# ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Since 1888*

## ANNUAL REPORT 2025

# ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Since 1888

**ANNUAL REPORT 2025**


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## TABLE OF CONTENTS


3 CHAIR'S REPORT
4 TREASURER'S REPORT
5 *ONTARIO HISTORY*
6 MEMBERS & INCORPORATION
7 INSURANCE PROGRAM
8 PARKVIEW NEIGHBOURHOOD GARDEN
9 CEMETERY DEFENCE
10 HONOURS AND AWARDS
11–13 NEW MEMBERS, SUBSCRIBERS, & DONORS


Established in 1888, The Ontario Historical Society (OHS) is a not-for-profit corporation, registered charity, and publisher. The OHS is a non-government group bringing together people of all ages, all walks of life, and all cultural backgrounds interested in preserving some aspect of Ontario's history.


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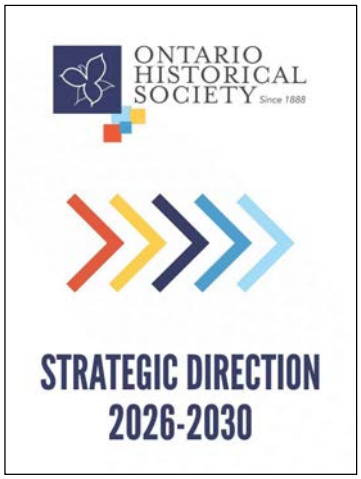
## CHAIR'S REPORT

Dave Mowat, **CHAIR**

In 2025, the Ontario Historical Society moved forward with its strategic planning consultation meetings, held virtually and in-person in communities across the province. I want to thank our members for their contributions to this process. The OHS introduced its new Strategic Plan for 2026-2030 at the 2025 Annual General Meeting.

Central to our vision for the future is a renewed approach to programming and membership support. Our mission is to connect individuals, organizations, and communities to Ontario history. In order to do that, the OHS will work to support its vast network of membership organizations as they work to fulfil unique local mandates. Pillar 1 of the new strategic plan is capacity building programs and services for our members. In the fall of 2026, we will be launching a new web platform with a resource library for our members. Through new partnerships with peer organizations and professionals, the OHS will populate this library with training, educational videos, and templates for our members.




Also central to our new plan is the redevelopment of our existing programs, services, and publications to help us reach new audiences together. By expanding readership and reach, we can better reflect the impact of the grassroots heritage organizations that make community heritage preservation and programs possible.

I want to acknowledge the ongoing support of the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism. OHS Executive Director Daniel Dishaw and I met with the Hon. Graham McGregor (and members of his staff) in June of 2025 to discuss the important work of the OHS and its members across Ontario. I'd like to thank the Minister and his staff for what was an engaging and productive discussion. The OHS continues to advocate for increased support for volunteers and not-for-profit heritage organizations in Ontario.

It has been an honour to serve the Society as Chair these past two years. I wish to extend my sincere thanks to the dedicated OHS staff who work diligently to support the Society's operations. I also want to recognize my fellow Board Members who work to support the organization's mandate and the staff. I look forward to welcoming new Directors and a new Chair at the upcoming Annual General Meeting.

Pictured above, from left to right are Dave Mowat, OHS Chair; the Hon. Graham McGregor, Minister, Citizenship and Multiculturalism; and Daniel Dishaw, OHS Executive Director.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Mark Plishewsky, **TREASURER**

The Society's 2025 financial statements, audited by Akler Browning LLP, show a balance sheet that is sound, healthy, and debt free.

Total revenues from grants, memberships, subscriptions to *Ontario History*, investment income, and donations amounted to $378,934 in 2025. Total income the previous year was $397,511. Total expenditures amounted to $388,543, which is down from $393,396 in 2024.

The Statement of Operations for 2025 reflects a marginal defecit of $9,609.

In 2025, the Society is reporting a 9.5% increase to the overall fund balance. Total Liabilities and Fund Balances for 2025 were $1,329,409. Nearly all of these funds are restricted donations and bequests.

OHS volunteers once again donated approximately 7,000 hours of time and expertise to the Society in support of its charitable activities. In its 2018 Report, The Value of Volunteering in Canada, the Conference Board of Canada established the average value of work by a volunteer at $27 per hour. Therefore, based on this calculation, the value of the hours contributed by OHS volunteers in 2025 is worth the equivalent of $189,000 in donated labour.

