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Museum Presence for Canada

The new National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. opened in September with unique contributions from Canada.

A sculpture by British Columbia Aboriginal artist Susan Point called *The Beaver and the Mink* has been donated by the Canadian government to be prominently displayed in the museum's entrance rotunda. A contemporary yet traditional piece depicting a Coast Salish legend about the origin of salmon in the rivers, the red cedar sculpture was chosen by a panel of Aboriginal art professionals from Canada.

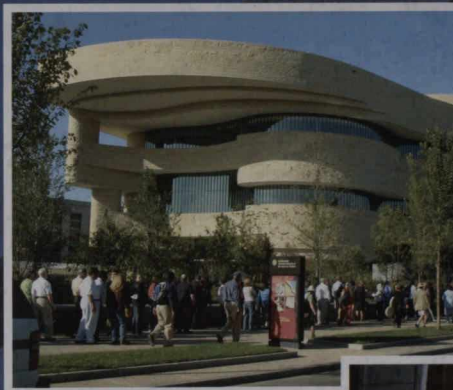
Foreign Affairs Minister Pierre Pettigrew said the sculpture showcases Canada's Aboriginal culture and emphasizes the positive contributions it makes to the Americas. "Canada and the United States share many unique Aboriginal cultures," he said. "This gift will bear witness to those ties."

The new museum features a good deal of other Canadian involvement, from Métis architect Douglas Cardinal's original curvilinear design to the Aboriginal communities in Canada that have been included in exhibitions of native life, identity and views of the world. Dominating the landscape are a cardinal stone marking north from Acasta Lake in the Northwest Territories and 40 Grandfather Rocks selected from a quarry in Alma, Quebec.

The Canadian Embassy in Washington marked the opening of the museum with a cultural program rich in Aboriginal talent and creativity, including an exhibition of Aboriginal art from the Canada Council Art Bank, as well as storytelling, workshops, musical and dance performances and films. Nine Aboriginal journalists from across Canada travelled to Washington, with the support of Foreign Affairs Canada's Media Outreach Program, to observe and report on Canada's contribution to the new museum and the festivities surrounding its opening.

To learn more about the museum, visit www.nmai.si.edu. For details of the Canadian events surrounding the opening, see www.canadianembassy.org.

photo: John Steiner/Smithsonian Institution



Curvilinear design: The National Museum of the American Indian's undulating façade gives it the appearance of a stratified stone mass.

Aboriginal artist Susan Point won a 2004 National Aboriginal Achievement Award for her work, which encompasses a wide range of materials and styles, from traditional to contemporary.



photo: courtesy of NMAAI

photo: Walter Larrimore/NMAAI



The sculpture, donated by Canada, will be seen by some one million international visitors who pass through the rotunda each year.