

**Re-Imagining the Study of Public History: Thoughts on Engaging Burlington Residents in their City's History and Heritage.**



**Postcard of Burlington's Beachfront, date unknown, from the Ivan Cleaver Postcard Collection housed in the Burlington History Room and available digitally at <http://images.burlington.halinet.on.ca/7117/data?n=12>**

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## **Précis**

This report on public history contains an inventory of resources that are currently available for those interested in studying Burlington's history and heritage. It then examines a number of cutting edge public history projects currently being undertaken in North America. The success of these projects suggests that a public history initiative that takes advantage of innovative media practices and that is based on public interaction and collaboration will attract a new, larger and more engaged audience to the study of Burlington's past. These new techniques for disseminating local history will work in tandem with more conventional approaches to public history already available. Finally, the report concludes with some thoughts on how to initiate and implement this sort of project in the near future by reaching out to community members that are already engaged in the study of local history and bringing their energy and enthusiasm to bear on the larger population.

## **1. Introduction**

Burlington, Ontario is home to a community deeply engaged in various aspects of local and public history. For over a century, residents of the city have been collecting archival material, publishing books relating to various aspects of the city's past, dedicating time to the city's two historical museums, fighting for the preservation of the city's architectural heritage, and engaging with local groups dedicated to the wider dissemination of public history.

This report, which is intended as the beginning of a conversation about the future of public history in Burlington, will provide an overview of existing material that is available to the general public on the subject of Burlington's past. This includes everything from books published on the subject, to websites maintained by the City of Burlington, its museums, the Burlington Historical Society, historical sites and commemorative monuments in the city.

In the subsequent section of this report, an overview is provided of a number of public history initiatives that are being undertaken elsewhere in North America. These are surveyed as a means of beginning a process of thinking through how the City of Burlington can move forward on this front.

This survey indicates that the field of public history is currently undergoing something of a renaissance. The possibilities presented by advances in digital technologies and the emergence of social media have led a broad cross-section of stakeholders, including local historians, civic officials, academics, educators, and other community leaders to pursue new opportunities to engage the public in discussions of the past. Some of this work is already being undertaken in Burlington. For example, the digitization of photographs being done by the Burlington Historical Society is taking material that only a decade ago would have been accessible solely by visiting local archives and making it easily available online, where it can be viewed by the public and used as a teaching tool.

This report suggests that by re-thinking how the great work being done by the advocates of local history in Burlington is disseminated to the broader public, a larger and more deeply engaged audience could be tapped. There would be multiple benefits to this. First, engaging the broader public with Burlington's local history would deepen people's connections to their community. Although the benefits of this are difficult to measure, they are important. Secondly, local history, even in the pre-internet era, tends to be shaped by the backgrounds and perspective of the people who research and write it. By casting a wider net and engaging more people in the project of documenting Burlington's past, we will gain a richer and more nuanced perspective on the subject. Finally, employing new media resources to disseminate public history in the community will reinforce the value of local history as a teaching tool to learners of all ages. Not only will they be able to access historical materials more easily, but in doing so they will develop valuable skills working with a variety of digital resources.

## **2. Resources on the History of Burlington Currently Available**

### **I. Books**

**Helga Loveseed, *Burlington: An Illustrated History*. Burlington: Windsor Publications, 1988.**

Loveseed's well illustrated history of Burlington traces the evolution of the city from its earliest days as the site of aboriginal camps on the shores of Lake Ontario to the 1980s. In doing so, it establishes the waterfront and the area's rich soil as the principal driver of economic and social change in the region. Loveseed briefly covers the history of aboriginal peoples in the area, focusing on Joseph Brant as an important intermediary actor who helped build bridges between aboriginal peoples and European colonists. Loveseed's approach to writing history leans heavily on the histories of prominent Burlington families, from the Brants to a handful of prominent loyalist families. Using this approach, Loveseed traces economic change in the area, noting the shift from wheat to mixed farming, and the transformation that occurred in the twentieth century as Burlington evolved from holiday spot to bedroom community to modern city. The final section of Loveseed's book is a profile of several local businesses and institutions.

