

New Exhibit Opens at Canadian Museum of History: Honouring the Belonging of Sma'knis Sam Glode



The opening screen for Wikpalu'k Sam Glodeo'q — Honouring the Belonging of Sam Glode, displayed at the Canadian Museum of History during the event celebrating Sam Glode's life and belonging. Photo: Lindsay Ralph / Canadian Museum of History

by Ross Nervig
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Hundreds of guests gathered at the Canadian Museum of History (CMH) on November 6 for the opening of *Wikpalu'k Sam Glodeo'q ta'n wetapeksitaq: Honouring the Belonging of Sam Glode*, an exhibition created through a collaboration between Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre, the Purdy-Glode family, and the museum.

The exhibition shares the life and legacy of Sma'knis Samuel (Sam) Freeman Glode (1878–1957), a respected Mi'kmaw guide, knowledge carrier, and First World War veteran whose skills, teachings, and deep connection to Kespukwitk shaped generations of Mi'kmaw people.

A Day of Ceremony, Reflection, and Family

The day opened with a morning media preview, where journalists explored the immersive exhibition and met with representatives from MDCC, the Purdy family, and the museum. In the afternoon, family members and MDCC delegates were welcomed for a private viewing, followed by a reception.

For family representative Jeff Purdy (Wasogopa'q First Nation), the emotion of the day began the moment he first stepped into the space.

“When I walked in and saw that big portrait of Sam, it hit me—it was real,” he said. “It was a long journey to get there, but that moment felt like, ‘Oh my God... we're here.’”

Seeing Sam's belongings honoured in the exhibition

was a powerful experience for the family.

“It felt honouring and humbling,” Purdy shared. “We're remembering how he lived his life and what he sacrificed, and that means

everything to us.”

The opening also reunited relatives who had not seen each other in decades, creating what Purdy described as a moment of “bringing family

together.”

“My family grew up learning the stories of Sam's legacy—we always knew we came from good, strong character. This exhibit validates that history and fills me with pride,” said Tracey Purdy-Oickle (Wasogopa'q First Nation), great-great granddaughter of Sam Glode.

During the reception, Tim Bernard, Executive Director of Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre, spoke to Sam's enduring impact.

“Sam was a father, a Sma'knis, and a protector of our treaties and our lands,” Bernard said. “His life and legacy show the strength that comes from belonging to place. This exhibition honours that belonging—his connection to the lands and waters of Kespukwitk, his service, and the generations of his family who have continued his work of protecting Mi'kma'kik.”

Dr. Don Julien, Chair of MDCC's Board of

Directors and Elders' Advisory Council, echoed this message.

“Sam lived with the teachings of netukulimk—living in balance with land and water, taking only what is needed, and giving back in return,” Julien said. “When we speak of Sam today, we also speak of the generations who followed. The Glode and Purdy families continue that same commitment to protecting Kespukwitk.”

A Deeper Look at Sma'knis Sam Glode

Samuel (Sam) Freeman Glode (1878–1957) was born in Kespukwitk, where Mi'kmaw families have lived along the Mersey River for thousands of years. Raised in the community at Indian Hill, he grew up learning the patterns of Mi'kma'kik from parents, grandparents, and extended kin. His knowledge of waterways,

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Descendants of Sam Glode, team members from MDCC, and staff from the Canadian Museum of History gathered together at the opening of *Honouring the Belonging of Sam Glode*. Photo: Lindsay Ralph / Canadian Museum of History

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Jeff Purdy (Wasogopa'q First Nation), descendant of Sam Glode, receives a framed display of reproductions of Sam Glode's medals from Caroline Dromaguet, President and CEO of the Canadian Museum of History. Photo: Lindsay Ralph / Canadian Museum of History

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seasons, animals, and weather shaped his life as a respected guide and outdoorsman whose travels took him across Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, and even to Alaska. By the time he enlisted in 1915, Sam's expertise on the land made him a natural fit for tunnelling and engineering units during the First World War. Sam's courage and leadership in the war earned him the Distinguished Conduct Medal—one of the highest honours awarded to non-commissioned soldiers. After returning home in 1919, he continued living on the land, guiding and caring for the territories his ancestors had protected for generations. His teachings and deep connection to Kespukwitk carried forward through his descendants, including the Purdy family, who continue to protect ancestral lands along the Mersey River and uphold

treaty responsibilities. Sam's life stands as a testament to Mi'kmaw resilience, knowledge, and the enduring strength that comes from belonging to place.

