

objectives include the presentation of competing and contentious historical narratives of Confederation and the two world wars, and the use of “selected commemorations to explore concepts of myth, memory, and nation.” The museums intended to “present honestly, but respectfully, for public understanding issues of contention or debate ... [through] deliberate exploration of traumatic pasts (e.g. Africville or residential schools).”¹⁴⁰

Drawing on research showing that Canadians valued their “personal and family connections to history,” the Canadian Museum of History said that it intended to “explore the realities of contemporary life for Canada’s First Peoples [including] cultural engagements with modernity, environmental change, and globalization, evolving concepts of tradition, political mobilization, and new avenues of social expression ... [and] the impact of rapid change in Canada’s North, especially for Inuit.”¹⁴¹ Another key research theme is “First Peoples,” with a particular focus on Aboriginal histories.

The histories and cultures of Aboriginal peoples are central to all Canadians’ understanding of their shared past. Respectful exploration of the interwoven, often difficult histories of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Peoples is a responsible, timely contribution to contemporary Canada, and to global understanding of Aboriginal Peoples.... There are four principal objectives in exploring and sharing Aboriginal narratives.... 1) Represent Aboriginal histories and cultures within broader Canadian narratives ... 2) Explore inter-cultural engagement and its continuing impacts ... 3) Broaden understanding of Aboriginal history before European contact ... [and] 4) Deepen efforts to support First Peoples’ stewardship.¹⁴²

We are encouraged to note that much of what the museum’s research strategy emphasizes is consistent with our own findings: Canadians, including youth and teachers, think they should learn about the history and legacy of residential schools and Aboriginal history more broadly. We take particular note of the prominence given to presenting both the positive and negative aspects of Canada’s history, demonstrating the relevance of the past to the present, including marginalized voices and perspectives, encouraging collaboration, and making connections between personal and public history.

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights

As a national public history institution, the new Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) in Winnipeg is mandated to “explore the subject of human rights, with special but not exclusive reference to Canada, in order to enhance the public’s understanding of human rights, to promote respect for others, and to encourage reflection and dialogue.”¹⁴³ Speaking at the TRC’s Forum on the National Research Centre in Vancouver on March 3, 2011, CMHR President and Chief Executive Officer Stuart Murray talked about the museum’s vision for, and role in, national reconciliation. He emphasized the prominent role of the CMHR’s First Nations, Inuit, and Métis advisors, as well as the Elders Advisory Council,