



Ontario Museum Association Awards of Excellence 2023 Recipients

Distinguished Career Award of Excellence

The OMA Distinguished Career Award of Excellence is presented to individuals who, over an extended period, have created a lasting and meaningful legacy in the Ontario museums community.

Lori Nelson

Director (Retired), The MUSE: Lake of the Woods Museum
and Douglas Family Art Centre

Over her 34-year tenure as Archivist and later Director, Lori has made exceptional contributions to the museum field through award-winning exhibits, programming, organizational, and administrative excellence. She has successfully managed significant institutional changes, fostered new relationships, led efforts for reconciliation with Indigenous partners, established Kenora's first public art gallery, and was instrumental in transforming The MUSE into a vibrant hub for arts and culture in the community.



Lori joined the Lake of the Woods Museum in 1989 as an archivist and spearheaded the ambitious project of digitizing the museum's extensive catalog of over 20,000 objects and images. As Museum Director from 2001 onward, Lori doubled down on public outreach and growing the museum's audience. Intentional about reaching out to the Indigenous community, Lori worked with Museum Board Member Geraldine Kakeeway (herself the daughter of an IRS survivor), elders, and Indigenous community organizations to bring Kenora's Indigenous history and the history of its two residential schools to light. One of the most significant examples of these newly formed relationships was the 2008 exhibition: *Bakaan nake'iingii-izhi-gakinoo'amaagoomin / We Were Taught Differently: The Indian Residential School Experience*. The Museum was invited to bring the exhibit to Ottawa in 2010 for The Forgiven Summit, a national gathering of many who were impacted by and involved in the Indian Residential school system. The exhibit continues to travel across Canada.

In 2017, Lori oversaw an ambitious fundraising campaign to establish the 4.5-million-dollar Douglas Family Art Centre, which opened in 2019 – a testament to Lori's success in making the Museum an integral part of the community. In June 2019, the Lake of the Woods Museum officially became The MUSE: Lake of the Woods Museum and Douglas Family Art Centre.

Lori has been present in the Ontario museum sector throughout many significant changes, remaining flexible and forward-thinking and leading by example with kindness, humility, and accountability. It is our pleasure to recognize her immense impact with this Award.

“Without Lori Nelson there would be no MUSE.” – Braden Murray, Director, The MUSE

Promising Leadership Award of Excellence

The OMA Promising Leadership Award of Excellence is presented to emerging professionals, of any position or institution, who have shown promising leadership within the museum community.

Deanna Way

Executive Director, Quinte Museum of Natural History

A graduate of the AMS program from Algonquin College in 2015, Deanna began her career as the Finance & Communications Coordinator at Museum of Health Care at Kingston. In 2016, she moved on to take a role as Fossil Preparator for Research Casting International (RCI). She was hired to work on the Smithsonian Deep Time project and prepared over 60 specimens for exhibit at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History. Deanna also worked with Legris Conservation and the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN).



After successfully building a wedding photography business during the pandemic, Deanna returned to RCI in November 2021. During her time in this role, she worked in partnership with the Quinte Museum of Natural History (QMNH) in preparing for their inaugural exhibit opening in March 2022. When the Executive Director role at the QMNH opened up shortly afterward, Deanna applied and was announced as Executive Director at the official grand opening of the Museum in June 2022.

As Executive Director, Deanna successfully accomplished the planning and execution of a \$449,395 project supported by the FedDev Tourism Grant in only 9 months, leading a team of newly hired staff and over 40 volunteers. Deanna has led the Quinte Natural History Museum through a number of other ambitious changes and innovations, including a complete renovation of the exhibit space and the introduction of three new exhibits, creating a new Kids Zone, developing new educational programs, and rebranding the museum. Under her leadership, the museum has built a local audience and continues to grow in capacity and reach.

“Deanna, and QMNH, have contributed greatly to the growing heritage network in our community. She has joined our local Quinte Museum Network, in order to connect to and share with other local museum professionals. She has added to the local landscape of educational opportunities for youth by offering field trips in a subject matter not previously

available locally. And she has cemented QMNH as a new, growing, and exciting science and culture organization within our community ... I can't wait to see how Deanna, and QMNH, continue to grow in the future". – Laura Imrie, Curator, National Air Force Museum of Canada

Volunteer Service Award of Excellence

The OMA Volunteer Service Award of Excellence is presented to individuals who have made a significant contribution to a museum or museums through volunteer work.

Phil Spencer

Volunteer, Toronto Railway Museum

After a long and distinguished career in law, Phil joined what was then known as the Toronto Railway Historical Committee (TRHC) as a volunteer in 2003, with the dream of opening a railway museum in Toronto's Roundhouse Park. With an unwavering passion for trains and the assistance of other committee members, Phil worked tirelessly to develop the committee's credibility with the City of Toronto. After years of hard work, Phil's dedication and perseverance culminated in the establishment of the Toronto Railway Museum (TRM) in 2010.



