

## Ontario Heritage Conference Report

The Ontario Heritage Conference was held in Midland, Ontario from June 6-9, 2013. Thanks to PACAC, Rebecca Whelan, Heritage Researcher, and Meighen Kirst, Cultural Intern, attended the conference as representatives for the Committee.

Highlights included the keynote address by Dr. Alan Taylor, author of *The Civil War of 1812*. This presentation offered a refreshing take on a national conflict. Dr. Taylor spoke to the War of 1812 as more than an event of national pride within Canada. In addition, he examined the far-reaching effects of the war in the southern United States.

The first workshop, “The Role of Heritage in Economic Development,” showcased three different historical destinations: the S.S. *Keewatin* located in Port McNicoll, the town of Seaforth, and the town of Brussels. Each of the destinations was looked at more closely, to examine how heritage can be used to increase the economic vitality of a community. The session focused on the importance of engaging the community, developing enthusiasm, and seeking community resources through in-kind or voluntary donations.

“Preserving Cultural Heritage Landscapes and Waterscapes,” was a session focused on the designation of Lake Simcoe as Canada’s first designated lake. It also explored modern First Nations’ perspectives on water, as a sacred and essential element of life. The session was rounded out by a presentation on heritage trails. The Township of Oro-Medonte has developed a heritage trail along Georgian Bay, which includes a fieldstone fence, engraved with the names of pioneer families, and historic plaques. Funding for the project was primarily acquired by targeting the descendants of settling families.

We attended the Friday Night Banquet, which included a keynote address by the Honourable David Crombie, former Mayor of Toronto.

The third session was “Emerging issues in Heritage: A Young Professional’s Perspective.” It was a panel discussion of seven emerging professionals in the heritage field discussed where they projects that they were passionate about. There was also a brief question and answer period. The importance of social media and “active collaboration” were repeatedly emphasized.

The final session was “Heritage Conservation Districts and Economic Development.” This workshop offered a definition of heritage conservation districts, and encouraged establishing one in every community. The presentation highlighted examples in St. Mary’s, ON and Collingwood, ON. The presentation also emphasized the importance of adaptive reuse in the downtown core.

Throughout the weekend, we also visited Sainte-Marie Among the Huron in Midland, Huronia Museum, and Discovery Harbour in Penetanguishene.