



Canadian Museum of
Immigration at Pier 21

Musée canadien de
l'immigration du Quai 21

PASSAGES SUMMER 2025

COUNTLESS JOURNEYS. ONE CANADA.



Museum CEO Marie Chapman gives a Pier 21 Lego kit to a new Canadian citizen on July 1, 2025.

CANADA DAY AT THE MUSEUM

Canada Day is an important day at the Museum for three big reasons.

First, for many people, **the Museum symbolizes something special about Canada.** It reminds them of their journey, or their family's journey, to this country. Secondly, the Museum opened on Canada Day 1999. So it is, fittingly, our birthday. And lastly, thousands of people come here every July 1 to see the exhibitions, join the activities and enjoy performances.

This year, **the building was teeming with life.**

Scores of families completed our popular scavenger hunt. A large-scale Canadian flag was assembled from nearly 20,000 LEGO blocks. On the road in front of the Museum, a chalk artist drew beautiful depictions of Canadian icons, from beavers to Bob and Doug McKenzie. Meanwhile, Freddy Mujica, originally from Mexico, played music from across Latin America outside our front doors, setting the tone for the festivities inside.

Continued on next page

Continued from first page

As always, the Museum hosted a citizenship ceremony. Forty-nine new Canadians took the oath of citizenship in a hall full of friends, family and supporters. Maybe the most special moment of the day was after the ceremony. As the newly sworn-in Canadian citizens emerged from the hall, **they were greeted by a large gathered crowd** welcoming and cheering them.

Visitors got to take the citizenship test themselves in our *Canadian Immigration Story* exhibition; this is part of our citizenship program, supported by the Molson Foundation. As it has been since the Museum's beginning, entrance to the exhibitions was offered free to the public. As with so much of what we do, **this wouldn't be possible without the generosity of donors and sponsors**. Canada Day at the Museum this year was supported by Nova Scotia Power Inc.

On Canada Day, staff from all across the organization are given tasks in the Museum, helping at photo

booths, greeting visitors, and handing out cookies. This includes people like me, who don't usually get to work directly with the public. It's a day I really look forward to; seeing the excitement and joy in so many visitors reminds me of the power the Museum has to bring Canadians together.

- **Anthony Black**, *Senior Writer*

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



The first citizenship ceremony I ever attended was July 1st, 1998. It was at the Upper Sackville Legion. I thought, somewhat nonchalantly, "This will be interesting." When I walked in, people were dressed to the nines. Some wore red and white glitter, others wore a version of their home country's traditional clothing. But what really stopped me was the singing of "O Canada". They sang with so much emotion.

Canada Day at the Museum, which always features a citizenship ceremony, is one of my favourite days of the

year. Watching people take their oath of citizenship is an annual reset for me. It's a gift to have those ceremonies here, to see what Canada means through the eyes of people who chose to come here.

The theme for this issue of *Passages* is Our Canada.

You'll read about our travelling exhibition, *Refuge Canada*, which for the last several years has been travelling across the country, busting myths about who refugees are; our new exhibition, *eat make share: a taste of immigration*, which is set to pick up where *Refuge Canada* leaves off. You'll read about an important, (and funny) speech by David Bensadoun at a Museum event in Montreal; the singing of "O Canada" at a fundraiser in Toronto; the *Wall of Service*, which recognizes Canadian service people and War Brides from the Second World War; and a recent visit from Stefania Zimarino, which opened her eyes to the power of this building and the stories we tell.

I hope you enjoy this issue, and I look forward to your next visit to the Museum.

A handwritten signature of Marie Chapman in black ink.

Marie Chapman,
Chief Executive Officer



Stefania was thrilled to see the plaque dedicated to her grandparents. Courtesy of Stefania Zimarino.

THE ENDURING POWER OF THE PIER 21 STORY EXHIBITION

Our Pier 21 exhibition represents a powerful experience for many. Visitors step back in time and experience what those who arrived in Canada through this building faced.

