

# Why Canada needs a new National RCMP Museum established in 2024



*The National RCMP Museum will be a place of celebration and discovery, of reflection and reconciliation. This will be a place to discover our shared history, reconcile with the past, and celebrate our future.*

The RCMP Heritage Centre is on its way to becoming a National Museum – but is not quite there yet. In 2019, then-Heritage Minister Guilbeault was mandated to make the RCMP Heritage Centre a National Museum. In Budget 2021, Government further committed with a budget allocation to ‘begin the transition to national’ for capacity building and Canada-wide engagement. Over the past four years, the RCMP Heritage Centre has taken the necessary steps to complete this transition.

**We need the federal government to finish this undertaking and establish the museum Canadians have envisioned.**

There are many proud and inspiring chapters in the RCMP’s 150 year history, but others that are painful and complex. The National RCMP museum will tell the important stories of duty and commitment, as well as beginnings, challenges, conflict, evolution, and progress.

The museum will be a place for visitors to reflect and learn about Canada’s history and its future from different perspectives. These uniquely Canadian stories not only deserve to be told, they **must** be told—inspiring, difficult, and everything in between.

# Canadians want to see a National RCMP Museum that is reflective of our history and voices

In November 2022, we completed a Canada-wide engagement. The focus of this engagement strategy was hearing from Canadians around the country, with particular distinction-based and intersectional effort to speak to Indigenous, African, Caribbean, and Black people, and those who identify as 2SLGBTQ, and other equity-deserving and racialized communities, and former and current RCMP Members. **The results were overwhelmingly positive.**

- 89% of survey respondents say that it is important for Canadians to have access to a national museum that honours the courageous contributions of the RCMP, while telling even the most difficult stories with dignity and compassion.
- 90% of survey respondents agreed that the Museum should “Pay tribute to the extraordinary dedication, duty, and service of generations of Canadian Mounties and civilian employees, both past and present.”
- A sizeable majority of survey respondents also agreed (somewhat or strongly) that the Museum should “Reflect a broad and diverse set of perspectives” (84%) and “Support efforts aimed at reconciliation between the RCMP and Canada’s Indigenous Peoples” (76%).



*“There’s never been a better time in our society to confront any and all aspects of the history of this institution – head on and with compassion, with the intent to learn and heal.”*

#### **– Survey Respondent**

*“The history of the RCMP is an integral part of the history of Canada. History is full of mistakes, wrong attitudes, conceit and weakness; however, we also have to recognize that history includes admirable personalities, incredible achievements, notable events and defining moments. We can acknowledge both—reasons for celebration and responsibility for grave errors.”*

#### **– Survey Respondent**

# Supporting the Prairies tourism industry while growing the Canadian economy

For every dollar invested in museums, Canadians see four dollars in benefits through jobs, programming and learning, and community building. **Museums contribute \$2.9 billion per year to Canada's economy.**

The Heritage Centre is already a tourist destination; last year welcoming 35,000 people from around the world, including Brazil, Scotland, Nigeria, the Philippines, England, New Zealand, Switzerland, and many more.

*A federal investment of \$4 million and commitment in the 2024 budget to complete the transition to a National Museum would positively impact the economy, create jobs, and send a strong signal of government's support of tourism, business, and culture, on the Prairies and in Saskatchewan.*

## **NO OTHER CANADIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM CAN EXPLORE TOPICS LIKE A NATIONAL RCMP MUSEUM**

We are undertaking the necessary work towards Truth and Reconciliation and have become a place to explore our shared humanity. No other site in Canada can explore topics like we can.

As a National Museum, we can offer a place for understanding about difficult topics like Residential Schools, Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-spirited people, society and the evolution of our country.

## **NOW IS THE TIME TO MAKE THE INVESTMENT TO ESTABLISH US AS A NATIONAL MUSEUM**

It has been four years since the government committed to designate the RCMP Heritage Centre as a National Museum, and we need the final steps to be completed in 2024.

