted directly to inquire about our ancestral remains, as this information is not included in the website information. Some of the countries where our belongings may be located are: Canada, USA, England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Germany, Holland, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Russia, Israel and South Africa.

We must have our own museum in order to bring our cultural belongings back home. Many of the items are very old and fragile. They must be kept in a climate controlled building, that is pest free and safe and secure. We will be looking for community input into the planning of the museum in the near future, and look forward to hearing what you would like to see in our Cowichan Tribes Museum.