



NIAGARA^{ON THE} LAKE **MUSEUM**

ANNUAL REPORT



WWW.NOTLMUSEUM.CA

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MISSION

We are a team of staff & volunteers that passionately collects, preserves, researches, educates and promotes the history of Niagara-on-the-Lake and its communities. We inspire an appreciation of local history through engaging programs and exhibitions.

REPORT FROM THE CEO

Year after year our organization is continuing to grow. It has been amazing to witness. Gone are the days of the quiet little museum on Castlereagh Street and welcome to Niagara's new and bold heritage hub!

Our greatest achievement in 2024 was the purchase of Janet Carnochan's 1911 home next door to the main museum complex. This was a huge step forward in our strategic plan to expand the Museum facilities. We are eternally grateful to Lauren & Vaughn Goettler, Lorraine & Geoffrey Joyner, and the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake for helping to purchase the house! We are also grateful to Tom Elltoft and the team at NOTL Realty for helping to facilitate its purchase. We are excited to reveal the revised plans for the membership and donors in 2025.

Over the last year there has been a growing interest in the Museum from tourists and locals. Our visitation grew by 17% and our beloved Tiny Museum welcomed over 4,400 visitors! We were also honoured to receive the Ontario Museum Association Award for Excellence in Exhibitions for our 2023 exhibition "Bound & Determined: Chloe Cooley, Enslavement & the Fight for Freedom".

Another major success was our much-loved Past is Present Heritage Festival which saw over 2,000 visitors (a 300% increase) thanks to generous funding from the 'My Main Street' grant. Your support and continued interest in participating in our activities inspires our staff and volunteers to develop and plan new and engaging programs and events every year.

Our future is bright at the NOTL Museum with exciting new permanent exhibitions on the horizon and a new expansion in the works. With your support, we can continue to revitalize our Museum to be an immersive heritage centre for residents and our visitors.

My deepest thanks to you for believing in the future of our Museum. It is more important than ever to support our heritage and culture. It is about pride in our unique cultural identity.

- Sarah Kaufman



Images from the Past is Present Heritage Festival: Peter Babcock and Sarah Kaufman finding some unique treasures; members from the Ship's Company of Penetanguishene; checking out the Tiny Museum exhibits prepared by our summer campers; and the Niagara Old Tyme Fiddlers.

NOTL MUSEUM BY THE NUMBERS

2024 Standard
Reader's Choice
Award:
**Gold Award
for Best Museum**

6,035	MUSEUM VISITORS
43,341	WEBSITE VISITS
3,306	SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS
11,602	PROGRAM/EVENT PARTICIPANTS
9,966	DIGITAL PROGRAM VIEWS
101	PROGRAMS DELIVERED
522	MEMBERS

Ontario Museum
Association Award
for Excellence in
Exhibitions for
"Bound &
Determined"

Guests at the Heritage Garden Party at the McArthur Estate. Photo courtesy of Dave Van de Laar.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

As always, the NOTL Museum, reaches out to the community through multi channels – from gatherings of volunteers making decorations or poppies, to employing its Tiny Museum to be a visual and delightful portable ‘ambassador’ of the Museum itself. In all these events, the goal is to inspire, engage, and connect people to our shared history – and to foster an ongoing appreciation for the NOTL Museum.

The Tiny Museum

In 2024, the Tiny Museum was invited to 11 events within the Niagara Region, including all the major fruit festivals in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Total admissions were 4,412, a 300% increase over the previous year. Increased visibility and creative programming throughout the year helped make the Tiny Museum more attractive to event organizers in and around Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Poppy Project

The NOTL Poppy Project expanded again in 2024. In addition to the poppy installations at the NOTL Museum on Castlereagh Street, and the Court House on Queen Street, additional poppy wreaths were seen on businesses in the Old Town, Virgil and St. Davids. The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 on King Street invited the poppy brigade to create an expanded eye-catching remembrance display on their Memorial Cairn. Plus, an exterior display at RiverBrink Art Museum property in Queenston was created to overlook the Queenston Cenotaph. All of our installations, including the more than 50 wreaths, will be seen again in 2025.

Also in 2024, poppy connections were created across Canada, inspiring ‘satellite’ versions of the NOTL Poppy Project: The Royal Henley, St. Catharines; The Vimy Foundation in Montreal; the City of Stratford’s Recreation Department; and The Millington’s Home Memorial in Victoria, B.C.

