

# NEWSLETTER

## The Town of York Historical Society

October 2015

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### FORMER RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL TO BE SAVED



Photo courtesy of the Woodland Cultural Centre.

Not all old buildings, however handsome, are easy to love. The one pictured above, which dates from 1904, was formerly home to the Mohawk Institute – one of only ten (of 130) residential schools for First Nations children still standing. Those who attended

these schools refer to themselves as survivors. Nevertheless, at a community consultation meeting held at the Woodland Cultural Centre in the fall of 2013, members of the Six Nations of the Grand River reached a consensus to preserve this building. Furthermore, their Council – led by Chief Ava Hill – has since launched a fundraising campaign under the banner “Save the Evidence” with a \$220,000 contribution. This past spring, the City of Brantford matched those funds with monies from its Casino reserve. Said Ward 5 Councillor David Neumann, “We all know what came out with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission ... We, in Brantford, have a unique opportunity to respond and this is our response.” (*Brantford Expositor*, June 24, 2015) In August, the Sunrise Club of Brantford Rotarians pledged \$35,000 to the campaign. The initial target is to raise the estimated \$1million cost of repairs to the roof to prevent any further damage to the building. Despite decades of neglect – resulting in rotting wood, peeling paint and mold – an engineering study has concluded that the structure is sound.

*Continued on page 2*

### Dig at St. Lawrence Market Reveals Centuries of History

For the past decade, the City of Toronto has required developers to conduct archaeological assessments when working in parts of town likely to contain such resources. Accordingly, prior to the much anticipated North St. Lawrence Market redevelopment, three tidy trenches – each 15 metres long and one metre wide – were excavated beneath the concrete slab floor of the soon-to-be-demolished 1968 structure. As it turns out, the latter's construction had little below-ground impact on what had come before, and remnants of three previous market buildings that had stood on the site – from 1904, 1851 and 1831 – were revealed. This did not come as a surprise; eighteen months for historical assessment had been built into the timeline for the new market. As this spot is where the town began, there is a lot to be learned in the coming months.



Dr. Peter Popkin instructs visitors at a public viewing on September 16. Photo: Marcus Mitanis, [urbantoronto.ca](http://urbantoronto.ca).



Photo source: Anglican Church of Canada

## Residential School, *from page 1*

The roots of the Mohawk Institute are deep, dating back to a mechanics institute founded in 1828, which offered manual training at a day school for boys. By 1831, dormitories had been added and, by 1834, girls were admitted to learn spinning and sewing. The school was located in a Mohawk village near an important crossing on the Grand River (Brant's Ford) on land that had been granted to the Six Nations in 1784. Many of its early students were Anglicans; Joseph Brant had petitioned the crown for a chapel in 1785, and the Mechanics Institute was across the street. In 1837, the Six Nations residents were ordered, by colonial decree, to resettle on the other side of the river. Nevertheless, according to the Anglican Church of Canada, a waiting list of those wanting to attend the school, which had room for only 40 students, existed throughout the 1840s.

The institute was rebuilt in 1859 following a fire, and nearby land was acquired for vocational training in farming. By the 1870s, when the Mohawk Institute name was adopted, the school was reportedly a profitable venture. Some graduate students went on to attend Brantford Collegiate Institute and became teachers themselves.

The turning point for residential schools in Canada was an 1894 amendment to the Indian Act that made formal education compulsory for all First Nations children under 16. Students were now coming to Brantford from as far west as Sarnia and as far east as Kahnawake. In 1903, some of them set fire to the school and barns. The school reopened in October of the following year, with 125 students housed in the building we see today. Renovations and additions saw 185 children resident by 1955, in an institution that had had been managed by the Department of Indian Affairs since 1922. It had become known as the Mush Hole for the soggy oatmeal, often containing worms, which its students were expected to eat. "Nobody could eat it. Nobody ate it," recalls Bud Whiteye, a former resident (*CBC News*, June 14, 2015).

Closed in 1970, the school property reverted to the Six Nations of the Grand River, who renovated part of it for the administrative offices of the Woodland Cultural Centre. Their hope is to restore and repurpose the main building as a museum and interpretive centre. Says Amos Key Jr., acting executive director of the Centre, "One survivor told me you can't appreciate what went on in this building by just standing in front of a plaque" (*Toronto Star*, June 14, 2015).