The Society thanks the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for supporting the OHS through the Aid to Scholarly Journals grant, and the Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism for supporting the operations of the OHS through the Provincial Heritage Organization Operating Grant.

The OHS remains committed to its policies of fiscal discipline, strict spending controls, no debts, and prudent financial management.

In 2025, the OHS held strategic planning consultation meetings with our members. On February 7, 2025, members of the OHS staff and Board of Directors held a consultation meeting at the Thunder Bay Museum. Pictured below, the Museum's Executive Director Scott Bradley delivers a presentation on the various programs and activities of the museum.

## *ONTARIO HISTORY*

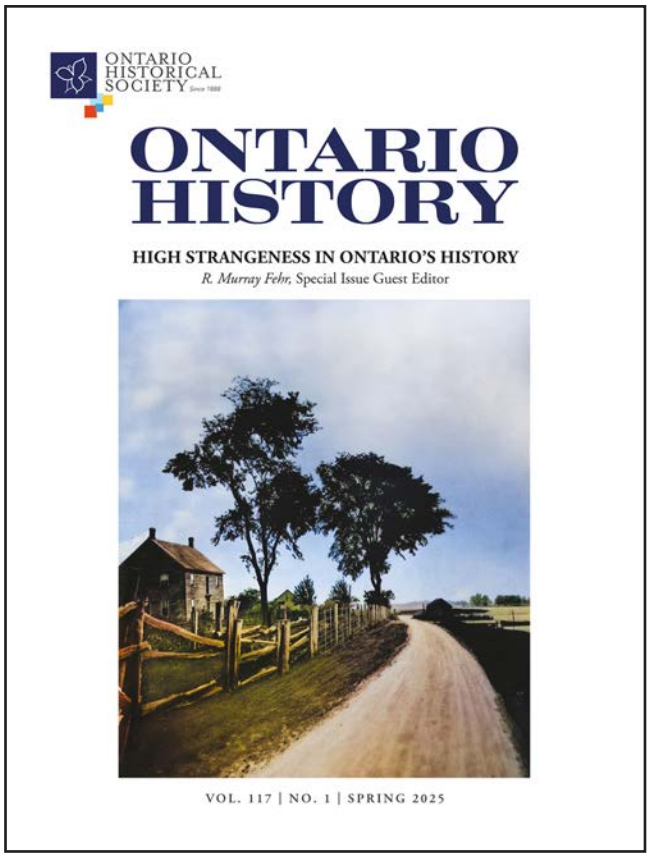
Cynthia Comacchio, PHd. FRSC, Editor

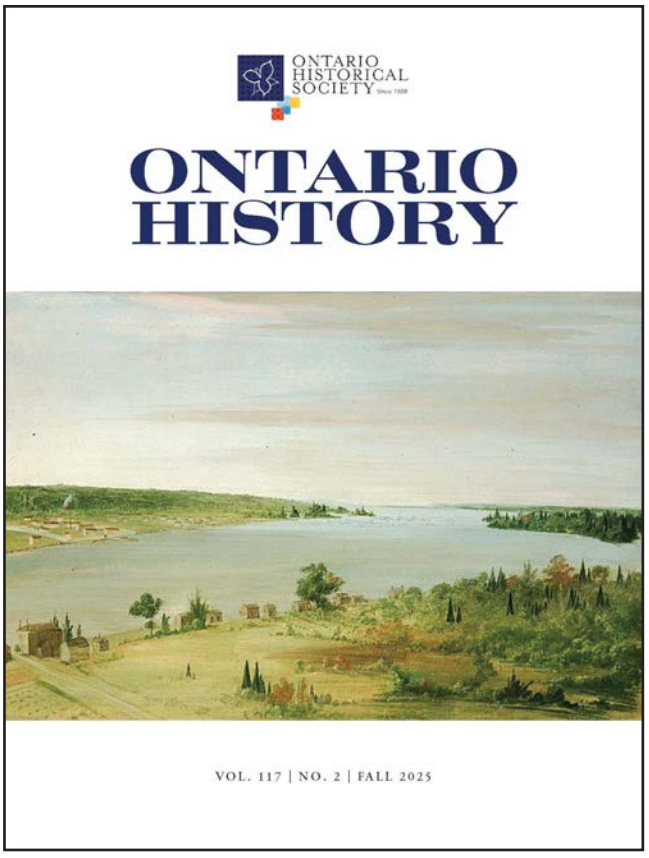
My inaugural year as the journal's editor was an exciting and fruitful one. When I was approached to succeed long-time editor Dr. Tory Tronrud, I knew from previous experience on the Ontario Historical Society Board of Directors, and also as book review columnist for the *OHS Bulletin*, that I was joining a seasoned and supportive team. Given a considerable head-start from Tory, who had initiated the collection of articles that would become our Spring 2025 special theme issue, we were able to publish High Strangeness in Ontario History (v. 117, no. 1) on schedule. The volume was guest-edited by Dr. R. Murray Fehr (Western University), who also provided the introduction, and included five peer-reviewed articles on a subject area of rising interest among historians. The Fall 2025 issue (v. 117, no. 2) returned to the customary format, with five stand-alone articles and nine book reviews.

