

# WOODEN CANOE

The Journal of the Wooden Canoe Heritage Association





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*Front Cover: Detail of birch bark canoes featured in one of The Canadian Canoe Museum's new exhibits, 'All My Relations', which explores the extended family of the canoe through communities across generations around the world. Photo by Chris Eden*

*Back Cover: One of The Canadian Canoe Museum's voyageur canoes setting out from the docks during Grand Opening celebrations in May 2024. Photo courtesy of The CCM*



WHERE STORIES AND CONNECTIONS FLOW:  
THE CANADIAN CANOE MUSEUM STARTS A NEW CHAPTER ON THE WATER'S EDGE  
Story by the staff of The CCM, Photography by Justen Soule and Chris Eden. Additional images courtesy of The CCM.



JIIMAAN KINOMAAGEWIN  
THE CANADIAN CANOE MUSEUM  
LE MUSÉE CANADIEN DU CANOT



**Museum (noun):** an institution or building where objects of historic, cultural, artistic, or scientific interest are housed and/or exhibited.

Such a dry, boring definition might apply well enough to some places, but certainly not The Canadian Canoe Museum. This place is alive! With flowing architecture and canoes swirling overhead, The CCM is an experience like no other. The CCM faithfully embodies the spirit of the canoe, through and through.

Peterborough, Ontario, lies at the Canadian nexus of canoeing legacy, from the vast expanse of Native American history to the core of Canadian commercial canoe production. Situated on the eastern bank of Little Lake on the Otonabee River – according to the Ojibwe language, the “river that beats like a heart” – The CCM experiences the historical and current flow from Lakefield, through Peterborough, and on to Rice Lake, all centers of canoeing and canoe building over the course of centuries. Visitors experience this history not only in the form of spectacular displays and an unrivaled collection, but also through an active waterfront and boathouse, a fully functional workshop, and a massive collection of canoe-related artifacts and ephemera.

Whether you rent a canoe, launch your own, learn from historical materials, or simply gaze in awe at the amazing collection, The Canadian Canoe Museum is a canoeing Mecca for those of us who love the humble, historic, double-ender that bridges past and future in the watery outdoors.

*Michael Grace, WCHA President*







**H**ome to the world's largest and most significant collection of canoes, kayaks and paddled watercraft, The Canadian Canoe Museum bridges the rich stories embodied by these vessels with contemporary perspectives, creating a unique and meaningful connection between the past and present.

With its new home now open to the public in Peterborough, Ontario, the Museum's team reflects on their journey to date and the vital role the Museum plays in inspiring curiosity and connection through the canoe for the next generation of canoe enthusiasts.

"Our work at The Canadian Canoe Museum is centred around fostering connections through our collection," says Executive Director Carolyn Hyslop. "Using the canoe as our lens, we have a unique opportunity to share stories and honour the cultural histories within the collection. The collection includes diverse voices and perspectives from across the country and the globe."

#### **JOURNEY TO THE WATER'S EDGE**

The Canadian Canoe Museum's journey started in the late 1950's at the Kanawa Museum of Camp Kandalore, near Dorset, Ontario. Here, the late Professor Kirk Whipper began his collection of watercraft. As time passed and the collection grew, it became clear that more space was needed to properly store these watercraft and share their stories.

In the mid-1990s, The Canadian Canoe Museum was established in Peterborough, Ontario to become the new stewards of this remarkable collection, and it was relocated to the vacant facility that was once the Outboard Marine Corp factory. It was fitting that a city considered a canoe-building epicentre would host the collection, and for many years, the old factory allowed The Canadian Canoe Museum to carry out its mission and vision. Eventually, however, the Museum's goals for the future exceeded the building's capacity.

