

In the years following the Royal Commission's report, museums across the country have implemented many of its recommendations.¹³⁶ Many have worked with communities to repatriate human remains or cultural artifacts. For some institutions, consultation and collaborative partnerships with Aboriginal communities have become standard practice, and Aboriginal internships and other training opportunities have been established. Yet, more is still needed, even as museums are faced with significant challenges in obtaining adequate and stable multi-year funding to properly support these critical initiatives.¹³⁷

Over the past three decades, Canadian museums that used to tell the story of the nation's past with little regard for the histories of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples are slowly transforming. Although dialogue between museums and Aboriginal peoples has improved substantially since the 1980s, the broader debate continues over whose history is told and how it is interpreted. Here, we focus on two national museums, the Canadian Museum of History (formerly the Canadian Museum of Civilization)¹³⁸ and the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. As national public history institutions, they bear a particular responsibility to retell the story of Canada's past so that it reflects not only diverse cultures, history, and experiences of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, but also the collective violence and historical injustices that they have suffered at the hands of the state. It is instructive to examine how these two public history institutions plan to interpret the history of Aboriginal peoples and address historical injustices in the coming years.

Canadian Museum of History

Appearing before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in June 2013, Mark O'Neill, president and chief executive officer of the Canadian Museum of Civilization Corporation, acknowledged that many important aspects and milestones of Canadian history—including residential schools—have been missing from the museum.

[P]erhaps the most egregious flaw in the Canada Hall is its starting point. If you've been there, you will know that its telling of our national story begins not with the arrival of First Peoples but with the arrival of Europeans in the eleventh century. Colonization as a term or concept is not mentioned in Canada Hall. This is something we intend to correct. Canadians made it very clear to us during the public engagement process that the voices and the experiences of First Peoples must have a place in any narrative of Canadian history.... Canadians want us to be comprehensive, frank and fair in our presentation of their history. They want us to examine both the good and the bad from our past. We were urged to foster a sense of national pride without ignoring our failings, mistakes and controversies.¹³⁹

In July 2013, the Canadian Museum of Civilization and its partner, the Canadian War Museum, released a joint research strategy intended to guide the research activities at both institutions until 2023. "Memory and commemoration" is a key research theme;