

## Ontario Museum Association Awards of Excellence 2020 Recipients

### Distinguished Career Award of Excellence

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

#### **Gayle McIntyre**

Program Coordinator (retired), Fleming College Heritage Programs

Gayle McIntyre has made a lasting impact in the heritage community, both through her own work in the field of conservation, and as an educator who has empowered generations of museum professionals. Over the course of her career, Gayle has inspired numerous students and faculty members at Fleming College, been a youth mentor, and cultivated supportive professional relationships in the heritage sector.

With generosity and optimism, Gayle laid the foundations for the future of museums. In her 37 years at Fleming College, she built capacities and demonstrated genuine care for students, becoming one of the most esteemed educators in the Museum Management & Curatorship and Cultural Heritage Conservation & Management programs.

Her legacy will be carried forward by her students, many of whom can be found in museum and heritage organizations across Canada and around the world.



*Gayle McIntyre*

A leading figure in the field of conservation, Gayle specializes in preventive conservation applications, risk reduction, and disaster preparedness. She has brought her expertise to institutions at the local, national, and international levels, including Lang Pioneer Village, the Canadian Conservation Institute, and the International Centre for the Study of Preservation.

Gayle's remarkable contributions have been recognized by various organizations. She has received the Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property (CAC-ACCR) Charles Mervyn Ruggles Award in 2012, the Fleming College Team-Teaching Award in 2014, and holds an Ontario Museum Association Award of Merit for flood recovery work in 2004.

*"It's hard to put into words what Gayle has done for heritage in Canada...I personally can't imagine a better mentor to what it means to be a Conservator. Her poise, professionalism, and passion for the work we do are all great examples of things I will continually work toward, and maybe never attain."*

– Owen Thompson, Preventative Conservation Officer at the Peterborough Museum & Archives

## 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. An emerging professional is an individual within the first ten years of their professional career.*

### Pailagi Jaimin Pandya

Museum Program Officer, Scarborough Museum, City of Toronto



*Pailagi Jaimin Pandya*

Pailagi Jaimin Pandya stands out as an emerging changemaker in the museum field. She is a trailblazer who creates new intersections with intercultural experiences. Pailagi aspires to transform museums into open gathering spaces that are responsive to diverse voices in their communities and where everyone feels included. She strives to realize this vision in her work with equity-seeking and underserved communities including youth-at-risk, newcomers and marginalized groups.

Pailagi began her career as a teenager, volunteering at the Scarborough Museum hoping to improve her English skills, and she has been growing ever since. Her resume

highlights include experiences as a Historical Interpreter, an Assistant Curator leading a rural community engagement project at the Mehrangarh Museum Trust (UNESCO) in India, and a Curatorial Intern at the ROM. She has also curated the work of local artists and held the Program Coordinator Position while working for the Women in Arts initiative lead by the Centre for Women Studies at University of Toronto's Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. Recently, she has completed a Market Research Consultation project with the John Brown Heritage Foundation. Now, Pailagi works as a full-time Program Officer at the Scarborough Museum, Museums and Heritage Services at the City of Toronto. In this role, she excels in creating opportunities for co-creation, conversation, and employment training

A dynamic and empathetic leader, Pailagi mentors emerging museum professionals and contributes to museum advocacy initiatives. While at the Scarborough Museum, Pailagi took an active leadership role in the Canadian Museums and Youth Diversity Project, tirelessly supporting peers in cities across the country and presenting at conferences nationally and internationally. Pailagi was an inaugural member of the OMA Emerging Museum Professionals Committee from 2013-2016, which recognized her great potential.

