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CANADA HISTORY HALL: the Revival of a National Treasure

It is not often that a commercial flooring company has the opportunity to create a national treasure, but National Décor of Ottawa, Ontario, did with the renovation of Canada History Hall,

popular with Canadians and with visitors as well. Canada has a rich history stretching back for 15,000 years, so the History Hall brought to life the remarkable events of our country.

Unfortunately, in recent years, the Canada History

and engineering firm in Montreal, was retained to work hand-in-hand with the museum's team and head architect Douglas Cardinal, to overhaul the exhibit. Critical to the collaborative design build team was consult from National

museum's collection to a more interactive experience and to tell the story of Canada from several different perspectives. The goal was to be novel, authentic and thought provoking, while giving visitors the insights from a full range of inhabitants of Canada. These inhabitants included the first indigenous people, and the spotlight was placed particularly on the First Nation, Inuit and Metis people who populated Canada many years ago. The content of many exhibits were still relevant, but their presentation was lacking.

GSM Project assigned nearly 40 people to this project and this portion of the museum was closed down in 2014. The team included engineers, fabricators, media producers, local architect Moriyama & Teshima and Pomerleau Construction. Their story began with the last Ice Age to the present day. Again, with the focus on the human population which lived in Canada over the years, their voices were brought to life with narration and visual media.



As the capital city of Canada, Ottawa offers many beautiful historic sites, statues and museums. One of the most notable sites is the Canada History Hall, housed in the Canadian Museum of History. First opened in 1989, this location was very

Hall Exhibit had fallen into disrepair. The displays were breaking down and the technology was dated and not interesting to current museum attendees. Attendance was trailing off, and in 2013, GSM Project, an architectural

Décor on the role flooring would play in attendees' experiences within the space.

A VISION FOR THE CANADA HISTORY HALL

A top priority for this project was to elevate the

Left: For weeks, National Décor's qualified installers followed the intricate design closely, and in all, a total of 12 colors were used for the path.



Left: National Décor played a key role in the revitalization of the Canadian History Hall at the Canadian Museum of History, providing flooring that elevates attendees' experiences within the space.

Bottom Left: The revamped space now reflects on the history of Canada is a genuinely authentic way, displaying both the excellent moments of our history as well as the less successful events.

THE CRITICAL ROLE OF FLOORING

In this renovation, the flooring made a critical contribution. The museum was designed as a fluid experience and the flooring became the pathway through the experience. Rather than simply functioning as a foundation or a walking space, the flooring was charged with the role of leading attendees through the exhibit with an extensive, sophisticated use of color and different flooring materials.

Planning began in 2013 when the previous owner of National Décor, Tom Lowe, and Kim Leclair of Milliken got involved at the preliminary stage in developing this very special project. Once I purchased the company in December 2015, Tom remained as project manager for my first year of operation. Tom, our head installer, Bob Seltitz, and myself strategized the project together—a true example of collaboration during a business transition. Tom and Bob's experience and knowledge of the commercial flooring industry was invaluable to the success of this project.

Our team worked closely with the designers and





Left: For their work in the Canadian History Hall at the Canadian Museum of History, National Décor won Starnet's Gold Award in the Unique Installation category, the Silver Award in the People's Choice and the Starnet Design Awards Grand Prize.

the museum's project managers to create a total of 24 different, full scale templates in heavy paper which wended their way throughout the museum space. These templates, some as large as 9 feet, met the design requirement and leveraged the natural materials used in historical times. Bob and our qualified installers, including project managers Tom and Dany Lacombe, followed the design by laying them on the floor in a specific pattern. Each template had to be approved by the designers before the installation could proceed. In all, a total of 12 colors were used for the path. This phase of the project took numerous weeks and we had a full team of installers working on the project every day.

Looking back, I believe the Canada Hall of History

presented a very unique challenge and the results of the project are outstanding. The design team tackled the layout of the gallery with a complete rethinking and update. The space now reflects back on the history of Canada in a genuinely authentic way, displaying both the excellent moments of our history as well as the less successful events. The museum truly provides an exciting experience for which all Canadians can be proud.

STARNET DESIGN AWARDS RECOGNITION

For the first time in the history of National Décor, we entered a project in the Starnet Design Awards competition.

As a relative newcomer to commercial flooring (my previous career was construction related), National Décor's

membership in Starnet, dating back to 2005, has been critical to my training in this industry. The knowledge and experience of my fellow members is remarkable, and I have eagerly attended a wide range of meetings and training events in order to learn more about this industry. In my short tenure, I have admired the high quality of the flooring projects displayed through the Design Awards and had a personal goal of entering a project someday. Clearly, the Canada Hall of History was the ideal project.

We entered this project in the Unique Installation category because of the challenging preparation required and the intricate skills of the installation team. We wanted this project evaluated not only by flooring designers and architects on the

judging team, but also by an installation specialist, Robert Varden, president of the International Certified Flooring Installers Association (CFI); who could understand the large challenge of the project.

The Design Awards were presented during the Starnet 2018 Annual Meeting in Orlando, Fla., in April 2018. To our delight and surprise, the Canada Hall of History won the Gold Award in the Unique Installation category. In addition, it won the Silver Award in the People's Choice competition through which Starnet Members and Preferred Vendor Partners vote on all of the entries in the competition each year. Finally, much to our delight and surprise, our project won the Starnet Design Awards Grand Prize, the highest award presented during the award ceremony.

During the awards ceremony, it was with great honor to celebrate the win together with Starnet Preferred Vendor Partners Milliken, H.B Fuller and Tarkett Commercial. My wife and I were so excited, the first person we contacted was (now retired) Tom, who joined in the celebration back in Ottawa. We are so grateful for the opportunity to work on this special project and are thrilled with the recognition from Starnet and the commercial flooring industry. **ft**