

10. Haida Totem Pole Canberra 1988

One of the features of the Chancery area is the 6.5m Canadian totem pole near the main entrance. The pole is an example of Haida art and is carved from a single red cedar log by the well-known Canadian artist Clarence Mills.

Mills was born in 1959 in the Queen Charlotte Islands off the coast of the western Canadian province of British Columbia.

The pole took more than 600 hours to carve and was one of two totem poles that were carved for the Canadian Pavilion at the 1988 Expo held in Brisbane. Mills was assisted by Glen Wood, a Gitksan carver from the Hazelton area of British Columbia.

The totem pole represents members of the artist's family, in particular his grandfather, Chief Skedans, of the Eagle Clan. At the top of the pole is a representation of his grandmother, Na-nai. The family crest includes the grizzly bear, the raven and the moon, all of which are depicted.

A plaque at the foot of the totem pole reads:

This totem pole was carved during World Expo' 88 by Clarence Mills, a Haida Indian from the Queen Charlotte Islands.

The carvings on the pole relate to Chief Skedans, one of the last survivors of the village of Skedans and grandfather of the carver. The chief is shown in front of the grizzly bear, his family's main crest. Above the bear a Haida moon, another of the chief's crests, can be seen and above that stands the raven with his long beak. Between the ears of the raven is the chief's wife. The wife and daughters of the chief wore an ornament inserted in their lower lip and this is illustrated in the representation of the chief's wife on the pole.

The second totem pole carved for the Canadian Government Pavilion at Expo 88 was by Richard Hunt, of the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nation from Vancouver Island, British Columbia. It was given to the Australian Museum, Sydney in exchange for two late 19th century totem poles from Cape Mudge, off the coast of British Columbia.

Richard Hunt comes from a large family of artists and is the third Hunt to be the chief carver at the Provincial Museum in Victoria, Canada.



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