

Speech delivered by President and CEO Stuart Murray to PCL Constructors Inc., September 19, 2011

Edmonton, Alberta

Thank you for the invitation to join you today. It's a pleasure to be here.

I want to begin by extending my genuine thanks for your interest in the Canadian Museum for Human Rights.

PCL has long been a supporter of this project – beyond forging a partnership with the Museum to bring this unique building to life, PCL has also donated to the capital costs of the building, as has PCL Chairman Ross Grieve. I thank you for believing in the power that this Museum will have to change the world for the better.

As I hope to make clear today, what we are building at the Canadian Museum for Human Rights is something truly unprecedented, both in Canada, and the world.

What we're doing has never been done before.

The Museum will be game-changing.

World-changing.

And it will bring together people from all backgrounds, all walks of life, and from every neighbourhood; not just in Winnipeg, but in cities across the country and beyond.

We already have close ties to Alberta and Edmonton in particular.

We've visited Alberta 3 times as part of our official public engagement process, stopping in Edmonton twice as we spoke with many Albertans on the museum and heard what they felt were important human rights stories to tell in Canada's first national museum to have been established in almost 40 years.

As well, Dominique Clément, a professor of the history of rights at the University of Alberta is a valued member of my Human Rights Advisory Council. In addition, two members of our Board of Trustees hail from Alberta: our Vice-Chair, Eric Hughes, from Calgary and Dr. Wilton Littlechild from Hobbema.

We are also exploring ways to collaborate with the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights to fulfill our mutual goals to create programs for youth to learn about human rights as well as learning how Edmonton has become known as a human rights city.

And speaking of youth, I also want to talk about our plan to have students from across the country, including Alberta, experience the Museum, either in person through our National student travel program or via a robust web presence. We are working to ensure that we have strong pre

and post visit programming for students across Canada, as well as engaging Museum programming. Young people have shown time and time again their willingness to make the world a better place. It is our aim to give them the tools to take action for the promotion and protection of rights on a local, national and even international scale.

We were pleased to meet a number of Deputy Ministers of Education from across the country last week in Winnipeg. We've also recently seconded a Manager of Learning from the Province of Manitoba. One of the reasons that we chose this person is due to her work with the Western and Northern Canadian Protocol, working towards common curriculum outcomes in all western provinces and territories. We are interested in forging this relationship with Albertan students and in bringing them to Winnipeg for a life changing Museum experience.

Even though we're still two years away from opening our doors, your interest today is essential to the Museum's success.

Why? Because the Canadian Museum for Human Rights isn't being built just to become a centre of learning

It's going to be a place where people come to help change the world.

And it's my job, at this stage of the Museum's development, to connect with the people who will join us in this important project of writing a bold new chapter in Canada's human rights history.

To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world. ¹

The scale of our project and our mission are bigger than any one person or one organization.

We need you. We will need many hands working, many voices speaking, and many ears listening to make the Canadian Museum for Human Rights a true success.

Tonight I want to give you a sense of what we're building on the historic parcel of Treaty One land where the Red and Assiniboine Rivers meet in Winnipeg, now called The Forks. This land is also at the doorstep of the site of the Métis occupation of Upper Fort Garry and Louis Riel's provisional government that gave birth to the Province of Manitoba as we know it today.

I want to tell you about the museum building itself – a structure like no other – that is now taking form at this historical site. I also want to tell you about the work taking place right now that you don't physically see –

...the behind-the-scenes work that will bring our exhibits and our galleries to life.

The aim of the Canadian Museum for Human Right is to be a catalyst for change; a centre of hope and optimism; a place where people can truly feel that they're not only part of something but that they have a direct stake in helping build a better world.

We see this interwoven in the very fabric of the building. Each part has a meaning that is meant to reflect this vision of human rights.

We start with the four roots that anchor the museum into the ground – into Mother Earth and symbolize the critical importance of human rights to humanity. Visitors will enter the building and be given the impression that they are descending into the earth. They begin their journey in darkness, but they will journey towards light and hope.

We then enter Buhler Hall, the welcoming gallery that will provide visitors with an indigenous welcome and will share the significance of the Museum being located on Treaty One land.