A short video of the project was made by Cogeco-TV, and aired throughout the month of November, 2024.

More than 30 volunteers contributed to the Poppy Project in 2024, with 7000 poppies now created for all the displays. The Poppy Project continues to grow and inspire us all.



Pictured: Kids enjoying the Tiny Museum at one of our community events; Volunteer Sue Henry showing a Royal Oak student how we make our poppy nets; and the poppy display at the Court House on Queen Street.



The rain didn't keep away the crowd for our Black History Tour with Jan King-Watson at Voices of Freedom Park.

Growing Connections

In 2024, we hosted various external groups, who in turn provided a new audience for the Museum. The **Niagara-on-the-Lake Newcomers** had three events, with presentations provided by David Hemmings and Shawna Jarman.

The **International Shaw Society** held a presentation as part of their annual symposium that attracted nearly 60 guests, all visitors to the Shaw and members of the Shaw Society. They debated the theatrical and societal history behind Shaw's musical *My Fair Lady*.

Blood Sport was an original production, devised and inspired by First Nations playwright January Rogers, and presented as a reading at the NOTL Museum, accompanied by a panel discussion moderated by Museum Board Member, Tim Johnson. This production was created to educate and confront the trend of 'pretendian' – where false claims to Indigenous identity and ancestry have angered and disappointed Indigenous communities across the country.

A book launch for the **Landscape of Nations: Beyond the Mist**, co-edited by Tim Johnson and Rick Hill, was also hosted at the Museum, followed by a presentation with several of the book's authors. We are proud to share in the promotion of such a significant and seminal anthology, chronicling the history of Indigenous peoples here in Niagara.

The NOTL Museum Mennonite Project began in 2024, with producers Barbara Worthy and Joe Lapinski recording oral histories from seven local Mennonite founding families, with audio videos of each interview. The final results can be seen and heard on the NOTL Museum's [oral history website](#) in 2025, and are key components to the NOTL Museum's growing Mennonite history collection. This project was funded by Library and Archives Canada.

PROGRAMS



We had another busy year of programming to engage our members, the community, and visitors to Niagara-on-the-Lake:

- Six **virtual lectures** were delivered via Zoom in the winter.
- Seven in-person **lectures** were held from March - September, sponsored by Geoffrey & Lorraine Joyner.
- A workshop on the **Ontario Land Registry**, was delivered by the knowledgeable team from Brown Homestead.
- **Members' Trivia Night** was another fun and friendly competition.
- A virtual monthly **Doc Club** from February to May, and from October to December, provided an engaging way to discuss and debate a wide range of Canadian and international documentaries.
- Eleven monthly **Famous & Infamous** presentations were given by local residents about the life and times of people from the past.
- A total of **60 Walking Tours** were conducted, including our Neighbourhood walks series in the spring, public tours on Saturdays and Sundays from June to September, and private group bookings throughout the year. In 2024 the Museum guides hosted private groups from UNESCO, Google, the William Morris Society of Canada, provincial and federal government representatives, and a surprising amount of travel writers.
- Six morning **Yoga** sessions were held in our courtyard with Sonya de Lazzer.
- **Kid Curator Camp** ran for one week in July and one week in August.
- A **Secret Salon Series** concert was held in partnership with J.A.D.E. Music.
- A panel hosted by the **International Shaw Society**, in partnership with the Shaw Festival.
- **Doors Open NOTL**, coordinated by the Museum, offered free admission to 15 sites showcasing our natural, built, and cultural heritage.
- The Museum participated as an annual site on the **Rotary Holiday House Tour** with Memorial Hall decorated in a gingerbread theme by our volunteers.
- The Tiny Museum was part of the **Christmas Parade** with costumed volunteers to hand out chocolates.



The Past is Present Heritage Festival: Niagara Handweavers and Spinners; Volunteer Marnie Taylor selling books; and The Canadian Historical Songbook singers performing for the crowd.

SPECIAL EVENTS



Photo courtesy of Dave Van de Laar.

Heritage Festival - In 2024, our annual Past is Present Heritage Festival expanded thanks to generous funding from **My Main Street**. This annual community event included heritage demonstrations along with the much-anticipated treasures sale, food and live music. As a new addition in 2024, we invited Sorella Niagara to curate a summer market of vendors on Castlereagh Street. We closed off the street from Davy Street, up to and including our new property at 25 Castlereagh. This allowed for more participants, larger displays and more visitors. We welcomed approximately 2,000 people throughout the day, four times what we normally see! The event raised over \$5,000 through the sale of your generously donated treasures and used books.

