

The purpose of the Ontario Museum Association Awards of Excellence is to:

1. Recognize outstanding contributions to the Ontario museum community, with emphasis on innovation;
2. Advance the museum profession in Ontario;
3. Encourage high standards of excellence in the museum field.

The OMA is pleased to announce the following recipients of the 2017 Awards of Excellence!

Promising Leadership Award of Excellence

The OMA Award of Excellence in Community Engagement is presented to emerging professionals, of any position or institution, who have shown promising leadership within the museum community. An emerging professional is an individual within the first ten years of their professional career.

Lisa Terech **Oshawa Museum and GOEMP Committee Chair**

Lisa Terech completed her Museum Management and Curatorship diploma from Sir Sandford Fleming College and entered the museum field the usual way, volunteering and working two jobs. Her volunteering at the Oshawa Museum led to a maternity leave position that she filled with such enthusiasm and creativity that they were not letting her go.

In her role as Community Engagement Coordinator, Lisa has played a vital role in the success of the Oshawa Museum's (OM) very popular social media sites. Lisa brings a sense of fun and pun to our social media with such projects as:

- the 21st Century Victorian project, placing "Victorians" in 21st Century situations (taking selfies or duck lips)
- Pioneer Facebook: Facebook accounts for some of Oshawa's early settlers
- "When You Work At A Museum" Dance-Off, creating a video showcasing the OM- it was the first ever Museum Dance-Off and the OM made it to the finals!



- “Scenes from the Cemetery” theatrical event with local actors to bring to life the stories of Oshawa’s citizens whose final resting place is in Union Cemetery

Lisa was a founding member of the GOEMP Committee from a project begun by the OMA and continues the work to connect and engage with young museum professionals. She is currently Chair of the Committee. The Awards Committee found both this and her commitment to leadership in the museum community, mentoring the next generation of heritage professionals to be impressive. The agility, energy and enthusiasm in her present performance is an antidote against future hardening of the corporate arteries and should be encouraged. Her example encourages a focus on reward over risk.

“Lisa Terech is a talented EMP who has proven her commitment to the museum sector. Her work has continually raised the bar of her expectations of museums in the future.”

– Nathan Etherington, GOEMP Programming and Community Coordinator, Brant Historical Society

Volunteer Service Award of Excellence *WOW Distinction*

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.

Senta Ross **Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery**



Joining the Gallery in 2013, Senta has since given countless hours of her own time to help develop the Gallery on a number of projects. A retired school teacher and a Kitchener local, her passion for the visual arts and the Gallery is expressed in everything she does on a daily basis.

Senta has been a member of Gallery's Black and Gold Gala Organizing Committee since 2015, acting as an integral part of the fundraising and event planning efforts for the past two years. She has also been an ambassador for the Gallery, representing them when welcoming the public into the art gallery for events, speaking on the Gallery's behalf when at various off-site community organizations, and delivering flyers and information to the community. In addition, Senta has done considerable research for the Gallery in part to its 60th Anniversary initiative to find out more about its history and

early days of formation, with emphasis on the Founders. Working with two other volunteers, Senta conducted intensive research into every library and historical archive in Waterloo region and outside, including Waterloo region's libraries, University of Waterloo, Kitchener Public Library and Waterloo Public Library, Hamilton Public Library and the Art Gallery of Ontario Archives. She not only tracked down various members of the original founding committee, but has also committed additional time to visiting various founding members in person, marking the Gallery's 60th anniversary campaign as a smashing success due to her tireless dedication.

Another project she undertook was her role as the Gallery's Community Curator in 2016. She curated an exhibition, titled **Celebrating our Own** which featured works drawn from the permanent collection that aligned with the 60th anniversary celebrations and the founding of the Gallery. Ranging from the early 1900s to the present, the selection of works provided a rich array of visual expression.

It is unusual for a Volunteer to take on so much, show such initiative and receive such profound support from the staff and Board. Her success and approach to her work has won over and gained support for these initiatives; that is exactly the kind of leading example that institutions

should learn from. Whereas museums often have different departments that handle floor interaction, collections research, community development, promotion, and strategic communications, the Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery has this all in one person: Senta.

