



WHY A CENTRE AT THE FORKS?

Museums today aspire to stay relevant, be responsive, engage with and provide value to their local community. The development of a learning centre (to be known as the Centre at the Forks) enhances the value and impact that a museum provides by inviting and welcoming participation and active engagement of the local community and deepening the overall visitor experience.

Museum London will develop the Centre at the Forks over the next eighteen months to two years, and will build on the excellent arts educational programming the Museum currently offers, as well as introduce new opportunities for educational partnerships and help expand and re-imagine the Museum's role in the community. The Museum's attendance grew from 92,150 in 2014 to 107,978 in 2015 and much of this is attributable to our public programming and school programs.

The Centre will be a new setting in which to harness community imagination and learning - a meeting place where Londoners can explore the creative process, find out what creative work offers as a lifelong pursuit, understand how history shapes who we are and what we can become, and come to appreciate the value of visual and creative languages in their many forms.

The Centre at the Forks will double the amount of space currently available to the Museum's education programming and will be designed in ways to create unique, dedicated, yet flexible spaces that provide the agility to respond to the multitude of uses that innovative, community-focused programming requires. Its success will lie in an architecture that articulates this complexity in a simple, manageable way and encourages access to participation by all our visitors. Museum London's current curriculum-based school program attracts more than 15,000 student visits per year and is at capacity. The learning centre concept will allow the Museum to greatly increase the number of people who can have access to hands-on creativity at the Museum.

We believe that Museum London can inspire and educate our community by preserving and sharing our art and history. Boasting a collection of over 25,000 historical artifacts and a collection of art that approaches \$80 million dollars in value, Museum London is uniquely poised to serve and expand the cultural appetite of our community. The Centre at the Forks provides the mechanism to satisfy and expand upon the cultural needs of London by providing unique, integrated, and interactive programming designed for creative learners.

WHAT WILL THE PROJECT DO?

This renovation will modernize our infrastructure and will see us:

- Doubling the amount of program space from 2100 to 4400 square feet
- Installing an passenger elevator to meet Accessibility Standards for the Design of Public Spaces
- Designing a dedicated yet flexible space to respond to a multitude of uses that our community-focused program requires. This includes the traditional Museum programs but also looks to attract events such as concerts and theatre productions.
- Upgrade our technology so that we can provide new media to increase visual literacy capabilities.

- Create a glass wall on the west side of the Museum to visually connect the Museum interior with the Forks of the Thames
- Develop plans for outdoor programming space on the west side of the Museum

The intention is to build the Centre at the Forks in stages, starting with programming first, and then adding the necessary improvements based on key ideas and aspirations from the community. The amount of space currently available for the Museum's education programming will double with this new creative gathering place and will:

- Ensure high quality programming and lifelong learning for London residents
- Promote the advancement of arts education
- Encourage the personal development of youth, families and seniors through the arts
- Provide optimum enjoyment for everyone

We are raising \$3.5 million for this project from the community with the funds to be used to achieve two important goals:

Building Fund

A new \$2.5M space for innovative programming that is functional, flexible and accessible. The renovation for the Centre at the Forks will include a passenger elevator that will create a feeling of welcome for visitors of all ages and abilities.

Endowment Fund

An endowment fund provides a reliable source of income and is critical to the Museum's ability to plan its programs consistently and creatively. A lasting legacy for donors --- and an invaluable support to the Museum --- this \$1M endowment will support our work and enhance the visitor experience.

WHAT WILL YOU SEE IN THE CENTRE AT THE FORKS?

The new direction for programming for the Centre at the Forks will enhance the current offerings by Museum London by focusing on experiential education and offering visitors the opportunity to interact with and personalize their experiences in the Museum. You will see a number of new things in the Centre at the Forks, including:

- The use of new media and technology as ways to expand engagement with visual literacy. For example, displays of the historical artifacts and culture of London will be enhanced with digital audio and images for visitors to interact with when they visit the Museum through the use of audio tours with small players and headphones or through their own phones and interacting with barcodes associated with the exhibits. Visitors will also be able to access a media lab with digital imaging and 3D printing facilities so that they can create their own narratives of their individual or family culture and heritage, and produce artworks inspired by the historical treasures within the Museum
- The development of new partnerships in arts education. For example, arts education is now partnering with the medical community in a variety of ways and our Centre at the Forks is an obvious place for this to happen more significantly. Art therapy as it relates to the treatment of a variety of diseases such as Alzheimer's is a growing field and the Centre will create the venue and the opportunity for this type of engagement to be fostered at the Museum. Special needs arts programming and programs for medical students to improve their observation and diagnostic skills by studying art are other projects that will allow us to partner with the health care and university communities

- The provision of space that can be programmed by the community for the community, creating a ‘hub’ and a community meeting place
- The establishment of an “artist-in-residence,” helping to make art-making and cultural production more accessible and understandable for the visitor
- The addition of remote access to the Centre at the Forks and its programming so that people who can’t physically come to the Museum can still be engaged with what the Museum has to offer.