***“Pailagi [expands] the museum’s [reach] beyond its walls with a focus on accessibility and community engagement. Quality outreach takes someone who is outward thinking, energetic, and community minded. Pailagi is clearly dedicated to making positive change in the world.”***

**– Richard Schofield, Archivist at the Scarborough Historical Society**

## Promising Leadership – Honourable Mention

### Susan Jama

Assistant Curator & Program Coordinator, Toronto Ward Museum

Early on in her museum career, Susan Jama has managed to stand out as an innovative, thoughtful, and inspirational leader. She has played a critical role in the success of the Toronto Ward Museum, advancing its commitment to amplifying immigrant voices and stories. Susan also leads by promoting critical and inclusive museology practices, and by creating opportunities for people of color.

Since 2017, Susan has devoted her time and expertise to curation, programming, engagement, and mentoring projects at the Toronto Ward Museum. As a driving force behind the *Block by Block* program, she contributed to shaping its progressive curatorial approach to community storytelling, in addition to training 37 young researchers, many from underrepresented minority groups. Susan is a thought-leader and a maker, and the Toronto Ward Museum would not be the same without her.

The reach of Susan's impact extends beyond a single organization. She has worked as Administrative Coordinator for the Black Artists' Network in Dialogue (BAND), played an advisory role with the Programming and Outreach Committee at the Textile Museum of Canada, and was a panelist for a Canadian Museums Association National Conference session titled *Back to the Museum Future: Tomorrow's Diverse Leadership Today*. In her many roles, she advocates for diverse participation, inclusive opportunities, and anti-oppressive practices.



Susan Jama

*“Susan is the hope for change that I have for this field. She has contributed innovative ways of working and thought leadership as a promising professional in the Ontario museum community. She has not only walked through the door of opportunity opened by women of colour before her ... she is also helping others to walk through that door ... – the mark of a great leader.”*

– Wendy Ng, Manager, School Programs Science Education at the Ontario Science Centre

## 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.*

### Graeme Watson

Volunteer Director, Murney Tower Museum

After 17 years in the navy, Graeme Watson returned to his native Kingston and approached the Murney Tower Museum with an idea for an exhibit. Only a year later and with no previous heritage experience, Graeme became Volunteer Director of the institution. Graeme has shown unmatched passion and dedication to the Murney Tower Museum ever since.

Graeme went above and beyond in this role, dedicating countless hours to his multiple responsibilities, all while having a full-time job. His leadership was central to modernizing the Murney Tower Museum and to building connections with its community. Graeme's accomplishments include developing new policies and operational processes, designing a 5-year strategic plan, and securing funding to hire a formally trained curator, and instituting training programs for staff. Notably, he led the Museum to stronger financial independence and viability by shifting a system that was primarily dependent on grants to one based on marketing strategy.



Graeme Watson

Building diversified partnerships with local and national organizations – such as Queen's University and Parks Canada – was central to his vision for the future of the Tower Museum. Graeme's proudest moment was when he developed an Indigenous display within the Tower, fulfilling the museum's mandate towards greater inclusion of all local voices. Committed to excellence, he obtained a Certificate in Museum Studies at the Ontario Museum Association in 2018.

*“Graeme exemplified leadership and innovation in helping to revamp and update the Murney Tower Museum. Through countless volunteer hours, Graeme sought to place the museum on a new path... In my view, Graeme demonstrated the best of what one could expect from a volunteer leader and innovator, and his work is more than deserving of recognition.”*

– Marcus R. Letourneau, Managing Principal and Senior Heritage Planner at Letourneau Heritage Consulting

## Volunteer Service – Honourable Mention

### Alice Borrowman

#### Middleville and District Museum

For over two decades, Alice Borrowman has enthusiastically devoted her time and energy to the Middleville and District Museum. Alice is deeply invested in her community's local history and has a strong emotional connection with the Museum, as her father was one of its founders. Following in her father's footsteps, she has undertaken many remarkable projects as President and Curator, leading a team made up entirely of volunteers.

Alice managed to secure permanent loans and donations that were instrumental to building the Museum's collection. She also played a key role in obtaining a \$100,000 Ontario Trillium Foundation grant to fund a building extension and oversaw the project from beginning to end. In 2014, Alice received an award from the Lanark Highlands municipal government for her exceptional work.



