Heritage Update

Heritage NL

News and Notes on Heritage NL's Built Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage Programs
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Heritage NL named Recipient of the John Bragg Award for Atlantic Canada

Three $50,000 grants will support projects sharing stories of influential figures in Atlantic Canadian history and society.

A doctor turned patron, educator, and builder of cultural development whose commitment shaped the artistic and heritage identity of Madawaska and Acadie. A queer artist and philanthropist whose legacy continues to inspire cultural and community life in Atlantic Canada. A visionary artist and pioneer of occupational therapy who put craftsmanship at the service of well-being, economic autonomy, and the vitality of rural communities in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The lives and legacies of these remarkable Atlantic Canadians will be honoured through the John Bragg Award for Atlantic Canada. The award is a granting program made possible by the River Philip Foundation, dedicated to preserving and promoting the histories of people whose contributions shaped the region.
"The stories that shape our communities are often found in places, people, and legacies that might otherwise fall into obscurity," said Melony Ward, President and CEO of the Canada's History Society. "Whether it is highlighting the contributions of important figures or preserving heritage sites that reflect diverse experiences, the John Bragg Award supports initiatives that allow these stories to be preserved, shared, and passed on to future generations."

"This award supports community initiatives that bring to life significant stories from Atlantic Canada and make them accessible to a new audience," said John Bragg on behalf of the River Philip Foundation. "By highlighting figures who have shaped art, culture, and social engagement, we hope to inspire current and future generations to also contribute to the well-being and vitality of their communities."

Each of the recipients' projects aims to expand knowledge and increase public awareness of key leaders in their communities. The recipients are:

1. Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador (Heritage NL), St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador — Jessie Luther — Craft and Community Advocate, research and writing of a biography to be published online, and a series of community craft workshops;
2. Société historique du Madawaska, Edmundston, New-Brunswick — Dr Paul- Carmel Laporte, « un artiste dans l'âme, » museum exhibition and series of lectures;

3. La Société Vieille Maison Association, Meteghan, Nova Scotia, — La Vieille Maison — Saving Built Heritage, Saving Stories, preservation of a heritage site.

Each organization will receive $50,000 to implement its initiative.

Heritage NL's Jessie Luther Project will highlight the life and legacy of **Jessie Luther** (1860–1952), an artist and pioneer of occupational therapy who contributed to the social and economic development of rural communities in Newfoundland and Labrador through Grenfell Industries. Trained at the Rhode Island School of Design and influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement, Luther created industrial workshops for women and hospital patients, encouraging the production of handcrafted rugs and traditional objects while supporting community well-being. The Heritage NL project includes three components: research and writing for a detailed biography to be published online, the submission of a nomination for provincial commemoration, and the delivery of accessible community workshops inspired by Luther's craft techniques. This initiative preserves the history of a pioneering woman — often overshadowed by Wilfred Grenfell — while transmitting her artistic, social, and educational legacy to new generations.

Sustainable Heritage Tourism Conference - Heart's Content Oct 2026!

By Victoria Mathews

Join us in Heart's Content, October 15th - 18th for the Annual Heritage Conference! This year will cover sustainable heritage tourism with talks on environmental heritage and UNESCO practices. As a collaboration between the conference committee and Mizzen Heritage Society, Sunday will feature a Doors Open day in Heart's Content and surrounding communities, allowing you to explore local museums, workshops and stores.

Registration will open July 14th and run until October 1st, so get your tickets early! Tickets will be $160 for ANLA/MANL members and $200 for non-members. Registration includes three days of activities and talks, select meals, and transportation to nearby communities on both Saturday and Sunday. It does not include transportation to Heart's Content or accommodations.

If you have any issues with accommodation, please contact Conference@heritagenl.ca. You should also contact the conference email if you plan to fly to the conference as we have a Westjet discount code for attendees.

For more information check out our new conference website,
https://heritagetomorrownl.wordpress.com/2026-heritage-conference/

Looking for Conference Sponsors

Are you interested in supporting Newfoundland and Labrador's cultural heritage sector? The Museum Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (MANL), in partnership with Heritage NL and the Association of Newfoundland and Labrador Archives (ANLA), is holding its Annual Heritage Conference on October 16th-18th, 2026, in beautiful Heart's Content.

