V. 8 No. 2 Fall 2026

TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM OF THUNDER BAY

# Land, Sea and Sky

## Transportation Museum of Thunder Bay Newsletter

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## Sharing Our Story: Volunteers, Partnerships, and a Look to the Future

- Paul Morralee, TMTB Board of Directors

It has been a busy and exciting season at the Transportation Museum. We are thrilled to share an update on the projects, partnerships, and people that are helping us connect with our community and build a better experience for everyone.

**Connecting with Our Community and Environment**

We are always looking for ways to connect the museum to the local environment. A new Bird Observatory Platform is being envisioned for the corner of our leased property, overlooking the water. This area, which is already home to many birdhouses deposited by the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority, will be a wonderful spot to connect birders and wildlife enthusiasts with the local environment around the museum.

Our volunteer spirit was also on display this season with a project to plant wildflowers on the banks of Superior, on land owned by the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority. This initiative helps to create stability for the riverbanks and beautify the area.

*Volunteers and summer students work with the Lakehead Region Conservation Authority to plant native species along the shore near the museum. Photo: David Muir*

**Showcasing Our Maritime Heritage**

We were proud to welcome the Association of Great Lakes Maritime History this year. This international non-profit organization, founded in 1984, brings together institutions and individuals from Canada and the United States to preserve the maritime heritage of the Great Lakes region. The group enjoyed tours of Fort William Historic Park, Porphyry Island Lighthouse, and our own *Alexander Henry*. They were very impressed with the tour given by our summer students! The Thunder Bay Museum hosted the annual conference, where I was honoured to provide the keynote address, *"Last Port – First Stewards" Preserving Lake Superior's Maritime Soul*, to close the three-day event.

We also welcomed the Rail Travel Tours group from Winnipeg for their fifth consecutive year. This group of railway enthusiasts enjoyed a tour on the *Alexander Henry* before continuing on their bus tour to the Agawa Canyon Train Tour in Sault Ste. Marie.

**Improving Our Site & Visitor Experience**

The James Whalen Room has come a long way this season. The wheel and telegraph have received long-overdue restoration, and photos are now displayed in one of the museum rooms aboard the *Henry*. We would like to recognize board member Clive Dudley, one of the people responsible for bringing the James Whalen Tug back to Thunder Bay in 1993.

This work is all part of our effort to ensure a quality experience for visitors, and we are incredibly thankful for the volunteers who make it happen. This season, we want to give a special mention to:

- Darren Riley, a board member who scraped and repainted the exterior superstructure of the vessel, as well as inspecting the ship's hull.
- John Groves, who volunteered countless days to paint the interior museum rooms, which are now looking in good form thanks to his hard work.
- Florence Bramm, who has done a wonderful job accommodating our souvenir gift shop during the summer. The shop featured volunteer and author Barbara Yurkoski's new book, **Launched on an Inland Sea: Two Centuries of Building Ships at the Head of Lake Superior.**

These individuals have made a significant contribution to improving the visitor experience, and we are grateful for their hard work.

*The season is over but our work is not. Flooring has been ripped out so that new carpet can be installed. The funds that we have received from Superior Shores Gaming Association help us build a better experience. Photo: David Muir*

**Fundraising & Community Fun**

Our **50/50 draw** has continued this summer with some big wins! One winner, John Maydo, took home $2,610. Funds raised by the group help us continue to improve the artifacts on display and pay for the overhead to keep the site operational. We would also like to recognize Board Director David Muir and outstanding volunteer Janet Northan, who have been working hard in the background to raise awareness and funds for future developments of the organization. As part of our fundraising efforts, Marlene Kohar has been busy coordinating our bingo volunteers at the Superior Shores Gaming Association on Memorial Avenue. Again, these funds are used to enhance and maintain our historic artifacts.

**Haunted Harbour – The Black Tide**

This event was a spooky success! These family-friendly tours of the ship were kept fun for our younger ghosts and goblins—no jump scares, and nothing too dark. Hosted by the Transportation Museum of Thunder Bay as a fundraiser for **Our Kids Count**, this immersive haunted ship experience ran on selected Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from October 8th through October 24th, 2026. The event sold out, with one evening provided to families through donation only. Everyone had lots of fun! A special thank you goes to Chair Wally Peterson, who has helped guide the Haunted Harbour over the past five years, adding many ghoulish touches along the way.