Alice Borrowman

Alice's passion inspires those around her. She is often found guiding tours on holidays and responding to unexpected needs at the Museum. There is no doubt that this exceptional volunteer is deserving of much praise and recognition.

*"In the 1990's, Alice took over the running of the museum [and] has tirelessly kept her father's legacy alive... [She] inspired the whole village in volunteering or sponsoring the museum. The Middleville & District Museum would not be what it is today without the dedication of Alice Borrowman."*

– Michael Rikley-Lancaster, Director & Curator at the Mississippi Valley Textile Museum

## Award of Excellence in Special Projects

*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.*

### **Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre** **Collections at Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung** **WOW Distinction**

*Collections at Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung* was a project born out of a desire to enhance access to Anishinaabe culture and knowledge for members of the Rainy River First Nations. The project involved reclaiming the centre's spaces – whose collection room was displaced by a boardroom 10 years before – as a place for Indigenous sharing and learning.

Overcoming budget and time constraints, museum staff effectively implemented project management frameworks and devised community-driven, customized databases as well as preservation, digitalization, and display methodologies.



*View of the renewed collections, office, and storage spaces*

An outstanding project component was the development of a collections management system that approached preservation through the lens of evolving cultural and human needs. Rooted in Anishinaabe values, it recognizes the importance of tactile interaction with heritage artifacts, appropriate care and storage, and community access to the collection.

The OMA Awards of Excellence Committee gave this project an additional WOW Distinction for the example of community-engaged and indigenized collections management practice that the Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre has given the Ontario museum community.

*“The reclaiming of the original collections room, ensuring the respectful storage, access and making space for sharing and learning can be seen as a metaphor for the reclamation of Indigenous history and culture. Placing local Anishinaabe beliefs, values, and the community needs as the foundation of the project is reflected throughout.”*

– Tomasin Playford, Archaeologist at the Saskatchewan Archaeological Society

## Special Projects – Honourable Mention

### Myseum of Toronto

#### *Wigwam Chi-Chemung*

*Wigwam Chi-Chemung* invited the public to board a boat converted into an Indigenous Interpretive Centre – a space dedicated to Indigenous learning and cultural expression. Conceived by Myseum of Toronto in collaboration with Elder Duke Redbird and covered in vibrant murals painted by various Indigenous artists, this project generated opportunities to explore the ongoing relationship between Indigenous peoples and Toronto’s waterfront.



Elder Duke Redbird in front of the mural-covered houseboat and Indigenous Center. Image by Rhiannon Johnson from CBC news

While many exhibits are built around physical artifacts, *Wigwam Chi-Chemung* consisted of four public programs centered around direct interactions among the Museum’s collaborators and the community. Public performances, talks, and workshops, created opportunities for experiential learning inside the boat. Visitors could also drop in to meet Elder Redbird at the *Wigwam Chi-Chemung* boat to ask questions and gain deeper levels of understanding through one-on-one conversations.

*Wigwam Chi-Chemung* constitutes an outstanding example of responsive programming and public outreach. It expanded ideas about what museums can provide as educational experiences and how to bring deeper meaning and engagement to projects.

***“Thank you for the opportunity to learn about land, language, and Indigenous resurgence on this Canada Day 2019. It has got me thinking about my obligations to future generations, and most of all– to listen.”***

– Anonymous Exhibition Attendee

## Award of 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.*

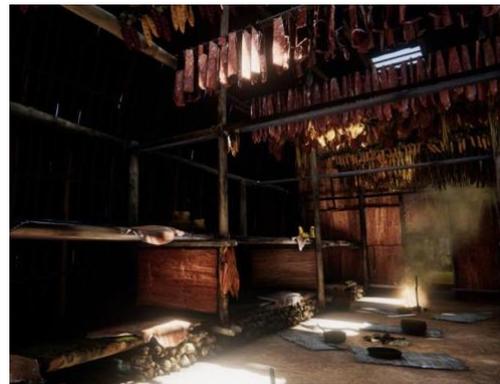
### Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum & Community Centre