Heritage professionals, students and volunteers from all corners of the province will participate in this annual event, which is dedicated to connecting, supporting and celebrating Newfoundland and Labrador's heritage sector.

Last year we had approximately 100 attendees and 20+ speakers at our event in St. John's, and are expecting an even better event this year. We are even expecting speakers and attendees from outside of Canada.

We have multiple levels of sponsorship available that you can look through and we are open to a customized level to suit your needs. You can find our sponsorship package on the conference website https://heritagetomorrownl.wordpress.com/2026-heritage-conference/! If you would be interested in sending a representative, let us know as we have a discount code or flights.

Donations are also appreciated as part of the conference bag, speaker gifts or general support.

Any support for the event would be greatly appreciated and if you are interested reach out to Conference@heritagenl.ca.

Custard Head Fishing Premises Plaque Unveiling

By Juliet Lanphear

Heritage NL, including board member Kerri Abbott, were excited to participate in the launch of the Hant's Harbour Willow Tree Walk on Saturday, June 13th, and to present the Custard Head Fishing Premises with a new heritage plaque. This event was a great opportunity to celebrate the heritage of Hant's Harbour, including their heritage buildings, NONIA knitters, and their famous "Bag Ladies", who collected recycling for fundraising, including purchasing the building for the Willow Tree Heritage Museum.

The new plaque reads:

> *Constructed by Joseph Francis and Simeon Green, this property is a good example of fishing premises along the south shore of Trinity Bay. Fishing stages were used for cleaning, salting, and storing fish. Built from locally sourced and recycled materials, these simple utilitarian buildings played a vital role in the traditional inshore fishery.*

Change Islands Memory Mug Up

By Terra Barrett

Join us on Sunday, July 12th for a Memory Mug Up in Change Islands at 7pm!

Change Islands Heritage and Culture Committee and Heritage NL, in partnership with the Change Islands Digital Heritage Project, are hosting a Memory Mug Up at the Change Islands Heritage Building and want to see you there.

A Memory Mug Up is an informal story sharing session for community members, where people gather, have a cup of tea, and share memories. You bring a memory, we will supply the tea and biscuits, and we'll all have a chat!

Do you pick berries in Birch Cove? Does your family have a connection to the fishery? Do you remember the ponds you swam in or skated on?

Come have a mug up & share your memories of growing up in Change Islands!

All are welcome, no tickets or registration necessary!

What is Cemetery Tourism?

By Katie Crane

Also known as thanatourism, cemetery tourism is the practice of visiting cemeteries, not just for memorial purposes, but as part of a broader cultural, historical, and recreational experience. This practice dates back to the 19th century when cemeteries, especially Victorian garden cemeteries, were designed as beautiful, tranquil spaces meant to serve as both burial grounds and public parks. Cemeteries like London's Highgate Cemetery invited visitors to stroll, picnic, and appreciate the mix of nature, art, and remembrance. Cemetery tourism really has a long history, but over time, this visitation aspect of cemeteries fell out of vogue, and they began to be seen as purely memorial sites. But there is a growing interest in cemetery tourism, both informally and formally. Cemetery tours are often used to raise funds for the ongoing preservation, maintenance, and protection of historic cemeteries *(image: Arnos Vale Cemetery, Bristol UK).*

There are many different reasons why a tourist may be interested in visiting cemeteries. Depending on which type of cemetery tourist you want to attract, you might take different approaches to the types of tourist experiences you offer, including guided tours, living history, self-guided tours (signs, audio tours), or events (cemetery fairs, concerts, movies, scavenger hunts).

The most common form of cemetery tourism is a guided walking tour of the general history of those interred in the cemetery. These tours are led by an employee or volunteer who has memorized a script, with predetermined stops, aimed at giving visitors a general history of the origins of the cemetery, the time period in which it was constructed and used, and a small window into the lives of some of its most notable inhabitants.