**Accessibility & The Future**

This season saw nine visitation cruise ships come to the museum, and we are always working to make our site more accessible. A VR film has been progressing this summer, with the full ship having been captured. This virtual reality tour will allow visitors who are unable to navigate the ship, or people who cannot walk along uneven ground, to experience the *Alexander Henry*. The next step in production is supported by the **Thunder Bay Community Foundation** through the **JP Hudolin Family** and the **Danny Clara Legacy Fund**. The film is being produced by **Blueprints** and is now being reviewed, with added functionality to be developed during the winter months.

For upcoming events, see page page 9, **Looking Ahead at the Museum**.

**TRIVIA QUESTION**

Which ship deck was the setting for a storm in the move, **November Gale**?

a) Bulk carrier *SS V.W. Scully*
b) Tug *James Whalen*
c) Jacques Cousteau's ship *Calypso*
d) CCGS *Alexander Henry*
e) Lake freighter *Arthur M. Anderson*

*answer on page 6.*

***Cover photo:*** *Wildflowers planted in partnership with Lakehead Region Conservation Authority contribute to the museum's plans to connect with the environment. Photo: David Muir*

## The Story of the Museum Ship *Alexander Henry's* Return

- Elle Andra-Warner

*The tug Salvage Monarch tows the Henry from Kingston to Thunder Bay. Photo: Elle Andra-Warner*

Ten years ago the newly formed Lakehead Transportation Museum Society (now Transportation Museum of Thunder Bay) began the "Bring Henry Home" campaign to return the former Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker, supply and buoy tender *Alexander Henry* to Thunder Bay to serve as a museum ship. Here's how it all happened.

**June 11, 2016**: The Lakehead Transportation Museum Society (LTMS) was incorporated through the Ontario Historical Society as an Affiliate and a non-profit organization. After incorporation, LTMS made a presentation to the City of Thunder Bay's Waterfront Committee and Heritage Advisory Committee with plans for the museum.

**Summer 2016:** LTMS came across an opportunity to purchase the *Georgian Queen*, which was the former tug *Murray Stewart,* built in 1918 at Port Arthur Shipbuilding Company. Subsequently, in late August, LTMS learned that the former Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker, supply and buoy tender *Alexander Henry* – which had been built in 1958 at Port Arthur Shipbuilding – was at risk of being scrapped or sunk. Since 1985, she had been the museum ship of the Kingston Marine Museum of the Great Lakes but the Kingston Museum had lost its dockside location and needed to dispose of the ship. The focus of LTMS changed and it came up with a plan to take over the *Alexander Henry* and tow it from its temporary mooring in Picton to Thunder Bay.

Kingston agreed to sell the ship to LTMS for $2, contingent on LTMS (a) securing the required $250,000 funding by June 30, 2017 to tow the ship through the Great Lakes AND (b) to have to ship towed by June 30, 2017. If LTMS did not meet those conditions, an industrial buyer was ready to buy it. LTMS immediately began its "Bring Henry Home" fundraising campaign with strong support from the Thunder Bay community.

**January 1, 2017:** LTMS became a registered not-for-profit charity with Canada Revenue Agency.

**April 10, 2017:** LTMS received from Council approval in principle for support to bring the *Alexander Henry* back to Thunder Bay. LTMS was directed to work with City Administration and Council.

**June 12, 2017:** City Council approved LTMS's requested funding of $125,000 to bring *Alexander Henry* back to Thunder Bay to be a museum ship, but the issue of final dock site was still up in the air.

**June 16, 2017:** Having secured the necessary funding of $250,000 by the deadline June 30, 2017 and having arranged for towing to Thunder Bay, LTMS officially took ownership of the *Alexander Henry*. The funders were City of Thunder Bay $125,000; City of Kingston $50,000; and the balance of $75,000 from a generous anonymous matching-funds donor, community/area donors and fundraising events like the "Bring Henry Home" dinner.

**June 18, 2017:** The *Alexander Henry* began its journey towed from Picton, through the Great Lakes to Thunder Bay. *Cont'd on page 5*

## The *Richard George* at Lac Seul

- Barbara Yurkoski

The motorized barge *Richard George* was the last vessel built at Port Arthur Shipyards. In 1993, it was delivered to Lac Seul, a large meandering lake north-west of Sioux Lookout, where it was welded together. The barge was named after a manager at the Buchanan sawmill in Hudson, west of Sioux Lookout. I spoke with his son, Mel George, who told me that his father had died in an accident at the time that the vessel was in production. Mel explained that Port Arthur Shipyards was chosen because of its proximity to Lac Seul and the familiarity of engineer and design staff with conditions in the northern area, especially for a barge that would be carrying three logging trucks at a time.