#### *Archaeology Alive!: The Jean Baptiste Lainé Site in Whitchurch-Stouffville*

Technologically ambitious and innovative, *Archaeology Alive! The Jean Baptiste Lainé Site in Whitchurch-Stouffville* leverages digital resources to enhance visitors' experiences and present history in an exciting fashion. Inspired by recent archaeological discoveries made in the excavation of the Jean-Baptiste Lainé Site, the ancestral home of the Huron-Wendat Nation, this exhibit provides an entryway to the rich history of the site and to the ways of life of Iroquoian societies that inhabited it.



Staff at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum & Community Centre (WMS) demonstrated creativity and initiative in the development of this exhibit. Acknowledging the significance of the site to the Huron-Wendat, they actively sought opportunities to build relationships with this community. The result is a display in which indigenous voices are ubiquitously present.



*3-D recreations of a traditional longhouse from the Wendat-Huron community. Images from Ryerson Today and The Star*

Seeking to expand their technological horizons, the Museum partnered with Ryerson University to design A 3-D virtual “Longhouse” gaming experience that was made specifically for this display. Not only did the staff develop new skills but also decided to add this element of the exhibit to its permanent collection.

*Archaeology Alive! The Jean Baptiste Lainé Site in Whitchurch-Stouffville* has enjoyed widespread popularity, breaking visitor records and increasing the reach of the Museum's educational programs. By daring to ‘dream big’, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum & Community Centre raised its own standards of practice and now serves as an inspiration to other community museums across Ontario.

***“It is inspirational to see a small community museum so effectively expand its interpretation and contribute to a national initiative: Reconciliation.”***

**– Dorie Billich, Former Curator at the Gibson House Museum**

## Exhibitions – Honourable Mention

### THEMUSEUM

#### *Afterlife: A Séance Experience*

Original in its approach, *Afterlife: A Séance Experience* blends art, history, performance, and immersive activities to pose thought-provoking questions about the themes of death and the spiritual world.

THEMUSEUM's Exhibition and Programming teams, designed stimulating experiences that presented a wide array of perspectives on traditions and beliefs surrounding death. Covering the Victorian Period to the present, the exhibit included site-specific installations, visual art by Canadian artists, live performances, original séance recordings and artifacts, in addition to a speaker series, achieving a delicate balance between inspiring awe and inviting reflection.



*The display showcased several unique artifacts which spoke to traditions and beliefs of death, spirituality, and the afterlife.*

One of the most remarkable aspects of *Afterlife: A Séance Experience* was its thoughtful treatment of a difficult subject. Staff received training from a registered grief counsellor, which informed a mindful approach to interpretation. In a Reflection Room located at the end of the exhibit, visitors were invited to share their own experiences on paper and read each others' thoughts.

*Afterlife: A Séance Experience* excelled in activating deep inquiry, multidisciplinary creation, and immersive participation.

*“As a historian whose research focuses on death, and having previously curated exhibitions with death as the main theme, I am always cautious that exhibits on this topic not be ‘gimmicky,’ while maintaining a suitable balance of macabre to attract interest... I believe that THEMUSEUM has achieved that unique balance”*

– Lindsay Kernohan, Curator at Museum Strathroy-Caradoc

## Award of Excellence in Community Engagement

*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.*

### Grey Roots Museum & Archives

#### *Facing the Flames: The History of Firefighting in Grey County*

*Facing the Flames: The History of Firefighting in Grey County* recognizes the contributions of all of Grey County's fire departments and unearths their untold stories. This grassroots project fostered collective discovery and intergenerational knowledge exchange. Museum staff made considerable efforts to collaborate with firefighters of different age groups, including those who had retired many years ago, and to incorporate interactive activities for children and families into the exhibit.