Phil's projects and contributions to the TRM were vital to its early success. As a Board member and volunteer with TRHA, Phil worked with other volunteers and oversaw more than 20 crucial projects at the TRM, ranging from collaboration meetings and fund development, to major restoration projects. A few of the iconic restoration projects that Phil championed include the restoration of Train Stalls 15 through 32 of the John Street Roundhouse, a National Historic Site of Canada; and restoring and installing the 37-metre rotating turntable, one of the largest ever built in Canada.

"Beneath our feet and along the tracks is a rich and long history. Over many years Phil Spencer helped to protect and tell an important story of Toronto - a story of connection. The Toronto Railway Museum is a deeply important institution, and it simply would not exist without Phil's tireless work". - Joe Cressy, Former Toronto City Councillor

Excellence in Exhibitions

The OMA Award of Excellence in Exhibitions recognizes the creation of an exhibit. Examples may include permanent, temporary, traveling or virtual exhibitions.

Shingwauk Residential School Centre *Reclaiming Shingwauk Hall*



The Shingwauk Residential Schools Centre (SRSC) has been working with the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association since 2012 to design and implement a curatorial plan for the former Shingwauk Residential School site, now home to Algoma University. Completed in 2023, the Reclaiming Shingwauk Hall exhibition represents decades of advocacy work by Residential School Survivors of the Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association to ensure that their experiences are preserved and shared in a culturally appropriate way.

"Reclaiming Shingwauk Hall" is a one-of-a-kind permanent exhibition driven by Survivors and located in one of only 14 remaining former Residential School buildings. The exhibition not only tells the history of the Shingwauk Residential School, but also contextualizes the Shingwauk site in the larger history of colonialism, Indigenous resistance, and decolonization. It speaks to issues such as reclamation of sport, land, and spirit. It also addresses MMIWG2S, the status system, Indigenous and state relations, and other aspects of Canadian history.

This project has had a monumental impact on the Survivor and intergenerational Survivor communities, who see themselves and their communities represented in the exhibition. The exhibit space also provides opportunities for education, learning, and reflection for Indigenous and non-Indigenous visitors. Annually, the SRSC sees approximately 20,000 visitors for educational programming in this space. As Indigenous communities and all Canadians are called to grapple with the legacy of residential schools and the difficult work of Truth and Reconciliation, 'Reclaiming Shingwauk Hall' illustrates the power of community collaboration, listening, and truth-telling

"We need more projects and spaces like it across this land that encourage such profound learning, critical consideration, healing, and reparation. The exhibition's success and impact reflect what's possible when institutions become trusted co-conspirators, collaborators and amplifiers of community voices, experiences and healing". – Miranda Bouchard, artist and curator

Exhibitions – Honourable Mention

Pickering Museum Village *Greenwood Blacksmith Shop*



Pickering Museum Village's Greenwood Blacksmith Shop exhibit is designed to spark imagination through elements of play-based learning. Visitors of all ages are drawn into the space by the colourful activity stations and rich information about blacksmithing and trades. Visitors can operate a hand-cranked bellows, build their own wagon, assemble a wagon wheel, and learn about paint colours and pigments in the richly interactive space.

The Museum renovated this space in 2022, using the need for structural repairs to preserve the heritage building as an opportunity to reimagine the space, improve visitor experience, and make accessibility upgrades including a ramp and lighting. The renovation opened up the second floor of the building to visitors for the first time. The Museum also produced digital resources and a lesson plan available for teachers' use, and catalogued and relocated over 700 items from the Blacksmith Shop.

This exhibit also makes space for new educational programs at the Museum, including "Junior Carriage Painter" which invites participants to play with pigments and to create their own paint, and "Forging Ahead: The Blacksmith Challenge". "Blacksmith Apprentice Quest", a new education program launched in fall 2022, offers school groups the chance to explore the museum's different buildings and the pathway of a blacksmithing apprentice in the 1800s. Throughout the 2022 season, over 400 people visited and explored the Blacksmith Shop's hands-on learning environment. The Greenwood Blacksmith Shop allows for a truly hands-on and immersive museum experience while honoring the 175-year history of the Greenwood Blacksmith Shop and meeting the needs of the museum's buildings, collections, and visitors.