Earlier this year, Stefania Zimarino and her husband did just that. Stefania's grandparents, Stefano and Immacolata, arrived from Italy on May 1, 1959, aboard the *Queen Frederica*. With them were Stefania's mother Giuseppina, then only six years old, and uncle Antonio, aged 11. A plaque dedicated to Stefano and Immacolata is one of many on our *Sobeys Wall of Honour*, **a place where families can inscribe their loved ones' place in history.**

Stefania wrote to tell us what the visit meant:

Pier 21 helps us understand and appreciate people's lived experiences with photos, artifacts from their travels and culture. I was taken through their journey through a detailed model of the process my family experienced from the moment they stepped off a boat onto Pier 21 and to the time in my family's story waited to board a train to get to their final destination... Most importantly, Pier 21 allows us today to embrace the stories

of fear, courage, and hope. While the hopes for many of these people were for a better life, it certainly did not come without sacrifice. People left everything they knew and loved behind without knowing what would await them ahead. Today, because of the life-changing decisions my grandparents made, I get the luxury of living in this land of opportunity.

Receiving testimonials like Stefania's **reminds me of the impact that the Museum continues to have on visitors**, how meaningful it can be to connect to one's past, and what Canada means to the people who came here and their descendants.

- **Maria Almeida**, Donor Relations Manager



The last chance to memorialize a loved one on the Wall of Service is December 2025.

A LAST CHANCE TO HONOUR A WAR BRIDE OR WAR HERO

The *Wall of Service* bears the names of nearly 1000 people. This includes people who served in the Canadian Armed Forces and merchant navy, as well as War Brides who came to Canada.

Eighty years have passed since the Second World War ended. Those young men and women who embarked or disembarked at Pier 21 are now mostly gone.

And yet, their legacy endures. Their families have grown and spread. The values they taught have been passed along to new generations.

As I look at the names on the wall, I think about both impermanence and memory. Although the time we all have is finite, the desire to remember—to honour and commemorate—remains strong. Dedication a plaque on the *Wall of Service* before it closes to new entries is a way of preserving the past before it slips from memory.

December 31st is the final cut-off date for dedicating plaques on the *Wall of Service*. To commemorate a loved one, visit pier21.ca/support/wall-service

Anne Risley Gateway

The *Wall of Service* is located in the very spot where people boarded or got off of ships. It is a place steeped in meaning and memory.

Thanks to a generous gift from her son John, the Gateway is named in honour of War Bride Patricia Anne Risley. As part of the war effort, she was working for the Red Cross in England when she met Captain Robert Campbell Risley at a dance.

They married in 1941 and had their first child, Robert, a year later. On October 8, 1946, she and Robert arrived at Pier 21 aboard the *Aquitania*. The couple's second son, John, was born in 1948.

- **Anthony Black**, Senior Writer



David Bensadoun speaks at a Museum event at the Maison Forget in Montreal.

WHY THIS CEO IS PASSIONATE ABOUT IMMIGRATION

"I don't really like galas," David Bensadoun said, relating a story of being at a charity fundraiser that happened to be held here. "I was getting kind of bored, and I went for a walk through the Museum. And **it was fantastic. I read every panel.**"

David Bensadoun, CEO of ALDO Group, the famed shoe business, was our guest speaker at an event in Montreal. He talked about the Museum, about his family, and above all, why he's passionate about immigration.

David's father, Aldo Bensadoun, was born to an upper-middle-class family from Morocco. He arrived in Canada in 1958 and went on to found ALDO Group. David's mother, Sarah Crawford Richardson, arrived aged 19 from Scotland, where she'd grown up in a tenement building without hot water.

Having two parents with immigration stories, however different, influenced David greatly.

For David, tolerance, acceptance, and immigration are part of Canada's fabric. "If you come to a place that has already, by design, decided to accept multiple cultures... then you have to say right away that this is a place that will be more tolerant."

But immigration, David noted, is also beneficial for his

business: "We have operations in 110 countries in the world... In Montreal, I can recruit [people who speak] 70 or 80 of the languages spoken in the 110 countries. Do you think you could do that in Cincinnati or in Kansas? It's not happening."

David's passion for immigration was clear, as were his deep appreciation of Canada, love of the Museum and sense of humour.

In preparing for the speech, he asked his dad about his own immigration story.

"I said Dad, do you know about Pier 21?"

"No. What's Pier 21?" replied Aldo, who arrived in the busiest years for the immigration facility, when thousands of people arrived by ship annually.

Stunned, David asked, "Well, how did you come to Canada?!?"

Aldo shrugged, "I came on a plane."

- **Fiona Valverde**, Vice-President, Revenue Generation



Refuge Canada has travelled from coast to coast in its large format (red pins) and small format (blue pins).