Heritage Garden Party - We held the second annual Heritage Garden Party at 200 John Street East, the beautiful home of our gracious hosts **Brenda and Blair McArthur**. We celebrated the long history of this property with excellent food from Niagara's Finest Hotels, drinks from Konzelmann Estate Winery and Niagara College, and musical entertainment from the Sonen Sisters (pictured above),

We are grateful to our garden party committee, led by Catherine Novick, for helping to raise over \$36,000 for the Museum through this sold-out event, which complemented our Niagara Polo event held the next day. The weekend was one for the books!

The success of this event could not be possible without the support of our amazing sponsors:



Scotia Wealth Management.

Nancy Ammari, CFA, CFP
Associate Director
and Team Lead

Aleksandra Gorodezky, CIM®
Senior Wealth Advisor,
Portfolio Manager



WOODWINDS
FOUNDATION





The Heritage Garden Party: Rick Meloen, Judy Thornton, Denise Ascenzo, and Steve Steele dressed up to play croquet at the McArthur Estate; guests checking out the event program; homeowners Brennda and Blair McArthur. Photos courtesy of Dave Van de Laar.

An aerial photograph of a large outdoor polo event. A large crowd of people is gathered on a grassy field, with many cars parked along the edges. Several white tents are set up, and the event is surrounded by trees. The text "NIAGARA POLO" is overlaid in large white letters.

NIAGARA POLO

Photo courtesy of Rene Bertschi, Skyview Arts.

Our biennial Niagara Polo event was a huge success, raising just over \$75,000 to support our exhibitions, programming, the care of our collections and buildings, and the future growth of the Museum.

Approximately 2,000 people descended on the Commons for an exciting day of live polo, with generous support from many sponsors, including our major sponsors, Donald & Elaine Triggs.

The day started with an Indigenous Welcome by Phil Davis (Mohawk of the Six Nations) and followed with a parade featuring the Niagara British Car Club, cars from Performance BMW & MINI St. Catharines, members from the Fort George Fife & Drum Corps, the Grimsby Pipe Band, and of course, the amazing players and ponies from the Toronto Polo Club.

Finally, the national anthem was sung by Daya Summers courtesy of Yellow Door Theatre Project to begin the games. The first match was Trubar vs. Performance BMW/MINI St. Catharines, and the second was Elaine & Donald Triggs vs. Platinum Medicine, with half-time entertainment from the Hitmen Drumline and a Best Hat competition sponsored by Beau Chapeau.

It was truly a spectacular day, with a great lineup of vendors curated by Sorella Niagara, pony rides by Warner Ranch, an amazing crowd, and exhilarating polo!

We could not have put on such a big event without our dedicated polo committee, tons of volunteers at the event, and of course, the support of our generous sponsors. We look forward to seeing everyone at the next event in September 2026!

THANK YOU TO OUR 2024 NIAGARA POLO SPONSORS

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EXHIBITIONS

STRIKE A POSE: THE ART OF SELF OBSESSION

December 1, 2023 - April 29, 2024

An exploration of how the people of Niagara-on-the-Lake documented themselves, either through paintings and drawings, or photography and pixels. Selfie Mode sponsored this display with a selfie station for visitors to use.

THE PRETTIEST TOWN: BEYOND THE BRICKS AND MORTAR

May 17, 2024 - April 6, 2025

This exhibition explored the “storeys” of some of our Town’s heritage homes and why it is important to preserve them for future generations. This exhibition was sponsored by **Niagara Holiday Rentals**.

AWARDS

In 2024, the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum received the **Ontario Museum Association award for Excellence in Exhibitions** for the 2023 exhibit, *Bound and Determined: Chloe Cooley, Enslavement, and the Fight for Freedom*. This exhibition was chosen to receive this award because “From the beginning, NOTL Museum staff set out to mindfully tell these stories through the intentional involvement and participation of members of the Black and African communities, including through co-curation of the exhibition and the commissioning of an original piece of artwork of Cooley. The NOTL Museum was able to reckon with the past by centering stories of truth, resistance, and freedom by presenting a more authentic, inclusive, and truthful history.”