The year's two volumes also featured a "new look," many thanks to OHS Executive Director Daniel Dishaw, who oversaw the design work. We have returned to the cover style adopted during the 1980s, with a few modifications for the twenty-first century. The journal title now predominates on a white background, with a single illustration, drawn from one of the articles within, centered on the page. Reader response has been very positive.

Regarding the "seasoned and supportive" team mentioned, the typical transition-year bumps were navigated with the advice and assistance of Dr. Tory Tronrud; Daniel Dishaw; former OHS Board member Dr. Michel S. Beaulieu; and our ever-ready office staff, Sarah McCabe (Project Manager/ Librarian) and Heather Anderson (Member Coordinator). We also acknowledge and appreciate the important contributions of Book Review Editor Dr. Alison Norman, and the members of the Editorial Advisory Committee, many of whom were also newly-appointed in 2025.

In its more than a century of publication in print (through the Ontario Historical Society) and more recently online through Érudit, a not-for-profit digital publisher based in Montreal, *Ontario History* has served the province's citizens as its foremost disseminator of historical research and storytelling on our province. We continue our commitment fulfilling our mandate to publish scholarly articles of high quality and relevance to our distinguished readers.



## PUBLIC OUTREACH, SERVICES, & PROGRAMS

Daniel Dishaw, **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

### NOT-FOR-PROFIT MEMBERS & INCORPORATION

An Act to incorporate The Ontario Historical Society, Assented to 1st April, 1899, at The Legislative Assembly of Ontario, authorizes The Ontario Historical Society (OHS) to incorporate not-for-profit historical corporations as independent legal entities in the Province of Ontario. The Society's membership includes over 350 of these incorporated heritage organizations. Since March 2020, the OHS has incorporated 25 new, not-for-profit historical organizations from regions across Ontario.

A core mandate of the OHS's work with our provincial membership is to provide consultations and services to our member organizations and institutions by phone and online such as: examining strategic directions, reviewing and revising constitutions and by-laws, discussing good corporate governance, providing letters of support for grant applications and fundraising initiatives, advocating for built and digital infrastructure funding, processing insurance applications, writing letters of good standing for member organizations, surrendering charters, and facilitating corporate name changes.

Citizens who organize to preserve and promote Ontario's history can apply to incorporate not-for-profit corporations through affiliation with the OHS. Each applicant must satisfy incorporation criteria, which includes preparing a mission statement, forming a volunteer board of directors, establishing a constitution and a set of by-laws, facilitating a public meeting (in person or online) with the OHS, and paying a fee. In 2025, the OHS held incorporations meetings with members of the following communities: Burlington, Markdale, Prince Edward County, and Thunder Bay.

From January 2025 to December 2025, the OHS processed incorporations for four new, not-for-profit historical organizations dedicated to the preservation or promotion of Ontario's history.

The Society is proud to have incorporated the following affiliated societies in 2025:

- Middle Grey Arts and Heritage Group
- Friends of Oliver Paipoonge Heritage Park and Museum
- Shooting Sports Museum
- Prince Edward County Heritage Conservancy Inc.

Photograph of the Boer War Display, resourced and arranged by Museum members. Photograph from Ross McBean.

