

**May 15, 2013****IMMEDIATE RELEASE: New Exhibition – *Textile Museum of Canada explores Maya weaving traditions in exhibition Ancestry and Artistry: Maya Textiles from Guatemala***

TORONTO - Opening May 29, the Textile Museum of Canada presents *Ancestry and Artistry: Maya Textiles from Guatemala*, an exhibition exploring the dynamic relationship between tradition and innovation reflected within the vibrant fabric and garments of Guatemala. Drawing from the Textile Museum of Canada's permanent collection as well as private collections, the exhibition also includes rarely-seen, exceptional weavings on loan from the Friends of Guatemala's Ixchel Museum of Indigenous Dress. On view for the first time in Canada, the exhibition features the work of contemporary artists Andrea Aragón and Verónica Riedel of Guatemala and US photo-journalist Jean-Marie Simon – three women who are intimately connected to the country and have been close observers of the evolution of Maya cultural identity and present-day politics in Guatemala.

Weaving holds great importance for the Maya, and traditional dress plays an essential role in community life. Worn for religious ceremonies and as an emblem of ethnic pride, textiles have also offered a medium for innovation and creative expression as well as a marketable product for the tourist industry. The distinctive garments and accessories associated with Maya culture maintain a vital link with the community's ancestral past while also representing a potent symbol of contemporary 21<sup>st</sup>-century life. Featuring an array of textiles patterned with evocative designs rich in visual imagery, the exhibition *Ancestry and Artistry* offers a journey through a century of dynamic social change in Maya textile production representing modernization, political upheaval, and religious transformation.

Today, the expansion of Maya artisanal production into the global sphere has offered both opportunities and challenges for cultural survival. As the exhibition curator Roxane Shaughnessy notes, "Museums have an important role to play, supporting the efforts of Maya weavers today to maintain the richness of their culture in an era of rapid urbanization and globalized economies." In many cases, contemporary *huipiles*, or woman's blouses, are now commercially-produced and made using cheaper, less labour-intensive methods. Despite these changes, however, weaving remains a key cultural practice in Maya communities and women are deeply proud of their artistry, supporting the retention of values and tradition while facilitating cultural reinvention and survival.

*Ancestry and Artistry* is presented by the Textile Museum of Canada with the support of the Museums Assistance Program of the Department of Canadian Heritage. The exhibition is accompanied by a full-colour catalogue with essays by Roxane Shaughnessy, James C. Langley, Rosario Miralbés de Polanco, Ann Pollard Rowe, Donna E. Stewart, and Mary Anne Wise, and will travel to the Nickel Arts Museum in Calgary, AB and The Reach Gallery in Abbotsford, BC in 2014-15.

A public opening reception will be held at the Textile Museum of Canada, 55 Centre Avenue, Toronto on Wednesday May 29, 6:30 - 8 pm.

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**Museum Hours**  
Open 7 days a week 11 am – 5 pm  
Wednesdays 11 am – 8 pm