



The Green Door

Citizens Supporting Ontario's Prosperous and Sustainable Future

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Heritage Strategy a Key Step with Impending Yorklands Site Sale



Stonework walls built as part of trades skills training at the Ontario reformatory are part of the Yorklands site's unique heritage.

The Ontario Ministry of Infrastructure is now moving through the sale of the entire remaining land parcel of the former Ontario Reformatory. This process may take up to a year. The Yorklands Green Hub is in a signed contract with the Ministry, so we will be made aware of any movement.

A key concern now is the heritage conservation strategy for these Reformatory lands as they change hands. The Province has recently requested that Heritage Guelph and the City begin preparation for designation of the heritage resources on the site, a requirement for sale of the property.

Heritage Guelph members, along with Senior Heritage Planner Stephen Robinson, have been doing extensive research on the buildings and the landscape elements of the Reformatory lands. As a result of that research, City staff will present recommendations for the designation at a meeting of Heritage Guelph on April 12.

The meeting will be available for delegations or for viewing on the live stream on the City website, at guelph.ca/live.

To register as a delegate, call 519-837-5616 or email planning@guelph.ca. Delegations will be allocated a maximum of 5 minutes to present their opinions to the committee. Those who

wish to make a delegation must register by 12 noon on Thursday, April 9.

After input from Heritage Guelph and citizen delegations, staff will prepare an Intent to Designate report, due to go to City Planning on June 14. ✨

Terms involved in heritage preservation can be confusing and are often subject to misunderstanding about their meaning and powers.

You can read about Guelph's recent Cultural Heritage Action Plan decision, and find a list of definitions of some key terms at the City's website. If you wish to make a deputation, you will find this information helpful.

<https://guelph.ca/city-hall/planning-and-development/community-plans-studies/heritage-conservation/cultural-heritage-action-plan/>



Cut stone stairs and masonry walls adorn the Yorklands landscape, a legacy of the work done by Reformatory trainees.

Lands for Reform, Past and Future

By Sophia Yanischevsky,
YGH Board of Directors

The Yorklands in Guelph is no stranger to “doing things differently.” Historically the former Ontario Reformatory, as a provincial correctional facility, used progressive reform methods to improve the lives of inmates pre- and post-release. The institution aimed for rehabilitation through meaningful, care-taking labour and training on the grounds of this prison farm, rather than more typical punishments that rarely resulted in improving lives.

Presently, the Yorklands Green Hub has proudly taken on the role of planning to reform some of this heritage land and its Superintendent’s house to help create a brighter and greener future.



The former Superintendent's House at the Ontario Reformatory site.

In its ongoing quest to partner with academic researchers on key aspects of its interests in built and natural heritage, YGH welcomes new research papers from two different University of Guelph departments to the Research link on our website. We have had a strong history of collaboration with various university

departments over the years who have conducted research on and about the Yorklands site. We are very thankful for the impressive research from the students and professors.

Our two most recent additions are:

- E. Vanleeuwen (History, University of Guelph) : *The Superintendent’s House*
- Kevin Todd (Landscape Architecture, UofG): *The Yorklands in Guelph -Looking to the Future*

Both of these interesting papers are available on our website at <http://yorklandsgreenhub.ca/research/>

These two papers shed light on some unique characteristics and potential uses of our envisioned site. A cultural heritage landmark, the 100-year-old former Superintendent’s house was designed in the revered Arts-and-Crafts style. This style of design drew inspiration from English and Medieval influences, which are reflected in hand-crafted house details. The limestone for the foundation of the house was cut from the former quarry right on the reformatory grounds. This house could serve as an ideal community centre for education, research, and enjoyment on the grounds of this wonderful outdoor green space.

The Yorklands has hundreds of acres of farmland with wetlands, ponds and forest. While in the past this site was maintained through skilled labour training, in the present day, we intend to re-purpose these lands to support urban environmental sustainability. Through community projects that preserve both cultural and natural heritage, we can create an interactive educational showcase for renewable energy, urban agriculture, and water and wetland ecology. Realizing the history of the land and how it was used is a huge step in the

right direction toward preservation of our cultural capital.

There’s a big agricultural legacy here: the Reformatory inmates actually produced all of their own food (for up to 1000 inmates) through the prison agriculture labour operation. The current no-longer-cultivated grounds have some potential to support local food production once again.

It’s an ideal place to build on a legacy of reform from the past for a new vision of sustainable reform for the future. ✨

Franklin the Turtle is a Winner! And so are our wonderful January Snow Sculptors



The impressive form of a very big turtle appeared beside the wall at the Yorklands site in snowy January.

Meet Franklin the turtle! – the artistic creation of the Graydon family: grandmother Annette, Lisa and Sean, and their daughters Anna and Edith. The Graydons are the winners of our Snow Sculpture Challenge for the month, and will receive a \$25 gift certificate for The Bookshelf.

The Yorklands is a favourite outdoor spot for this family as it is for hundreds of others. Its rolling green space is appreciated as a well loved park for many outdoor activities along the Blue Dot Trail. And these days it’s a perfect place for our Covid-challenged lives.

(con’t p. 3)



A family poses in front of their home in Queen's Bush Settlement.

Black History (Heritage) Month: What is it all about?

By Dionne Daley,
YGH Board of Directors

In February, Canadians are invited to join festivities and events in celebration of Black History Month. This is a time for honouring the history of Black people in order to understand the present and find ways to create a new path forward.