R.G. Miller, *What Was in the Mush*, oil on canvas



Tracey-Mae Chambers, *Untitled*, 2015, encaustic, 60 x 60 cm

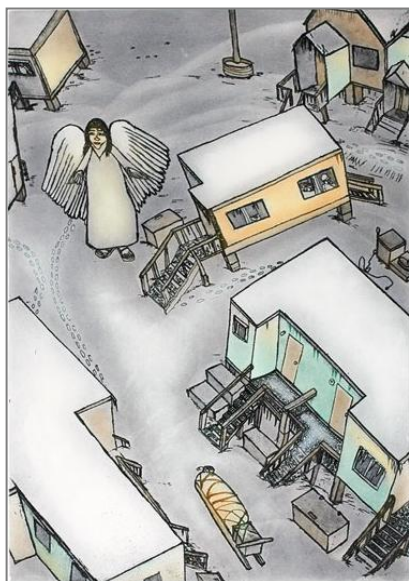
## Walking Together

This exhibition features eleven mixed-media artworks by grade-twelve First Nations students from Pauline Johnson Collegiate Vocational School in Brantford, Ontario. The works were inspired by interactions with survivors from the Mohawk Institute residential school. Two students were paired with each elder and they toured the former school together taking photos, listening to and recording stories about the elders' time at the facility. Coordinated by the Woodland Cultural Centre with assistance from a Canada Council Grant, this evocative exhibition reveals the power of intergenerational healing evident in today's urban and non-urban First Nation communities.

The exhibition continues at Mackenzie House Museum, 82 Bond Street, until November 15. Regular admission applies.



## Meet *Another* of Our Neighbours and Customers



Shuvinai Ashoona, *Angel in Town*, 2008, etching and aquatint, 23/30, 30 x 22.5"

the well known Cape Dorset artist Shuvinai Ashoona and Canadian art superstar Shary Boyle – will be on display at Centre Space, a contemporary gallery within the gallery on George Street, until October 27. Centre Space is alternately programmed by Feheley Fine Arts and Pierre-François Ouellete art contemporain of Montreal.

Once a stalwart of the Yorkville gallery scene, Feheley Fine Arts (established in 1961) relocated in 2012 to a former livery stable at 65 George Street. Synonymous with excellence in the field of Inuit art, and expert in the research and marketing of rare, early, private collections, Feheley's main focus is on fine quality original works by contemporary Canadian artists. Owner Patricia Feheley champions her living Inuit artists in the mainstream. One of them, Annie Pootogook, won the 2006 Sobey Art Award and, the following year was invited to participate in Documenta 12. Held every five years in Kassel, Germany, Documenta is perhaps the most prestigious invitational contemporary art exhibition in the world.

This year, Feheley Fine Arts was chosen to be the "host gallery" for the annual fall print collection from Cape Dorset, released October 17. *Universal Cobra* – a collaboration between the



Ohtaq Mikkigak, *The Chase*, 2006, lithograph, 35/50, 16 x 22.5"  
Top: Ningeokuluk Teevee, *Red Umbrella*, lithograph, 15.25 x 18"



## New Face in the Post Office

**Zoé Dulguste-Cincatta** joined the TFPO team in September. Zoé is in the second year of the Masters of Museum Studies program at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Information. Originally from Montreal, she holds a B.A. in history from the University of Kings College in Halifax, Nova Scotia. While in Halifax, she worked in visitor services at the Citadel National Historic Site. She has also worked at the Markham Museum in exhibition development. Fluently bilingual, Zoé will be helping us to translate the text of our permanent exhibition on the Royal Mail and has offered to deliver our school tour program in French. She will be working weekends, replacing our much missed Katie Dennis who has decided to further her education at the University of Western Ontario in London. I hope those of you who frequent the post office on weekends will help to make Zoé feel welcome.

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



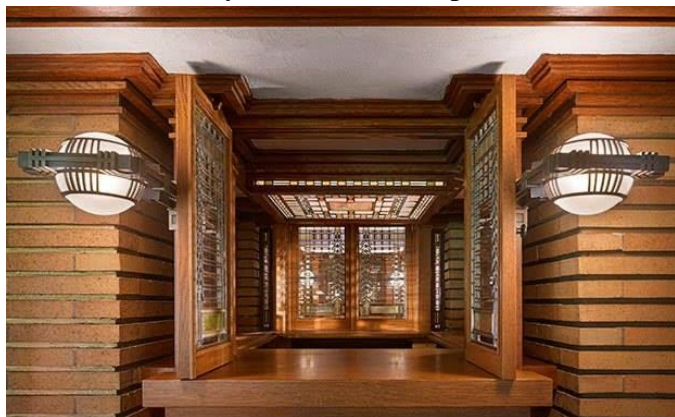
### Bus Tour of Buffalo, NY

On a rainy September 12, the Town of York Historical Society took a busload of members and friends down to Buffalo for a guided tour of the Queen City's architectural gems. Lucky for us, the rain largely held off during the morning's walking tour, guided by local enthusiast and volunteer Deb Hall-Stonish. After a satisfying lunch, we took a bus tour through various neighbourhoods, with our guide Tom Mudra pointing out so many wonderful buildings on the left and right that our necks turned