*Grey County Fire Chiefs, CAO Kim Wingrove, Grey Roots' staff Sim Salata and Ted Noble, and 2020 Grey County Warden Paul McQueen at the exhibition's opening reception*

*Facing the Flames* opened on Friday, September 17, 2019. Committed to the people the display represents, the Museum made the exhibit free to all firefighters. Through 150 artefacts, a 12-minute video, and an interactive children's area, the exhibit explored multiple dimensions of firefighting culture and experience. The exhibit offered emotionally stirring insights into personal motivations, job demands, and challenges. Consequently, it resonated widely and drew new audiences to the Museum.

Over the course of six months, the team at Grey Roots' researched and toured local fire departments, recording observations, interacting with the staff, and collecting relevant objects and photographs. They managed to interview 30 firefighters, join in on an emergency call, participate in training exercises, and attend meaningful events such as a firefighter's funeral.

Requiring extraordinary levels of inquiry, outreach, and trust, *Facing the Flames* forged lasting ties between the Museum and the local community.

*"It was and is a great display... I've seen it about five times now and it's a great tribute to Grey County's Firefighters. I get a lump in my throat and feel humbled when I sit and gaze at the display and what it represents to me and the great saves we made, but not without tragedy."*

– Phil Schwartz, Fire Chief at the Municipality of West Grey

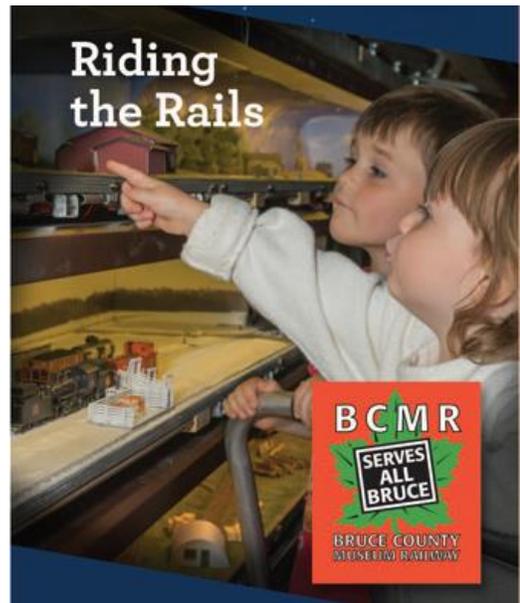
## Community Engagement – Honourable Mention

### Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre

#### *Riding the Rails*

When a retired industrial designer approached the Director of the Bruce County Museum & Cultural Centre (BCM&CC) with a plan for an exhibit depicting a hundred years of life along the County's railroad, she immediately recognized the project's potential to capture the community's imagination. It attracted 31 passionate volunteers to the BCM&CC, who worked for over 21 months and spend more than 8,000 hours to see the project come to fruition.

An interactive exhibit with clear educational goals, *Riding the Rails* takes visitors on a historical journey in which they follow a model train through different railroad towns in Bruce County. Along the way, visitors discover seasonal peek-a-boo windows and informational panels that highlight key events and stories. Since the exhibit's opening in July 2018, the BCM&CC has hosted many related volunteer-run events and programs.



*Riding the Rails Exhibition Poster*

*Riding the Rails* is a great example of community engagement and collaboration. It was designed by and for the people of Bruce County and is one of the Museum's most popular exhibits to date.

*"The completed project is impressive for many reasons beyond the mastery shown in the technical elements, including [the fact] that the trains operate as they would have in the 1950s. BCM&CC has hosted many events, including railway-operating sessions where volunteers give instructions on picking up and dropping off railcars, just one example of how this project gives visitors a greater understanding of the importance of the Bruce County railways and how it is truly a community project."*

– Tom Hakala, Graphic Designer (retired) at Bluewater Modellers