"As many living history museums move away from traditional approaches to static exhibits, Pickering's Blacksmith Shop embraces this change and offers a new way of using artifacts to engage the visitor in information about blacksmithing and heritage trades". – Allison White, Curator, Black Creek Pioneer Village

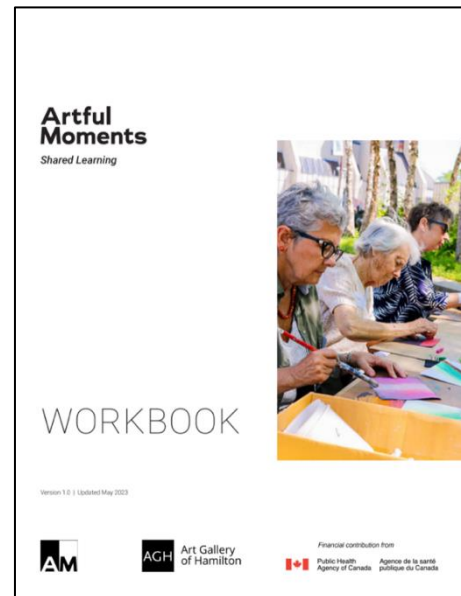
Excellence in Publications

The OMA Award of Excellence in Publications recognizes the creation of materials that are distinguished by their design and content. Examples may include books, catalogues, blogs, brochures, posters, and other printed or digital materials.

Laurie Kilgour-Walsh and the Art Gallery of Hamilton *Artful Moments: Shared Learning*

The *Artful Moments* program at the Art Gallery of Hamilton provides meaningful, individualized and engaging activities that encourage participants living with dementia to be creative, to express themselves, and to connect with others through shared experiences. The Art Gallery of Hamilton recognized that, although many institutions wished to work with community members living with dementia, lack of access to training, knowledge, and program design strategies was preventing organizations from pursuing programming.

Artful Moments: Shared Learning takes the extensive clinical and practical knowledge and experience that informs the Artful Moments program and shares it with the whole of the museum field as an accessible online resource in both official languages. Six modules guide museums through program development to create engaging, inclusive and meaningful experiences for people living with dementia. The accompanying Workbook facilitates program planning for each museum that is specific to their own mandates and audiences, and shares additional resources for research and evaluation.



Presenting a flexible methodology in an accessible resource, *Artful Moments: Shared Learning* addresses a growing demand in the sector and supports museums of all sizes and types in planning, delivering and evaluating programs for people living with dementia in their communities.

“The workbook helps to apply the lessons to real-life planning, and leads almost by default to a complete plan once the program is complete. Knowing that the lessons and knowledge come from both long-term experience in a gallery and from people who really understand dementia ensures that users are well-equipped to proceed with their own program. And the ongoing access to AGH staff person embarking on a new program is supported throughout.”
– Nicole Knibb, Senior Education Officer, McMaster Museum of Art

Excellence in Special Projects

The OMA Award of Excellence in Special Projects recognizes innovative initiatives, or new approaches or techniques that advance the museum profession.

Musée Bytown Museum *Exhibition Renewal*



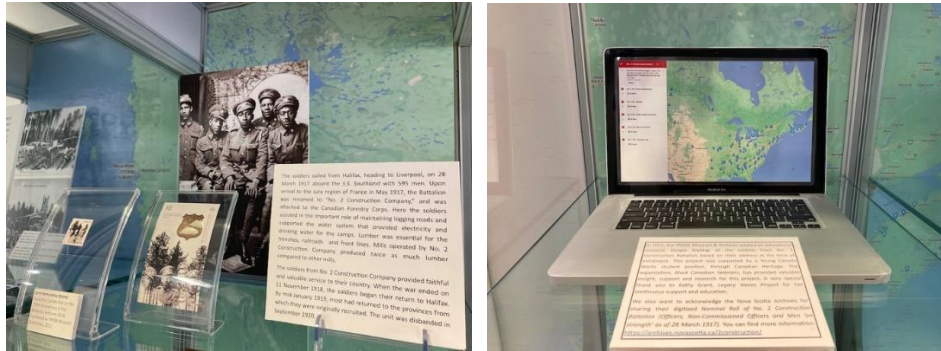
In partnership with the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg and the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation communities, the Bytown Museum embarked on the "Renewal Project," an initiative aimed at revitalizing its overarching narrative and fostering inclusivity, diversity, and accessibility in its exhibits. The museum undertook an ambitious endeavor to decolonize its narrative texts, incorporate Indigenous history, stories, and language, and update research and representation.

The first standout accomplishment of the Renewal Project is the redevelopment, design, and installation of the Museum's 31 main narrative text panels in English, French, and Anishinabemowin. In addition, the Museum commissioned a striking two-part mural to compliment the updated text and design. Titled "Sìbì Ashidj Kijig (River to Sky)", this mural narrates the story of Anishnabe Algonquin Peoples, told in their own words and through their unique artistic lens. The project also included the creation of video content to complement the artwork, providing a rich, multimedia experience for museum visitors. Additionally, the project's new text panels were designed to adhere to, and in many cases exceed, accessibility standards. The Bytown Museum's Exhibition Renewal project is an inspiring example for community museums to lead with ambition, collaboration, and a commitment to inclusion.