I also spoke with Richard Goretzki, a float truck driver who hauled logs to Lac Seul for Buchanan Forest Products, about the role of the barge in forest operations. According to Richard, before the barge was purchased, logging trucks drove around Lac Seul to make deliveries to the Hudson mill. The drive took 4 ½ hours. Using the barge to cross the lake took 2 ½ hours off the trip. One vehicle was driven down the middle, right up to the ramp on the end, then two others were parked on either side. This still left room for six or seven pickup trucks at the front.

The barge ran 24 hours a day, five days a week. In the course of a trip it might be called on to divert to make deliveries to Kejik Island,* which took an extra 15 minutes. Keith Britten, a tugboat driver from England, captained the vessel. He trained people from Lac Seul First Nation as deckhands and backup captains.

*The Richard George abandoned on the shore of Lac Seul. Photo by Stacey Goretzki.*

In 2008 Buchanan's mill closed. About the same time, a 600 metre causeway with a road for vehicles and a walking lane was built to connect Kejik Island to the mainland. The *Richard George* no longer had a purpose and was left to rest on the shore of the lake. Over the years it was vandalized. At one time, some restoration work was done. More recently it has been neglected but remains as a local landmark and a reminder of the days when the Hudson mill was a busy operation.

* Until 1929, this island was part of the mainland and the community's name, which is still sometimes used, was Kejik Bay. When a hydroelectric dam at Ear Falls began operation, it raised the water level of Lac Seul by three metres, destroying some homes and permanently surrounding the community with water.

**Alexander Henry timeline** **cont'd from page 4**

**June 27, 2017:** The *Alexander Henry* arrived in Thunder Bay but lacked a docking site. She was moored at the former ore dock on Pierre Gagnon property, while LTMS negotiated a lease agreement with the City.
**November 23, 2017:** With agreement between all parties for the Pool 6 site, the *Alexander Henry* was finally towed to the Pool 6 dock, five months after her arrival in Thunder Bay.
**July 18, 2018:** The *Alexander Henry* was re-christened on July 18, 2018 exactly 60 years after her first christening at the 1958 Port Arthur Shipbuilding launch. The Ship's Sponsor was Annie Kolisynk, a former crew member of the Alexander Henry, who carried out the traditional breaking of the ceremonial bottle on the ship.

## Linking Alexander Henry the Elder and Louis Riel

by Elle Andra-Warner

So what's the connection between Alexander Henry the Elder (namesake of the Transportation Museum's museum ship) to Métis leader Louis Riel, who is now considered to be the Father of Manitoba and founder of the province?

First, some background. Alexander Henry the Elder (1739-1824) and his nephew Alexander Henry the Younger (1764-1814) were both born in New Brunswick, New Jersey when it was still a British colony and are prominent in Canadian history as pioneer fur traders and explorers. After the Younger married his Ojibway wife Madeline in 1801 in Red River Valley, they had four children, including Julie who would be the Elder's great niece. When Julie later married, one of her sons was Ambroise-Dydime (aka Didyme) Lépine and therefore would be the Elder's second great nephew.

And here's the Riel connection: Lépine would became Riel's military leader, chief enforcer and played a major role in Riel's Red River Resistance of 1869-1870. He has been described as being of extraordinary strength, standing 6'3" tall with black hair and "eyes of piercing brilliance".

Much has been written about the Lépine who was born in St. Vital in the Red River Colony and educated at the French language university in St. Boniface. A commemorative plaque by the Manitoba Heritage Council was installed in 1985 at Winnipeg's Fort Garry Gate Park. The plaque reads:

Born in the Red River Settlement, Ambroise-Dydime Lépine engaged in river-lot agriculture, combining this with hunting and trading as did many other Metis. In the autumn of 1869 he became Adjutant General to Louis Riel and played a prominent role in the Red River Resistance.

Lepine was a member of Riel's Provisional Government and presided over the court martial which condemned prisoner Thomas Scott to be shot on 4 March 1870. Here, before the wall of Fort Garry, Scott was executed. Lepine was arrested, tried and was to be hanged on 29 January 1875. The sentence was subsequently commuted to two years imprisonment and forfeiture of political rights. Although he remained sympathetic to the Metis cause, Lepine withdrew from public life. His dictated recollections contributed to the publication of history of Metis people.