**John Lawrence Reynolds, *Sounds by the Shore: A History of Burlington, Ontario, Canada*. Burlington: 1993.**

Reynolds book covers much of the same ground that Loveseed did, but is a far more concise history. Reynolds focuses on Burlington's most prominent early residents, noting that their energies and efforts in building the city are recognized in the streets and parks named after them. The book contains a number of sidebars that describe memorable events in the city's past, including an 1884 explosion at a local gunpowder factory, the growth of the canning industry that accompanied the shift towards market gardening, and the story of the HMCS Burlington. He highlights how Burlington was transformed by the development of a sophisticated transportation network across the Golden Horseshoe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, dissecting the importance of the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Queen Elizabeth Way, and the Skyway. Reynolds discusses the opening of the new City Hall in 1964 as being symbolic of Burlington's emergence as the wealthy,

dynamic heart of suburbanization in the region. Reynolds concludes that the efforts of Burlington's industrious early settlers laid the groundwork for its current prosperity.

**Dorothy Turcotte, *Burlington: Memories of Pioneer Days*. Erin: Boston Mills Press, 1989.**

Dorothy Turcotte's two volumes of Burlington history are linked to the efforts of the Burlington Historical Society to document the community's past from its earliest days to the present. Turcotte's book is organized around biographies of prominent families and institutions. Its greatest strength is in the migration stories of Burlington's earliest residents, noting how political and military conflicts, personal ambition, and other processes of social change led people to settle in the area. This allows Turcotte to conclude that the city was built around a shared ambition for living in peace and freedom that linked its residents, be they migrants from the British Isles or loyalists from the United States. There is also a great deal of material here on the challenges faced by the region's earliest settlers, who faced isolation and the endless labour that came with clearing the land and establishing farms. Like the volumes mentioned above, Turcotte discusses Joseph Brant as the crucial figure in Burlington's founding, arguing that he was a bridge between European and Aboriginal culture.

**Dorothy Turcotte, *Burlington: The Growing Years*. Burlington: Burlington Historical Society, 1992.**

This is a sequel of sorts to Turcotte's book on Burlington's earliest days, discussed above. It follows the same methodology as the earlier volume, outlining the city's development through short histories of its prominent families and institutions. Covering the final decades of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century, Turcotte's traces Burlington's evolution from a colonial outpost and port on Lake Ontario to its emergence as an important agricultural centre- it was known briefly as Canada's Garden. Moving through the twentieth century, this volume sheds light on the city's ethnic and racial diversity in its discussions of aboriginals from the Six Nations Reserve at Caledonia being hired as farm labourers and the establishment of a community of Czechoslovakian refugees in the area. Another important thread here relates to the groundwork that was laid for numerous local institutions through the determined work of local volunteers.

Turcotte's book demonstrates that as much as Burlington was transformed during this period, there were important continuities that cannot be ignored.

**Claire Emery Machon, *From Pathway to Skyway Revisited: The Story of Burlington.***

**Burlington: Burlington Historical Society, 1997.**

This volume is an updated version of a work that was produced as a centennial project on the city's evolution. It covers much of the same terrain established in Turcotte's volumes on the city's history. For better or worse, however, it goes into far greater detail with regards to Burlington's prominent families and institutions. Rather than being organized chronologically, *From Pathway to Skyway* is, for the most part, organized thematically, with each chapter addressing the history of a prominent family, themes like sport and leisure, and institutions such as the fire department and local schools. While this makes the book difficult to read from cover to cover, individual sections appeal to readers with a deep interest in a particular subject, such as education, public health and local government. There is a great deal of valuable information contained in these pages for future projects whose objective would be to engage the public in various aspects of Burlington's history.

## **II. Online Resources**

### **Heritage Burlington**

<http://cms.burlington.ca/Page99.aspx>

This is the official website of Heritage Burlington, a citizens advisory committee that reports to the municipal government. Its mandate is to promote interest in the city's history, in accordance with the provincial heritage initiatives. The website contains information on current members of the committee and on how to attend its meetings. The website suggests that most of the committee's attention is devoted to overseeing various provisions of the Ontario Heritage Act relating to local properties that have been deemed to be of historical significance. The site contains information on the obligations that come with owning a property that has been given this designation, and how property owners and other interested parties can go about obtaining such a designation. Particularly valuable here for the purposes of public history is a searchable directory of local heritage properties.

The Heritage Burlington site contains links to a number of important public history resources, including the aforementioned directory of heritage properties:

<http://www.burlington.ca/heritagedirectory/>

It also contains information on Doors Open, an annual event where the public is invited to explore local buildings both public and private, most notably Burlington's two historical museums, Ireland House and the Joseph Brant Museum.

