

### 7.3.2.2 National Museums of Canada

The responsibilities of a museum include collecting, preserving and storing objects related to the various disciplines within its area of activity. Of equal importance is the research carried out by specialists in these fields and the publication of their findings. Museums exhibit artifacts from their collections in attractively designed displays to illustrate the scientific origins of the various subjects. Lectures, publications, inquiries, consultations, workshops, guided tours for children and adults, travelling exhibits, loans, library services and radio and television programs are also part of the National Museums' programs.

In 1972 the National Museums of Canada, a Crown corporation including the National Gallery of Canada, the National Museum of Science and Technology, the National Museum of Man and the National Museum of Natural Sciences, was charged with the administration of the National Museum Policy. This Policy is intended to provide Canadians with better access to the objects, collections and exhibits that form part of the Canadian cultural heritage through the decentralization and democratization of exhibitions.

The Policy involves small and large museums in all regions of the country. Smaller institutions are encouraged to upgrade their receiving and exhibition facilities so that they may exhibit a range of travelling exhibits and collections from other institutions. The Policy also provides for the development of exhibition space, either through mobile display units or by building new display facilities, in remote localities which have not previously been served by a museum or art gallery.

Implementation of the National Museum Policy is carried out under 11 programs: associate museums, national exhibition centres, special grants, training assistance, catalogue assistance, emergency purchase fund, education and extension, national loan collection, museumobile, national inventory, and conservation. For these 11 programs, \$1.1 million was provided to initiate the Policy in 1972-73 and \$13.4 million to continue in 1973-74.

The Board of Trustees of the National Museums of Canada created a Consultative Committee on National Museum Policy, chaired by the Vice-Chairman of the Board and consisting of two representatives from the Secretary of State Department, a representative of the Canada Council, two members appointed by the Chairman of the Board from nominees submitted by the Canadian Museums Association and two members similarly appointed from the Canadian National Committee for the International Council of Museums.

In addition to this a Secretariat to the Consultative Committee on National Museum Policy has been established within the National Museums of Canada which assists the Consultative Committee and the Board of Trustees in carrying out the first eight of these programs. The Corporation also operates the museumobile, which is a travelling caravan to bring museum exhibits to remote communities, and administers the National Inventory, which holds computerized data on all museum collections across the country. The Canadian Conservation Institute has responsibilities for the conservation and restoration program.

The early history of the National Museums is described in the *1972 Canada Year Book* pp 418-419. Recent activities of the museums are outlined below.

**The National Gallery of Canada.** The beginnings of the National Gallery of Canada are associated with the founding of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts in 1880. The Marquis of Lorne, then Governor General, had recommended and assisted in the founding of the Academy and among the tasks he assigned to that institution was the establishment of a National Gallery at the seat of government. Until 1907 the National Gallery was under the direct control of a Minister of the Crown but in that year, in response to public demand, an Advisory Arts Council consisting of three persons outside government was appointed by the government to administer grants to the National Gallery. Three years later, the first professional curator was appointed.

In 1913, the National Gallery was incorporated by Act of Parliament and placed under the administration of a board of trustees appointed by the Governor General in Council; its function was to encourage public interest in the arts and to promote the interests of art throughout the country. Under this management, the Gallery increased its collections and developed into an internationally recognized art institution. Today, a board of trustees reporting to the Secretary of State administers all the National Museums of Canada, including the National Gallery, under the National Museums Act (RSC 1970, c.N-12).