



COUNTLESS JOURNEYS. ONE CANADA.



Dr. Afua Cooper presents the exhibition to staff.

A HISTORY EXPOSED

Many Canadians don't know that before the Underground Railroad, Canada had its own history of enslavement that lasted over two centuries. The Museum exposes this brutal reality in our latest exhibition, *A History Exposed: The Enslavement of Black People in Canada*, guest curated by Dr. Afua Cooper and created in partnership with the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia.

As a museum of migration, we explore the many ways people arrive in this country. The experience of

forced migration is part of that larger narrative we tell. We developed *A History Exposed* to share this grim and often unknown history with a national audience. As the first national exhibition on this history, **it will travel to museums and educational spaces across Canada for the next five years.**

The exhibition's design features a range of ways visitors can connect to the history. Visitors can easily find red circles throughout the exhibition that each answer a different question: *Was slavery common*

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in Canada? Were there Canadian slave ships? Was slavery legal in Canada? The easy-to-find factual information about slavery enables visitors to test their knowledge and acts as an introduction to more detailed descriptive content.

The exhibition also uses individual biographies and illustrations to humanize the experience of slavery. Visitors learn about Nancy, who challenged her enslaver in court; nine-year-old Olivier Le Jeune, the first known enslaved person in Canada; and Dembo Suckles, who outlived slavery to know freedom and have a family whose roots can be traced to today. These are just some experiences of many that remain lost. Through the exhibition, the text of Dr. Cooper's poem *For Nur* is deployed as an evocative call to lost ancestors, weaving past and present together. The exhibition connects the legacy of slavery to today, acknowledging both ongoing anti-Black racism in

Canada and the transformative contribution to Canadian culture made by enslaved people and their descendants. If knowing our past can help us to shape our future, *A History Exposed* **offers a beacon of hope.**

- Sara England, Curator, Temporary and Travelling Exhibitions

A History Exposed closed at the Museum in December 2024 and is at the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia until May 2025. The exhibition is supported by Scotiabank.

MARIE'S MESSAGE



It's important to remain hopeful in winter. The days are short, the air is cold and although we have a vision of pristine falling snow, the reality of winter is sometimes one of grimy slush puddles.

The theme for this edition of *Passages* is **Hope Lives Here**. Canada has represented hope for a better life for most of those who have come here. At the Museum, we share stories of newcomers; it's a place where hope thrives. That's not because we only focus on positive stories. Our job is to tell the story of Canadian

immigration history, warts and all. Hope is always part of the story.

This issue has articles about an immigration success story from one of our past *Welcome Home to Canada* program participants and an introduction to our new online timeline web application, developed in collaboration with Indigenous scholars. You'll read about my fascinating conversation with Montreal power couple Andrew Molson and Helen Antoniou and about *A History Exposed*, our recent exhibition about the history of slavery in Canada, developed with guest curator Dr. Afua Cooper and in partnership with the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia. Finally, you'll read loving tributes to two dearly departed friends of the Museum, the late John E. Oliver and Thomas Weisz.

Thank you for your support of the Museum. I invite you to visit this winter and share your hopes with us.


Marie Chapman,
Chief Executive Officer



Nataly atop the Angus L. Macdonald Bridge in Halifax. Courtesy of Nataly Flórez Rodríguez.

THE BRIDGE TO A NEW LIFE

On October 19, 2022, my husband, our cat, and I landed in Canada to begin a new chapter in our lives. The immigration journey had begun four years earlier. I love my home country, Colombia, and the city of Bogotá where I was born and raised, but as an Environmental and Sanitary Engineer with a background in consulting and project management, finding a position that truly matched my skills was challenging.

Immigration brings its own challenges - cultural differences, professional requirements to meet, and emotional struggles - but I had to be focused because the paperwork was overwhelming. I started gathering documents, validating my credentials, and completing other steps to apply for permanent residence.

In January 2020, we submitted our application, expecting a six-month wait, but the COVID-19 pandemic extended our process by two years. It was frustrating, but I was fortunate to discover the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS). They offered online pre-arrival services like CV preparation and interview coaching, which helped me stay focused and optimistic. Finally, in early 2022, we received our permanent residence status.