<http://cms.burlington.ca/Page7811.aspx>

### **Burlington Public Library**

The Burlington Public Library's website contains some resources for local and public history, including a short history of the city, which places a particular emphasis on municipal buildings like the library itself. The library's local history website also contains brief historical descriptions of the various villages and hamlets that were amalgamated into Burlington over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There are also pictures and short essays on some of the city's historical churches.

<http://heritage.bpl.on.ca/localhist/burhistory.htm>

## **Museums of Burlington**

The Museums of Burlington have put together an attractive website that outlines the history of the Joseph Brant Museum and Ireland House at Oakridge Farms. The site contains information on the activities held at the two museums, the objective of which is to engage the community in discussions about the region's past. Many of these activities are directed specifically at school-aged children. The site, for example, outlines how various activities held at the museums can be integrated into Ontario's history curriculum. The website features a number of online exhibitions that showcase its extensive holdings, and features discussions on how museums go about doing the work that they do collecting and preserving the community's past. The website also details the extensive archival holdings of both museums, and contains a searchable guide to its archival holdings that is catalogued by Artefacts Canada. This website does an excellent job of making a variety of historical artefacts accessible to members of the broader community, an experience that can extend and build upon actual visits to these two museums.

<http://www.museumsofburlington.com/>

## **Burlington, Ontario Glimpse of the Past Slideshow**

While the websites discussed above have been put together by public institutions charged with engaging the city's residents with the past, there are a few private individuals and organizations who have produced websites with similar objectives. This digital slideshow is one of them. Collecting historical images from a variety of sources, it gives a photographic overview of Burlington's evolution as a city. While it might not make a particularly important contribution to Burlington's public history, it offers a valuable glimpse into the sort of material that interests community members, and what sort of work can be produced with the digital resources currently on offer to those interested in the city's past.

<http://www.slideshare.net/immigroup/burlington-ontario-glimpse-of-the-past>

### **Burlington- Things to see and do for Burlingtonians and visitors alike**

This is another independently produced website that offers viewers an interpretation of Burlington's past. It is anchored by an excerpt from John Lawrence Reynold's 1984 commemorative history of the city. It contains a number of different collections that would be of interest to those who are curious about Burlington's past. Of particular interest is a mapped walking tour of some of the city's heritage homes- this is the sort of project that could be developed further using some of the methods I will be outlining in the following section. Some of the other sections of the website are more ephemeral, such as a collection of photographs of some of the city's historical fire hydrants and an "honour roll" of trees selected as being Burlington's oldest specimens. Also of interest here is a photographic essay of Burlington's magnetic hill, information about the history of Burlington's Cenotaph, and a history of Spencer Smith Park. Again, while this website has been produced by an amateur historian, it is a valuable source of information on the sorts of themes, artefacts and places that are of interest to members of the public interested in Burlington's history.

<http://www.eureka4you.com/burlington/history-history.htm>

### **Burlington Ghost Walks**

This final website that deals extensively with Burlington's history is an example of an alternative way that the public encounters the past. This is the website of a company that conducts walking tours of the Burlington area that highlight landmarks that are rumoured to be haunted. Their services are offered to people planning parties and corporate retreats. While their theories about paranormal activity might be dubious, the website suggests that they make an effort to be historically accurate in other ways. Furthermore, the popularity of this venture- as touted on this website- suggests that there is widespread interest in local history in the broader community, and that more formal ventures like the city's websites and museums might not be the only place where the public encounters discussions of the past.

<http://www.burlingtonghostwalks.com>

### **III. Monuments and Historic Sites**

The past two sections of this report have examined books and websites that provide readers and viewers with information about Burlington's past. As effective as these resources are, they have one important drawback: They are only accessed and viewed by people who set out with an objective to learn more about Burlington's past. The city is also home, however, to numerous teaching tools that the public encounters in their daily journeys through Burlington. These resources are of interest to people who are already engaged in the study of local history, and have the potential to draw others into these discussions.

#### **a.) Plaques and Heritage Properties**

Dozens of properties and institutions in the Burlington area feature plaques that outline the historical significance of the property or structure in question. These do much to instill in the public the sense that they are, in Burlington, surrounded by history. By taking a few seconds to stop and read these plaques, members of the public can learn a great deal about the city's development, even if they never would have had the notion to check out a book on Burlington's history from their local library.

