

Description of new permanent exhibits at the Haida Gwaii Museum Opened 2008

The underlying theme running through all the new permanent exhibitions is: the inextricable links between the land, the sea, human beings and supernatural beings that give Haida Gwaii its incomparable natural and cultural character. The exhibit messages encourage a holistic learning experience by cross-cutting the traditional museum boundaries that separate our experiences of the natural and cultural worlds. Scientific information, natural specimens, Haida knowledge, oral history and art are brought together in the same exhibit context. Following is a brief description of exhibit areas installed:

A. Greeting House Atrium

Three commissioned installations:

- a) Large appliquéd banners in the button blanket tradition with logo designs representing the three partners: Skidegate Band Council, Haida Gwaii Museum and Parks Canada supported by text related to the Centre's mission and roles of the partners.
- b) Large copper shield symbolizing the wealth contained in the Centre.
- c) Large 3-dimensional glass sculptural map of Haida Gwaii. Commissioned art pieces

B. Eating House

An exhibit on the vital role that food gathered from the land and sea plays in Haida culture, showing the story of hunting, gathering, preserving and presenting traditional Haida foods. This exhibit features relevant tools and baskets, examples of preserved foods, feast dishes and food storage boxes, along with both historic and contemporary photographs of food gathering, food processing and feasting.

C. Classroom 2

A flexible space that can serve as an extension to the new Temporary Exhibits Gallery as well as a standard classroom. This classroom provides space for instructing in a wide array of academic, artistic and industrial trades fields.

D. Saving Things House

Introduction panel to the Haida Gwaii Museum accompanied by Robert Davidson's 1983 monumental cedar carving, 'Raven bringing Light to the World' and excerpts from the Haida story of the beginning of the world.

E. Temporary Gallery

A 1500 sq ft space equipped with a modular exhibit system designed to receive and present temporary art exhibitions and/or traveling exhibits from around the world.

F. Contact and Conflict

The story of the Haida contact with European cultures showing both the significant tragedies that followed for the Haida as well as the strategies they implemented for survival and success. The exhibit area includes a 15-minute film, a Haida history timeline from 1776 - 2005 and exhibits of argillite carvings and other objects representing Haida life from 1776 to the early 1900's.

G. Keeping Our Way of Life

This large vaulted area addresses Haida contemporary life and initiatives that have contributed to Haida culture and society including exhibits on the Haida repatriation movement, the historic and contemporary role of the Council of the Haida Nation, the Haida language program, traditional Haida social organization and four exhibits addressing different aspects of Haida art, design and weaving. Four interactive video stations enable visitors to sample video and audio clips related to a wide array of contemporary Haida economic, cultural and spiritual activities. This area brings together the past and present, juxtaposing masterpieces of the past with the work of a brilliant new generation of Haida weavers and artists. An open storage area provides visitors with visual access to approximately 85% of the museum's collections of Haida artifacts. Three historic Haida house frontal poles were raised in this gallery in late 2006.

H. Forest

This hands-on area provides an introduction to the 12 indigenous tree species of Haida Gwaii showing the look, feel, smell and characteristics of each tree with touchable objects made from each of the woods and natural samples of bark, resins, wood and roots of each. Graphics present information and images on botanical characteristics, Haida knowledge and uses and industrial harvesting history.

- Connections

This 600 sq ft area provides an in-depth look into the flora, fauna and landscapes/seascapes of Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site through visitor-operated video journeys to various destinations in the National Park Reserve. Interactive touch screens provide 'layered' information and images related to various aspects of the human and natural history of the area.

- Cycles/Natural History

Six exhibits each tell the story of a unique ecosystem area on Haida Gwaii and reveal why each is unique in this 2000 sq ft area. These exhibits incorporate natural history specimens, artifacts, commissioned art works and touchable items and underscore the interdependence of life forms, including the role of human beings.