Like any portage, the journey to the Museum's new home on the water's edge was not without challenges. In 2015, the Museum began planning to move to a new location near the historic Peterborough Lift Lock along the Trent Severn Waterway. After years of preparing for this next chapter, the Museum faced a double blow in 2020: COVID-19 altered life as we know it, and, despite early due diligence, it was discovered that the site near the Lift Lock was contaminated just months before construction was scheduled to begin.

"After more than five years of work, a national campaign, and an award-winning design, walking away from the Lift Lock site was devastating," says Hyslop. "However, we quickly shifted our efforts to securing a new location. Failure was not an option with an aging museum and storage facility that was never intended to be a long-term home for our world-class collection and a community of donors, funders and volunteers that wanted us to keep the vision alive. When you get a second







The Canadian Canoe Museum's exterior building architecture and grounds are simply stunning. The public entry hall and spaces greet museum visitors with their first hints of the canoe world and experience within.



chance at something important, it allows you to reflect on your journey and remember what truly matters."

Less than eight months after learning of contamination and after conducting extensive feasibility work, the Museum announced its new home would be on the water's edge at 2077 Ashburnham Drive, Peterborough. Construction of the new facility began in October of 2021.

Now, after completing a successful fundraising campaign of \$45 million, the 65,000-square-foot Museum invites guests to explore the impressive collection of over 650 watercraft, a completely new suite of exhibits, a versatile and stunning facility, and of course, a Lakefront Campus.

#### A NEW HOME INSPIRED BY THE CANOE

The new Museum is inspired by the canoe through and through. The building was designed by Peterborough-based architects Unity Design Studio. The architects drew inspiration from the artisanship of watercraft and the connection between land and water.

The project brought together a largely local team of designers and tradespeople through an "integrated project delivery" model to maximize efficiencies, accelerate the construction schedule, and contribute to the local economy.

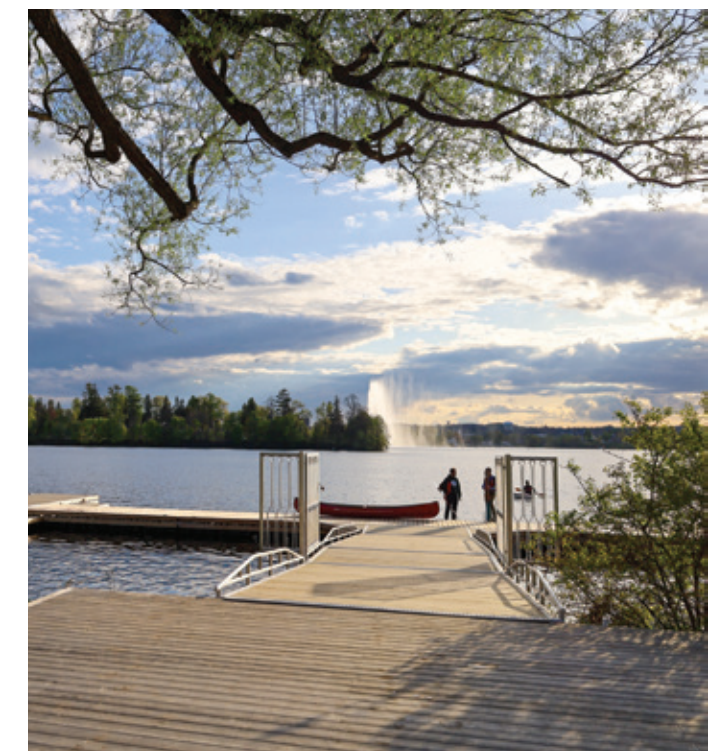
The graceful curve of the building's roof provides a focus for the facade, perhaps evoking the upswept sheer of a canoe's bow. This draws the visitor not just inside the building but also to its 5.3-acre waterfront campus.

The homage to the canoe continues when you enter the building with its double-high ceilings and exposed mass timber elements, such as laminated Douglas fir beams and structural panels of northern spruce. There is a nod to canoe cultures present in the atrium thanks to a mix of canoes suspended overhead and a floor-to-ceiling natural stone wood-burning fireplace.