PERMANENT EXHIBITION PLANNING

In 2024, we hired interpretive planners Laura Robb and Judith Koke to develop an interpretive plan that will provide the framework for the new permanent exhibition. Throughout the year, the interpretive planners met and surveyed stakeholders, staff, teachers, historians, and tourists to determine our target audiences, visitor outcomes, concept maps, sample visitor experiences, and text. The interpretive plan will be used in the design and installation phase of the permanent exhibition planning.



Sarah Kaufman wins the Spirit of Niagara Award for Community Leadership.



Babs Worthy wins the Women in Business Award for Arts & Culture.



Shawna Butts moderating a session at the Canadian Museum Association Annual Conference.

VIRTUAL EXHIBITIONS

GOOGLE ARTS & CULTURE

We added several new online exhibitions in 2024:

- All Along the Waterfront: Leisure and Recreational Pursuits
- All Along the Waterfront: Pleasure Crafts
- All Along the Waterfront: The Niagara Harbour and Dock Company

For those unfamiliar with our participation in this platform, Google Arts & Culture allows us to feature our collection and create online exhibitions. We have 30 digital exhibitions for you to check out.

COLLECTIONS & RESEARCH

In 2024, we had 30 donors with 367 items collected. Some of the highlights are:

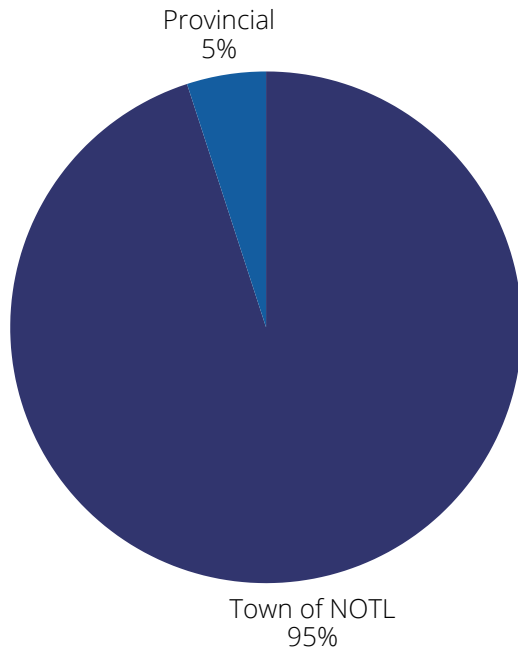
- Camera owned by local photographer, William Quinn.
- Cowrey Shell Snuffbox given to Elizabeth Servos by William Claus, February 5, 1801.
- A photo album including images of the Queen's Royal Hotel, the ice rink across from the museum, Niagara Camp, and more.
- Silver Serving Tray from the Queen's Royal Hotel.
- Trumpets played by Alfred Crysler while in the Niagara Fruit Growers Band.
- Daily Orders Book from Niagara Camp for the 12th Battalion, York Rangers, 1888.

In 2024, we handled approximately 65 requests from researchers. However, this number does not reflect the number of requests the museum handled as the Town Historian for the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. Staff spent countless hours researching properties in support of the Town's mission to designate non-designated priority properties on the Municipal Register. As the Town Historian, the Museum has also supported the Town with research for the expansion of the Queen-Picton Heritage Conservation District.

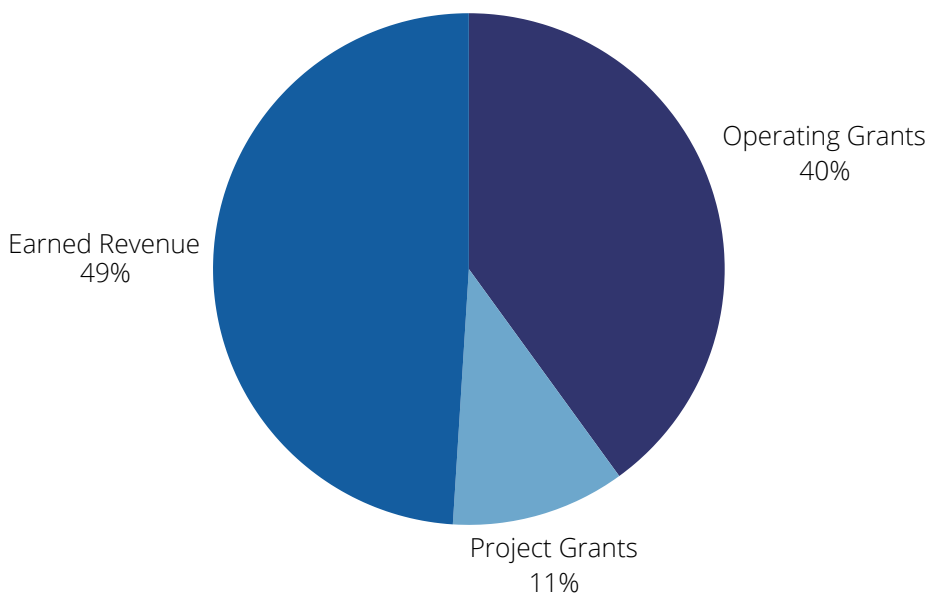
Thanks to the **Community Services Recovery Fund** grant awarded in 2023, we were officially able to transfer our collections database to PastPerfect Online in 2024. This change has allowed us to work from anywhere in the Museum, in the community, and even while working remotely. It has also allowed us to make records available on our public-facing database. We added 224 records in 2024 to our public database, bringing the total to 6,130 records or approximately 11% of our collection.