Photograph of Russ' Garage at Oliver Paipoonge Heritage Park and Museum. Photograph from Rebecca Eras.

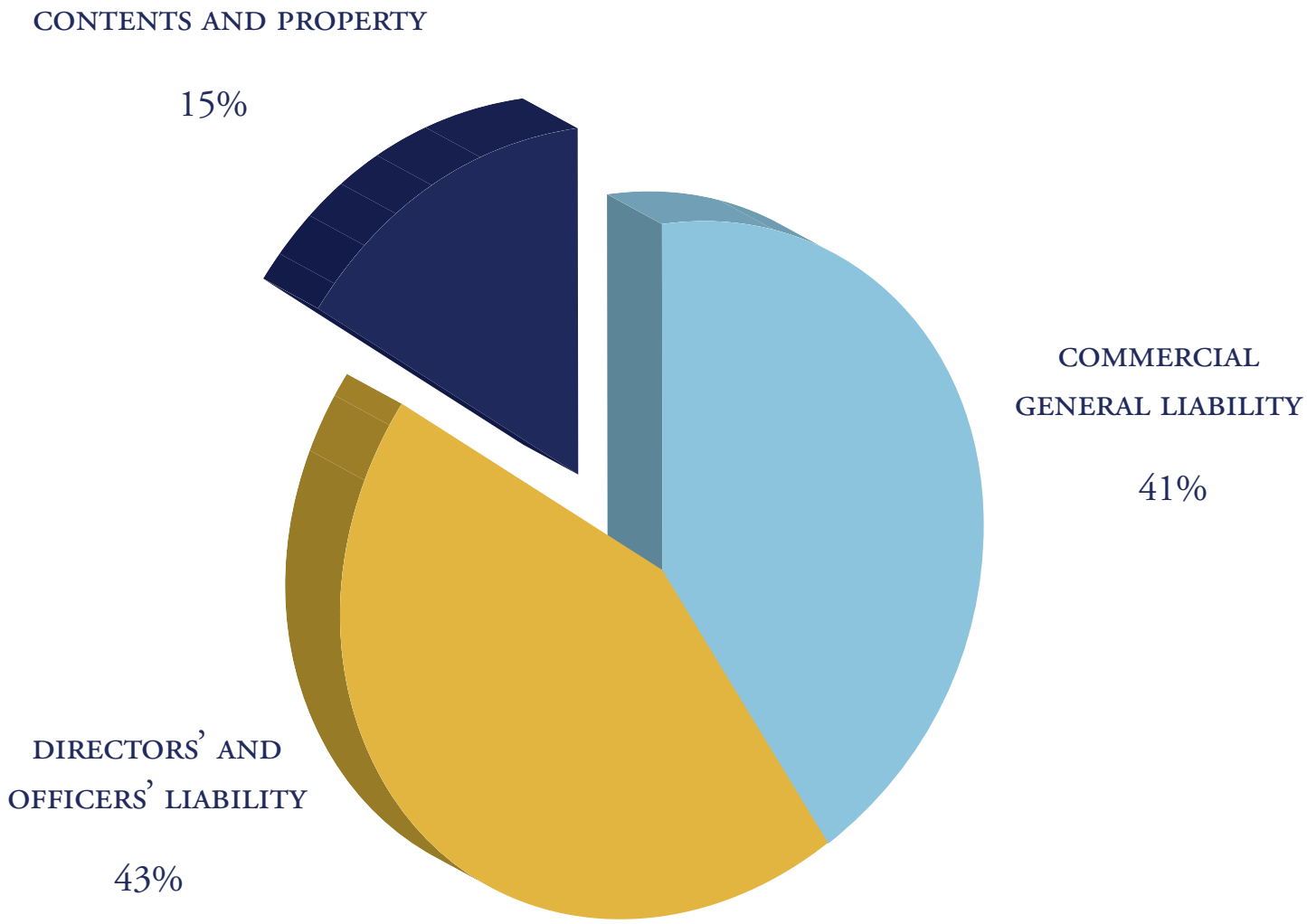
Photograph of the Annesley Sanctuary in Markdale, Ontario, where the OHS met with members to celebrate their incorporation on May 27, 2025. Photograph by Daniel Dishaw.

