

The Heritage Economy: Communities As Shareholders In History  
Presentation to the Ontario East Municipal Conference  
Kingston, Ontario  
September 14, 2016  
By Peter Lockyer, History Lives Here Inc.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

This presentation is a very practical workshop about public education to promote heritage conservation, and the need to develop a new business model for rural communities based on showcasing and marketing their history.

It's our belief that the greatest, dormant economic asset we have in Eastern Ontario is our history and heritage

That there is a marketplace for this history

And that there is an imperative to develop an alternative business model that creates new revenues for heritage organizations and their communities as grants from all levels of governments decline and become increasingly competitive, and as the volunteer sector ages and becomes unable to maintain current levels of support for a wide range of worthy causes including the maintenance of heritage properties such as archives, cemeteries, museums, libraries, and other significant properties.

The future of the past in many Eastern Ontario communities is very uncertain.

### The Heritage Economy

So this presentation is about creating what we call The Heritage Economy – the notion that the local history that is in every community can be transformed from a dormant asset into a suite of “popular history” goods and services retailed online, year-round to the world.

The concept of the Heritage Economy has evolved from several influences over my lifetime.

I've been a journalist all my life. It's been my experience that most of the world goes by unreported everyday. So being a reporter is a bit like having an addiction really. I want to tell all the untold and forgotten stories from the history that is all around us. These are wonderfully rich tales of struggle, survival, setbacks, and successes. They are the stories of us – but they are currently a “hidden history” locked away in the collections of museums, archives, cemeteries, and libraries. What needs to happen is that this “hidden history” is transformed into “popular history” products retailed to heritage consumers on a sustained, professional basis. We have the raw product – the history. We just need to package and market it as a product line.

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This concept has also evolved from my own experiences working across Canada and internationally. For over a decade of my life, I travelled extensively documenting Canada's relief and development programs. I was often documenting the development of micro-finance projects – village banks, small credit unions and cooperatives – in places like Indonesia and Sri Lanka where these pictures were taken. They are alternative economic models in use by some of the world's poorest people as a means of escaping poverty.

Coops and credit unions are big business. There are some 750,000 in the world. In Canada today about 18 million Canadians are members of 9,000 coops and over 600 credit unions. They are social enterprises harnessing the great capacities of people and pooling limited resources to foster economic development in the communities where they reside. This “sum-of-our parts” philosophy has deeply influenced my thoughts on economic development in my own community.

Finally, the concept of The Heritage Economy has also been shaped by my experiences working as a volunteer on a variety of heritage projects, and serving as the Chair of the Prince Edward County Heritage Advisory Committee. So while I am discussing my own community, I am sure you will find a great many things in this presentation that sound very familiar.

#### A Brief History of History Lives Here

History Lives Here Inc. is a communications company I founded in 2004. We provide strategic communications, multimedia, marketing, event planning, and fundraising services to our clients. The company has 10 experienced, professional associates who live throughout the region.

We do many things - some of which have nothing to do with history. During Canada's military mission to Afghanistan, we managed a unit providing media training to senior command staff to prepare them for the media landscape they would face in that country.

We have provided multimedia services to Public Safety Canada and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to document their annual bilateral training programs to test and evaluate emergency preparedness systems. We are currently involved in an exercise to evaluate provincial and municipal capacities to respond to a nuclear emergency in the Bruce Peninsula.

But more and more our work involves working with Eastern Ontario municipalities to create heritage products – from events, re-enactments, and tours to a television

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series and other heritage products – to promote and market their history because we believe history is the region’s greatest, untapped economic resource.

### The Marketplace for History Lives Here

There is a marketplace for history.

History is one of the top four reasons why people go anywhere after business, family and friends.

The History Channels in Canada and the United States exist because they link advertisers with consumers interested in history – the 9.8 million boomers in Canada, many of whom are history buffs.

Every month, 68 million people around the world Google the word “history.”

The Town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania is a small community of just over 9,000 people. They have only one competitive asset – three days of history forged during the Civil War in the 1860s when nearly 60,000 soldiers from both sides died in battle. This is all Gettysburg has. It’s the only thing they sell. And they make nearly \$700 million a year, and have created 7500 jobs telling their Civil War story to three million annual visitors.

Ancestry.com makes \$28 million a month retailing access to its extensive data base to its 1.7 million subscribers.

In many places in the world, history makes money. So why don’t we retail the history we have in Eastern Ontario and make it a major economic driver for our communities?

### Research Casting International Inc.

There are companies in Eastern Ontario making history. Research Casting International in Trenton is one of three companies in the world, which makes reproductions of dinosaurs for the world’s museums. We recently completed a photo assignment for one of their clients, the Tokyo Museum, who wanted images of their dinosaurs being made to promote an exhibit this year.

