



National  
Gallery  
of Canada

Musée  
des beaux-arts  
du Canada

## Speaking Notes

### Dr. Sasha Suda, Director and CEO

National Gallery of Canada  
2019 Annual Public Meeting

Sunday, September 15<sup>th</sup> at 16:30  
Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, Halifax, Nova Scotia

---

Thank you Françoise and hello everyone. It's an honour to be here in Halifax for my first Annual Public Meeting as Director and CEO of the National Gallery of Canada.

It's been an inspiring five months settling into the role and getting to know our dynamic and talented employees, some of whom have joined us today. Allow me to introduce our Senior Management Team:

- Jean-François Bilodeau, Deputy Director, Advancement and Public Engagement;
- Sylvain Bordeleau, Director, Human Resources;
- Anne Eschapaspe, Deputy Director, Exhibitions and Outreach;
- Stephen Gritt, Director, Conservation and Technical Research;
- David Loye, Deputy Director, Administration and Chief Financial Officer;
- Matthew Symonds, Director, Corporate Secretariat and Ministerial Liaison; and
- Ann Thomas, Interim Chief Curator.

As Françoise noted, 2018 was a landmark year for the National Gallery of Canada. Close to 435,000 people walked through our doors in Ottawa, representing a 13% increase from 2017, and a 9% increase over projections. This success is largely based on the popularity of our exhibitions and numerous programs and activities, and a vigorous marketing.

The Gallery organized 42 exhibitions; 24 were presented in Ottawa, and 18 at galleries throughout Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and Italy. *Halifax Harbour*, organized in partnership with the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, explored the city's waterfront through the eyes of artists Arthur Lismer and Harold Gilman, following the horrific explosion that rocked the city in 1917. We were saddened to learn of the recent damage to the harbour caused by Hurricane Dorian. My heart goes out to those affected.

In addition to its exhibitions, the Gallery loaned 250 works to 66 institutions, including the Beaverbrook Art Gallery in Fredericton, the Dalhousie Art Gallery in Halifax, and the Confederation Centre Art Gallery in Charlottetown. We also had the chance to purchase 176 works of art, including five by the Halifax-born artist, Garry Neill Kennedy. I invite you to consult our most recent [Annual Report](#), available on our website, to learn more about the highlights of our last financial year. I applaud the NGC team and my predecessor, Marc Mayer, for a stellar year.

Looking ahead, I'm excited and humbled to lead the National Gallery of Canada as its new Director and CEO. There is an incredibly strong foundation of hard work and excellent programming to build on, and it is truly a privilege to take on this role.

We just wrapped up a busy summer. In addition to numerous exhibitions in Ottawa, we were proud to have the artist collective Isuma represent our country at the 2019 Venice Biennale. Their videos invite us to critically engage with Inuit life and to consider the impact of displacement and forced relocation on Indigenous people worldwide. Inuit and Indigenous cultures are at risk. We've made huge strides bringing Isuma's work to Venice, but we need to do more.

We look forward to continuing this conversation with *Àbadakone / Continuous Fire / Feu Continuel*. This exhibition will bring together more than 70 artists identifying with approximately 40 Indigenous nations, ethnicities, and tribal affiliations from 16 countries, including Canada. We hope to ignite visual dialogue and discourse about Indigenous sovereignty, cultural expression and innovation.

The exhibition will also align with two new initiatives. The first will bring artworks into our public spaces. We want our audiences to experience art as soon as they cross the threshold from the plaza to the entrance.

The second initiative addresses the fact that our Gallery did not collect historical Indigenous art until now. In June, I attended my first Board Meeting, where the curators of Indigenous Art proposed a historic new initiative – the re-creation of *Chief Zidansuu Regalia*. By commissioning a re-creation, the Gallery will commit to a reciprocal relationship between the artists – Master Weaver Lisa Hageman Yahgulanaas and Carver Jim Hart – and our institution. We will thus play an important and active role in revitalizing traditional artistic practices that disappeared during colonization.

With all of these projects, we hope to play a leading role in providing space for a global dialogue between Indigenous artists and our audience.

I'd like to thank our extraordinary staff for supporting our vision and working hard to bring it to life. I would also like to thank the members of our Board of Trustees for their directions and invaluable contributions to the continued success of our Gallery, and the Government of Canada and Mr. Pablo Rodriguez, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, for their support.

Finally, I'd like to thank the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 for hosting us today, and all of you for joining us. We hope to see you in Ottawa on November 7 for the opening of *Àbadakone*. We encourage you to visit the website to learn more about the exhibition.

Thank you.