

Fraser River Discovery Centre programs boosted by Seaspan and Southern Railway of British Columbia

December 15, 2021

NORTH VANCOUVER, B.C. – Indigenous and Fraser River Education Programs provided by the Fraser River Discovery Centre Society will be enhanced by a C\$250,000 grant from the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation in conjunction with Seaspan and Southern Railway of British Columbia Limited (SRY). The Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation is the charitable arm of the Washington Companies.

The Fraser River Discovery Centre Society (FRDCS), which operates the Fraser River Discovery Centre, based in New Westminster, BC, will receive the grant for Indigenous and Fraser River Education Programs. The funds will specifically support programs in partnership with First Nations (Musqueam Indian Band), including school programs, public information and dialogue programs, and interactive exhibits.

Seaspan and SRY have a long relationship with FRDCS, and previously provided support for their *Journey Through the Working River* exhibit in 2017. FRDCS is currently partnering with the Musqueam Indian Band (MIB) and plans to develop xʷtatəlləm (*Place of Learning About the Indigenous Heritage and Teachings of the Fraser River*). FRDCS will work with the MIB and other First Nations to share information about the Fraser River and work towards Reconciliation and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

FRDCS's Fraser River Education Programs will help students explore the Fraser River from economic, environmental, socio-cultural and Indigenous perspectives. They include *RiverSchool* programs on Fraser River transportation and trade which were supported by funding from Seaspan and SRY as well as Indigenous *RiverSchool* programming that was also supported by Seaspan and SRY. All *RiverSchool* programs are linked directly to the BC curriculum and meet learning outcomes in social studies, history, mathematics, and science. Since their inception, *RiverSchool*, has served 25,000 students from over 500 schools.

“On behalf of Seaspan and Southern Railway of British Columbia, we are pleased to be able to support the Fraser River Discovery Centre Society in their work to promote the diverse history and culture associated with the Fraser River. Educational perspectives provided on the environment and transportation will benefit the Fraser River’s long-term sustainability. Their engaging programs highlight the importance of the river and bring an understanding of the livelihoods and communities which depend on it to a wide range of audiences,” said Kyle Washington, Executive Chairman, Seaspan.

“This support from Seaspan and Southern Railway of British Columbia is critical to moving forward with both xʷtətəlləm and our Fraser River Education Programs as we continue to recover from the impacts the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the Fraser River Discovery Centre,” said Mark Rizzo, Chair, Fraser River Discovery Centre Society. “The donation — the single largest we have ever received — helps ensure we can further educate our visitors and the region about the Indigenous, economic, environmental, and socio-economic importance of the living, working Fraser River.”

“We are proud to once again support FRDCS in their educational outreach. As founding members, our Washington Companies — Seaspan and Southern Railway of British Columbia — have enjoyed a long relationship with FRDCS and we value the work they do creating informative dialogue and innovative pathways for learning about the cultural, environmental, and economic significance of the Fraser River. In particular, this grant will help to create greater awareness of Indigenous peoples’ relationship with the river and establish new ways in which we can work together to sustainably manage this valuable resource,” said Frank Butzelaar, Chief Operating Officer, Washington Companies.

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About Seaspan ULC

Seaspan is an association of Canadian companies primarily involved in coastal marine transportation, shipdocking/ship escort, ship repair and shipbuilding services in Western North America. In addition to the marine transportation services offered directly through Seaspan, commercial ferry, shipyard and bunkering services are provided via affiliate companies: Marine Petrobulk, Seaspan Ferries, Vancouver Drydock, Vancouver Shipyards and Victoria Shipyards.

www.seaspan.com

About Southern Railway of British Columbia Limited

Southern Railway of British Columbia (SRY) is a major transporter of freight in British Columbia. Based in New Westminster, we provide businesses and customers located in the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley with seamless rail connections to markets throughout North America.

www.sryrailink.com

About the Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation

The Dennis and Phyllis Washington Foundation is the major philanthropic organization for The Washington Companies, which includes Seaspan ULC and Southern Railway of British Columbia Limited. Funding for the Foundation comes primarily from personal contributions from the Washington family and annual contributions from the Washington Companies.

www.dpwfoundation.org

About Fraser River Discovery Centre Society

The FRDCS is a registered non-profit society founded in 1989 and governed by a Board of Directors. It operates the Fraser River Discovery Centre (FRDC), a 17,000 square foot interpretive centre located on the Fraser River waterfront in New Westminster, B.C. The FRDC is the only place in the world to focus solely on the Fraser River, something it does from a true sustainability perspective, balancing the economic, environmental, socio-cultural and Indigenous priorities related to the Fraser River.

<https://fraserriverdiscovery.org/>