"Learning about the history and future of watercraft through our collection is one thing, but feeling it come alive as you paddle a canoe is another," explains Hyslop. "That's why the Museum is crafted to draw you outside, forging a deep connection with both the collection and the water."

The Lakefront Campus, made possible by the philanthropic efforts of former CFL player and businessman Stuart (Stu) Lang and his wife, Kim, offers visitors the chance to learn and build connections with the land, water, and community through immersive, authentic outdoor experiences that will create a new generation of paddlers.

Venturing out beyond the Museum's outdoor firepit and sizable Canoe House, the campus features an accessible boardwalk connecting visitors to the Trans Canada Trail and the natural shoreline. Here, visitors will find a comprehensive docking system designed to accommodate voyageur canoes for group paddling experiences, as well as an expansive T-dock for on-water instruction and canoe and kayak rentals. Additionally, the area features an adaptive canoe and kayak launch and a walk-in canoe launch located at a natural put-in.



Water access is a key feature for The CCM. Note the paddle motif gates. No detail is overlooked in this beautiful new museum.







### A COLLECTION LIKE NO OTHER

In 2013, the Canadian Senate declared The Canadian Canoe Museum and its collection a cultural asset of Canadian national significance. One can see why when one walks through the expansive Collection and Exhibition Halls in the new museum. This unique collection is as diverse as the people, stories, and makers behind the watercraft.

The new 20,000-square-foot Collection Hall on the first floor gives visitors a glimpse of the true breadth of the collection through magnificent 23-foot-high glass windows. For the first time in the Museum's history, the entire collection is accessible to the public through tours and appointments.



With Class "A" Museum Environmental Control standards, the Collection Hall ensures optimal conditions for artifacts. The Museum also developed a

unique watercraft cradle system that protects watercraft as they rest in storage and are handled by forklift. This system allows for the accessible storage of watercraft.

Ten runs of 200' racking soar upward to the ceiling, as high as 16' overhead. Carefully positioned nose-to-tail in rows, the watercraft have been arranged largely by their construction type. Ancient, fragile dugouts recovered from the bottoms of lakes and rivers are paired near carved dugout working canoes of all types, used throughout the Americas and around the world. The amazing diversity of skin-on-frame hunting kayaks reflect the maritime cultures of the Inuit and other arctic people from Greenland to Alaska.

Representing Canadian and American canoe factories and smaller workshops, painted canvas-covered canoes transition to the varnished hulls of 19th and 20th century cedar strip, board and batten, cedar rib, lapstrake and other constructions. Other types are represented here as well, including carbon

fiber and molded veneer competition boats and reed canoes from Peru.

Enormous storage racks support more than 550 canoe and kayak paddles from the global paddling community. Factory 'salesman sample' canoes and miniature watercraft of all types, specialized canoe making tools, canoe sails and leeboards, PFDs and other types of floatation gear used by canoeists all find their home here.

"When people step into the Collection Hall or look in through its windows, they will immediately realize the story of the canoe is so much bigger and more complex than they ever imagined," says Jeremy Ward, the Museum's Curator. "For many years, we recognized the need to relocate our collection to a safe and accessible space that reflects its quality and significance. Our new home has finally allowed us to fulfill this crucial need, bringing our entire collection together under one roof with room for growth. This space is also finally set up to be accessible to researchers, as well as to donors of watercraft, their families, and their communities to allow individuals to connect or reconnect with their family histories and past generations. I'm delighted to say that, in the few weeks that we have been open, it has already played this role many times."

Upstairs, leading off from the Museum's research library, rare books and archival materials, such as canoe factory catalogues and records, maps, photographs and other documents, are arranged in the compact storage banks of the archive.

To minimize the building's footprint on the sensitive shoreline landscape, the two-story facility also prominently features a sizable indoor jib crane, essential for moving watercraft up to 55 feet in length, between the first-floor Collection Hall and the Exhibition Hall on the second floor.







