

WELCOME TO YOUR HISTORY



The **Canadian History Hall** traces the history of Canada and its people from the dawn of human habitation to the present — a span of some 15,000 years. Through authentic artifacts and compelling stories, the Hall invites visitors to explore the events, personalities and historical currents that have shaped, and continue to shape, this country.

### **The Entrance**

Visitors enter the Hall through the **Passageway**, a long and curving passageway lined with 101 silhouettes of familiar Canadian landmarks, symbols and activities, all serving as reminders that history is all around us and is relevant to our lives today.

The Passageway leads to the **Hub**: a grand rotunda that serves as a gathering place and a point of orientation. The Hub features a vaulted dome ceiling, as well as the long sightlines and elegant curves that characterize the Hall's overall design. Bringing to mind the vast and majestic Canadian landscape, the space provides a central point of access to the Hall's **three exhibition galleries**: two on the main floor and a third on the mezzanine overlooking the Hub.

**Each gallery focuses on a separate chronological era in Canadian history.**

### **1 – Rossy Family Gallery**

**Era:** Early Canada — 15 000 years ago to 1763

**Storyline summary:** Indigenous peoples have lived on this land for thousands of years. They have developed thriving societies in diverse environments, and have established an enduring presence in what is now Canada. The arrival of Europeans eventually disrupted the Indigenous order in North America, with natives and newcomers alike striving to maintain traditional ways while adapting to new realities.



The early history recounted in Gallery 1 draws upon archaeological evidence, and on Indigenous cultural traditions based on oral histories passed down by Elders in each generation. The first thing visitors see and hear is an animated telling of the Anishinabe creation story, told in the Anishinabe language. The gallery also presents archaeological evidence revealing the presence of First Peoples as far back as the end of the Ice Age.

The gallery explores the expansion of Indigenous peoples from coast to coast to coast; the arrival of Europeans about 1,000 years ago; the establishment of permanent European settlements; and the competition between France and Britain for dominance in North America, culminating in the British conquest of New France.

Some of the stories:

- The Inuit arrived in the Canadian Arctic about 800 years ago, and spread rapidly across the region. They relied upon cooperation and sharing to thrive within a harsh climate.
- One thousand years ago, First Peoples encountered Norse seafarers (Vikings) along the shores of Eastern Canada. Although the Norse did not stay, they left with knowledge of lands beyond the Atlantic Ocean.
- On the Northern Plains, First Peoples developed a unique way of life, centred on hunting bison herds.
- The introduction of agriculture about 2,500 years ago heralded a fundamental shift in Indigenous ways of life, leading to the development of large, permanent settlements and powerful nations.
- With royal oversight, New France became more than a fur-trade outpost. French women arrived in large numbers, and farms and families flourished.

## 2 – Fredrik Eaton Family Gallery

**Era:** Colonial Canada — 1763 to 1914

**Storyline summary:** The integration of northern North America into the British Empire had profound consequences for Indigenous peoples, Canadiens and Britons. Through struggle and accommodation — and propelled by demographic, economic, social, political and cultural forces — the British North American colonies achieved a degree of self-government and unity, establishing a Dominion that stretched “from sea to sea.”



Gallery 2 explores the foundation of an uneasy accommodation between people of British, French and Indigenous heritage that has endured to this day. It also explores a dramatic rise in the non-Indigenous population; the creation of a self-governing, federal dominion; the expansion of the fur trade — and a Euro-Canadian presence — into western and northern Canada; conflicts between Euro-

Canadians, the Métis and First Nations over control of land and resources in the Canadian West; and the beginnings of Canada's transformation into a more urban and multi-ethnic country.

Some of the stories:

- Following the Seven Years' War, French-speaking, Catholic Canadiens and Acadians adjusted to life in an English-speaking, Protestant empire.
- The rapid settlement of English-speaking immigrants came at great cost to First Nations. In Upper Canada, treaties hastened European settlement and marginalized Indigenous peoples.
- British North Americans implemented principles of responsible government to create a new country: the Dominion of Canada.
- The grievances of Métis and First Nations came to a head in the spring of 1885, prompting many to take up arms against the Canadian government.
- After consolidating its vast western territory, the federal government reformed immigration policy and recruitment strategies to encourage European immigration to the Canadian Prairies.

### 3 – The Honourable Hilary M. Weston and W. Galen Weston Gallery

**Era:** Modern Canada — 1914 to the present day

**Essential summary:** During the first half of the twentieth century, Canada's commitments and contributions in two World Wars, as well as its experience during the Great Depression, helped support and define its economic prosperity and political independence. Canadians have since worked hard to recognize and reconcile differences, and to sustain a diverse and inclusive society.



Gallery 3 explores five central themes:

1. **Sovereignty and Prosperity:** The push, over the past century, to establish Canada as an independent power on the world stage, and to build a more prosperous society for all.
2. **First Peoples:** The struggle by Indigenous peoples for their rights and the preservation of their cultures.
3. **Quebec:** The dramatic evolution of contemporary Quebec, and the profound impact of that evolution on the province and the country.
4. **Diversity and Human Rights:** The ongoing transformation of Canada into a more inclusive and diverse society, through political and social struggle and changing societal norms.
5. **An International Canada:** Canada's push to become a more active, effective and respected member of the world community.

Some of the stories:

- In the decades following the Second World War, Canadians recast their national symbols, celebrated success on the world stage, and achieved full legal independence from Britain.
- Despite oppressive policies and constant attempts at assimilation, First Peoples have organized, resisted and worked to sustain their cultures, and to have their fundamental rights recognized and respected.
- Following the 1960s, the independence movement in Quebec gained momentum. An independent Quebec appealed to those in the “Yes” camp, but repelled those in the “No” camp. Two dramatic provincial referenda put the question to a vote, in 1980 and in 1995.
- By today’s standards, Canada prior to the Second World War was not an inclusive or tolerant society. This was reflected in Canadian immigration policies, and in social attitudes toward ethnic and other minorities.
- After 1945, Canada worked, through the United Nations and other agencies, to help maintain peace. It also joined a powerful military alliance of Western states.

Chronologically, the gallery ends with the story of two groups of refugees, nearly 40 years apart. The Alkhalaf family were Syrian refugees who came to Canada in 2015. One of their sponsors was a member of the Tran family, who had come to Canada with the Vietnamese “boat people” in 1979. The exhibit includes a wok the Trans gave to the Alkhalafs. The new owners used the wok to fry Syrian flatbread and Canadian BeaverTail pastries, creating a typically Canadian fusion cuisine.

### **The Main Message**

This is the story of Canada, the stories of our country, what it is, and how it got that way. It’s a story of conflict, struggle and loss; success, accomplishment and hope. It’s all around us, and about us, and we shape its future.