to rubber. By the time we arrived at Frank Lloyd Wright's Martin House Complex it was pouring, but then it didn't matter; the welcome was warm and the interiors so rich that a little rain outside was soon forgotten. The very last stop was a visit

to Parkside Candy for some sweet punctuation.



Photos from top: the group in Niagara Square (by Kevin Both); interior staircase, Ellicott Square Building (by Miriam Adams); Darwin Martin House interior (by Stephanie Thomas).



### Book Launch

Lindy Mechefske is a former scientific copy editor turned freelance food writer, and author of the blog *Love in the Kitchen*. The latest book from this Kingston-based writer is *Sir John's Table: The Culinary Life and Times of Canada's First Prime Minister*. On September 16, Ms. Mechefske gave an engaging and lively presentation of how the book came to be, and a brief history lesson as easy to swallow as the oysters served at the Charlottetown Conference. Sprinkled with recipes throughout, this book would make a delightful gift for the culinary historians in your life, and is available in the museum gift shop for \$19.95.

## COMING UP!

### Gold Foil Workshop

Lesley Pocklington is the proprietor of Swell-Made Co. Inspired by her love of type and urban life, she creates art prints and greeting cards that make a statement. In this workshop Lesley will teach us the



basic of gold foiling – just in time for the coming sparkly season! You'll go home with a newly-glam Moleskine notebook, and a strong desire to see what else you can beautify with your new skills. Registration is only **\$18**, and includes all supplies and a 10% discount in the museum gift shop that day. Tickets are limited!

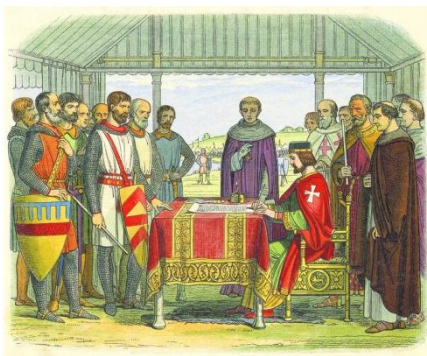
**Sunday, November 22, at 1:00 p.m.**

**Toronto's First Post Office**

**260 Adelaide Street East, 416-865-1833**



# THE NEIGHBOURHOOD AND BEYOND



## **MAGNA CARTA: Law, Liberty and Legacy**

**October 4 - November 7**

This year marks the 800th anniversary of King John of England putting his royal seal on the Magna Carta in 1215. As symbols of justice, the Magna Carta and its companion document, the Charter of the Forest, act as reminders that those who govern do so only by the consent of the people. See the two medieval charters and a fascinating exhibition that explains their history and importance.

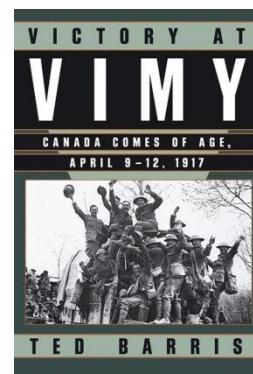
**Fort York, 250 Fort York Boulevard. Tickets are \$20 for adults, \$15 for seniors and \$10 for youth. Call 416-392-7725 or go to [Toronto.ca/magnacarta](http://Toronto.ca/magnacarta).**

## **VICTORY AT VIMY: Canada Comes of Age**

**Tuesday, November 3, 6:00 pm**

During the First World War, 500 young men from Little Trinity Church Sunday School went to the front. They mustered at Enoch Turner Schoolhouse a century ago. Acclaimed author Ted Barris looks at Vimy as the story of citizen soldiers from many salt-of-the-earth communities across the Empire, melding into an army that would become known as the “shock troops” of the Allied expeditionary force. A book signing will follow the talk.

