

# PRESS RELEASE

DRESS, FASHION AND TEXTILES



## **APRIL 6, TARTAN DAY**

**MCCORD MUSEUM BRINGS TOGETHER MONTREALERS OF ALL BACKGROUNDS TO RAISE PROFILE OF OBSCURE NATIONAL SYMBOL**

Montreal, April 1, 2019 – Do you know Canada’s official symbols? Are you familiar with the Maple Leaf tartan? With Tartan Day fast approaching—April 6!—the McCord Museum, Montreal’s museum of social history, is urging Montrealers, Quebecers and Canadians to wear the Maple Leaf tartan with pride as a way of celebrating our plural and complex identities that enhance our national fabric.

In a video posted today on the McCord Museum’s platforms, Dress, Fashion and Textiles curator Cynthia Cooper demystifies the origins of this obscure national symbol, which she is touting as the “best official symbol for Canada today.” With gentle humour, she relates the history of the Maple Leaf tartan and asserts the right for everyone to wear it as they see fit.

For the occasion, the McCord Museum brought together people of all backgrounds. Rabbi Avi Finegold, Cree activist and journalist Maïtée Labrecque-Saganash, Gabrielle Laïla Tittley (aka PONY), journalist Philippe Lépine, personal trainer and well-known Instagram fashionista Grece Ghanem, fashion reporter and Fashion Is Everywhere blog founder Lolitta Dandoy and blogger Jessica Prudencio, to name just a few, joined with McCord Museum staff and collaborators to reinterpret how the tartan can be worn—using the checkered fabric in a kippah and a hijab, wearing it decorated with Cree embroidery and stylishly matched with t-shirts bearing thought-provoking slogans such as “A Tribe Called Queer” or “Escape From Colonialism.”

## **DID YOU KNOW?**

Created in 1964 by David Weiser, a first-generation Russian Jewish immigrant, the Maple Leaf tartan was made an official national symbol of Canada in 2011, but the recognition associated with it was restricted to the contributions of Scottish immigrants and their descendants to the founding of Canada. Given this reinterpretation of history and missed opportunity to make the Maple Leaf tartan relevant to a greater number of Canadians, Cynthia Cooper, the McCord’s curator of Dress, Fashion and Textiles, decided she should promote it and bring it in step with contemporary Canadian society by showing its potential as a symbol of openness and inclusion.

If our other official symbols may bring to mind darker aspects of our history—the beaver, for instance, was the economic impetus that underpins our colonial history, but is also a

reminder of the violence perpetrated against Indigenous peoples—the Maple Leaf tartan, with its colours representing the life cycle of the maple leaf, can be seen as emblematic of our environment and the land, a cause that we can all get behind.

### **CELEBRATING TARTAN DAY IS A WAY OF CELEBRATING OUR PLURAL IDENTITIES**

To celebrate Tartan Day in style, the McCord Museum, Montreal's museum of social history, is offering free admission on April 6 to anyone who comes to the museum wearing tartan clothing or accessories.

In addition, the McCord is asking Montrealers, Quebecers and Canadians to recreate Canada's identity mosaic by taking part in a contest on its Facebook page. Those who participate will be eligible to win a one-year membership for two people. The name of the winner will be revealed on Monday, April 8, on the McCord's Facebook page. Last, if you'd like to explore the idea of adding tartan to your wardrobe, stop in at the museum's boutique, which carries a range of accessories in Maple Leaf tartan and Quebec plaid.

The McCord Museum wishes everyone a wonderful Tartan Day!

#### **The Maple Leaf Tartan in a Nutshell \***

The Maple Leaf tartan was declared an official national symbol on March 9, 2011.

It was created in 1964 by David Weiser in anticipation of Canada's Centennial in 1967. Inspired by the different colours maple leaves take on as the seasons change, the design of this tartan incorporates the green of summer, the gold of early fall, the red that appears with the first frosts and the brown of dead leaves.

The 2nd Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment Pipes and Drums has adopted the Maple Leaf tartan, as have the 3rd and 4th battalions. A symbol of national pride, this tartan was designed to be worn by Canadians of all backgrounds, whatever their heritage, in particular on the occasion of national days such as July 1 (Canada Day) and April 6 (Tartan Day).

#### **McCord Museum, a Museum of Fashion**

The McCord Museum, Montreal's museum of social history, holds the largest Canadian Dress, Fashion and Textiles collection, consisting of over 20,680 garments and accessories made or worn in Canada over the past three centuries. The custodian of many examples of mid-20th-century high fashion by Montreal, Canadian and international designers and couturiers, the McCord preserves the memory of the development of Canada's apparel industry and garment retail sector. Its substantial contribution to the vitality of Montreal's fashion industry has been acknowledged three times by the Costume Society of America with the prestigious Richard Martin Exhibition Award, which recognizes outstanding costume exhibitions that demonstrate excellence in both presentation and interpretation of costume.

#### **About the McCord Museum**

The McCord Museum is the museum of all Montrealers, a social history museum that celebrates life in Montreal, both past and present—its history, its people and its communities. Open to the city and the world, the museum presents exciting exhibitions, educational programming and cultural activities that offer a contemporary perspective on history, engaging visitors from Montreal, Canada and beyond. It is home to over 1,500,000 artefacts, comprising one of the largest historical collections in North America, organized into the following departments: Dress, Fashion and Textiles, Photography, Indigenous Cultures, Paintings, Prints and Drawings, Decorative Arts and Textual Archives. McCord Museum: Our People, Our Stories.

\* Source: Government of Canada, 2019.

Possibility of interviews with Cynthia Cooper, Curator, Dress, Fashion and Textiles, and with Suzanne Sauvage, President and Chief Executive Officer.

**PRESS KIT**

**Source and information**

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