The establishment and implementation of programs and ideas will be an ongoing, holistic process, so that as programs develop and the community identifies new needs further opportunities will be identified for the Centre at the Forks.

WHO IS THE CENTRE AT THE FORKS FOR?

Children, youth, families and seniors need a stimulating place to connect socially and interact with others. Guided public and school tours, exhibitions, art classes, Creative Sundays events and family art activities—many with free admission—make Museum London a cultural jewel in our community for people of all ages and from all walks of life. Museum London makes it possible for anyone to enjoy and participate in cultural activities and the development of the Centre at the Forks will further create a dynamic cultural focal point for lifelong learning, no matter your age.

For Youth

By its nature, the Centre at the Forks main audience is young people, from Junior Kindergarten to high school. There’s no shortage of research indicating the benefits of museum visits for children. They can provide memorable, immersive learning experiences, provoke imagination, and introduce unknown worlds and subject matter. With the addition of new media and technology at the Centre, it will certainly attract and inspire children and youth.

For Families

As much as young people are important, having their parents understand the value of the cultural literacy offered at the Museum is equally as critical. With the creation of the new Centre, the Museum can better respond to our community by becoming an even more attractive place for families. It will offer a unique environment to spend time with family right here in London and provide cultural works and programs offered in larger communities.

When parents and grandparents come to the Museum with their children, they spend family time together, sharing conversations about favourite objects, family stories and historic events. Lifelong learning begins at a young age and museums are a great place to spark an interest in history and art.

For Seniors

People are living much longer today with the senior population increasing at a rapid rate. It is projected that London’s senior population will grow from 99,225 in 2011 to 127,900 in 2021 – a growth of 28.9%. The Centre at the Forks will provide not only an arts experience for this growing population but, just as importantly, will provide a social experience. Being a community hub will provide seniors with the activities they are seeking in a safe, inviting and communal setting.

For Newcomers

London is a friendly community ...”a great place for new families and newcomers of all types,” and this is supported by the fact that almost 15% of London’s immigrants are recent, arriving between 2006 and 2011. Museum London can be an important place for them to learn and become involved in their new home. It will provide them with a look at the past and provide them with the history of London in a welcoming place.

Creating a dynamic cultural environment for lifelong learning is a key goal for Museum London. Our varied programs are tailored to our specific audiences and tap into the pulse of our community. With the development of the Centre at the Forks, we will be able to expand our programming and be more responsive to the needs of the community.

HOW DOES IT RELATE TO OTHER CITY INITIATIVES?

As we move forward in planning the Centre at the Forks, we are meeting with representatives of the Back to the River initiative, the My Dundas flex-street initiative, as well as those working on Shift to ensure that our plans dovetail with and support other high-profile civic projects. Through continuing consultation in this regard, it is our hope to have the Museum's programming space extend towards the forks of the Thames.

We are indeed excited by the possibilities which the Centre at the Forks presents, together with other high-profile civic projects, in contributing to creation of a dynamic and engaging civic space at the historical heart of London, a cultural and recreational destination of choice, and ongoing revitalization of the western section of the downtown area.

WHO IS INVOLVED?

Our campaign is supported by a number of community-minded volunteers who bring a way variety of skills and experience to the project. They are:

Honourary Chairs

Dr. Ron and Susan Holliday

Patrons

Alan Cohen
Lorraine Shuttleworth
Richard Ivey

Campaign Co-Chairs

Ken Andrews
Patrick Mahon
Judith Rodger

Campaign Cabinet

Judy Bryant
Ian Dantzer
Madeline Lennon
Deb Majer
Paul van der Werf

London is a creative community in search of spaces where people can meet, create, and share. The Centre at the Forks at Museum London will be a multi-disciplinary, multi-function space that both answers and challenges our need to engage the broader community in the kinds of learning, innovation and excitement which art, and visual and material culture offer. This Centre will create new opportunities for visitors to the Museum to connect with programs, exhibitions and collections in creative and participatory ways – deepening the visitor's experience and resulting in the Museum enhancing and extending its impact within the London community and beyond.

Submitted by Brian Meehan, Executive Director, Museum London