To access the exhibits from Buhler Hall, visitors will walk a series of ramps, located in the wedge canyon. The wedge canyon walls are made of black concrete, once again symbolizing the despair and struggle often associated with human rights.

But the ramps are clad in white alabaster and light from within and the glass cloud will invite the sunshine in, more and more light as the visitor moves higher and higher through the building.

The galleries are stacked on either side of the wedge. Inside these galleries we find the strong content and programming that are at the core of this Museum and are essential for us to achieve our goal to become a catalyst for change.

I'll break the content down for you into 4 main areas:

The first section of the Museum provides an introduction to the Museum, the land on which it sits, and the concept of human rights. The Introduction to Human Rights gallery will paint a broad vision of human right to help our visitors appreciate what we mean when we talk about looking at the world through a human rights lens. The gallery will set up the rest of the journey through the Museum. For example, we will include a human rights timeline that will feature seminal events like the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the granting of the vote to women in Canada.

The next section deals with Canada's human rights history. This part is made up of 3 galleries:

- Indigenous rights – which is intended to convey indigenous concepts of humanity and how indigenous peoples struggle for and assert their rights in Canada.
- Canada's Human Rights Journey – which will focus on historical incidents of rights violations in Canada as well as the struggle to achieve rights for those who had them denied, and the achievement of those rights. This will include events like the Komogata Maru and Canada's internment operation. And finally:
- The Canadian Challenge – this gallery will look at the current state of human rights law and legal instruments in Canada as well as the limits to these rights.

The third section focuses on international human right history.

- We begin this section by Examining the Holocaust and exploring how a modern, democratic society collapsed into genocide and studying the stages of genocide as articulated by Raphael Lemkin.
- We will look at the drafting and adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in a gallery called Hope and Hard Work. In this gallery, we look at how this document was developed and the numerous declarations and covenants that have followed in the footsteps of the UDHR. We will also look at the social movements, made up of committed and passionate individuals, that have worked to bring these declarations, such as the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, to life.
- We then move to a gallery called Breaking the Silence. This gallery examines up to 20 other incidences of gross large scale human rights violations and will feature prominently the 5 genocides officially recognized by Canada – the Holodomor (Ukrainian Famine), Rwanda, Srebrenica, the Holocaust, and the Armenian genocide.

The last section of the content is devoted to current human rights issues and there are 4 galleries that make up this section.

- The Forum – will be a participatory space designed for dialogue and discussion on peace and human rights. It will focus on notions of action that are crucial to the protection, promotion and achievement of human rights — creativity, empowerment, dialogue and relationship-building. Agency, identity, awareness, education and collaboration.
- Human Rights Today – will focus on pressing current issues and emerging human-rights trends, conveying the immovable notion that the struggle for human rights is ever-pressing and ongoing around the world. This gallery will feature the stories of people working for human rights around the world.
- Eye on the world is next – this is a space dedicated to the use of photo-journalism and documentary film to explore human rights issues.
- Finally, we have the Take Action gallery - It's here we get into the nuts and bolts of activism, empowerment and personal agency. It's here that we explore how we each can make a difference in building and nourishing a human rights culture, whether it's signing a petition, volunteering your time or starting a non-profit organization, we can all take steps for human rights.

Visitors can then take a trip up the Tower of Hope, the culmination of the journey from darkness to light, from despair to hope. They will be treated to a spectacular view of Winnipeg, and look upon a landscape where many human rights struggles have been fought and won.

Finally, the Stewart Clark Garden of Contemplation. Stewart Clark is a prominent Albertan who donated generously to the Museum project. From our beginning, we've recognized that for many of our visitors, the human rights journey at the museum will be an emotional one. We want to respect and dignify that, and so there are quiet spaces in the museum designed to offer a space for quiet reflection.

We strongly believe that this museum has the opportunity to change the face of Winnipeg, and put Canada on the map as a major proponent of human rights.

I want to again offer my sincere thanks for allowing me the privilege of speaking with you today.

From our home base in Winnipeg, at the heart of Canada, it's our mission to do a world of good.
We invite each and every one of you to join us in this mission.

Thank you. Merci.