

### The new National Museum of Man

Five years after closing for extensive renovations, the National Museum of Man reopened its doors on October 3 to disclose a new kind of museum.

The Victoria Memorial Museum Building, one of the landmarks of Ottawa, still houses the permanent displays but staff, labs and collections are all housed in suburban Ottawa locations. The elegant old building has been preserved, and renovated drastically. Walls have been removed and others introduced; ceilings and floors have been redesigned, and the new interior is rich in architectural surprises. Walls slope; ceilings curve into domes. The visitor is constantly moving amid fresh textures and colours and spaces. And the original elevators, themselves museum pieces, are at last retired.

Even more remarkable are the new halls, which, rather than simply displaying artifacts and describing their origins, have been built to surround the visitor and involve him. Instead of merely seeing a model igloo, the visitor can step inside a white-domed alcove, glance at the Eskimo drawings on the round roof and listen to Eskimo music, experiencing for himself the serenity and intimacy of this unique space.

The visitor enters through the northern portico, where he is greeted by three interlocked totem poles about 50 feet high. In the entrance of the exhibit area, a skeleton stands in a faint light that illuminates the crown it wears and the sceptre it holds. The skeleton beckons him into the first hall, called "The Immense Journey" – a passage through the millions of years of man's struggle to live productively with his environments and with himself. In the first of four domes, a vast curved mural depicts man stepping into a forest of dreamlike creatures and trees; and later, man standing before an ethereal luminous city – an impressionistic vision of evolution. In a series of clay tableaux, sculptured figures depict mankind's private journey through childhood and initiation and adulthood and marriage and death – and continuity.

#### Canada before Cartier

"The Immense Journey" is one of five halls in the new National Museum of Man. The second, "Canada before



Scene from mural in Dome II of "The Immense Journey" Hall shows the

hunting technique of primitive man in bringing down a Paleoloxodon.

Cartier", introduces the visitor to the techniques of archaeology and what archaeology has revealed of early life in Canada.

In one exhibit in the second hall, the floor and four walls are a descending ramp, along which a forest painted on the walls reveals layers of shell and earth, which are for the archaeologists strata of time. To the left, is a reconstruction of an actual dig, with all the materials – shell deposits, bones,

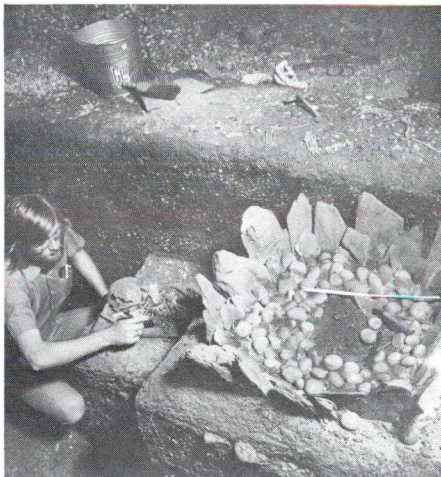
artifacts – taken from the Prince Rupert site in British Columbia. Several square trenches reveal house floors and skeletal remains. Five thousand years of human history are inscribed in the bones and artifacts that poke from the carefully scoured clamshell deposits. An interpreter tells how the archaeologist can read from these remains a complex story of house-building and eating habits and burial practices.

Other exhibits in this second hall give an even broader understanding of modern archaeology and its discoveries about early Canada.

#### Indigenous peoples

Upstairs, three halls are devoted to three great indigenous peoples of Canada: the Plains Indians, the Buffalo Hunters; the Iroquois, the People of the Longhouse; and, finally, the Eskimos, or, as they call themselves, the Inuit.

Each of these surrounds the visitor with the internal world of a culture: its games and hunts and language and legends. In the hall of the Buffalo Hunters, for example, a buffalo hunt is reproduced. Nearby stands an authentic preserved buffalo. And the visitor cannot help but be intrigued by



Last-minute touches are made to "The Dig" exhibition in "Canada Before Cartier" Hall.