

CASCA

CANADIAN ANTHROPOLOGY SOCIETY
LA SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE D'ANTHROPOLOGIE

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Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington St.
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Dear Prime Minister Harper,

I have the pleasure of writing to you on behalf of the Canadian Anthropology Society to raise a number of issues following the announcement on 16 October that the Canadian Museum of Civilization will be remade into a Canadian Museum of History. Ordinarily, we would delight in the retention of \$25 million in heritage funding from the Government of Canada at a time of widespread cuts in cultural and scientific funding. We have long treasured the Canadian Museum of Civilization and its stellar research, curatorial and educational contributions both to Canadian life and to the larger human experience of which we are inextricably part.

The announcement of the new Canadian Museum of History is targeted to focus on the history of Canada as we approach the 150th anniversary of Confederation. This is a diminished vision compared with that of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. One need only recognize that this land was initially peopled by ancestors of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis, with origins and histories of their own, who have bequeathed and continue to create a rich heritage and living culture in the heart of Canada. In the middle of the past millenium settlers from France, Britain and elsewhere formed some of the distinctive elements of our bilingual national culture; and these were followed in turn by a succession of peoples from every corner of the world, creating the unbounded mosaic in which we now live. These peoples have brought with them invaluable cultural heritages formed in distant lands, many continue to have family and close ties elsewhere, and many more Canadians seek to expand their horizons and create new ties through international work and engagement. The lives of Canadians have never been confined in time and space. We are an especially mobile and open society, benefiting from Canada's place in a world community. It is necessary to an appreciation of the Canadian condition to preserve, explore, celebrate and disseminate the diverse experience of all within Canada and to work to understand the world in which we live. We welcome the prospect that the existing space for indigenous cultures will be preserved and urge that the work of this portion of the museum be enhanced, adequately resourced and enabled to move forward with new discoveries and contemporary creations on a firm research and curatorial basis. In addition, we urge the Government of Canada to recognize the depth of interconnection between Canadians and our larger human world—to research, to learn and to engage for the greater enrichment of both Canadians and our global neighbours.

As we approach our 150th anniversary, we note that the Government of Canada is spending \$28 million to commemorate the War of 1812 for three years and this, together with indications of emphasis on Canadian military history, is a source of apprehension. It raises questions about how our national culture may now be understood. We are grateful and enormously fortunate that Canada achieved Confederation without war, and that there has been relatively little armed conflict in Canada throughout our country's

history. This has been the basis for our prosperity, human security and advancement of knowledge. We have a rare and arduous trajectory of seeking to address conflict through non-violent resolution. However difficult and partial they may be, such processes as truth and reconciliation, democratic referenda, apology and multiculturalism have been our preferred choices. Internationally, Canadians take pride in the choices we have made not to go to war, in the bravery of peacekeeping and in contributions to international processes that reduce conflict and uphold human dignity. We urge that this be a lens through which Canadian history will be seen. And we urge support for honest, rigorous and effective exploration of where we must learn to do better.

We respectfully ask you to preserve the unique accomplishments of the Canadian Museum of Civilization and to carry these forward—strengthened—in a vision of Canada and the world in our renewed national museum.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ellen R. Judd". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ellen R. Judd, FRSC
President

cc. James Moore
Mark O'Neill