#### **b.) Monuments**

Monuments, like the Burlington Cenotaph at City Hall, achieve a similar objective. They encourage people who might not be motivated to learn about historical events to engage with these ideas. They communicate stories from the community's past, and serve as beacons for public celebrations and commemorations that are rooted in discussions about history.

#### **c.) Museums**

Residents of Burlington encounter the city's two historical museums in a number of ways. Some might visit as children on a school field trip, others might attend a community event or wedding celebration on the grounds of the Joseph Brant Museum or Ireland House. Either way, the displays on the grounds and inside these two buildings are often the first place that members of the public take a moment to contemplate the history of their daily surroundings, and are thus an invaluable resource for those of us looking to promote an interest in local history.

#### **IV. Burlington Historical Society**

The most active organization involved in promoting discussions about Burlington's past is the Burlington Historical Society. This group, whose stated mission is to promote more widespread engagement with local history, has been in operation for several decades and coordinates a wide range of public activities, as documented on their website. It plays an active role in helping residents arrange for heritage plaques for their properties. It has been involved in a variety of publishing projects and public events. Its websites contain excerpts from some of the books mentioned above. They provide assistance for members of the public interested in working in local archives, as they provide links to subject guides for everything from genealogical research, to the histories of local religious institutions, to instructions for how to work with census data. Most impressive of all is their large catalogue of digitized images drawn from Burlington's history, which has been made accessible to the general public through their website, and which can be searched using subject headings and keywords.

The Burlington Historical Society publishes a monthly newsletter, entitled *The Gazette*, which updates members of the society on developments in local history. They include everything from news regarding the acquisition of new archival collections deposited with the city to excerpts from newspaper articles from the nineteenth and early twentieth century Burlington press. This publication demonstrates that there is already a core constituency of local residents who are deeply engaged in studying their community's history. They devote considerable time- nearly all of it on a voluntary basis- to improving their knowledge of the city's history. Editorials published in recent issues suggest that there is an interest in using new media tools- such as apps that would provide an audio walking tour of the city's historical neighbourhoods- to reach out to people who might or might not already be engaging in public events like lectures.

The Burlington Historical Society, therefore, will be a valuable resource in the city's attempts to reach a larger public audience, as they appear willing to devote considerable energy to these ends, and are already thinking through many of these issues.

<http://www.burlingtonhistoricalsociety.ca/>

### **3. Emerging Trends and New Methods in Public History**

This section of the report looks at some of the most important emerging trends in the field of public history. These projects were initiated by research teams and local governments that shared a series of objectives with the City of Burlington, most notably the desire to engage a larger public in discussions about history and heritage. These projects, many of which have received national and international acclaim, have often been collaborative efforts between academics, local governments, local historians, and other community groups. They use public events, digital materials and social media to reach an audience that is substantially larger than what conventional local history projects have been able to reach in the past.

#### **Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21**

<http://www.pier21.ca/home>

The Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 is both a physical museum and a virtual project that reaches far beyond the confines of Halifax. Its objective is to do more than simply commemorate the spot where many migrants to Canada first landed in the country. By collecting the stories of immigrants, it places the migratory experience at the centre of Canadian History.

The website contains a number of virtual galleries and exhibitions that highlight the changes and continuities of the immigrant experience in Canada. What is most relevant with regards to the City of Burlington's objectives is that the project flows in two directions: It provides an enormous wealth of information and material to the user, and subsequently invites users to share their own experiences and add their own material (letters, photographs etc...) to the collection. The website is something of a clearing house for resources on the history of immigration in Canada. It includes everything from material that you can be used by secondary school teachers to sophisticated archival collections that can be used by professional researchers and genealogists. Employees of the museum have a blog where they discuss their experiences and upcoming events at the museum. This sophisticated website is an excellent example of how digital tools can be used to provide resources to the public and engage them in insightful discussions that enrich our understanding of historical questions.

## **Baltimore 68: Riots and Rebirth**

<http://archives.ubalt.edu/bsr/>

Baltimore 68 is a website that focuses on a single event- the outbreak of racially-charged rioting in Baltimore following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in April 1968. Like the Pier 21 website discussed above, this award winning project provides an enormous body of research material on the subject, including a trove of oral history interviews conducted by students at the University of Baltimore and links to several galleries of digitized slides and photographs taken as the events unfolded. What is of particular interest to the objectives of the City of Burlington here is an interactive online map that is available as a free download on the site. This allows anyone interested in the topic to conduct a walking tour of the neighbourhoods that were impacted by the rioting, informed by sophisticated historical research on the area. Users can choose either a printed map or an audio tour that they can download on to their phones or media players. The website also allows the project's coordinators to advertise public history events that reach out to diverse community groups, including everyone from artists to social activists to members of the broader public with an interest in history.

