

# Post Cards of Canada



**Teacher's Booklet**



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# Welcome to the McCord Museum

You will soon tour *Post Cards of Canada* at the McCord Museum.

This activity presents Canada's great symbols and embodies the vision of David Ross McCord and his wish to create a museum bringing Canada to light.

Throughout his life, David Ross McCord, the Museum's founder, endeavoured to collect objects representative of Canadian history and identity as if he was putting together a collection of the most symbolic post cards of Canada.

With *Post Cards of Canada*, the McCord Museum aims for new immigrants to Canada to discover this heritage.

The permanent exhibition *Simply Montréal* features a creative discovery of Canada through the seasons, landscape and culture. Powerful symbols and popular images that are today indispensable references of Canada will be the focus of this journey.

During the tour, emphasis is placed on learning vocabulary associated with the Canadian context, in addition to discussions and handling of objects from the education collection to encourage the students to practice their new language skills. The tour also places importance on individual learning. Our team of museum guides frequently pause during the tour to allow the students to discover objects that interest them.

This booklet has been specially prepared for you and provides ways to discover the many facets of the McCord Museum and the visit tour. We invite you to help prepare your students for their visit to the McCord Museum.

In this booklet, you will find general information on the McCord Museum, its founder, David Ross McCord, and the visit. Preparatory and follow-up activities are also included emphasizing specific vocabulary words that your students will encounter. Knowledge of this vocabulary will help them in their understanding of the tour.

For more information on the museum and its collections, go to our website at <http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/>.

Good luck in your preparation!

# About the Museum

## Mission

Since its creation in 1921, the McCord Museum of Canadian History has been dedicated to preserving, studying and highlighting a remarkable collection of objects, archives and photographs from the past. This collection contributes to the diffusion of social and cultural objects from Canada, Quebec and Montréal, from the 18th century to present day.

## Collections

The McCord Museum of Canadian History has more than 1 113 000 objects and groupings, as well as 180 linear meters of documentary archives.

- \* Ethnological and archaeological objects: approximately 13 000 artefacts
- \* Costumes and textiles: approximately 16 000 artefacts
- \* Notman photographic archives and textual archives: some 1 000 000 photos and texts
- \* Paintings, prints and drawings: around 56 700 artefacts
- \* Decorative arts: about 27 600 artefacts

## History

Inaugurated in 1921, the McCord embodies the vision of a passionate collector, David Ross McCord, whose abiding wish was to shed light on the history and cultures of his country and thus bring its people together.

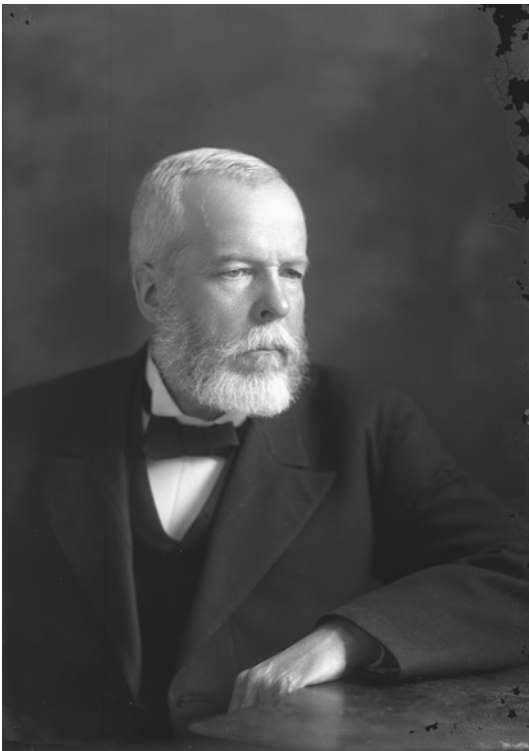
In 1878, David Ross McCord began adding to the already considerable collection assembled by his family since their arrival in Canada. Sparing neither time nor money, he combed the length and breadth of the country in search of the finest and most historically significant objects. Gradually, a plan began to take shape in his mind: that of founding a national history museum in Montréal, then Canada's metropolis.

On October 13, 1921, the McCord National Museum opened its doors, housed in a building provided by McGill University. Both its collection and its reputation grew rapidly.

The citizens of Montréal, heirs to the passion of David Ross McCord, encouraged the Museum's development. McGill University administered the McCord for over sixty years, until it became a private museum. Leading members of the community, including the families of Walter M. Stewart, T.H.P. Molson and J. W. McConnell, lent their steadfast and generous support to the Museum's various activities and, with additional government backing, made possible the renovation of its building in 1992. Today, the McCord is supported by the governments of Canada, Quebec and Montréal, and by a large network of members, donors and sponsors.

David Ross McCord wanted to make history accessible to all. His dream has become the McCord's mission – a mission whose importance is reaffirmed each year by tens of thousands of visitors.