## INSURANCE PROGRAM

Established in 2008, the OHS insurance program provides vital protection for the Society's not-for-profit, volunteer-run member organizations. All organizations with a membership in good standing with the OHS are eligible to apply for insurance. This program is just one of many ways that the OHS works with organizations across the province to ensure volunteers and community heritage organizations are protected from liability.

Once the OHS approves a new application, the Society's insurance broker, Jones DesLauriers Insurance Management Inc., holds a thorough consultation with the applicant to ensure that each policy is tailored to the specific needs and local circumstances of the organization.

As of December 31, 2025, 209 historical organizations held Directors and Officers Liability insurance policies, 198 organizations with Commercial General Liability insurance policies, and 71 organizations with coverage for Contents and Property.




2025 OHS INSURANCE PROGRAM POLICIES

## PARKVIEW NEIGHBOURHOOD GARDEN

The OHS enjoyed the seventeenth year of its partnership with the Parkview Neighbourhood Garden (PNG), a communal, organic market garden run entirely by volunteers. It is believed to be the first instance in Toronto of residential real estate being reclaimed for local urban agriculture. The garden is situated on the site of the John McKenzie property's former vegetable patch, adjacent to the Milk House, Stable and Coach House. The stable is loaned by the OHS to PNG's volunteers for the storage of tools and equipment.

During the 2025 season, many new volunteers, as well as returning volunteers, participated in garden work. Many of the volunteers were high school students, completing their community service hours. The PNG leadership team also grew, with the addition of several younger volunteers eager to be part of the decision-making process.

PNG continued with its produce distribution model, initiated in 2022; PNG donates half of the produce to charities directly after harvest, and offers half to neighbours in exchange for donations to the garden. Over 280 pounds of food was donated. The not-for-profit groups to which donations were made included: the St. Vincent de Paul Women's Shelter, the Community Head Injury Resource Service (CHIRS), Neighbourlink North York, and 415 Food Hub. Donations to the garden totaled close to $1,700, thanks to generous community members who exchanged donations for organic produce.

PNG volunteers gather at the garden for the year-end celebration in the fall of 2025.

Flower arrangements, comprised of garden-grown flowers, were offered for the first time in 2025. Some skilled volunteers made delicious jams out of the berries harvested from the garden. These items were especially popular with our generous market-goers.

The 2025 growing season, as usual, presented some challenges. Cool temperatures in the spring and hot and dry summer conditions required special attention from volunteers, who worked hard to preserve plants that survived. During the hottest part of the summer, a watering schedule was maintained with committed resources who kept the garden irrigated.

Once again in 2025, PNG benefitted from the growing trend of corporations giving back to their communities. Several groups of workplace colleagues, who volunteered to spend a few hours in the garden, accomplished big projects that required many people and a commitment of time.

As the John MacKenzie Parkette/Garden Expansion project (centered around the city-owned property at 37 Norton Avenue, adjacent to the northeast section of Parkview Neighbourhood Garden), progressed, PNG provided detailed input to the project. The new space opened in 2026. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the process.

Despite some challenges, the 2025 gardening season saw student and adult volunteers working hard to maintain a productive and beautiful space in the neighbourhood. As in past seasons, gardening knowledge and methods were passed on to new volunteers by more experienced ones. The gardeners at PNG are thankful for the continued support of OHS.

## CEMETERY DEFENCE

In 1995, the Society was forced to establish a trust fund to protect Ontario's cemeteries from inappropriate development. This on-going work is made possible through financial contributions to the OHS Cemetery Defence Fund and donated time and skills from many generous expert volunteers.

Since 2016, an OHS staff member has sat on the Cemetery, Crematorium & Municipal Advisory Committee of the Bereavement Authority of Ontario (BAO), a not-for-profit corporation, delegated with the responsibility to administer provisions of the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, 2002 on behalf of the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services. Meetings of the Advisory Committee are held throughout the year as requested by the Board and Staff of the BAO, with the aim to represent the consumer interests of Ontarians as regards to Cemeteries and Crematoriums. In 2023, the staff member was re-elected for a second term and continues to represent the OHS in their working relationship with the BAO, preserving and protecting our Province's historic cemeteries.