Living History Tours, a form of guided tour, include actors dressed up as a person interred in the cemetery, standing at their grave, and informing visitors of their life and legacy. These tours aim to put a face to the stories being told to make them more impactful. Several years ago, there was a popular cemetery tour of this category in Carbonear in St Patrick's Cemetery *(shown right)*.

Not all tours need a tour guide. Self guided tours can use printed maps and handouts with information about the stops, or they could do sign boards with stories and information about the stops in the cemetery. This allows visitors to take the tour at their own pace, reduces the need to have a person on site, or can be combined with guided walking tours to either supplement their information, or attract visitors outside of the allotted walking tour time slots.

Abney Park Cemetery, one of London's Magnificent Seven, has developed a series of self guided audio tours on different topics, addressing the different layers of use within the cemetery space. Covering everything from Victorian mourning practices, the art of the gravestone, the cemetery as a haven for nature, and more. Audio tours can include music and narration to achieve a desired mood while visitors walk the cemetery landscape. Abney Park uses pauses at particular graves to give space to absorb information before moving on.

Some cemeteries have taken inspiration from the 19th century, when cemeteries were destinations and the precursors to public parks. When researching London, UK cemeteries in 2024, I visited two different cemetery fairs in two of London's Magnificent Seven - Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park, and Brompton Cemetery Park. These fairs were part craft fair, part food festival, part performance space. In Tower Hamlets, the Friends of Tower Hamlets had set up information booths to learn about the history of the cemetery, activities for children that tied into learning about death and dying in Victorian times, a craft fair to support local artisans, local food trucks, and had both musical and theatrical performances. Brompton Cemetery had similar activities, but also included a stand to buy honey made by the bees of Brompton Cemetery park, as well as a birds of prey educational performance.

Some cemeteries offer musical performances, host movie nights, or even develop pop-up exhibitions within these spaces. Hollywood Forever, one of the oldest cemeteries in Los Angeles, advertises outdoor classic film screenings at their cemetery where many old Hollywood stars are interred. In Arnos Vale, in Bristol, the upper part of one of their two chapels has been converted into a cafe, and the rest of this chapel and the second one have been converted into exhibition and event space.

There are many other ways to attract tourists to cemeteries, reimagining their use and their place within a community. Essentially, as long as the tourist experience is respectful of the cemetery space, there is a cemetery out there doing it. What is most useful for the kind of tourist you want to attract, the cemetery space you have, and respectful cemetery use is up to individual cemeteries and communities.

Katie Crane is a PhD student at Memorial University looking at the reasons why people are interested in preserving, documenting, and promoting historic cemeteries in Newfoundland and Labrador. Her research involves looking at places like the United Kingdom, which have long histories of this kind of historic cemetery work.

St. Patrick's Parish Heritage Committee (Brigus) Scanning Party

On Saturday, July 25th, Heritage NL will be partnering with St. Patrick's Parish Heritage Committee in Brigus to host a Scanning Party. From 1-4pm everyone is welcome to attend and bring their original photographs of community and social life in the region to have their images scanned. Once scanned, the images will become part of the Digital Archives Initiative (DAI) hosted at Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador for public use in research. As a component of the women's history research project, images of women and their roles both formally and informally in the social life of the parish and in the community of Brigus are strongly encouraged! *(image: Photograph of first communion class of 1966, taken in Marysvale Community Center)*

A Scanning Party is an informal photo collection session for heritage groups, small museums and archives, or town councils. Community members come to a Scanning Party prepared. They bring their own photographs to be scanned at the event and then taken back home with them the same day. You are not limited to photographs. You could also scan recipes, documents, slides, negatives, or anything else that will fit into a scanner. The goal of a Scanning Party is to help digitize and preserve community photographs as well as make them accessible to community members.

Individuals are encouraged to bring a small selection of photographs and other primary documents that there are currently no digital copies of to have them scanned in. Participants will sit with a representative from Heritage NL, who will collect information on the contents of the photos such as where was the photo taken, who is visible in the photograph, who took the photo, and what is the significance or story behind the image taken?