

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Murney Tower  
Museum National  
Historic Site of  
Canada







## OUR MISSION

The Murney Tower Museum NHSC is a public, non-profit museum which strives to connect visitors with Kingston's military and cultural history through collection, preservation, research, and interpretation.

## OUR VISION

At Murney Tower Museum, our vision is to create meaningful experiences and provide a sense of place for our community by representing Kingston's distinct cultural and military heritage through programs, research, and interpretation as a designated NHSC.

## OUR VALUES

As Kingston's oldest museum, our values are as time-honoured and deep-rooted as our institution.

*ENHANCE PRESERVATION.*

*FOSTER EDUCATION.*

*FACILITATE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.*

*PROMOTE COLLABORATION.*

*AUGMENT ACCESSIBILITY.*



## YEAR AT A GLANCE

The museum's steering committee is delighted to present its 2023 Annual Report. Providing a comprehensive overview of the Murney Tower Museum's activities throughout 2023, this report covers seven areas of work, projects, collections, exhibitions, special events, education, collaborations and publicity, which offer a glimpse into the museum's activities in 2023. Thanks to the generous operating funding provided by the City of Kingston Heritage Fund and Kingston and Area Association of Museums, Art Galleries, and Historic Sites (KAM) and summer funding provided by the Young Canada Works and Canada Summer Jobs programs, the Murney Tower Museum had a very successful and memorable year.

In 2024, we will continue offering new educational experiences to engage a broad range of audiences with the unique history of Kingston. It is our goal to follow local, national and global developments to deliver meaningful, vibrant, and relevant cultural experiences that promote cultural vitality in our city. We would like to thank everyone who visited our site, participated in our special events, and supported us in 2023. We would not have been able to have such a memorable year without you. As the oldest operating museum in Kingston and a National Historic Site, it is our honour to preserve Kingston's cultural heritage, build bridges between the past and present and turn Murney Tower into a living, breathing, and engaging space.



# YEAR AT A GLANCE

## IN NUMBERS



### 12.600 VISITORS

We welcomed local residents, local tourists and international tourists into Murney Tower.

### 1.500 PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Our educational programs, special events and community activities engaged more than 1.000 people.

### 16 OPERATING WEEKS

The museum site was open from 21 May through 4 September 2023.

### 18 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS



Between January and December 2023, we organized school visits, onsite educational activities, and online arts and crafts tutorials.

### 4 EVENTS

We organized the first-ever holiday-themed and summer events in 2023.

### 10 SCHOOL TRIPS

In 2023, the museum welcomed more than ten school groups from grades 2 through 9 into the Murney Tower.

### 10.000 CLICKS



The museum website was visited by more than 10.000 people from all across Canada and around the world.





# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

PAUL CHARBONNEAU

Murney Tower Museum stands to watch over the Kingston harbour for another cold and blustery winter, as it has done now for almost a century. As you read this annual report you should be astonished at the numbers of this year in review. In a year where recovery from COVID-19 has been slow for many tourist attractions, our little museum had a gargantuan year of visitors and events.

The praise and acclaim of this success is wholly with the staff and volunteers whose passion to ensure this part of our antiquity never vanishes from history. Vision, innovation and actual physical work led to this transition and elevated the visitor experience. Kudos to the Museum Director, Dr. Tabitha Renaud and Manager and Curator, Dr. Simge Erdogan-O'Connor and the staff, interns, and many volunteers. Congratulations to Simge for receiving her Ph.D.

This year we cast our minds forward to the 100th anniversary of the Murney Tower Museum, a National Historic Site of Canada and UNESCO World Heritage Site. Plans are well underway to mark this timely event; stay tuned through our newsletter. Please plan a visit this summer to the Murney Tower Museum and cherish the feeling you will experience.



# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

## DR. TABITHA RENAUD

Murney Tower is one of Kingston's beloved treasures and a symbol of this community. A Martello appears on our city flag and Kingston's latest snowplow was named after Murney. Radio DJs joke that things are "older than the Murney Tower" and people feature Martellos on their license plates (myself included). We are proud of the special place the Tower holds in this community and have worked hard to ensure we're back on the radar as a community hub.