Since 2020, the Preservation and Cemeteries Committee of the OHS Board of Directors has had an ongoing consultation with the BAO to save a number of important Black history cemetery sites in Haldimand and Norfolk counties, including the Barnes-Street Family Burials, Morris-Williams Cemetery, Duncan Family Burials, and others. Former Board member and Cemeteries Committee Co-chair Janie Cooper-Wilson, current Board member Graeme Bachiu, and BAO inspector, Andrew Reynolds, have put in countless hours of travel, research, and local outreach to preserve and tell the story of these sites of national historical significance. A Black Freedom Seeker site in Haldimand discovered several years ago, the Gales-Cain-Johnson site, underwent a stage one archaeological survey in 2025, and will be undergoing a stage two archaeological survey in spring 2026.

In 2025, the OHS Board elected two new Co-Chairs for the Preservation and Cemeteries Committee: Graeme Bachiu and Dr. André M. Levesque.

Bachiu is an active advocate for the preservation and recognition of Ontario's abandoned and unlicensed cemeteries. In partnership with OHS volunteers, he assists the Bereavement Authority of Ontario by conducting research and working collaboratively with other historians, local authorities, and landowners to support cemetery operators and heritage stakeholders, advancing awareness and protection of these important sites. Dr. Levesque OMM, OOnt, CD, FRSA, is a historian, former senior public servant, and retired Canadian Army Reserve lieutenant-colonel whose work has helped shape how Canada and its allies remember military service and sacrifice. He is a pioneer of memorialogy—the interdisciplinary study of memorials and commemorative practices. Holding a PhD in history from University College Cork, where his thesis on military memorials is among the institution's most consulted works, Dr. Levesque has advanced public understanding of remembrance through research, policy, education, and volunteer leadership.

The OHS, with a membership from all cultures and religions, believes it is in the public interest that all cemeteries be afforded the same legal status and be treated equally. The Society is pleased to have honoured its public commitments on this important principle, and will continue to work tirelessly to protect Ontario's historic cemeteries.

Pictured above are BAO Inspector Andrew Reynolds and David Drobitch, Supervisor of Cemetery Operations with Norfolk County during a site visit to the Captain John Robins Family Cemetery, located just north of Simcoe. The BAO and OHS assisted with research to support Norfolk's licensing of this previously unlicensed site. David's team will be working to bring the site up to the standards defined by the *Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act*, including tree removal and general site maintenance. Photo by Graeme Bachiu

## HONOURS AND AWARDS 2025

Established in 1967, the OHS Honours and Awards program recognizes excellence in Ontario's heritage community. Congratulations to the 2025 recipients.

## AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

### PRESIDENT'S AWARD
**Pancheta Barnett**

**Honourable Mention:**
The Waterdown Museum of Hope

### DOROTHY DUNCAN LEADERSHIP AWARD
**Sidney Williams**

**Honourable Mention:**
Dr. Robert (Bob) Roden

### RUSSELL K. COOPER PROGRAMMING AWARD
**The Potter's Field Project**

## AWARDS FOR EARLY CAREER HISTORIANS

### ALISON PRENTICE AWARD FOR CANADIAN WOMEN'S HISTORY
**Dr. Rebecca Beausaert**

*"Pursuing Play: Women's Leisure in Small-Town Ontario, 1870–1914*

2025 OHS Award winners gathered at the Society's headquarters in Willowdale for an awards ceremony.

## AWARDS FOR AUTHORS

### BEST LOCAL HISTORY BOOK AWARD
**Susan McKellar, Ruth Wright, William Tupper, Georgina Tupper, and Owen Cooke**

*North Gower: A Village History, 1820–2020*

**Runners-up:**
Ian McKechnie & Tom Mohr, *Reflections on Old Victoria County: In Tribute to R.B. Fleming*

Ann Love and Sharon Bentley, *The History of King Township – A Community Shaped by the Land*

### BEST SCHOLARLY BOOK AWARD
**Dr. Steven High**

*The Left in Power: Bob Rae's NDP and the Working Class*

**Runners-up:**
Dr. Daniel Macfarlane, *The Lives of Lake Ontario: An Environmental History*

Dr. Ian Radforth, *Deadly Swindle: An 1890 Murder in Backwoods Ontario that Gripped the World*