REFUGE CANADA CONTINUES TO RESONATE ACROSS CANADA

Our special exhibition *Refuge Canada* has been travelling across Canada since 2019. As the exhibition's reach has continued to grow, sadly, so has its relevance. Estimates on the global number of refugees and forcibly displaced people have almost doubled since the exhibition first opened.

Refuge Canada busts myths about refugees and builds empathy by sharing first-hand accounts from those who fled Nazi Europe, the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia or most recently Syria. Through these accounts, one message comes across clearly: No one chooses to be a refugee. Anyone can become one.

Wherever it travels, people are deeply moved. Visitors' beliefs are challenged as they are asked to confront their biases. Most importantly, **they are uplifted by the stories of strength and resilience** and walk away with an appreciation of what a warm welcome and a hand-up can achieve.

Refuge Canada has been hosted beyond typical museum and library spaces. From a synagogue to the CN Tower, it has travelled as far east as Cape Breton Island and as far west as Vancouver Island. This winter,

Refuge Canada will conclude its travels just as the Museum's newest travelling exhibition, *eat make share: a taste of immigration*, sets off across Canada.

Refuge Canada would not have been possible without our donors and contributors. Thank you to the Ralph & Rose Chiodo Family Foundation, which supported the exhibition during its inaugural installation in Halifax. Thanks as well to the generous support from TD Bank Group, which supported the travelling exhibition on its national tour and to the Birks Family Foundation, which sponsored a smaller format of the exhibition that puts French language content first. And lastly, thank you to all of the Canadians who allowed their stories to be shared in this significant exhibition and those who have come to see it

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



Staff members Shipra Chaubey, Dominique Bujold and Nathaline Piedrahita-Budiman in one of the interactive sections of the exhibition, designed for kids of all ages.

NEW EXHIBITION: **EAT MAKE SHARE: A TASTE OF IMMIGRATION**

Every meal tells a story about people and place. Here in Canada, those stories are not only diverse, they're also often shaped by migration and relationships between newcomers and Indigenous Peoples.

Our feature exhibition *eat make share: a taste of immigration*, presented by BMO, brings those stories to life through images, video, immersive environments, artifacts, and hands-on activities. In a recreation of a Chinese restaurant, the exhibition shares the creation of Chinese-Canadian food, sometimes known as chop suey. In another section of the exhibition, we invite visitors to put on their creative "chef toque" and invent a new dish by spinning a wheel of ingredients and cooking methods. Pistachio-crusted buffalo and smoked dates with wild rice are a few of the visitor-created dishes on this week's chalkboard menu.