We were fortunate to receive an **Ontario Trillium Foundation** Capital Grant in 2024 to replace the outdated UV-Coated Plexiglass on the windows throughout the galleries. This ensured that our collection on display would not become faded and embrittled by the harmful ultraviolet radiation.

GRANTS & FOUNDATIONS



Operational grants received in 2024.



Revenue Breakdown 2024

GRANTS RECEIVED IN 2024

Community Museum Operating Grant (Province of Ontario)

Documentary Heritage Communities Program (Library and Archives Canada)

My Main Street Community Activator delivered by the Canadian Urban Institute

Ontario Power Generation

Ontario Trillium Foundation

Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake

Young Canada Works/ Jeunesse Canada au travail (Government of Canada)

STATEMENT OF REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2024

REVENUE	2024	2023
Municipal Grant	297,934	281,029
Event Fundraising	213,972	34,660
Federal and Provincial Grants	97,986	140,984
Gift Shop Sales	40,795	29,808
Donations	34,259	28,079
Admissions and Tours	29,108	18,612
Harmonized sales tax refunds	20,861	13,136
Memberships	19,720	23,010
Programs and events	12,773	8,927
Interest Revenue	8,442	11,306
Special Projects and other	2,049	1,106
	777,899	590,657
EXPENSES		
Staff Salaries and Benefits	324,107	320,591
Event Fundraising	102,618	1,641
Administration	60,814	49,465
Maintenance and Utilities	47,253	59,281
Programs and Events	41,295	22,142
Harmonized sales tax refunds	30,010	18,337
Advertising and Website	28,340	24,066
Gift Shop Merchandise	22,125	19,207
Curatorial	20,539	4,944
Capital Expenses	10,721	10,346
Exhibition	4,943	8,179
Publishing and education	468	3,585
Planning studies and Other	236	487
	693,469	542,271
GENERAL FUND—EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES	84,430	48,386

CAPITAL FUND	2024	2023
Capital Campaign donations	1,007,266	348,912
Capital Campaign interest revenue	8,399	10,036
Harmonized sales tax refund (capital)	7,280	14,904
Interest on long term debt	(5,017)	0
Harmonized sales tax (capital portion)	(5,606)	(16,826)
Capital fundraising expense	(40,256)	(60,817)
CAPITAL FUND—EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES	972,066	296,209
COMBINED—EXCESS (DEFICIENCY) OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES	1,056,496	344,595
STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN NET ASSETS		
General Fund	2023 Balance	311,267
	Excess of Rev. over Exp.	84,430
	Transfers	0
	2024 Balance	395,697
Capital Fund	2023 Balance	999,448
	Excess of Rev. over Exp.	972,066
	Transfers	0
	2024 Balance	1,971,514
Total Net Assets		2,367,211

FOR A FULL COPY OF THE AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS BY BRIDGMAN & DURKSEN, CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS, PLEASE CONTACT THE MUSEUM.

