



IAN MCKAIN/TIMES COLONIST

Museum boss Guy Mathias and Angela Mittoni, gift shop manager, admire items to go on display

28 Bastion Square

**MARITIME MUSEUM**

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# New look brimming with new life

**By Patrick Murphy**  
Times Colonist staff

Workers are putting the finishing touches to a new entrance and gift shop this weekend as the first stage of the Maritime Museum of B.C.'s \$1.4-million renovation which museum boss Guy Mathias says will at least double attendance.

"The museum has always had one constituency in the last decade," the executive director said in an interview.

"That has been older people, and we have 20,000 a year in attendance. Our intention is to minimally double that number and I am confident we can do it."

Since May, the main entrance to the Bastion Square museum has been closed while it was rebuilt and a new gift shop was installed. That \$80,000 project is to be completed

next week. The next stage, to open Sept. 30, is a new exhibition gallery on the main floor to hold art shows, travelling exhibits and special exhibits from the museum collection.

The entire project is slated for completion in the fall of 1998 and is expected to stand the museum in good stead for another decade. Mathias said he hoped the museum could then find a new waterfront location with floating exhibits.

"This work is meant to renew the museum to bring it to a level of professionalism you would expect from a maritime museum.

"We are not as big as [the Royal B.C. Museum], but we want to be No. 2. We're small; the little guy in the league.

"We are convinced [the

renovation] will turn around attendance and the museum will be a place to go and to see. Unless the product is really strong, it does not get talked up. We want to have that strong product and accentuate the heritage of the building and heighten the elements."

The museum is in the former provincial courthouse designed by Otto Tiedemann in 1889. The heritage building was the first Victoria building made from concrete blocks instead of bricks.

The heart of the project will be the exhibition hall. Architect Paul Merrick and designer J.J. Andre have matched the wishes of the board to create the space it plans.

"Our galleries will be much stronger with a higher educational level," Mathias said.

All this will be done without an

increase in entrance fees," said Mathias.

Adult admission is \$5. The ticket will be good for three days. An annual pass will be \$10 and \$25 for a family.

Now the emphasis swings to families and youth with five major themes in the exhibition galleries:

- Adventure highlighting the Tilikum round-the-world sailboat.
- Exploration showing European contact with this coast.
- Commerce of the Port of Victoria.
- The navy.
- Passenger travel.

There will be children's zones, including one gallery where all 475 ship models will be on display from floor to ceiling and computer access to the model collection and archives.