I have served as Director from 2019 until February 2024 and over the last five years, we have accomplished quite the transformation. We modernized and rebranded the museum, shaped its direction and strategic priorities and overhauled all areas of museum operations. We redid all our exhibitions (bilingually), moved our collection to a climate-controlled storage unit for cataloguing and created a full roster of public programs and special events. We developed a new website, a groundbreaking bilingual audio tour and switched to "admission by donation" – doubling our attendance per season. We've had interviews on national television and put this little museum on the map.

I am very proud of the work this team has done over the last five years and the Tower will always hold a very special place in my heart. Thank you to the Murney family and the Kingston Historical Society for a wonderful experience. The museum is going to celebrate its 100th birthday soon and the best is yet to come!



# MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGER

## DR. SIMGE ERDOGAN- O'CONNOR

When I joined the Murney Tower Museum team in March 2020, I had no idea how far this little tower would come. Despite the outbreak of a global pandemic, the closure of our site for over two years, and unprecedented times, we achieved many institutional objectives and brought our museum a step closer to becoming a more vibrant, living and inclusive space filled with intellectual curiosity, cultural experience, and wonder. This year we welcomed more than 12,000 visitors to Murney Tower and engaged them with the unique history of Kingston. We hosted ten school groups, delivered three classroom visits, organized four special events and participated in four collaborative initiatives, which engaged more than 1,000 people with the history of our site as well as the broader cultural heritage of Kingston. With the launch of our accessible audio tour - a project that has been so close to our hearts - we encouraged a deeper conversation about cultural participation in Kingston, setting an example for improved accessibility in cultural spaces. As I look back at my journey at the Murney Tower Museum, I am grateful for our parent organization, the Kingston Historical Society, our steering committee, our volunteers and staff members who dedicated an abundance of their time to our organization, working enthusiastically to transform it into a vivid educational and cultural space. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to our team, visitors, event participants, collaborators, and followers for supporting and allowing us to create new cultural experiences that bring people together and make life worth living.