### BEST ARTICLE/PAPER AWARD
**Dr. Melissa N. Shaw**

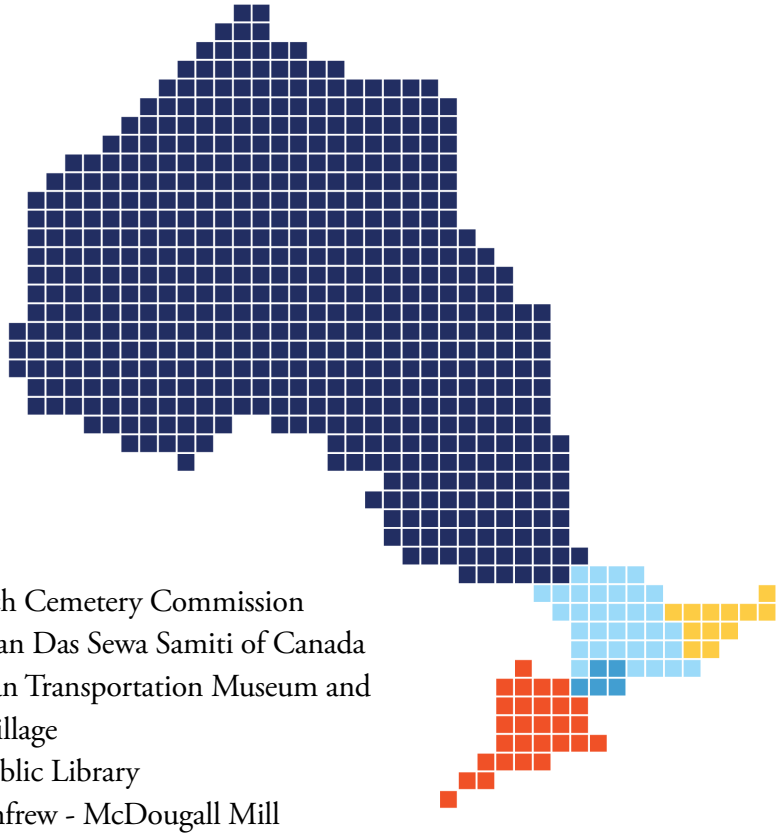
"Who Used to Run the UNIA Hall": Black Canadian Women's Leadership of Toronto Division 21, 1919–1939"

## NEW MEMBERS & SUBSCRIBERS 2025

Kerry Abel
Jason Albers
Mark C. Ambrogio
Graeme Bachiu
Wilfred Barnett
Aysha Bisimwa
Nathan Brinklow
Brian Campion
Jessica Cogar
Robert Collins
Jane Cooper
Caroline Dukes
Rossiter Dukes
Susan Dunlop
Brent Epp
Todd Farrell
Catalina Fellay-Dunbar
Mark Fisher
Karolyn Fournier
Brandon Gaudette
Sam Goodwin
John Gray
Debra Honor
Paul Huntington
Sara Janes
Brian Jantzi
Shannon Kilburn
David Leadbeater
Laurie Leclair
André M. Levesque
Thomas Little
Colin McGugan
Sonja McKay
Jeffrey L. McNairn
Alfonso Menanno UE
Richard Merritt
Sandra Miller
Jon Parmenter
Susan Peters
Brendan Ray
Terry Redden
Henry Rego
Matt Reniers
V. M. Roberts
Mary Rossiter
Bruce Southers
Richard Spies
Robert E Staples
Gray E Taylor
Jordan Thomas
Paul Van Katwyk
Nick Vander Gulik
Anton Wagner
Shirley Wainright
Peter Zaduk

### ORGANIZATIONS & INSTITUTIONS

927 St. Joachim L'Association
Beachville District Historical Society
Belmont Methuen and Havelock Historical Society
Dundalk Team Town Hall
EBSCO Information Services
Espanola and Area History
Friends of Oliver Paipoonge Heritage Park and Museum
HarperCollins Canada
Middle Grey Arts and Heritage Group
Newholm Community Heritage Centre and Friends of Holy Trinity Newholm
Ontario Steam and Antique Preservers Association
Prince Edward County Heritage Conservancy Inc.
Sharon Museum and Gardens
Shooting Sports Museum
St. Francis Xavier University: Angus L Macdonald Library
Stone Church Cemetery Commission
Swami Mohan Das Sewa Samiti of Canada
The Canadian Transportation Museum and Heritage Village
Timmins Public Library
Town of Renfrew - McDougall Mill Museum
Trinity Theatre
Tyndale University Library
UELAC Calgary Branch