### Glenwood Cemetery: A Case Study in History

I have lived what I am talking about beginning with a decade working as a volunteer to restore Picton’s historic Glenwood Cemetery.

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Glenwood is a spectacular 62-acre cemetery, parkland, and urban forest in downtown Picton. But after 50 years of neglect, it was by 2000, in sad shape. It's not easy raising money for a cemetery. We used to joke about different fundraising ideas at our board meetings just to alleviate the stress we felt. "Lucky Wednesdays" is one memorable idea. Another was "Scratch and Lose" tickets.

Well, we didn't do any of those ideas, but we did raise significant revenues beginning with a \$300,000 restoration of the elegant stone chapel, a designated heritage building - and we went on to restore roads, digitize record systems, repair other heritage buildings, and to reforest the cemetery. Today, Glenwood is a very different place, and a significant community heritage asset.

#### Heritage Products: Walking Tours

We started our fundraising by telling stories - and developing some heritage products like walking tours in partnership with our local museums.

#### Heritage Products: History Nights At The Regent Theatre

We developed a lecture series in partnership with the Regent Theatre, a heritage property itself.

#### Heritage Products: The History Moments Television Series

In 2009, we created a television series called The History Moments. These are highly - produced, two - minute video vignettes that showcase local history stories of early settlement, founding industries, prominent people and significant events. They play on CKWS TV in Kingston, on CHEX TV in Peterborough, on TVCogeco stations, before movies at several area theatres, and the series is distributed into schools and libraries as learning resources. We are introducing the series to communities throughout Eastern Ontario, and working with Dundurn Press, the largest Canadian publisher of local history books, to transform their inventory of books from across the country into History Moments.

Our next series of 12 short stories - our sixth series - will be launched at the National Air Force Museum of Canada in Trenton on Friday, October 14, 2016.

#### The Miss Supertest 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event

In August 2011, we assisted in creating an event to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the last race of this boat, Miss Supertest III, in Picton. Canada Post unveiled a special

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commemorative stamp, 2500 people showed up, and the event raised \$18,000 for a local museum. We created a documentary on the story of the Miss Supertest team. The anniversary event, the commemorative stamp, the souvenirs, and the documentary are all heritage products that told the story of this great boat and the races held in Picton over 50 years ago.

#### Celebrating the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of Canada's First Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonald

We were also involved in a \$400,000 project to create a bronze sculpture of Sir John A. Macdonald who learned the legal trade as a young lawyer in Picton in the 1830s. The sculpture was unveiled at a VIP dinner at The Royal York in Toronto in January 2015, and later installed on Picton's Main Street on Canada Day that year.

#### The Re-enactment of Picton's infamous 1884 Murder Trial

To raise funds for the project, we re-enacted a famous trial that took place in the Picton courthouse in 1884, the same courthouse where Sir John had his first trial, and during the time that Macdonald was Canada's prime minister. This is the story of two young men who were tried and hanged unjustly for a botched robbery and murder. Local lawyers, judges, and volunteers played the various roles and we had a sold out performance raising \$20,000 in an afternoon for the project.

So we've made a small start on the concept of The Heritage Economy – transforming the dormant history in our community into a suite of “popular history” goods and services retailed to heritage consumers – walking and bus tours, lectures, anniversary events, re-enactments, a bronze sculpture, documentaries, and our television history series, The History Moments.

These heritage projects all created awareness of our local history; and they've all helped raise money for worthy community heritage initiatives.

#### The Challenge to Volunteer Agencies

We believe it's very timely to further develop this concept of The Heritage Economy. 2017 is Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> birthday and I can't think of a better gift to Canadians than to tell them the untold and forgotten stories that are in every community.

But this is also timely because we are on the eve of profound change. In my community, our greatest export is our youth. And the place runs on volunteers. But the volunteers are aging; they are fatigued from years of fundraising; they are facing enormous difficulties in attracting new blood; and I don't think it's true that a next

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generation will necessarily replace the current generation of boomers who are raising funds and supporting a wide range of worthy causes – including the operation and preservation of heritage properties.

Queen’s University did a study some years ago of the non-profit sector. One of their findings was that 7% of volunteers do 71% of the work. So you can see how vulnerable the sector is if just 7% of volunteers – the “doers” in every community – retire from this charitable work.

We believe it is better to hire young people creating jobs for them rather than to recruit older volunteers. There are limits to volunteerism. We think we’ve reached it.

### Creating A New Business Model

We believe we have to transition from a charitable, grants-based, volunteer model that keeps us as “heritage beggars” to a market-driven, business – based economic model – a social enterprise that makes us “heritage entrepreneurs” marketing and retailing heritage products to heritage consumers and re-investing profits back into the conservation of our community heritage assets.