An Exhibition Rooted in Place and Memory

The exhibition traces Sam's journey from his early life along the Mersey River—where his family has lived for thousands of years—to his remarkable wartime service as a tunneller and mine-sweeper. His intimate knowledge of Mi'kma'kik, passed down through generations of Mi'kmaw families living on the land, made him an invaluable member of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Purdy's connection to Sam's wartime experience deepened last year during a visit to Belgium. "I walked the same paths he did—through no man's land, to the exact spot where the tunnel collapsed onto

him," he said. "Knowing what he accomplished there was very honouring and humbling." "Our ancestors freely gave for the good of others, and Sam's life proved that," said Tracey Purdy-Oickle. "He contributed greatly to our Nation and to other countries where he served." Guided by stories shared by the Purdy family, the exhibition also highlights their continued work to protect ancestral lands, safeguard sacred spaces, and uphold treaty rights throughout Kespukwitk. "If people wanted pictures and stories of Sam, they had to talk to the family," Purdy added. "That's how this all started—sharing what we had and slowly building it up over the years."

Honouring a Legacy That Lives On

Caroline Dromaguet, President and CEO of the Canadian Museum of History, acknowledged

the importance of the partnership behind the exhibition. "This exhibition is the result of deep collaboration, trust, and shared vision," she said. "Working alongside MDCC and the Purdy family has been a profound honour. Together, we've created a space where Indigenous voices lead the storytelling." As the ceremony concluded, reproductions of Sam's medals were presented to his descendants before guests made their way upstairs to the gallery for the exhibition opening. For Jeff Purdy, that moment encapsulated the meaning of the day.

"The whole display was amazing," he said. "It wasn't just a little mention—it was a large space that honoured him properly." Sam Glodeo'q ta'n wetapeksitaq: Honouring the Belonging of Sam Glode is now open at the Canadian Museum of History and will run until November 2027. ʘ



Visitors explore the gallery at the Canadian Museum of History during the opening of Honouring the Belonging of Sam Glode. Photo: Lindsay Ralph / Canadian Museum of History



Tracey Purdy-Oickle (Wasogopa'q First Nation) delivering remarks at the opening of Honouring the Belonging of Sam Glode. Photo: Lindsay Ralph / Canadian Museum of History



Sam's Great-granddaughter Bev Purdy taking part in the gathering held in his honour. Photo: Lindsay Ralph / Canadian Museum of History



Members of Sam Glode's family gather on stage during the medal presentation at the opening of Honouring the Belonging of Sam Glode at the Canadian Museum of History. Photo: Lindsay Ralph / Canadian Museum of History



Brian Purdy enjoying the stories and memories shared during the event. Photo: Lindsay Ralph / Canadian Museum of History



Donna Hurlburt, her sons Aiden and Bryson, and her niece, Leanne Hudson, visiting together between program moments. Photo: Lindsay Ralph / Canadian Museum of History



Elder Dr. Don Julien (Millbrook First Nation) offering remarks at the opening of Honouring the Belonging of Sam Glode at the Canadian Museum of History. Photo: Lindsay Ralph / Canadian Museum of History



Elder Claudette Commanda (Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation) and Elder Dr. Don Julien leading the opening of the program with teachings and reflection. Photo: Lindsay Ralph / Canadian Museum of History



Jeff Purdy reflecting on family history as he shows a photograph of his grandmother and great aunts. Photo: Lindsay Ralph / Canadian Museum of History



Three generations of the Purdy family standing together during the event. Photo: Lindsay Ralph / Canadian Museum of History

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Purdy family members sharing time together during the reception following the program. Photo: Lindsay Ralph / Canadian Museum of History



Jeff Purdy and Tracey Purdy-Oickle sharing reflections with the audience. Photo: Lindsay Ralph / Canadian Museum of History



MDCC's Mi'kmaw Language Specialist, Geordy Marshall (Eskasoni First Nation), offering the "Honour Song" during the program. Photo: Lindsay Ralph / Canadian Museum of History



A guest exploring the exhibits displays and interpretive panels. Photo: Lindsay Ralph / Canadian Museum of History



Brian Purdy examining a case of belongings during the gallery walk. Photo: FPS.



A view inside the gallery featuring Glode Family Stories. Photo: FPS.



MDCC team members attending the opening, (L–R): Kamden Nicholas (Pictou Landing First Nation), Curatorial Associate: Collections; Leah Morine Rosenmeier, Director of Operations; Ashley Sutherland, Curatorial Associate: Digital Assets; and Geordy Marshall, Mi'kmaw Language Specialist. Photo: FPS.



Introductory panels and family lineage display from Honouring the Belonging of Sam Glode. Photo: FPS.