## DONORS IN 2025

### INDIVIDUALS, ORANIZATIONS, AND INSTITUTIONS

Anonymous
Anne Baillie
Michel Beaulieu
Kari Dehli
Daniel Dishaw
Alexis Dishaw
Michael Dove
Sidney Down
Estate of Dorothy Duncan
George Duncan
Robert Halfyard
John E. Henderson
Brian Jantzi
James Kelly
Patricia Kennedy
Paul R. King
Jenna Kirker (Beaulieu)
Shannon Leeper
Richard Lucas
Sarah McCabe
Candice McCavitt
Steven McLarty Payson
Marjorie McLeod
Adrian & Suanne Miedema
Barbara Nair
Naomi Norquay
Barry & Jane Penhale
F. Brent Scollie
Karen Sloan-Beitzel
Harry Smaller
Donald Smith
James Stanley
Marjorie Stuart
Thorold Tronrud
W. Paul Willoughby
Enoch Turner Schoolhouse Foundation
Gananoque Historical Society
Waterloo Historical Society

### A TRIBUTE TO HELEN AND AARNE JUHOLA

The Ontario Historical Society (OHS) remembers long-time OHS member, donor, and provincial heritage advocate, Helen Ann Juhola (1936–2025).

For decades, Helen and her husband Aarne (1935–2023) acted as tireless and dedicated volunteers, donating their time and expertise to the preservation and promotion of Ontario's history. Helen relished a good fight, generously sharing her insights, wit, and wisdom with the OHS in countless struggles for Ontario's built and natural heritage. Helen's passion was advocating for our natural environment, which is why she was a supporter of the OHS and its Cemetery Defence Program. She understood that Ontario's cemeteries were vitally important ecological assets as well as heritage sites. In August 2022, Helen donated her unique collection of natural heritage books to the OHS Library, including books she co-authored for the Toronto Field Naturalists. Thank you so much Helen, for your decades of work to increase the public knowledge and appreciation of our green spaces and our heritage assets. The OHS also thanks you and Aarne for your incredibly generous bequest. Your legacy as environmental and heritage preservation advocates will live on through this gift and the many other bequests made by your estate.

### OHS NORTHERN ONTARIO TRUST FUND

Estate of Ruth E. Day

### OHS CEMETERY DEFENCE TRUST FUND

Estate of Jean Burnet

### OHS GRASSROOTS PUBLIC OUTREACH TRUST FUND

Estate of Ruth E. Day

### A. RONALD JUNKIN CEMETERY DEFENCE AND PRESERVATION FUND

Estate of A. Ronald Junkin

### FOUNDATIONS AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Alpema Foundation
Capital Assets, Museums & Heritage Services, City of Toronto
Diane and Steven Clendenan Fund - Toronto Foundation
Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Multiculturalism
Real Estate Services, City of Toronto
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

### IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

Gabriella Colussi Arthur
Rob Leverty
Donald W. McLeod
Louise Orr
Barry & Jane Penhale
Archives of Ontario

### NOUN PROJECT ICON CREDITS

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From the OHS Archives:

At the meeting of the Ontario Historical Society, held at the Exhibition Grounds in Toronto on September 2, 1898, the following resolution was passed:

"That the Ontario Historical Society having among its objects that of forming a historical museum, and as there is now available for such purpose a considerable quantity of rare and valuable material, it is desirable that steps should at once be taken to place the various articles on exhibition; and that a committee, consisting of Lady Edgar, Miss Mickle, Miss FitzGibbon, Rev. Dr. Blackstock, Mr. C.C. James, and Mr. J.O. Brant-Sero, be appointed to take such steps as may be necessary to accomplish that object."

As a result, in June of 1899, the Ontario Historical Society organized the first Canadian Historical Exhibition at Victoria College in Toronto. Running from June 14 to 28, this landmark event was staged with the patronage of His Excellency the Governor General of Canada. It represented one of the earliest concerted efforts to assemble, preserve, and publicly celebrate the artifacts and stories of Canada's past.

ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY Since 1888

# In 2024, volunteers once again contributed an estimated 7,000 hours of service in support of the OHS, worth the equivalent of $189K in donated labour.