## **Murmur**

<http://murmurtoronto.ca/>

The next example of a public history project that engages the public by inviting them to provide their own contributions to it is Murmur, which began in Toronto in 2003 but has subsequently spread to cities across the world. Murmur works by having people record memories and historical anecdotes about places across the city. A sign with a telephone number is then discretely placed at the site. Passersby can then dial the number and listen to the recording. This format allows the public to engage with it however they see fit. It can be used to organize a walking tour of an entire neighbourhood, or it can be used more sparingly- thus drawing curious bystanders into the conversation. Ultimately, a layering effect can occur with Murmur when a number of different anecdotes and memories about a single place- a park, a heritage building, a school- can be recorded, thus pointing to the complex history of changing communities.

### **Shaker Heritage Society**

<http://shakerheritage.org/home/>

The Shaker Heritage Society, like the Pier 21 Project, supplements its physical museum in Albany, New York with an extensive online presence. Most notable here for Burlington's objectives is a section of the site known as the Virtual Watervliet, which allows the public to explore the evolution of this eighteenth century settlement with a number of different tools. Using Google Earth, a digital mapping application, people interested in the history of the Shaker settlement can explore how the settlement was built and how daily life was carried out in these conditions. Another section that would work well in the context of Burlington is a gallery of then and now photographs, which demonstrate how this environment has changed (a feature that would actually have a greater impact in a setting like Burlington, where change has been more dramatic over the course of the past century). Like many of the projects described above, the Shaker Heritage Society site uses new media tools very effectively, providing visitors and those using the website at home to download interactive apps on to their phones, thus allowing them to easily access digital mapping initiatives and photographs. Finally, the website contains links for further study, including extensive archival collections.

### **Museo Urbano**

<https://www.facebook.com/MuseoUrbanoElPaso>

The Museo Urbano is an award winning museum that commemorates the borderlands culture of El Paso, Texas. This is a collaborative effort between academics at the University of Texas at El Paso and community activists. It brings together historical material and cultural celebrations, hosting everything from guided walking tours of the city to public forums about immigration and guest exhibits at a variety of local galleries and museums. Because the project is a mobile one, it relies heavily on social media. They use their Facebook account to keep the public informed about upcoming events that they are coordinating across the city. By posting photographs, videos and links to articles in the press, the museum reaches out to the broader community on a continuous basis.

## **Roy Rosenzweig Centre for History and New Media**

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/>

Last, but certainly not least, the Roy Rosenzweig Centre for History and New Media provides countless other examples of projects that link community groups, local governments and academics attempting to engage the broader public in discussions about local history. This website provides links to a variety of digital collections and exhibitions. Many- but not all- of these are based in the United States. All of the projects in question are employing various sorts of new media tools- whether that be digital maps, interactive applications, video and audio recordings of oral history interviews, and digitized archival collections- to make historical material and research available to a larger audience than has ever before been the case. The website also provides tools and suggestions for teachers at every level of education. It also contains links to a variety of websites and forums designed specifically for organizations and individuals pondering the same question that the City of Burlington is: How can we reach and engage more people in the study of our community's history? This includes everything from discussion groups to reviews of software programs that allow archives to share their digital collections online. This will make easily accessible a number of valuable resources to people working on various stages of the City of Burlington's project.

#### **4. Implementation and Outreach**

The second section of this report demonstrated the wealth of resources available to the residents of Burlington interested in learning more about the history and heritage of their city- from books and websites to museums and a historical society. Yet there is a divide between the resources that already exist in the City of Burlington, and the sorts of projects that are on the cutting edge of the field, and which are igniting discussions in communities across the continent. While the books published and the websites maintained on Burlington's history are of an admirable quality, they do little to reach out to a broader audience. They are accessible to people who are already motivated to learn more about these issues, but that is a relatively small constituency. Furthermore, once people seek out these resources, the dialogue that occurs flows in one direction: from knowledge producer to knowledge user. Conventional websites and books provide information to readers and viewers, but the discussion rarely goes beyond that. Even the public events held at the city's two museums and the lecture series coordinated by the Burlington Historical Society tend to adopt to this model.