“As a charity, a lot of what KWAG does is volunteer supported. Senta is one of those volunteers we have come to rely on not only because we know she is capable, but also because she is such a wonderful representative of the art community.”

– Shirley Madill, Executive Director, Kitchener-Waterloo Art Gallery

Excellence in Community Engagement

Revealing the Regalia: Honouring Anishinaabe culture through dance Atikokan Centennial Museum

The OMA Award of Excellence in Community Engagement is presented to individuals, institutions, corporations, or agencies that have increased the community's engagement with the museum or institution.

The exhibition celebrates a local man's culture and performance on the world stage. Jaret Veran, the Healing and Wellness Coordinator at the Native Friendship Centre, represented the Nigigoonsiminikaaning First Nation at the 2010 Winter Olympic Games in Vancouver. The focus of *Revealing the Regalia* was on Veran's experience and displayed his traditional regalia and several local Indigenous objects.



Jaret Veran with his parents (Jack and Evelyn) following his presentation at the exhibit opening

In addition to traditional ceremonies, Veran shared his journey and Elder

Nancy Jones offered teachings of the traditional care of regalia and Anishinaabe culture. The relationships that were nurtured throughout the development process have grown into a flourishing partnership that continues with new collaborative projects to better serve the entire Atikokan community.

The spirit of community engagement was fundamental to the creation of this exhibition. *Revealing the Regalia*, was a genuine example of authentic partnership between the Atikokan Centennial Museum and the Native Friendship Centre. They both demonstrated the value and principle of working together, practices that can inspire us and lead to changing the perspectives in our own institutional spaces.

"The Museum and the Centre now have a common history, a successful event having attracted 75 visitors, and a familiarity in communicating. Together they have reached a new relationship that continues to evolve."

– Lois Fenton, Curator, Atikokan Centennial Museum

Excellence in Exhibitions

Family Ties: Ontario Turns 150 Archives of Ontario

The OMA Award of Excellence in Exhibitions is presented to individuals, institutions, corporations, or agencies for the creation of an exceptional and engaging exhibition.

In 2014 the Archives of Ontario embarked on a two-year development process to create a series of compelling, interconnected exhibits to commemorate Canada 150.

As the 2nd-largest archive in the country and the provincial archival repository in Ontario, **Family Ties: Ontario Turns 150** aimed to recognise this major national anniversary along with the diverse perspectives and experiences of the peoples who lived through it.



Launching in 2016, this flagship project allowed the Archives to create the various modules that contributed to its success, ranging from a series of virtual exhibitions and physical displays, to a travelling version of the exhibition, and new educational programming and teaching resources available to the public. **Family Ties** examines the lives of four distinct family groups as represented in the Archives' collections: the Browns of Toronto, the Wolvertons of Oxford County, the McCurdys of Amherstburg, and the Families of Shingwauk from Garden River First Nation.

This ongoing project is also an excellent example of renewed institutional partnerships, as the Archives collaborated with equally passionate staff at the Amherstburg Freedom Museum, Black Creek Pioneer Village, the Huron County Museum, the Historic Gaol, the Ontario Science Centre, the Shingwauk Residential School Centre Archive, and York University.

This multi-format approach has allowed the Archives to engage with the public in person, online, and on the road, bringing the discussion of Ontario's past and the importance of archives to new audiences across the province.

“Family Ties: Ontario Turns 150 explores Ontario's heritage through the unique stories of four families, expressing otherwise distant and perhaps “cold” historic facts on a highly personal and relatable level...In my opinion, this exhibition is a case study on how to speak about our histories in an accessible, inclusive, and respectful manner.”

- Karen Carter, Executive Director, Myseum of Toronto

Excellence in Exhibitions Honourable Mention

City on Edge Waterloo Region Museum



Intended to commemorate the 100th anniversary city name change of Berlin, Ontario to Kitchener on September 1, 1916, the Waterloo Region Museum launched **City on Edge** which told the story of how and why this change occurred, addressing difficult themes of political propaganda, WWI tensions and cultural discrimination in Canada.

The exhibition functioned as a life-sized recreation of Berlin's streets as well as a physical timeline of the city as the War

progressed. Museum visitors were invited to stroll through a disorienting eight-foot tall maze of brick walls and recreated building facades. The exhibition featured several distinct areas that addressed the overall themes of Pre-War, the Vote to change the name, the repercussions of WWI in the city and finally the aftermath. A dizzying soundscape, which consisted of competing voices in English and German, music, and sounds of war created an intentional cacophony of noise throughout.