### PADDLING THROUGH TIME

Every canoe has a story to tell, and some of these narratives survive to tell of remarkable moments spent by ordinary people with these vessels. In many cases, however, the stories have not been recorded. Reconnecting an object with its unique history is an extremely important task.

These vessels and their stories are at the heart of the Museum's mission and offer valuable lessons about the world and ourselves, reminding us that we are all connected by water. The move to a new facility allowed staff to reimagine the Museum's exhibits, presenting a range of contemporary perspectives, stories, and voices that shed new light on these watercraft. Collaborative relationships with cultural leaders, community coordinators, canoe and kayak makers, industry professionals, subject experts and extraordinary paddlers resulted in a collection of stories and perspectives, creating a contemporary and engaging visitor experience.

Structured around six thematic zones, the Museum's permanent exhibits take visitors on a journey through the amazingly diverse world of the canoe. Throughout the hall, historic vessels are often paired with contemporary examples and feature the voices of contributors reflecting upon the enduring importance of these traditions today. Visitors will therefore embark on a journey where they will encounter historic vessels such as a 19th century dugout canoe crafted by the Nuu-chah-nulth people of Vancouver Island's west coast, as well as one of the earliest plank-on-frame racing canoes made in the 1860s for international competition. When it comes to contemporary watercraft, visitors will encounter gems such as an Inuit hunting kayak made by builders in Iqaluit working to revive Inuit kayak knowledge, as well as a 13' canoe made by legendary wood and canvas builder May Minto, commissioned by celebrated Canadian artist Robert Bateman.












### THE LIVING TRADITIONS OF CRAFTSMANSHIP

Learning by doing has always been a central strategy at the Museum. Its new Artisan Studio and adjacent Millshop, positioned just off the atrium's reception area, were designed to accommodate canoe and kayak makers of all methods. These new spaces will facilitate a series of new and exciting workshops, events, and a canoe-maker-in-residence program.

"Workshops are important to the hands-on philosophy of The Canadian Canoe Museum and the hands-on nature of canoes, kayaks, and paddling," explains Ward. "They offer participants the opportunity to learn new skills and experience the satisfaction that comes from creating something with your own hands, with a focus on natural materials and top-notch instruction."

The Museum also offers a range of customizable and curriculum-linked programs for youth and school groups.

"Visiting the new Canadian Canoe Museum empowers visitors to explore our connections to the land and water, and build new connections with each other," Hyslop said. "Whether you spend time on the water or outside on the Lakefront Campus, learn something new from touring the Collection and Exhibition Halls, or enhance your skills through a workshop, you are certain to leave the Museum inspired and with a new appreciation for the canoe." 

*The Museum is open daily from 10 AM to 5 PM, with extended hours to 8 PM on Thursdays. Admission is \$20 for adults, \$18 for seniors, \$15 for youth ages five to seventeen and free for ages five and under. Annual memberships support the Museum and its activities but also grant members free admission. Visit [canoemuseum.ca](http://canoemuseum.ca) for more information.*

*The new Museum is made possible, in part, by The Canadian Canoe Museum's lead donor and government partners, including the Government of Canada through the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario), the Weston Family Foundation, the City of Peterborough, Peterborough County, and the Province of Ontario.*



Carolyn Hyslop, CCM Executive Director, and Jeremy Ward, CCM Curator, have a great deal to smile about these days. An amazing accomplishment by all involved.