"The Bytown Museum renewal is a testament that being small doesn't mean you can't do big things." - Christina Tessier, President and CEO, Ingenium – Canada's Museums of Science and Innovation

Special Projects- Honourable Mention

York Region District School Board Museums and Archives *No. 2 Construction Battalion*



No. 2 Construction Battalion, Canada's only segregated unit of soldiers in Canadian military history, has often been represented by inaccurate and misleading details about its history in online resources. Actively responding to the York Region District School Board's Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Strategy, the YRDSB Museum & Archives created a special resource based on an archival primary source for educators, students, and researchers to learn and discover more about the story of No. 2 Construction Battalion. With Kathy Grant's assistance, YRDSB Museum and Archives ensured that they were providing accurate information on their website along with relevant and correct primary source documents to educators and students.

With permission from the Nova Scotia Archives, YRDSB Museum & Archives built and launched a Google MyMap based on the digitized Nominal Roll of the No. 2 Construction Battalion. This easy, ready to use, customizable digital tool brings a fresh perspective into historical analysis, highlighting just one small part of the Black community's response to the call for service during the First World War. Previously a small footnote in Canadian military history, the story of No. 2 Construction Battalion has rightfully become a story of prominence in the classroom. Available on the yrdsb.ca website, this resource remains available to anyone who is interested to use it.

"It invites the public into the exploration. The site becomes a tool to launch curiosity and make students aware of the kinds of materials that archives and museums hold. It makes the material tangible in a way that a static display cannot begin to." – Kris Tozer, educator

Excellence in Community Engagement

The OMA Award of Excellence in Community Engagement recognizes projects that have increased the community's engagement with the museum or institution. Examples may include the development of meaningful volunteer involvement, impactful marketing or social media campaign, or the creation of effective partnerships.

Textile Museum of Canada *Gathering*



Gathering is both an online project and the first installation of the Textile Museum of Canada's (TMC) permanent Collection Gallery. The installation presents over 40 pieces from the Museum's permanent collection of over 15,000 objects from around the world. 15 of the textiles presented were selected by participants and their varied responses to these textiles are presented digitally alongside the pieces themselves. Stepping away from the traditional role of museums as knowledge-keepers, TMC wanted to create a platform for the public to share their own knowledge and experience through the Museum's collection, and to convey the shared human experience of textiles.

A community-led approach was taken to gather the stories and creative responses for this project, which considered themes of migration and diaspora, everyday life, ancestral reclamation, and resilience. With the object of considering different models of collaboration and reaching wider networks, TMC put out an open call for artist submissions and personal stories. They partnered with the Afghan Women's Organization or AWO to produce *Weaving Journeys*, a collection of short films that features the stories of 6 women representing immigrants and refugees in Canada. The curatorial collective *Mending the Museum* also partnered with the Museum, inviting artists from their networks to participate in the project.

The curatorial process employed in *Gathering*, which resisted traditional models of the museum as knowledge keeper, fostered new relationships with the Museum's community and partners and allowed participants to share their own stories and artworks with new audiences.

“These initiatives – paving the way for new approaches in museum practices grounded in the communities they serve and those they welcome – not only shift local conversations, but impact the methodologies employed by arts organizations more broadly as a best practice to learn from.” - Ilana Shamoon, Deputy Director and Director of Programs, Toronto Biennial of Art

Excellence in Programs

The OMA Award of Excellence in Programs recognizes programming that creatively engages new audiences, or provides exemplary service to existing ones.

Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery *Creative Connections: Art & Dementia*



The ‘Creative Connections: Arts & Dementia’ project was an intergenerational community art project and exhibition at the Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery. Indigenous artist and educator Naomi Smith led free clay workshops with seniors living with dementia and grade 5 students. The work that participants made was exhibited at the Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery, and a public celebration brought all project participants together. Alongside the exhibition, a public event about Arts & Dementia, co-run by the Gallery and the Alzheimer Society of Waterloo Wellington, raised awareness about dementia and how to live well with dementia through creative and social engagement.

Smith selected an artwork from the permanent collection that gallery staff brought off-site to care homes in Elmira and Kitchener. Bringing original art objects into community spaces allowed the gallery to connect with audiences in an imaginative and accessible way, simultaneously enriching the lives of elders and young people within its community and speaking to the role that museums and galleries can play in well-being at every stage of life.

“... an outstanding example of how engagement with the arts can support the most vulnerable members of a community. It is important that work like this is supported by cultural organisations such as the Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery to raise awareness about dementia, its impact on both the people diagnosed with the condition and their carers and loved ones”.
– Jennie Crawford, Museum Matters