2024 DONORS

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

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Bowden, Judith & Jeff
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Wery, Susan

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Johnston, Brian
Schander, Ken & Frances
Sutherland, David
Weaver, Murray & Barbara

IN MEMORIAM

In Memory of Ben Buholtz

Jago, Syme
Rigby, Barbara

In Memory of Bruce Dixon

Berg, Barbara
McCrossan, Daryl
Miller, Fred

In memory of Barbara

Challis

Boniwell, Kirsty
Hrycay, Susan
Petrie, Stewart

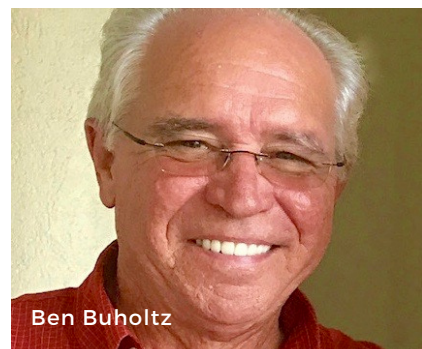
In memory of Lt. Col.

Bernard L. Nehring

Merritt, Richard

In memory of John Gardner

Coacher-Warren, Nigel



GENERAL

Alfie's Lemonade
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Frayne, Sharon
Gagne, Lucie
Gallant, John
Gasbarrino, Elise
Gillespie, Marie
Golombek, Lesley
Goodale, Viorika (Vika)
Gorodezky, Aleksandra
Granger, Steven
Greco, Mary
Guay, Lucie
Hacking, Dede
Hall, Stewart
Harley, Laurie
Hartford, Jan
Hartwick, Shari
Hayes, Ashley
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Heffler, Dana
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Nowina, Pamela

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Rumble, Ted
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Taylor, Mary
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Wery, Susan

West, Rob
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When planning your estate remember the Niagara Historical Society. Contact us to learn more about different planned giving options.



2024 DONORS

The Society & Museum wishes to thank the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Province of Ontario for their ongoing support.



THE PHOENIX CIRCLE

In 2024, the Phoenix Circle contributed \$7,500 towards our operating costs. As a thank you for their annual contribution, these donors enjoyed a private tour and picnic at Roselawn Centre in Port Colborne and a special collections talk with our Curator, who brought out some of her favourite First World War artefacts and archives for an up-close viewing.

The Phoenix Circle is crucial to the sustainability of the Museum. If you are interested in making an annual individual commitment of \$500 to preserve our heritage, please contact the staff at the Museum.

THE NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE MUSEUM ENDOWMENT

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum Endowment Fund was established in 2018 at the Niagara Community Foundation, the annual earnings of which go straight to Museum operations. If you are interested in contributing to our endowment to assist with building sustainable funding for the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum, please speak to Sarah Kaufman, CEO. Donations of stocks and securities are accepted.

A private endowment fund was also created in 2020 to help support Museum operations, the **Ron and Linda Fritz Endowment Fund at the Ontario Arts Foundation**. Thank you for the generous gifts from these donors who appreciate the importance of our future sustainability.

VOLUNTEERS

2024 Ontario Volunteer Service Award Winners:

15 year pin:
Victor Packard

10 year pin:
Stephen Steele

5 year pin:
Myrna Mackay
Maybeth Ross
Dee Steele
Marnie Taylor

Volunteers are always the heart of the Niagara-on-the-Lake Museum. We owe an outstanding debt of gratitude to all who give freely of their time, generosity, talents, and good nature to support our work in preserving the community's heritage.

The documents, artefacts, costumes, decorations, poppies and books, that all make up the NOTL Museum's huge collection, are documented, packaged, entered and recorded through hours of dedicated volunteer time. But our volunteers do more than just help within the Museum walls. From the huge crew it takes to run a successful polo event, to the gardeners who show up every two weeks to maintain our property, rain or shine, each volunteer makes a big impact.

In 2024 the Museum was again included in the Rotary Holiday House Tour, when hundreds of guests come to see local homes, designer-decorated for the holidays, as well as visit our Museum. Many of our long-term volunteers decorate the Museum with specific themes for the event, and their imagination and talent turn our galleries into a magical wonderland every year. In 2024, we also provided interpreters for the Rotary events held at the McArthur Estate, and costumes for their musicians and performers. The event leads into the NOTL Christmas Parade, where some of our same interpreters were seen walking with our Tiny Museum, and sharing the candies and spirit of the Museum for Christmas.

Our interpreters were also in demand for the Heritage Garden Party, where they created a visual treat playing a period croquet game, and welcoming the many guests arriving at the McArthur Estate.

In 2024 volunteer hours exceeded 2,500. Translated into 'in-kind dollars', even at a minimum wage, that equals an astonishing \$45,000 value to our organization. Thank you!



Volunteers Pauline Miller, Paul Mace, and Deborah Paine with Babs Worthy at the Newcomers event.



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