

PRESS RELEASE

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WEARING OUR IDENTITY – THE FIRST PEOPLES COLLECTION, THE NEW PERMANENT EXHIBITION AT THE McCORD MUSEUM: AN OPEN INVITATION TO REFLECT ON THE NOTION OF CLOTHING AS AN AFFIRMATION OF IDENTITY

Montreal, April 17, 2013 – The McCord Museum is pleased to present *Wearing our Identity – The First Peoples Collection*, its brand new permanent exhibition. The exhibition, which opens on May 2, will enable the public to explore the complex heritage of the First Peoples of Canada and learn more about how their dress has helped define their rich cultures and identities.

First Peoples' identity is intrinsically linked to their dress. Beyond its main purpose of protection, it tells observers the age and status of the individual, gives immediate information about the nation he or she belongs to, pays homage to the person's remarkable achievements, and highlights the intimate relationship that exists between people and nature. Today's dress makes an eloquent statement about the vitality and creativity of contemporary Aboriginal culture, which strikes a balance between ancestral and current knowledge and between traditions and innovation.

"We are very pleased to present this exhibition, which allows us to pay tribute to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples through exceptional, rarely displayed artefacts drawn from our Ethnology and Archaeology collection," stated Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer of the McCord Museum. *"All of these beautiful objects are a testament to the pride and resiliency of the First Peoples, and I am sure that our visitors will feel a sense of admiration and respect as they view them."*

The exhibition will also help visitors learn about the importance of clothing in the development, preservation and communication of the social, cultural, political and spiritual identities of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis. To this end, four themes are featured: *Wearing Who I Am*, *Wearing our Culture*, *Wearing our History*, and *Wearing our Beliefs*.

One-of-a-kind experience

Wearing our Identity – The First Peoples Collection will present some 100 items dating from the end of the 19th century to today. A silk Haudenosaunee dress, a Dene hunter's outfit, a Kwakwaka'wakw button blanket, and a wide assortment of accessories are notably part of this fascinating presentation of artefacts.

The exhibition will also include works by contemporary Aboriginal artists, who explore the notion of identity. Selected twice each year by Aboriginal guest artist and curator, Nadia Myre, the works will be integrated into the exhibition. Terrance Houle and Maria Hupfield are the first two contemporary artists whose artwork is featured.

In addition, close to 85% of the exhibition will be renewed each year. Due to the fragile nature of the artefacts, the McCord Museum will conduct an annual rotation of some 85 new pieces to help protect and conserve its collection.

The renewed exhibition, with its wide variety of featured artefacts, will provide the public with a unique experience worth many visits!



Chief's outfit
1865-1900
Mi'kmaq
Gift of David Ross McCord
© McCord Museum, M956.1-4



Dress (detail)
1900-1910
Niisitapiikwan, Siksika
Gift of Dr. John L. Todd
© McCord Museum, ACC1000

A contemporary perspective

Touchscreen terminals will enable visitors to view testimonials by well-known members of various Aboriginal communities, notably Joséphine Bacon, an Innu poet; Tammy Beauvais, a Kanien'kehaka (Mohawk) fashion designer; Stanley Vollant, an Innu surgeon; Nakuset, Nêhithawak (Woodland Cree), Executive Director of the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal; and Pakesso Mukash, Eeyou (Eastern Cree) and Abenaki musician.

Other videos will explore subjects such as hide preparation, the steps that go into crafting a button blanket, ceremonial dress, and the traditional pow-wow. The McCord Museum iPod application will also provide complementary information for visitors through a number of additional testimonials.

Guislain Lemay, Curator, Ethnology and Archaeology at the McCord Museum, led the exhibition research and preparation work in collaboration with an Aboriginal advisory committee. Daniel Castonguay designed the scenography with support from Dyane Plourde for development of the scenario.

This exhibition has been produced through a financial contribution from the program *Aide aux projets – Appel de projets pour le soutien des expositions permanentes, volet 4* of the Québec Cultural Heritage Fund of the ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec. The conservation of the artefacts in this exhibition was made possible through the generosity of The Molson Foundation.

Exhibition catalogue

Complementing the exhibition, a catalogue published by Éditions Gallimard will be available for purchase as of June 15, 2013. In addition to numerous colour photographs, the catalogue will feature texts written by 16 Aboriginal community members, who will examine the personal testimonials on the notion of identity, not only through dress but in all of its facets. This catalogue was made possible through the generosity of The Peter Cundill Foundation.

About the McCord Museum

The McCord Museum is dedicated to the preservation, study and appreciation of Montreal's history, as recounted by its people, artists and communities living in the city's past and present. The McCord Museum is home to one of the largest historical collections in North America, consisting of First Peoples objects, costumes and textiles, photographs, decorative and visual artworks, and textual archives, totalling more than 1.4 million artefacts. The McCord Museum produces exciting exhibitions that engage visitors from Montreal, Canada, and beyond by offering them a contemporary look at the world. The McCord Museum also offers educational and cultural activities, as well as innovative projects on the Internet. **McCord Museum: Our People, Our Stories.**

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Photographs available on request. We will be pleased to arrange interviews with Guislaine Lemay, Curator, Ethnology and Archaeology, Catherine K. Laflamme, Project Manager, Exhibitions, and Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer, McCord Museum.

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Dress (detail)
1845-1855
Haudenosaunee, Kanien'kehaka
Gift of David Ross McCord
© McCord Museum, M1087



Moccasins (detail)
1900-1940
Dene or Métis
© McCord Museum, ME976X.63.1-2