

# Museum of Nature opens with a new look

BY SARAH HOY, PHOTOS BY JUDITH GUSTAFSSON

The Canadian Museum of Nature opened on Victoria Day weekend with new exhibits and family fun.

Thousands of people visited the new museum over the weekend. Liz McCrea, director of communications and marketing, stated: "We had about 35,000 visitors over the three-day weekend – well beyond any attendance we've had for a comparable period. People were in a festive mood. It was very exciting to see people of all ages roaming through the museum again."

The grand opening included free admission for the Saturday, allowing visitors to experience exhibits such as the Animalium, a place to discover insects, arachnids and bugs; the fossil gallery, mammal gallery and discovery zone.

There was also a parade to start the weekend. "The parade was an engaging way to kick off the festivities. But I think the biggest hit – other than people experiencing the new galleries, the lantern and the new spaces – were the rainforest creatures that roamed throughout the museum over the weekend. They were at the centre of many family photos," said McCrea.

Before the launch of the new-look museum, the surrounding community was offered the chance to have a free sneak peek. "We recognized that our immediate neighbours had to deal with the impacts of construction throughout the project for about six years," said McCrea.

She continued: "From the start, we made an effort to communicate what was going on through public information sessions, as well as advisories with construction updates. So, with the reopening coming up, we wanted to offer them a special sneak-peek. We are their neighbourhood museum and, now with places such as our plaza and café, it will be a welcoming place they can drop into."

The museum is set to be a hub of tourism, but also a community staple in Centretown. McCrea said: "We are a national museum and, as such, welcome visitors from Canada and around the world, but we are also in the middle of a residential area.

"Centretown has a diverse group of residents, young and old, and we think the museum has something to offer them all. So, we hope they will see us as a place to visit that's in their backyard."

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When asked what the future holds for the Centretown museum, McCrea simply stated: "If the last few weeks are any indication of the future, it promises to be very exciting."

For more information on the Canadian Museum of Nature, visit [nature.ca](http://nature.ca)

**Top right:** Girls dressed as flowers in the parade.

**Right:** The new water exhibit at the museum.

**Bottom right:** Chinese gliding frog is part of the frog exhibit.

**Below:** The new-look museum boasts a spectacular lantern.