City on Edge pushed museum practice boundaries by using theatrical techniques to create a sense of place, allowing the visitor to enter a virtual world, of dramatic construction. The exhibit was a fully integrated and multisensory experience, with immersive spaces, authentic textual content and artifacts, and digital media that collaborated to simulate an environment that educated and challenged visitors. Built around telling a compelling story, **City on Edge** and the Waterloo Region Museum were able to communicate difficult past issues within thoughtful contemporary context, with every aspect of the exhibition working together seamlessly to foster a connection with visitors.

"The exhibition subject matter drew lots of attention from the media, and in turn, attracted new audiences to come and discover the museum, thereby reinforcing its role in the community. City on Edge acted as a catalyst to start discussions, and expose a complicated aspect of our local history that is now relevant to current events."

- Karen VandenBrink, Manager, Waterloo Region Museum

Excellence in Special Projects

BEATLES 50 T.O - featuring *When the Beatles Rocked Toronto: Metropolitan Life & Music in the Mid-60s*

Museums and Heritage Services, City of Toronto

The OMA Award of Excellence in Special Projects is presented to individuals, institutions, corporations or agencies for innovative initiatives, or new approaches or techniques that advance the museum profession.

BEATLES 50 T.O. was created to brand the diversity of events that spilled out into the city from the exhibition: *When the Beatles Rocked Toronto: Metropolitan Life & Music in the Mid-60s* at the Market Gallery, St Lawrence Market.

A wide range of partnerships, programs and volunteer opportunities, manifesting itself as concerts, art walks, talks, films and even a fashion show resulted from the exhibit plan.



Three curatorial themes: **How we Lived, Where We Played and When the Beatles Rocked Us**, investigated the lasting legacy of Beatles culture in Toronto while reconnecting with a city-wide audience. With over 23,000 visitors to the exhibition, the Market Gallery and Heritage Services had to coordinate a large but diligent team of volunteers, security and related professionals to manage their various events in and outside of the exhibition space. In addition to providing a welcome and orientation to the exhibit, the Gallery offered a Beatles trivia quiz for all ages, with retro 60s-style candies as prizes. They created Beatles face masks for visitors' selfies to share on social media, conducted surveys, and even used iPads to record visitors' stories about the Beatles and Toronto in the 1960s to deepen visitor involvement. The dedicated professionals, staff and volunteers who worked on this project were inspired to pursue opportunities that reached new audiences in a variety of venues throughout the city.

"I found both the exhibition and the concert to be thrilling...I believe the BEATLES 50 T.O project introduced new audiences to the museum, heritage and cultural life of Toronto with its special focus on the Beatles and the local museum scene during the politically charged 1960s...It's inspiring when recent history is relevant to so many visitors."

- David Tyler, Advisor, Partnership Development & Strategic Liaison, Archives of Ontario, Ministry of Government and Consumer Services

Excellence in Programs

Escape the Diefenbunker Diefenbunker, Canada's Cold War Museum

The OMA Award of Excellence in Programs is presented to individuals, institutions, corporations, or agencies for programming that creatively engages new audiences, or provides exemplary service to existing ones.



Capitalizing on the popular medium of escape rooms, The Diefenbunker reached out to Escape Manor Inc., and asked them to interpret their space as no one else has done before. The committee felt that Escape the Diefenbunker creatively re-envisioned the Bunker's spaces to offer a unique experience.

The Diefenbunker overcame the challenge of complementing this kind of commercial entertainment experience with the conflict resolution training that the museum delivers to local schools (which received an Award of Excellence in 2015). By re-purposing space, and by careful selection of content, they were able to create a successful enterprise that has engaged their community and shifted perceptions of what museums can provide as experience.

"As a rural community museum, it is great to see the Diefenbunker be proactive in forming partnerships with likeminded businesses who can help them further their mission. This particular project has strengthened their museum by enabling them to reach new audiences and make use of excess capacity."

- Michael Rikley-Lancaster, Executive Director and Curator, Mississippi Valley Textile Museum