# THE YEAR IN REVIEW

## Overview

### PROJECTS

AUDIO TOUR

### COLLECTIONS

COLLECTION WORK

NEW ARTIFACTS

### EXHIBITIONS

EXHIBIT RENEWAL

BILINGUAL PANELS

### SPECIAL EVENTS

EGGS-TREAM EASTER FUN

MURNEY FEST

ESCAPE THE MUSEUM

DECK THE HALLS

### EDUCATION

HISTORIAN-IN-TRAINING

CURATOR-IN-TRAINING

SUNSET PAINTING

### COLLABORATION

MARCH OF THE MUSEUMS

KINGSTON REGIONAL HERITAGE FAIR

DOORS OPEN KINGSTON

PRINCESS STREET PROMENADE

PHANTOMS OF YORE

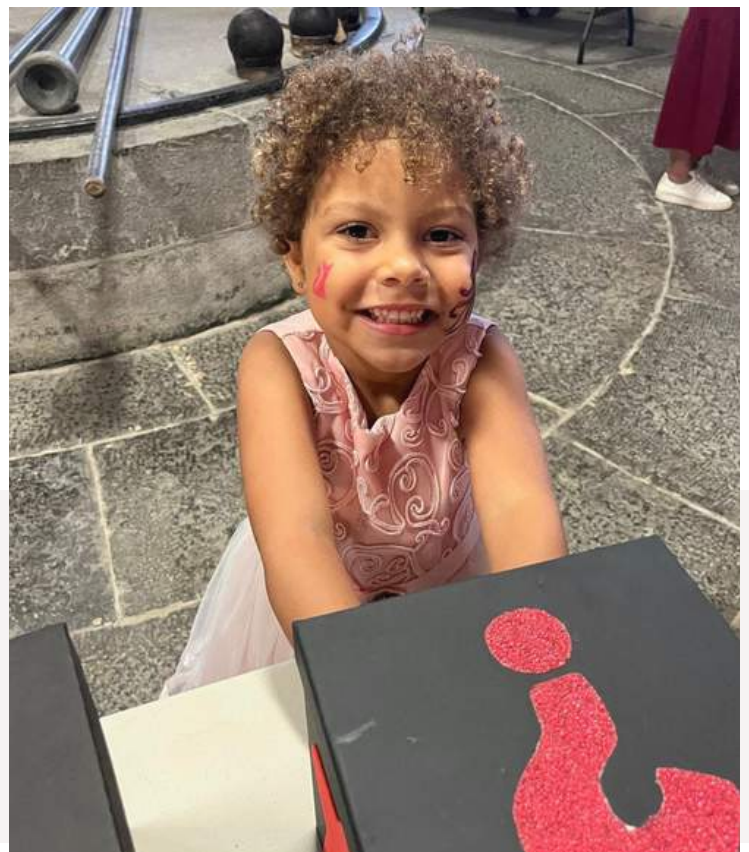
### PUBLICITY

BROCKVILLE LECTURE SERIES

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CTV OTTAWA

MR. MURNEY







**12.600**

Visitors

**1.500**

Program  
participants

# PROJECTS

## Audio Tour

Our accessibility efforts were revamped in 2023. In May 2023, we launched a new and accessible audio tour, which was made possible by a generous grant received from the Community Foundation for Kingston and Area. The tour was available online and onsite at Murney Tower during the summer of 2023 free of charge. Throughout the summer, more than 200 people used the audio tour to complement their museum experience and accommodate their accessibility needs. This project, which is the first of its kind in the Kingston Heritage Community, has moved us a step closer to greater accessibility and allowed us to provide a more unique and engaging museum experience to our visitors.



**Community Foundation**  
for Kingston & Area



▶ Murney Tower - The Beginning

▶ Murney Tower - The Basement

▶ Murney Tower - The Barracks

▶ Murney Tower - The Gun Platform



# COLLECTIONS

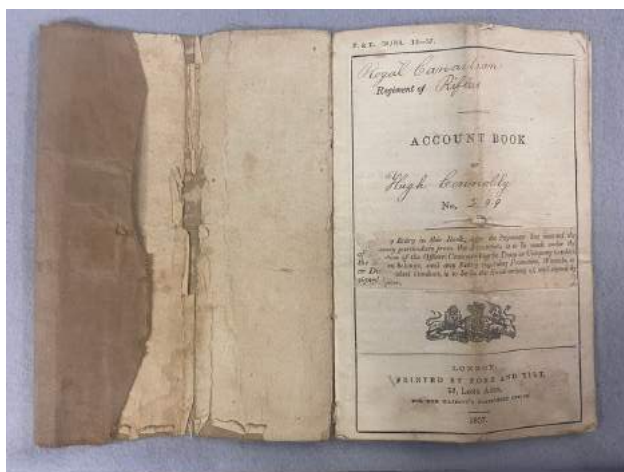
## COLLECTION WORK

In fall 2023, we cleaned and wrapped all exhibits and moved them to our climate-controlled offsite storage facility. First introduced in 2020, this routine cleaning practice has become an incredibly important part of our ongoing collection management and care efforts, allowing us to preserve our collections according to the International Museum Standards.



## NEW ARTIFACTS

In winter 2023, we received a donation of two military medals and an 1857 Account Book, which belonged to a British soldier named Hugh Connelly who served in the Royal Rifle Canadian Regiment in the 1860s. In the summer, we received another donation; an original key of Murney Tower, which opens one of the storerooms located in the basement of the tower. All artifacts were cleaned, numbered, accessioned, and added to the collection. Taken together, these artifacts made an important contribution to the museum's existing collections and stories.





# EXHIBITIONS

## EXHIBIT RENEWAL

This year we developed the “Voices of Murney” exhibit further through exhibit renewal efforts. We purchased two new display cases for the barracks level. The first display case exhibited a selection of rifles from the 19th century and the second case exhibited a selection of archaeological remains found in the dry ditch of the tower. We also created two new exhibits on the museum’s gun platform. The first case presented a selection of artifacts from the museum collections representing 19th century entertainment, and the other one was dedicated to the civilian life of the soldiers who lived in the tower between 1848 and 1885. Taken together, these efforts allowed us to showcase more collections and communicate different aspects of the history of Murney Tower.