With the intention of being truly inclusive at the Yorklands Green Hub, this means considering what it has been like for Black Canadians to occupy wilderness spaces. Enjoyment of the outdoors has not been a reality for all Canadians for many reasons, including a complicated history of not having a sense of safety. When asked about her consideration of camping, Oprah once said "I love the outdoors. But black people don't want to pretend they're homeless." While her opinion is not held by all Black people, this statement holds some truth. In fact, as

Dr. Jade Ferguson (she/her), professor at the University of Guelph, describes it, "Historically, the wilderness was fraught with enslaved people running – it was a passageway and nothing more." When your loss of freedom follows you, outdoor survival takes on a whole new meaning.

Local history in Guelph points to prime examples of this. Not far from Guelph there existed a pioneer village called The Queen's Bush Settlement. Visiting the site today will introduce you to one of the largest black cemeteries in South Western Ontario. But in the early 19th century the population of this area was largely Black Americans who had been freed, or escaped or from slavery via the Underground Railroad. Ontario (or Upper Canada as it was then called) was a place of refuge. These people worked tirelessly to transform rugged wilderness into sustainable farmland for survival. However due to government intervention, the land was taken away, leading to a mass migration to communities like Guelph. By 1881, Guelph had the largest proportion of Black settlers it ever had.

Snow Sculpture (con't from p. 2)

Our "Wild in the City" Snow Animal Challenge is still running with a draw for prizes at the ends of February and March. Watch for good packing snow days, and create your own wild snow animal! Send us a picture of your creation to noticing@yorklandsgreenhub.ca and you too could be a winner! ✨

Many thanks to **CERAMIC DECOR** in Guelph for generously sponsoring this outdoor family activity.



Being on the run marks many moments in history for Black Canadians, even those that were once incarcerated in Guelph's former Ontario Reformatory. As part of a community engagement program led by Dr. Ferguson, UofG students in the English Literature department have done extensive cultural history research to discover what life was like for the Black population in the area. This initiative, in collaboration with the Guelph Black Heritage Society (GBHS), has unearthed many interesting facts and artifacts of black history in Guelph, including images of former inmates at the institution. Dawn Owen (she/her), curator of the Guelph Museum, aptly acknowledged that the traditional reformatory system often did not take into account the lived experience of racialized bodies inside its walls, possibly leading to conditions that forced Black inmates to escape confinement.

Now, Black people are reclaiming their place in the outdoors; they're learning along with everyone else of their ancestral connection to the land and enjoying all that nature has to offer.

(con't p. 4)

Black History Month (con't from p. 3)
Want to learn more?

- Engage with Diverse Community Members like Toronto-based Demiesha Dennis (she/her) (IG: @BrownGirlOutdoorWorld) who is co-leading a virtual Film Festival called 'Black Like Me – Outdoor Edition,' www.colourthetrails.com/like-me-outdoor-edition/
- Read about the stories of marginalized Black figures and institutions in Guelph, Wellington County and beyond, curated in collaboration between University of Guelph of Guelph's professor Jade Ferguson (she/her) and the Guelph Black Heritage Society; <https://blackpastinguelf.com/>
- Check out the extensive February programming from the Guelph Black Heritage Society (GBHS) and the Guelph Black Students' Association (GBSA) for Black Heritage Month #CHANGESTARTSNOW. Available on the following websites; www.guelphblackheritage.ca and www.uoguelph.ca/studentexperience/black-history-month-2021
- Stay tuned for more from Yorklands Green Hub on creating an inclusive environment for BIPOC members.

We all have a role to play in making the outdoors a safe space for everyone! ✨

VOLUNTEER WITH Y.G.H.

Share your talents and interests with our all-volunteer group working for a sustainable future.
yorklandsgreenhub.ca/volunteer/

Someone there is that Loves a Wall

With the former Guelph Correctional Centre closed since 2001, there has been neglect and damage to some of the extensive heritage stonework that lends such a unique aspect to this site.

Walking past broken walls, it can be tempting to pick up fallen stones and restore them carefully to their former orderly structure.

And that's precisely what an anonymous kindly visitor to the Yorklands site has done.



The long fieldstone wall that runs along the east side of the main entrance driveway developed a gaping hole (without, surprisingly, having its top row of upright stones collapse).



And then one day, the stones were back. Much gratitude to the careful repairer of the broken wall, keeping the top row – and a bit of our historical heritage – intact. ✨



ENVIRO-SERIES – HERITAGE

A virtual event – February 24, 7 pm.

A panel discussion on conservation heritage protection and natural and cultural heritage. Amy Barnes, our Heritage Consultant, two board members, Alex Smith and Susan Ratcliffe, and Brian Skerritt, chair of Heritage Guelph, will be on the panel. <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/heritage-panel-former-guelph-correctional-centre-tickets-141990885561>

SECOND SUNDAY YORKLANDS WALK

March 14th at 2:00 pm. A guided walk to look back on the days when these fields taught farming to inmates at the Ontario Reformatory prison farm.

Be Covid-safe: wear a mask. We will be social distancing as we walk. Meet at the Yorklands entrance at 785 York Road (east of Victoria).

Become a Monthly YGH Donor!

Upgrade your membership to monthly donor and help YGH expand our administrative and programming capacity. This is a big year for the Yorklands: your support makes a huge difference!

"The Green Door" is a publication of the Yorklands Green Hub Promotions Committee. We welcome news, articles and letters. Each must include the author's name and full contact information.

We reserve the right to refuse or edit all submissions. Questions or submissions should be directed to a member of the Board of Directors at info@yorklandsgreenhub.ca