While the government has been committed to this transition since 2019, it simply must finally happen in 2024. We are growing increasingly worried that if it does not happen in 2024, it never will, and a large promise to the Prairies will go unfulfilled.

We need to see the Minister's mandate commitment completed this year. We need confirmation that we will receive National Museum designation and the required appropriation in Budget 2024.

RCMP history is Canadian history. It is the story of our beginnings, it is something that sets us apart in the world, connects us across the vast land, and has deep ties throughout our communities, homes, past, present, and future.





# Bearing Witness

In February–March 2023 the RCMP Heritage Centre hosted Carey Newman’s Witness Blanket. For the first time in the organization’s history, we convened an Elders and Survivors Advisory Council. The Council provided guidance and participated in the appropriate ceremony they wanted to welcome and conclude the exhibit’s time in the community. We also consulted Indigenous counsellors to ensure a trauma-informed and culturally relevant space and program.

With the approval of Carey Newman, we developed learning materials and an education program featuring the Witness Blanket, and using the Indigenous Peoples Atlas of Canada floor map and Residential School timeline as learning tools. More than 1,200 students participated in the program in one month, and hundreds of people visited the exhibit, including a group of 60 members of Regina’s Sri Lankan community.

As part of the education program we developed we asked students and the community to take with them a piece of cloth, and alter it, share a message, and create something as a response to their experience “bearing witness” to Carey Newman’s Witness Blanket exhibit.

We partnered with star quilt artist Murielle Buffalo, who herself is a Residential School Survivor and part of the Advisory Council, to help us create a community reflection of our experience with the Witness Blanket exhibit.

**Her quilt will be unveiled at the Centre this year**, in the week leading up to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.



*“I want to see Indigenous faces in the Centre when I walk in. Black faces. Female faces. Not a line up of white men. Showcase the RCMP as the image of Canada – provide a sense of connection to all Canadians. I really believe in this project.”*

– THE HONOURABLE MURRAY SINCLAIR



# Hosting Courageous Conversations

The Place of Reflection is a stone medicine wheel, conceptualized by Lori Whiteman – a 60s scoop Survivor and daughter of a missing Indigenous woman – and created by artist and stone carver, Lyndon Tootoosis. This piece of art is a sacred place, initially created for reflection and closure for people with Missing or Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-spirit people in their lives.

The Place of Reflection was first created with 1,400 stones, representing the number of Indigenous women and girls reported missing or murdered at the time. It has since grown with stones placed by many others from around the world, representing a lost or missing loved one.

For the past two years we've integrated the Place of Reflection in our education and programming. Students, members of the public, police agencies, and Cadets in active training visit the Centre and Place of Reflection to learn from Indigenous partners and retired Indigenous RCMP Members about the issues related and contributing to MMIWG2S, for a better understanding and appreciation of our shared humanity.





# A Place for Dialogue and Understanding

In September 2023 the RCMP Heritage Centre was the education partner; along with RCMP Depot Division, F Division, RCMP National Division, the Place of Reflection Committee, and funding partners K+S Potash, and the Office of the Treaty Commissioner to bring Master Carver Stanley Hunt's Monument to Regina. This 18 foot tall, 6,000 lb. hand carved piece of art was motivated by Stanley's reaction to the unmarked graves found in Kamloops. This piece represents his painful feelings around the Indian Residential School System, and was created to honour the memory of the children who did not return home.

The RCMP Heritage Centre developed and delivered an education program, an educational video of the artist's perspective, educational materials, and hosted the launch, public screenings and classroom programs throughout September.

The opening ceremony was an important celebration of Truth and Reconciliation; attended and supported by both Commanding Officers, Rhonda Blackmore and Sylvie Bourassa-Muise, as well as Commissioner Duheme. While in Regina, the Monument was visited by almost 3,000 people.

Following its time in Regina, the Monument continued its journey across Canada to its next home – the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, QC.

*"This is very important work. You have my full support if you do two things: one, you must tell the story of residential schools. Two, you must involve Indigenous voices all the way through."*

– FORMER AFN NATIONAL CHIEF PHIL FONTAINE