I'd had concerns about adjusting to a new culture and finding work, but we were welcomed by kind, helpful people. **One of the most valuable experiences was finding a job through the Welcome Home to Canada program at the Museum.** It was transformative. I was able to enter the Canadian job market, and build confidence in my communication skills. My colleagues from the Museum and the advisors from ISANS guided me in understanding Canadian workplace culture and encouraged me. The *Bridging Engineering Program* at ISANS helped me to find my current job with Halifax Harbour Bridges. I am proud to be part of the team that maintains and operates the iconic Macdonald and MacKay Bridges.

Programs like the one at the Museum don't just offer jobs - they help immigrants build the confidence and skills needed to thrive in Canadian society. That support made all the difference in my journey.

- Nataly Flórez Rodríguez

The Welcome Home to Canada program is supported by the RBC Foundation and the R. Howard Webster Foundation



Left to Right: Concordia President and Vice Chancellor Graham Carr, Helen Antoniou, Marie Chapman, Andrew Molson, Photo courtesy of Concordia University

FOOD, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN MONTREAL

In May 2024, at a Museum outreach event at Montreal's historic Maison Forget, CEO Marie Chapman was on stage to interview power couple Andrew Molson, Chairman of Avenir Global, and Helen Antoniou, executive coach and author. Both Andrew and Helen's families have immigration stories - though from very different times. The Molsons are a longstanding family in Anglophone Quebec, reaching back to 1782 when 18-year-old John Molson arrived in Montreal from England and started brewing beer. Helen's parents are both doctors from Greece who studied medicine in Italy before immigrating to Canada in the early 1960s.

The audience heard about the importance of languages and culture in both families. Andrew talked about going to French language schools and Marie pulled out a quote from his father, Eric, who wrote, "Understanding the language is not enough. **To know a culture you need to know more than just the language, and too few really know the culture of the other.**" Helen, for her part, talked about being fluent in French, but realizing she didn't know the French-Canadian culture. "Andrew knew the music...He knows the references," she said. Her parents valued languages enormously. "In my case, it wasn't even a question... you were going to benefit from what Quebec has to offer." So Helen

learned both French and English. At home, her family spoke Greek and Italian.

Marie asked the couple about their favourite Montreal foods. Andrew said, "As a kid, I used to love going to a place called Villa du Souvlaki," while the audience laughed at the foreshadowing of his romance with a Greek woman. The couple, however, agreed they both loved the classic Montreal restaurant L'Express. Andrew then recalled that, while they were still dating, they **asked Helen's mother to make baklava using the Molsons' homemade maple syrup** to share with his parents. "It was delicious," said Andrew. Quite the Greek-Canadian invention.

- Anthony Black, *Senior Writer*



Fascinating Canadians Sherry Porter (left) and Ajay Virmani (right)

FASCINATING CANADIANS INSPIRE HOPE

There are countless inspiring Canadians across this country. The Museum's *Fascinating Canadian* speaker series introduces us to a handful who have reached the pinnacles of their chosen fields.

The events, which have been held in Vancouver, Toronto and Halifax, allow leaders to share their views on what immigration means to this country. Often, it is a very personal conversation as speakers share their story of arrival or that of their parents and grandparents.

The Honourable Roméo Dallaire OC CMM was the first *Fascinating Canadian* speaker at the Museum, back in 2003. Since then, there have been a total of 28 *Fascinating Canadians*. If there are two themes that unify their stories, they are hope and resilience.

Last May, Dr. Ajay K. Virmani OOnt, Founder and CEO of Cargojet Inc., shared his remarkable story - from cleaning the windows outside the boardroom on the 54th floor of a Toronto skyscraper to having a boardroom of his own. This required resilience to overcome racist stereotypes held by others, unrecognized credentials and downright bullies. Equally necessary was the hope and belief that his future was in Canada. **Hope gave him the courage to roll up his sleeves and do the hard work.**

At November's *Fascinating Canadian* luncheon in Halifax, former Chair of the Pier 21 Society Sherry Porter CM looked back over the first 25 years of the Museum. She reminded us that becoming only the second national museum outside of the National Capital Region was never a predetermined outcome - indeed, the very existence of the Museum was at times precarious. **Sherry demonstrated both hope and resilience** in her leadership in those early days and in her ongoing involvement with the Museum.

The Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 is a museum of stories. Our collection of first-hand accounts of immigrants and refugees seeking a new life in Canada abound with hopeful and inspiring stories.