We believe is better to sell consumers heritage products than to ask them for endless charitable donations.

I don’t have all the answers to the challenges that face us. And we’re in the early stages of developing The Heritage Economy in Prince Edward County. But we’re working with a number of partners in our community and communities in Eastern Ontario through our television series and other projects to promote and market their history. Our work is based on these guiding principles:

#### 1. TELL STORIES

We believe a critical first step involves a public education campaign to awaken communities to the history that is all around us, and the enormous potential to use heritage as an economic driver. The starting point we believe is to tell the community its history.

In our community, we are telling stories transforming this “hidden history” into “popular history” heritage products – tours, lectures, re-enactments, crafts, conferences, books and documentaries, events, our History Moments series – all marketed and retailed to heritage consumers

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## 2. A COLLECTIVE APPROACH

We're developing strategic community partnerships for a "sum of our parts" approach – a collective action that complements rather than competes with the various groups and their events; and pools limited financial and volunteer capacities for greater marketing power and financial success

## 3. DEVELOP HERITAGE CHAMPIONS

We encourage local people to serve as "heritage champions" and local government to provide leadership to kick-start the community effort to develop a social enterprise business that shares risk with profits re-invested in heritage

### Financing Heritage

Preserving heritage is ultimately a matter of money.

We believe there is a need to establish a community-based, heritage social enterprise structure to serve as a coordinating, business with key skill sets in-house to develop and market heritage products. It could be a coop. It could be a charity such as a community foundation. It could be a benevolent private business. But it needs to be a social enterprise that generates money from the sale of products to be re-invested in heritage in the community.

This heritage enterprise works with its community partners – local businesses, artists, heritage groups, municipal governments, schools, and media to engage the community in its history and to develop capacities and products – and profits re-invested in heritage.

We believe we can develop creative ways to finance heritage through the sale of heritage products using the skills of local artists and producers to create them; other financing could come through the re-sale of surplus, community-owned heritage properties; contributions from developers when heritage buildings are demolished based on the value of those buildings; the purchase, restoration, and re-sale of endangered heritage properties; and community contributions through bequeaths, donations, and grants.

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### The Restoration of the Royal Hotel

This is a picture of the interior of the Royal Hotel in Picton before the start of renovations in 2015. This 1880s building on Picton's Main Street has been vacant for decades and was in danger of being demolished – another heritage casualty in an historic Eastern Ontario town that has suffered many other demolitions in the past.

But the Royal is not going to be lost. Greg Sorbara, Ontario's former finance minister, and his family, are transforming the Royal into a boutique hotel.

Heritage needs to provide tangible community benefits. Prince Edward County has a shortage of accommodation during the tourism season when some 800,000 people visit us. Restoring and re - purposing heritage buildings to meet these and other community needs such as affordable housing, conference facilities, and cultural and office spaces allows heritage buildings to make a new contribution to community life.

### The Future of the Past

I sometimes wonder whether it would be possible to create Canada today.

In the 1860s we were united then by a big, bold vision of what could be if we became “the sum-of-our parts” – a vision led by extraordinary people like Sir John A. Macdonald, and the other Fathers of Confederation. We can draw upon the experience of the past and remember Canada wasn't formed by a timid group of people. We can think bigger – and act more boldly.

The reality is that traditional approaches to funding heritage - bottle drives, bake sales, silent auctions, annual dinners and fish fries - are never going to raise the money required to restore even a single heritage building in your community or mine. We need to be open to innovation – and to be willing to test drive new ways of doing things. We need to encourage a community resolve to treasure the past.

Heritage isn't free. It's come at an enormous expense to those who have come before us. And if you lose all the special places and spaces in your community, you have to wonder what's so special about your community? The sad answer to that is absolutely nothing. This is a squandered inheritance.

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Either heritage matters – or it doesn't. If it matters – and I believe it does – than those of us working in the heritage sector need to make it more than a vague cultural asset and the luxury we can never seem to afford.

We need to stop being “heritage beggars” dependant solely upon grants and charitable donations only. We need to become “heritage entrepreneurs” transforming the history that is in every community into an economic driver. We need to develop a Heritage Economy.

This is a painting by Quinte artist Manly MacDonald, one of the features in our next History Moments series. He captured on canvas in his lifetime a disappearing world – life in rural Ontario in the 1920s through until the 1970s. I like to think we are continuing his legacy by capturing history before it is lost to time using new technologies.

But we're trying to do something more. We're developing a sustainable means of financing heritage through the concept of The Heritage Economy.

If history made money – as it does in many places in the world – we will be able to preserve the past for future generations.

I want to thank you again for this opportunity to speak with you today. And I am happy to take any questions you might have.