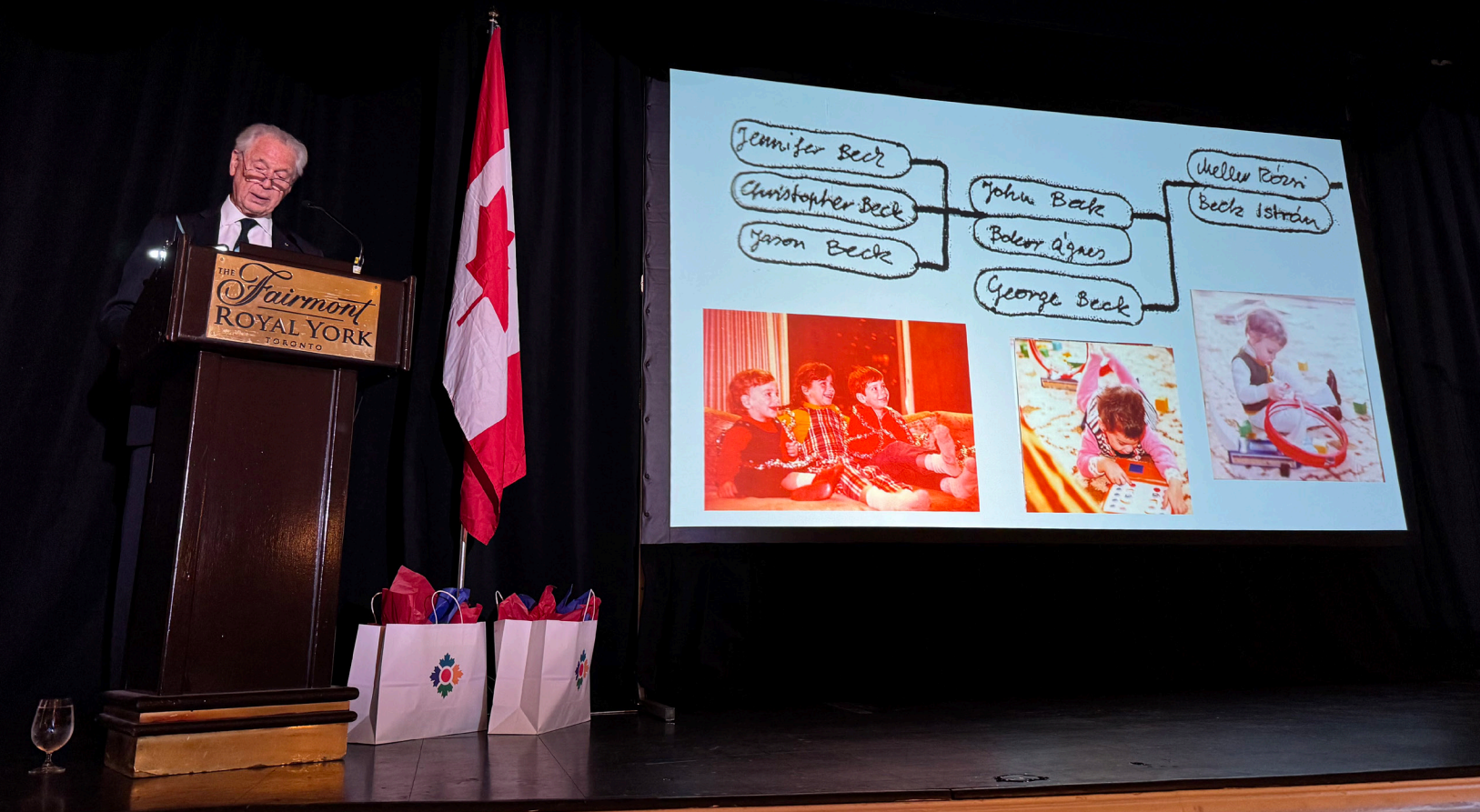
Canadian cuisine is expansive and constantly evolving. Dishes like butter tarts or beaver tails may be obviously Canadian, but there is so much more to discover. *eat make share: a taste of immigration* profiles nearly 50 dishes with sometimes surprising origins that are unique to this country.

Did you know Halifax's beloved donair was invented by a Greek immigrant, adapting locally available Lebanese

ingredients to make a gyro-like wrap; that maple syrup is an Indigenous invention shared with early settlers to help them survive; that the Jamaican patty is a centuries-old adaptation of the British Cornish pasty and now Toronto's unofficial "official food"?

As you might imagine, exhibition goers are likely to leave hungry, but I also hope they leave knowing that we all can share and contribute to Canada's cuisine, whether by visiting a new restaurant in your neighbourhood, trying out an old family recipe, or supporting your local farmer's market. I recommend a visit to *eat make share: a taste of immigration*. Bon appétit!

- **Sara England**, Curator, Temporary and Travelling Exhibitions



John Beck talked about his family's journey at the 2025 Luncheon with a Fascinating Canadian in Toronto. Photo courtesy of Aecon Group Inc.

FROM FAR AND WIDE, O CANADA

Although based in Halifax, ours is a national institution with a duty to serve all Canadians. To support that mission, we raise money and awareness beyond Halifax. Recently we held fundraising initiatives in Toronto, Burlington, and Montreal.

Last May in Toronto, our annual *Fascinating Canadian Luncheon* featured keynote speaker John M. Beck, Founder and Chairman of Aecon Group Inc. John shared his family's journey from Hungary to Algiers to Montreal. He shared how his first trip to school on a streetcar in a blizzard took eight hours. He told how his company began, grew and adapted. He ended by reflecting on the huge number of immigrant workers in Canada's construction industry and the many contributions they have made to building this country.

As Canada's national museum of immigration, we celebrate the contributions immigrants like the Beck family have made—and continue to make—to our culture, economy, and way of life.

The event ended with the singing of "O Canada".

We don't always do this, but it felt right as a way to celebrate our shared values of inclusion and diversity. It was a powerful reminder of the unity and pride that binds us all.

Thank you to our generous event supporters - sponsors, patrons, partners and donors - who join us at our *Fascinating Canadian Luncheons* and our outreach events. Our heartfelt thanks also go out to the dedicated community and business leaders who fuel and energize these events with their volunteer efforts. Their passion and enthusiasm for our mission help to grow our network of treasured supporters.

- **Daphne Carter**, Development Manager