- Jennifer Sutherland, *Vice-President, External Relations*

Immigration and Impact

All

Indigenous Presence

Arrivals

Legislation and Policy

1923

Williams Treaties



1923

20,000 Mennonites begin to arrive



1923

Officials promote immigration from "preferred countries"



Visit the Timeline at timeline.pier21.ca

IMMIGRATION AND IMPACT: A TIMELINE

After three years of development, the Museum has launched a new educational tool – *“Immigration and Impact: A Timeline.”* The web-based app guides visitors through significant events connected to the history of colonization and immigration in what is now Canada.

The Timeline **explores our history through three perspectives.** The Indigenous Presence lens spans from Time Immemorial to the present day. The Arrivals lens covers more than 400 years of immigration history. The Legislation and Policy lens begins in 1452 with the Doctrine of Discovery.

Independent lines weave through time to represent these lenses, overlapping at pivotal dates. This overlap helps visitors make connections between events and discover their relationships. View each lens as a single history by selecting one of the filters. Navigate centuries of change by scroll or search.

The Arrivals lens captures the often perilous journey of newcomers, from the early European settlers to the recent arrivals from around the world. Each wave of immigrants brings with them their culture, traditions, and hope for a better life in Canada.

We are grateful to the Indigenous scholars who wrote and reviewed the entries on the Indigenous lens. Local Mi'kmaw artist Lorne Julien created a meaningful icon entitled “Our Story” to go with each entry. The artwork features an eagle inside the medicine wheel. The medicine wheel represents 4 colours, 4 directions, 4 seasons, and many more Indigenous teachings. The scope of Indigenous history is powerful. This interactive experience is a portal. It leads the visitor to history papers, oral history galleries, archival images, and digital storytelling videos.

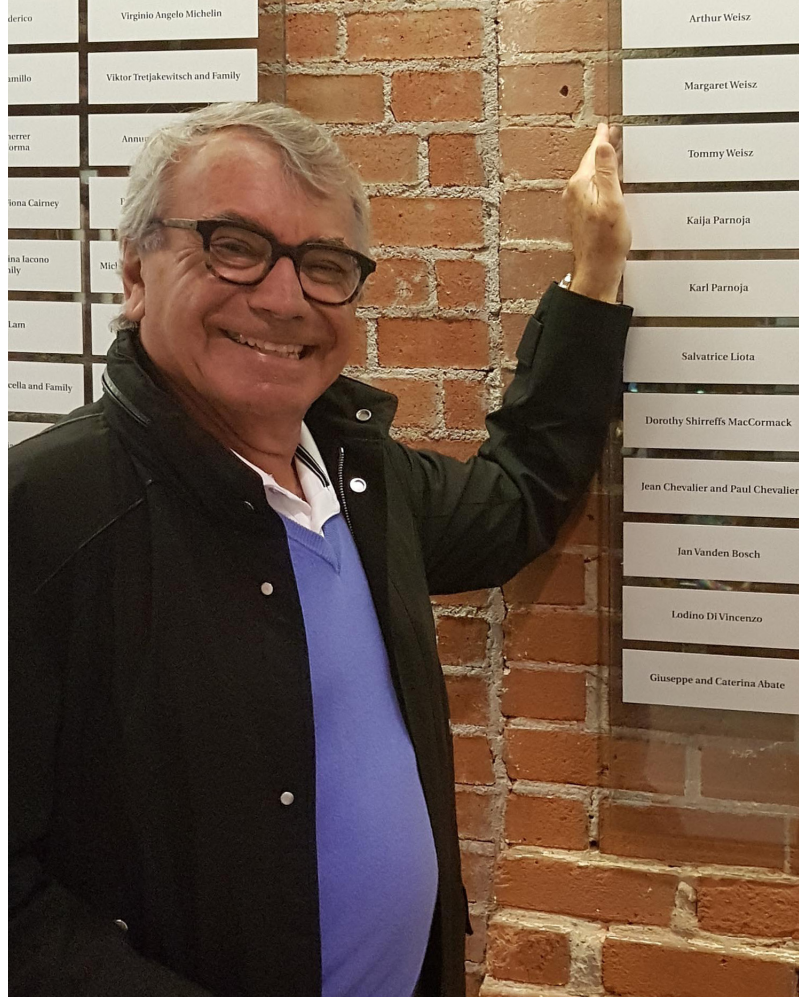
We hope teachers, families, and learners of all ages embrace this **first-of-its-kind historical resource.**

- Terri Harlow, *Digital Platforms Manager*

Explore our new historical resource at timeline.pier21.ca



John E. Oliver



Thomas J. Weisz

IN MEMORIAM

John E. Oliver was a long-time friend and supporter of the Museum. We always called him Johnny O.

