

August 4, 2015

The Royal BC Museum launches a new database for the BC Archives

VICTORIA, BC – Today, the Royal BC Museum launched a new website and searchable database for the BC Archives called, fittingly enough, Access to Memory – or “AtoM” (search-bcarchives.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/).

An improvement on the old BC Archives website for archivists and users alike, AtoM is an ideal platform for the digitized materials in the Ida Halpern fonds (or collection). Halpern is renowned for her recordings of **First Nations’** music from across the West Coast – and the BC Archives holds 342 of her audio recordings, 16.8 metres worth of written research material and 735 photographs.

“When Ida Halpern came to British Columbia), she collaborated with First Nations families to record their language and personal histories through music and song. These early recordings are an intimate view into the lives and culture of First Nations people, **and chronicle an important story for all British Columbians,”** said Royal BC Museum COO and Deputy CEO Angela Williams. **“The scale and scope of Halpern’s work is now** available to the public through a single, easily accessible digital home that encourages interaction and depth of research. We are grateful to First Nations for their support and cooperation in translating this material for us, and for **future generations.”**

The Halpern collection on AtoM comprises many different media, including audio files, photographs and digitized images of hand-written musical transcriptions, in addition to detailed descriptions of archival materials.

Ida Halpern was a Viennese ethnomusicologist, teacher and writer who immigrated to Canada in 1939. Beginning in 1947, and over subsequent decades, Halpern captured an unprecedented volume of sound recordings of valuable cultural creations from leading **elders in Kwakwaka’wakw, Nuu-chah-nulth, Tlingit, Haida and Coast Salish communities.** These elders hoped **Halpern’s recordings would preserve their stories** for future generations – a goal served by AtoM.

In addition to the Halpern fonds, AtoM features thousands of new records and the ability for archivists to upload new information faster and with greater regularity, a huge benefit for users.

AtoM, developed and implemented by two separate BC firms, contains thousands of new records, available to BC Archives users anywhere in the world. AtoM is used by most provincial and national archives, NATO, the World Bank **and UNESCO’s archives** – extremely good company for the Royal BC Museum to keep.

For the next month, BC Archives users familiar with the old site will be comforted to know they will be able to toggle back and forth between the old site and new as they familiarize **themselves with AtoM’s new features and appearance.**



As with many of the Royal BC Museum's recent digital initiatives, AtoM's debut shows how the Museum and Archives see technology as a smart and easy way to connect today's public, no matter where they live, with BC's collective history.

About the Royal BC Museum

The Royal BC Museum explores the province's human history and natural history, advances new knowledge and understanding of BC, and provides a dynamic forum for discussion and a place for reflection. The museum and archives celebrate culture and history, telling the stories of BC in ways that enlighten, stimulate and inspire. Looking to the future, by 2017 the Royal BC Museum will be a refreshed, modern museum, extending its reach far beyond Victoria as a world-class cultural venue and repository of digital treasures.

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