What makes the projects that are described in the third section so innovative is that they build on the efforts of generations of local historians who have organized archival collections, written books, and advocated for museums by both continuing these efforts and opening the conversation up to a larger public. Rather than producing and maintaining a website that is only accessed by a small group of people already engaged with studying the city's past, posting updates about the site on social media websites like Twitter- where the City of Burlington already has more than 4,000 followers- is a way to draw more people into the conversation.

The other key to these innovative projects is that their approach to discussing and debating history is not as uni-directional as conventional approaches to writing history. Initiatives like the Pier 21 Museum and Murrumbidgee open up the discussion to the public, asking them to contribute their memories and experiences to the project. It allows those with memories to feel as though their stories matter, and they do matter. This approach ultimately leads to a richer and more nuanced conversation, because it draws the public's attention to the fact that history is not simply a compendium of facts, but a conversation about the past. People experience the city and think about the past in different ways, and

a successful local history project is one that taps into these discussions, rather than attempting to impose an official history on the public. The results of these sorts of projects have been particularly fruitful because they leave us with a portrait of a community's history that a much broader and more diverse cross-section of the public feel that they have a stake in.

Pursuing this type of Public History project does not negate the need for other initiatives like books, pamphlets, and public lectures. Instead, it fosters the sort of intellectual and cultural climate where the broader public is more deeply engaged in these issues, and thus more likely to participate in more conventional aspects of local history.

The remaining question, then, is how to go about coordinating this sort of public history initiative. This need not be as imposing a challenge as it might appear. As was stated earlier in this report, Burlington is already home to a constituency dedicated to the study of their community's history. Furthermore, steps are being taken to digitize archival collections in order to make them more accessible to the general public, as the Burlington Heritage Society's efforts to digitize historical photographs demonstrates. These efforts need to be pursued, but also placed in a framework that is more interactive and collaborative, as discussed above.

Once a multi-media communications and knowledge mobilization plan is established and active, much of the ensuing work may continue to be undertaken on a voluntary basis. Besides people already engaged in the study of Burlington's past, local community groups can be invited to provide material about their history in the community. With the help of local teachers, students could contribute time, material, and technical prowess to moving the project forward. This is also true of university students. History departments at institutions like McMaster University are increasingly looking for opportunities to provide students with hands-on and technical expertise, and working on this sort of community project would be an excellent means of fulfilling those experiential learning goals. McMaster's History Department already offers a History Practicum- a fourth year course where students work on public history initiatives in their communities. They would be an ideal fit for the City of Burlington's project. Of course, the more people that participate in this project, the more their efforts will need to be carefully and respectfully

coordinated, but the dialogue that this process produces will surely make this a worthwhile endeavour.

## **V. Conclusions**

This is an exciting time to be embarking on a public history project. Initiatives aiming to engage the public more deeply in discussions about history and heritage are beginning to employ recent innovations in digitization, new media, and social networking to expand public interest in these discussions. These technologies have made it easier to launch projects that encourage public collaboration rather than simply delivering information to the public. Many of the projects highlighted in the sections above have produced attractive and effective websites that draw people into discussions about public history who might not have been interested in such topics earlier. Social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter allow the conversation between public historians and the general public to be continuous rather than sporadic. Weekly updates, for example, can be posted that attract readers with an interesting photograph or archival document that would serve as a reminder of the importance of preserving Burlington's heritage. These updates could reach an audience of thousands through popular social media websites.

It is difficult to predict what aspects of Burlington's history will attract public interest. For some, it might be stories about the city's colonial origins and its aboriginal heritage. For others, stories of life on the home front during the world wars could draw them into the discussion. For others still, photographs and oral histories that relate to life in postwar Burlington might be what engages them. A project that addresses Burlington's history from multiple angles will therefore have the broadest appeal. Furthermore, once members of the public learn that this is an interactive process that they are being invited to participate in by telling their own stories and sharing their experiences of Burlington's past, they might be more compelled to join in.

This report has made an inventory of existing resources for public history in Burlington, and has outlined a number of different models for moving forward. Its objective in doing so has been to point towards initiatives that are engaging and collaborative. Undertaking this sort of project ought to be conceptualized as a process that itself can be highly stimulating and rewarding. The discussions that emerge out of this project will do much

to encourage people from all backgrounds and walks of life in Burlington to become more actively engaged in their communities.