He served on the board of the Pier 21 Society, including as chair, and as chair of the California Wine Dinner fundraiser committee. He led us through the transition from a charity to a national museum. His leadership provided stability at a time of great change.

Although strong, steadfast and some might even say uncompromising on the outside, Johnny O was a softie at heart. Talking about his granddaughter Madeline, grandson Caden or his many dogs over the years, his eyes would light up, the photos would come out and he would gush with pride and joy. At our fundraisers, when the live auction bidding grew silent, up went his hand to buy another painting or golf package!

No one was more important to John than his wife, Connie, who also volunteered at the Museum. Supporting us became a family affair. In fact, among the gifts John shared with us, the best has been his son Matthew Oliver, who has followed in his parents' footsteps as a volunteer. We miss Johnny O dearly. His memory lives on, and his impact is still felt.

We were saddened to hear of the passing of **Thomas Weisz** last summer. Tom and his wife Sasha were long-time supporters of the Museum and generously funded an online resource "trunk" designed to help students and researchers with projects related to Hungarian immigration. Their gift was dedicated to the memory of Tom's father, Arthur.

Arthur and Margaret Weisz, both Holocaust survivors and displaced persons, came through Pier 21 in 1951 with young Tom. They were seeking refuge from communist Hungary. They had each other, one suitcase and nothing else, but they were also filled with hope and dreams of a better life. They settled in Hamilton, Ontario and went on to found a successful business and become pillars of the community.

We are thankful that the legacy of making a difference, passed to Tom through his parents, continues to reverberate through to the next generations of the Weisz family.

The Toronto Luncheon with a Fascinating Canadian a Museum fundraiser

Join us on Friday, May 23, 2025, 11:30 am - 1:30 pm
at the Fairmont Royal York, 100 Front St. W., Toronto

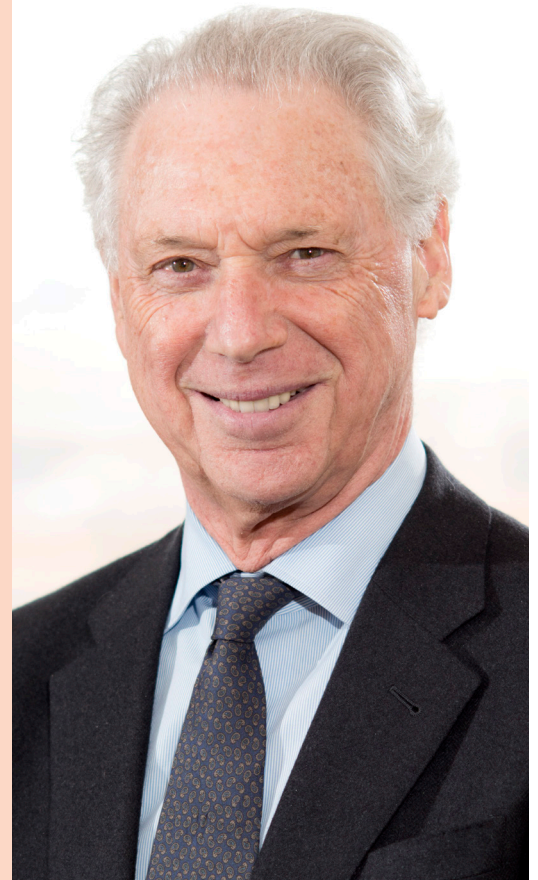
About our speaker...

John M. Beck is the Founder and Chairman of Aecon Group Inc. But before all that, he arrived in Canada at Pier 21 as a boy with his parents and brother on their way to a new life in Montreal. We look forward to hearing more about John's immigration story and his thoughts on the role immigration continues to play in Canada's economy, culture and way of life.

Scan for more information



Or contact Daphne Carter - 902-425-7770 ext. 259 - dcarter@pier21.ca



NEW EXHIBITION COMING MAY 2025

eat make share

a taste
of immigration

Canada's food is as diverse as its people. How and what we eat is shaped by over 400 years of immigration and by Indigenous traditions. Food connects us to the past, to place and to each other.