## BILINGUAL PANELS

Thanks to a generous contribution by the City of Kingston Heritage Fund Bilingual Exhibition and Program, we developed bilingual exhibits this year. All informative panels were professionally translated into French and five new exhibit panels were printed and mounted on rooms located in the basement of the tower to educate audiences about the unique architectural and engineering aspects of the Murney Tower. Our manager also created a new “Murney Timeline” panel, which provides information about the history of the tower and its transformation throughout the years.



# SPECIAL EVENTS

## EGGS-TREAM EASTER FUN

This year we collaborated with the Museum of Healthcare at Kingston to celebrate Easter with Kingston communities. On April 1st, the museum opened its doors for a special Easter Event entitled "Eggs-treme Easter Fun at the Museum." We offered a unique Easter egg hunt and arts and crafts activities at both sites and welcomed family groups to celebrate Easter altogether.



## SOFT OPENING EVENT

On May 19th, we hosted a private soft opening and networking event to celebrate the museum's 98th operating season with our partners, collaborators, and community members. We welcomed MP Mark Gerretsen and the members of the Kingston City Council into the tower, along with our colleagues and partners from Tourism Kingston and the Kingston and Area Association of Museums Art Galleries and Historic Sites (KAM).



# SPECIAL EVENTS

## MURNEY FEST 2023

On July 29th, we organized a special community event entitled “Murney Fest” to celebrate the museum’s 98th anniversary. This full-day event consisted of a series of indoor and outdoor activities including yoga, an oil painting session, face painting, and a treasure hunt. As part of this special event, we invited local museums and organizations such as the Museum of Healthcare at Kingston, Great Lakes Museum, Kingston Scout Museum, and Kingston MOVE radio station to promote their sites and carry out activities with event participants.



## ESCAPE THE MUSEUM

On October 21st, we collaborated with the Museum of Healthcare at Kingston to offer a special Halloween event, “Escape the Museum,” which had participants explore the Murney Tower Museum and the Museum of Healthcare to earn their keys and win a prize. As participants desperately searched for a way out, they came upon others who had been trapped inside the museums - some for hours, others for centuries! The event engaged more than 250 participants.





# SPECIAL EVENTS

## DECK THE HALLS

We celebrated the holiday season with a special holiday-themed event entitled “Deck the Halls,” which brought the Murney Tower Museum, the Great Lakes Museum and the Museum of Healthcare together for a day of tree-mendous fun. The event took place on December 2nd at the Museum of Healthcare at Kingston. Buddy the Elf welcomed the kids and families as the museum elves and event participants got creative with crafts activities, created wreaths, enjoyed holiday songs, discussed history and museums, decorated the Christmas tree, and sipped hot chocolate. Over 90 visitors filled the Murney booth and the colouring station with joy and laughter and gave us memories that we will cherish forever.



# EDUCATION

## HISTORIAN-IN-TRAINING WORKSHOPS

In the winter and spring of 2023, we offered a travelling collection program in collaboration with the Kingston Regional Heritage Fair. Between January-May 2023, we visited three classrooms at the Loughborough Public School and Kingston Christian School, engaging the 2nd, 3rd, and 7th grade students with the history of Kingston. Our classroom visits included a presentation about the history of Kingston Fortifications and Murney Tower and a special collection handling workshop led by our manager/curator. In the program, students examined a selection of artifacts from the Murney Tower Museum's collection and talked to our manager/curator about her museum work and curatorial practice.



## SCHOOL TRIPS

Between May-July 2023, we organized ten school trips with grades 2-4, and 6 classes from Kingston Christian, Glenburnie, Turnbull, and Amherst Island Schools. These visits included a guided tour of the tower and an in-depth discussion of Kingston's history, engaging more than 250 students with Kingston's cultural heritage. Thanks to the contributions of the City of Kingston Heritage Fund, all tours were offered free of charge.



# EDUCATION

## CURATOR-IN-TRAINING

Our new onsite program called the "Curator-in-Training" introduced youth to the museum's unique collections and offered a behind-the-scenes experience of curatorial work. The first program took place on June 3rd and the second one took place on July 7th and included a detailed guided tour of the tower and a collection handling workshop led by our manager/curator. After exploring the site and examining our collections, the participants engaged in a special arts and crafts activity and created their exhibits to be displayed at the tower.