## Portrait of David Ross McCord



**David Ross McCord**  
1908  
Notman & Son  
Gelatine dry plate  
17.8 x 12.7 cm  
Gift of Mr. David Ross McCord  
II-169489

**Birth.** In Montréal, in 1844.

**Background.** Irish. The McCord family, merchants and jurists for several generations, settled in Canada around 1760.

**Family.** Wealthy, cultivated, bilingual and open to the winds of social reform that were sweeping through 19th-century Montréal. His father, a jurist, was keenly interested in science and meteorology. His mother, a talented watercolourist, was an art lover.

**Education.** Trained as a lawyer. Although not a professional historian, D. R. McCord possessed a wide knowledge of history: he read and critiqued everything published about the country's past. He was also an expert on Canada's material culture.

**Profession.** Lawyer, negotiator for aboriginal groups, magistrate.

**Dream.** To forge links between his country's various cultures.

**Favourite quotes:** "What we have loved, others will love, and we will teach them how." (William Wordsworth). "Where there is no vision, the people perish." (The Bible, Proverbs 29:18)

**Passion.** Collecting anything related to the history of Montréal, Quebec and Canada, from a diversity of realms: domestic, urban, religious, artistic, political, aboriginal...

**Life's work.** The McCord Museum, founded following the donation of his personal collection (15,000 objects).

**Death.** In Guelph, Ontario, in 1930.

## Your Visit

The tour *Post Cards of Canada* focuses on the following themes:

**The Haida totem.** The McCord Museum totem pole originally stood at the entrance of the Tambour house in the Haida village of Masset, on the north shore of the Queen Charlotte Islands in British Columbia. The figures sculpted on the totem pole are emblems that spoke of the lineage and rights and privileges accorded to the house chief. This is a symbol of Western Canada, which introduces the notion of symbol, a key element of the visit.

**Montréal: An Island in Time.** This lively short film was created specifically for the opening of the permanent exhibition *Simply Montréal*. It explores the Montréal of yesterday and today through four themes: winter, leisure, prosperity and gatherings. David Ross McCord narrates the story of Montréal. It is a first approach for students to the tour's vocabulary and themes.

**Winter: a season of strategies for survival.** The students will grasp the cultural impact of winter on Canadian society. They will discover the specific strategies developed by Canadians over time to face winter such as snow removal, attire, and so on. The encounter with the habitant figure will be the focus of this voyage through winter. (*Vocabulary of winter and habitant clothing*)

**Canadian landscape.** The students will travel the rivers and lakes of Canada in an Aboriginal birchbark canoe in search of flora and fauna that are today Canadian symbols. For example, the students will stop at the maple leaf featured on the Canadian flag or the beaver on the nickel. (*Vocabulary of Canadian plants and animals*)

**Land of immigration.** While travelling over Montréal's topography, the students will discover how Montréal's streets reflect its history and cultural diversity. They will encounter the founding peoples of Montréal and cite the various neighbourhoods brimming with great cultural diversity, a diversity to which they now belong.

**The urban totem.** Erected on Victoria Street in 1992 for the McCord Museum's reopening, the urban totem is one of sculptor Pierre Granche's major works. The sculptor revisits Canadian history at different eras through this work and uses a number of typical objects and figures still present in the collective Canadian consciousness. The urban totem pole presents the symbols that the students encountered during their visit, which makes for an interesting conclusion to the tour *Post Cards of Canada!*

# Pre-visit Activity

## Prepare your visit with fun vocabulary learning

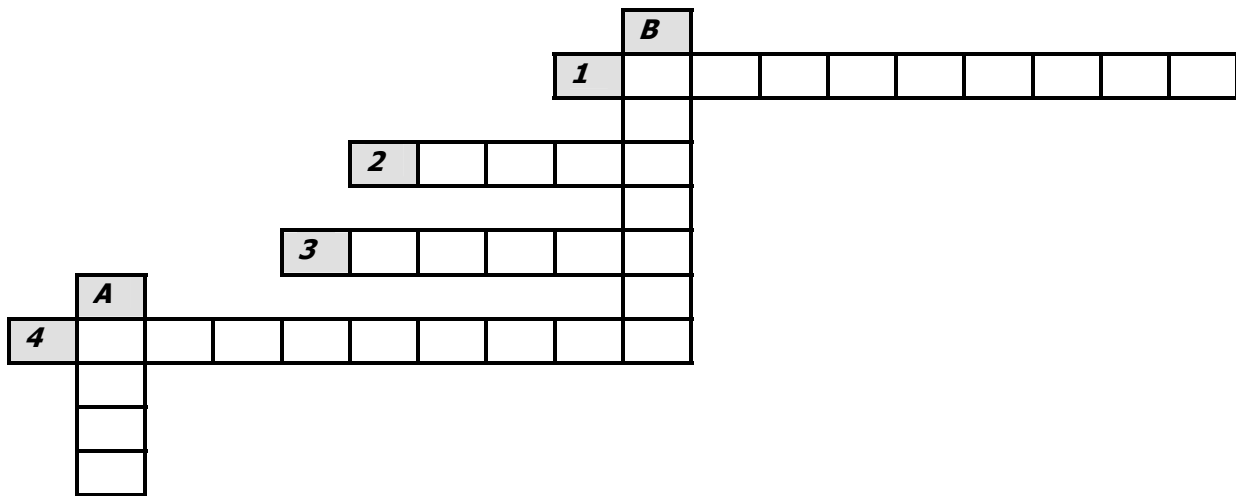
Emphasis will be placed on learning new vocabulary during the tour. A booklet will be handed out to the students at the beginning of the tour to introduce them to specific vocabulary words for winter, landscape and the founding peoples of Canada.

