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Museum chief `victim of racism'

By Mark Phillips in Canberra
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Outgoing National Museum of Australia director Dawn Casey was a victim of racism and sexism, Aboriginal leader Mick Dodson claimed yesterday.

He said Ms Casey, who is of Irish and Aboriginal descent, had lost her job because she had upset the Anglo-Saxon establishment.

Ms Casey, who finishes work today, denied being bitter about the museum council's decision to dismiss her but agreed the museum was a casualty of the "culture wars" about the history of black and white Australia.

Although she delivered the \$150 million museum on time and on budget in 2001, with attendances since being 60 per cent above expectations, Ms Casey's contract was not renewed.

Craddock Morton, a senior bureaucrat in the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, has been appointed acting director.

Ms Casey's last function as museum director - hosting an exhibition and forum on native title yesterday - was the catalyst for Professor Dodson's attack.

An emotional Professor Dodson began crying when he spoke about Ms Casey at the exhibition launch.

"I'm sorry but it's a bit difficult to sing the praises of a national treasure who has been treated so shabbily," he said.