**Enoch Turner Schoolhouse, 106 Trinity St. Tickets are \$12 or \$10 for ETS Foundation members, and are available at Eventbrite or at the door.**



## **TALKING HEADS - A Series of Dramatic Monologues**

**November 3 - 22, 8:00 pm and some 3:00 pm matinées**

Step into the lives of six ordinary people, each concealing a far from ordinary secret! John Shooter directs a collection of six of Alan Bennett's *Talking Heads* monologues. Originally written for BBC television and starring the likes of Maggie Smith, these ground-breaking one-act plays sealed Bennett's reputation as a master of observation and brilliant comic phrasing. Divided into two programs, they will be performed in rotating repertory.

**Campbell House Museum, 160 Queen St. West. Tickets \$25. For further information call 416-597-0227, or go to [campbellhousemuseum.ca](http://campbellhousemuseum.ca).**

## **REUNION OF GIANTS - Theatrical Screening**

**Wednesday, November 11, 7:00 pm**

In the summer of 2014, for the first time in 50 years, the world's two remaining airworthy Avro Lancaster bombers flew together. It was no small feat: Hamilton's 70-year-old Lancaster, VeRA, made the harrowing flight – complete with mechanical failures and unexpected storms – to the United Kingdom to meet her British counterpart, Thumper. This documentary records that historic event.

**Free at participating Cineplex Theatres. Tickets available at the box office in person only. For more information go to [www.warplane.com/reunion-of-giants](http://www.warplane.com/reunion-of-giants).**



## **AN EVENING OF REGENCY GAMES**

**Saturday, November 14, 7:30 to 10:00 pm**

Learn to play the elegant card games and other Regency-era pastimes beloved of Jane Austen and her contemporaries. Bring your friends or attend on your own – you will find like-minded Austen fans aplenty! A simple tea will be served by the fire; historical clothing is optional but encouraged. Space is limited, so pre-registration is strongly recommended.

**Toronto's First Post Office, 260 Adelaide Street East. \$20, \$15 for students and seniors. For further information call 416-578-1031 or e-mail [1812dance@gmail.com](mailto:1812dance@gmail.com).**



Top: An evocative watercolour of the 1831 market by Owen Staples, 1912, based on an earlier drawing made from an original sketch by Henry Scadding, c. 1840. Bottom: The farmer's market in 1898, seen from the southeast, with St. Lawrence Hall in the background.



Remains of a pier from the 1831 market building, found in Trench 1.

Its successor is to be a four-storey multi-purpose building that, in addition to the weekly farmers' and antiques markets, will house administrative offices, court rooms and (gulp!) four levels of underground parking. Whether or not the recent discoveries can be saved remains to be seen.

## Town of York Historical Society *Care to join us?*

Individual Memberships \$30  
Family Memberships \$50

Directors: Tom Arnold, Kevin Both, Shirley Farrar, Luisa Giacometti, Susan Grav, Suzanne Kavanagh, Judith McErvel, Councillor Pam McConnell and Nancy Wigston.

## Market, from page 1

It was Lt. Governor Peter Hunter who established a weekly market in the town of York. The first of these was held on Saturday, November 5, 1803. The first permanent structure on the site was a brick building (1831), which had a large courtyard surrounded by a gallery. The second floor over the main entrance served as the Town Hall and then, from 1834 to 1844, as the City Council Chambers. While an important building of British design, it was not popular with local farmers and butchers and was soon inadequate for the market activity. It was destroyed by fire in 1849. The new market building, completed in 1851, was part of a complex that included St. Lawrence Hall, through which one could enter the market from King Street. By the end of the 19th century, this market too had been outgrown. In 1904 two new, nearly identical markets were completed, connected by a glass and iron canopy that spanned Front Street. The south market remains to this day, open most of the week as it was then. The north market was replaced in 1968, to the delight of farmers (who liked the in-floor heating) and the disdain of architects.

## Toronto's First Post Office is administered by the Town of York Historical Society

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### Hours of operation:

Monday to Friday: 9:00 – 5:30

Saturdays: 10:00 – 4:00

Sundays: 12:00 – 4:00

Closed on holiday Mondays and the Sundays preceding them.

**The Post Office will be closed on November 11 in honour of Remembrance Day.**

The Town of York Historical Society is a legally incorporated non-profit organization and registered charity. Toronto's First Post Office is a museum, National Historic Site and fully functioning post office. Gratefully acknowledged is the support of the City of Toronto; the Ontario Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Sport; our members, donors and customers; and Canada Post Corporation.