Here are just a few of the vocabulary words used during the visit: totem, blanket coat, woven sash, mittens, moccasins, birch tree, maple leaf, birchbark canoe, river, beaver, loon, caribou, moose, lily, rose, clover and thistle.

To help your students become familiar with the vocabulary while having fun, have them complete the crossword below.

## Crossword

This morning, the habitant is going to cut wood. It is -30°C outside and he will have to dress warmly to protect against the cold. Help him get dressed by filling in this crossword below and guessing which items he will have to put on.



### Horizontal:

1. I am an object of First Nations origin. You slip us on your feet to keep them warm enough to walk in the snow. (moccasins)
2. You slip your arms through me and I keep your upper body warm. (coat)
3. I am usually made of wool and keep your head warm. (tuque)
4. You tie us to your feet to walk on the snow without sinking through! (snowshoes)

### Vertical:

- A. You tie me around your waist to keep your coat closed (sash)
- B. You slip your hands inside us to keep them toasty warm. (mittens)

# Follow-up Activity

## Questions following the tour

1. What is the first object you encountered in the Museum? What part of Canada does it symbolize?
2. You watched a film in the Théâtre Bombardier on the history of Montréal. Who narrated the film? Who was he?
3. How many months does winter last in Canada?
4. How did they clear the streets of snow in the past? How do they do this today?
5. What person did you encounter during your visit? What was he wearing to protect himself from the cold?
6. What is the most symbolic animal of Canada? What coin does it appear on?
7. How was the Canadian territory discovered? Why?
8. What were Montréal's former names?
9. Who were the founding peoples of Montréal?
10. What is the symbol of the French-speaking community in Montréal and Quebec?

## Answers

1. *The totem is the symbol of Western Canada.*
2. *David Ross McCord, founder of the McCord Museum, narrated the history of Montréal.*
3. *Winter lasts from December 22 to March 21. However, in Canada, the snow and ice last for a longer period (close to 5 out of 12 months).*
4. *Streets used to be cleared of snow by shovel. Today, snowploughs are used for this purpose.*
5. *The habitant wore a blanket coat, a tuque, mittens and moccasins to protect against the cold.*
6. *Canada's animal emblem is the beaver, which appears on the nickel.*
7. *The First Nations peoples discovered Canada by using the birchbark canoe. This was the most practical means because Canada is vast with many rivers and lakes.*
8. *The first Aboriginal village was called "Hochelaga", which became "Ville Marie" (religious colony founded by De Maisonneuve and Jeanne Mance), before being named Montréal.*
9. *The founding peoples of Montréal were the French, English, Scottish and Irish.*
10. *The "fleur de lys appears on the flags of Montréal and Quebec and represents the French-speaking community of Quebec.*

# Follow-up Activity

## Your post card of Canada

You just toured *Post Cards of Canada* at the McCord Museum. At the beginning of the tour, the guide asked your students what images they had of Canada prior to their arrival in this country.

Based on the students' likely conventional answers, the guide aimed during the tour to highlight the great and enduring symbols of the Montréal, Quebec and Canadian identity with significant themes such as the seasons, landscape and successive waves of immigration.

Your students are now much more aware of Canada's history, geography, culture and symbols. To apply what they learned during the tour, we suggest that they write their own post card of Canada.

**Beaver**  
*Engraving*  
John Henry Walker (1831-1899)  
1850-1885, 19<sup>th</sup> century  
Ink on paper – Wood engraving  
5.2 x 7.3 cm  
Gift of Mr. David Ross McCord  
M930.50.8.413  
© McCord Museum

## Your post card

You just toured the McCord Museum and now have much more knowledge about Canada. What are the images that come to mind when you think of Canada? Draw a post card and include a message for your family back home telling them what it is like here.

## Your electronic post card

From the on-line collection of 110 000 images on our website, search for an object that is symbolic of Canada that you encountered during your visit and that you would like your family back home to discover. Send your post card via e-mail including a short message by using the "Post Card" option.

Search for an object on our website (<http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca/fr/>) by entering a word in the search engine at the top left-hand side of the page. To help you in your search, you can use the vocabulary found in the student's booklet. Once the object has been chosen, click on the option "Post Card ". You can now write your own electronic post card. Once you are finished, send it off to your family!



MUSÉE McCORD MUSEUM

This program was made possible with the support of:



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