**JIIMAAN KINOMAAGEWIN**  
**THE CANADIAN CANOE MUSEUM**  
**LE MUSÉE CANADIEN DU CANOT**

*This story is a group effort by many members of the staff of The Canadian Canoe Museum. Everyone at The Canadian Canoe Museum is excited to introduce the new CCM to the members of the WCHA. Enjoy!*



# THE CANADIAN CANOE MUSEUM: COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS

*The Canadian Canoe Museum is pleased to share here with members of the Wooden Canoe Heritage Association just a few of the special canoes and stories that make The CCM the special place it is today.*

### COLLECTION FEATURE: BILL MASON'S CHESTNUT PROSPECTOR CANOE Chestnut Canoe Company, 1972-1973



Bill's iconic red 16-foot Chestnut 'Prospector' canoe, showcased in his instructional films and books, holds a special place in Canadian lore. Bearing the scuffs and scars of countless solo and family adventures, it became a cherished companion. Following his passing, Bill's wife Joyce scattered his ashes from it.

Bill's daughter Becky Mason, now a celebrated paddler in her own right, worked closely with The Canadian Canoe Museum to develop the panel displayed with this 'Prospector' canoe. It remains a popular and inspiring icon among many visitors, new and old.

### COLLECTION FEATURE: THE LABRADOR FAMILY CANOE The Labrador Family, 2022



Crafted by prominent Mi'kmaw canoe builders Todd and daughter Melissa Labrador, this 21' birch bark canoe was commissioned by The Canadian Canoe Museum in 2022 and features the distinctive characteristics of a kwitn (Mi'kmaw 'rough water' birch bark canoe). The designs etched into the bark represent the many family hands involved in its creation.

### COLLECTION FEATURE: UQQURMIUT KAYAK The Qajakut Society, 2023



Commissioned by The Canadian Canoe Museum in 2023 from the Qajakut Society in Iqaluit, Nunavut, this Uqqurmiut (People of Southern Baffin Island) qajaq (kayak) is one of a handful of this type built in recent years in Iqaluit. Guided by Elder Eemeelayou Arnaquq, it represents a new generation's interpretation of their regional style. Displayed with a full suite of hunting equipment, the qajaq's makers paddled it during the Museum's grand opening.







# THE CANADIAN CANOE MUSEUM: COLLECTION HIGHLIGHTS

## COLLECTION FEATURE: SEMINOLE DUGOUT CANOE

Robert Osceola, c. 1908



This dugout canoe was purchased in 1908 from pithlo (Seminole dugout canoe) carver Robert Osceola for the National Museum of the American Indian. Decades later, Kirk Wipper purchased the pithlo for the Kanawa Museum, which would form the core of The Canadian Canoe Museum's collection.

In 2021, in an effort to learn more about the Seminole canoes within its care, Museum staff worked with contemporary Seminole canoe carver Pedro Zepeda and learned that Robert Osceola was his grandfather. Zepeda is featured in the new exhibits and had a special visit with his grandfather's canoe at the Museum's grand opening celebrations.

## COLLECTION FEATURE: MAY MINTO CEDAR CANVAS-COVERED CANOE

Minto Marine, 1976



Female canoe builders were not common in the mid-20th century. One exception was May Minto, who worked with her brother to make canoes in their Minden, Ontario family business. During the Second World War, Minto had developed her fabrication skills by working on Lancaster heavy bombers in Toronto. Decades later, when the family business closed, Minto continued her canoe making alone, outfitting summer camps and clients in the area with beautiful canvas-covered wooden canoes.

Celebrated Canadian wildlife painter and environmentalist Robert Bateman commissioned this canoe for leisure use and to photograph his painting and sketching subjects.

## COLLECTION FEATURE: GREENWOOD CANOE

Made by Greenwood Canoe Company, c. 1967



Rich with history, this red canvas-covered canoe was crafted by legendary Vancouver canoe builder Bill Greenwood in 1967 for Camp Deka Boys camp. It was used for summer canoeing programming until 1976 when it became the preferred tripping canoe for Greg and Suzanne Brown. The couple embarked on extensive journeys between 1979 and 1994, crossing much of Canada and later embarking on a multi-year odyssey from Georgian Bay to the Arctic waters of Ungava Bay.



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