## SUNSET PAINTING

In July and August 2023, we hosted two sunset painting sessions for adult and family groups. Led by local artist Matthias Beechey, these sunset painting sessions took place in the park and had participants paint the picturesque surroundings of Kingston's one and only, Murney Tower.





# COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

## MARCH OF THE MUSEUMS

Between 13-17 March 2023, we participated in the March of the Museums event organized by the Kingston and Area Association of Museums, Art Galleries and Historic Sites (KAM) and engaged with approximately 600 kids and families. For the event, we developed a special activity that recreated the Long Service of Good Conduct medal given to the soldiers of Murney.



## KINGSTON REGIONAL HERITAGE FAIR

On May 8th, we participated in the Kingston Regional Heritage Fair. Over 500 students from local schools visited our booth which included word puzzles, games, and art and craft activities. On June 3rd, the winners of the Kingston and Ottawa Heritage Fair visited Murney Tower as one of the many stops of their celebratory field trip. We prepared a special visit for them, which included an artifact-handling workshop and a detailed tour of the Murney Tower.



# COLLABORATIVE INITIATIVES

## PRINCESS STREET PROMENADE

On August 5th, we participated in a community event, the Princess Street Promenade, organized by Downtown Kingston. The Murney Tower Museum booth displayed selected artifacts from our collection along with crafts for children. We interacted with approximately 120 people.



## DOORS OPEN KINGSTON

This year, we participated in two Kingston-wide Doors Open events, organized by the Kingston and Area Association of Museums, Historic Sites and Art Galleries (KAM). The first one took place on July 22nd and the second event took place on August 26th, engaging approximately 600 people with the history of the tower.

## PHANTOMS OF YORE

We welcomed courageous groups of ghost hunters on October 7th, 8th and 9th who completed a Paranormal Investigation Challenge at our historic site using all the latest ghost-hunting technology. The event began with a briefing on the haunted history of the site, the equipment to be used, and the best ghost-hunting practices to follow when collecting and analyzing evidence. The brave groups then ventured inside to see if they could discover any traces of the paranormal and communicate with the spirits of Kingston's past.



# PUBLICITY & MARKETING

## BROCKVILLE LECTURE SERIES

On February 14th, our manager/curator, Dr. Simge Erdogan-O'Connor, participated in the Brockville Museum's Annual Lecture Series and delivered a guest lecture on the history of Murney Tower as a historic site and museum and offered unique insights into its changing meanings and transformation throughout the years.



## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

On August 24th, our manager led a special professional development workshop entitled "Improved Accessibility in Museums," which was organized by the Kingston and Area Association of Museums, Art Galleries and Historic Sites. In her presentation, Simge discussed the impacts and challenges of accessibility design in museums and offered insights into the Murney Tower Museum's audio tour project, which was developed in 2022 in collaboration with the representatives of disabled communities in Kingston.





# PUBLICITY & MARKETING

## CTV OTTAWA

In April and July 2023, our manager/curator appeared on CTV Ottawa 6 o'clock news. She talked about the museum's Easter and Murney Fest events and answered questions about Kingston's heritage.

CTV NEWS

LIVE

OTTAWA

OTTAWA | News

Easter egg hunt draws in scavenger thrills and history at two Kingston, Ont. museums



## MR. MURNEY

This year we created a new mascot named “Mr. Murney” to strengthen our marketing efforts. Since its creation in July 2023, Mr. Murney has become very popular among museum visitors especially children and family groups. We have been using the Mr. Murney character in our promotional materials and marketing engagements.



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# ACKNOWLEDGING OUR GENEROUS SUPPORTERS

**The Murney Tower Museum acknowledges with thanks the continued support of our contributors:**

The City of Kingston

Parks Canada

Kingston and Area Association of Museums, Art Galleries, and Heritage Sites

Tourism Kingston

Community Foundation for Kingston and Area

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Government of Canada, Canada Summer Jobs Program

Queen's University Department of Art History and Art Conservation

Queen's University Law Clinics

Queen's University Faculty of Engineering and Applied Science

Queen's University Department of History

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