Ambroise-Didyme Lépine died at St. Boniface General Hospital on June 8, 1923 and is buried beside Louis Riel at St. Boniface Cathedral Cemetery, Winnipeg.

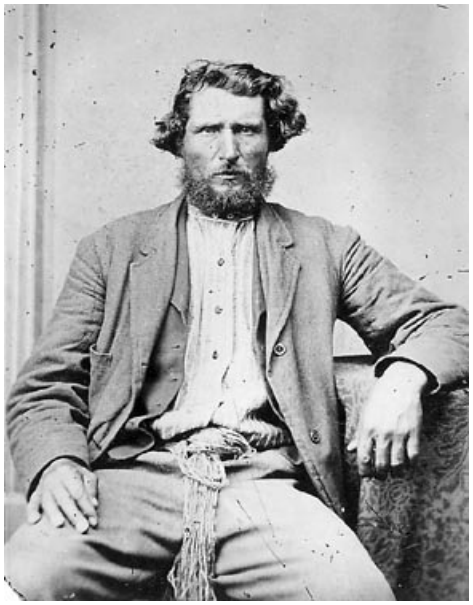


*Photo: Public domain.*

### TRIVIA ANSWER

(d) CCGS *Alexander Henry.* Lakefield Film Productions was making a movie "The November Gale" about the Edmund Fitzgerald's last voyage and used the deck of the *Alexander Henry* to film a storm sequence. The *V. W. Scully* ship name was changed to *Edmund Fitzgerald* during the filming in late 1978/1979.

## Thanks to the following who have supported the Transportation Museum with grants and donations:

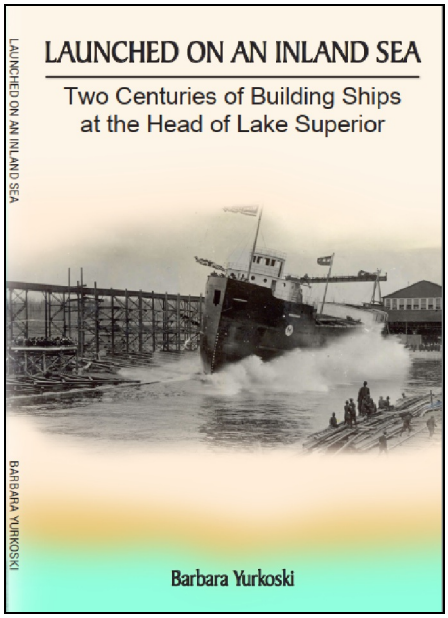
Every month Superior Shores gives us the opportunity to run bingos, with proceeds going to the museum. This regular source of fundraising is much appreciated. Thanks also to our bingo volunteers!

### Other supporters and stakeholders:

- Daytona's Restaurant
- Dulux Paints
- Equipment World
- LH North Construction and Heavy Equipment Rentals
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Superior Autobody Paint and Restoration
- Thunder Bay Community Foundation

Tax receipted donations can be made at **Canada Helps:** www.canadahelps.org Look for us there as Lakehead Transportation Museum Society

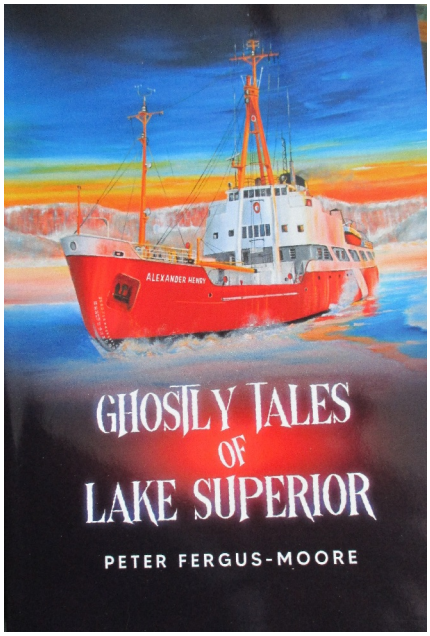
**For your Christmas List: the museum's latest publications**




Read the stories of ships built on Thunder Bay that served across Canada and around the world.

Both books are available at Entershine Bookshop, The Finnish Bookstore and Authentique.

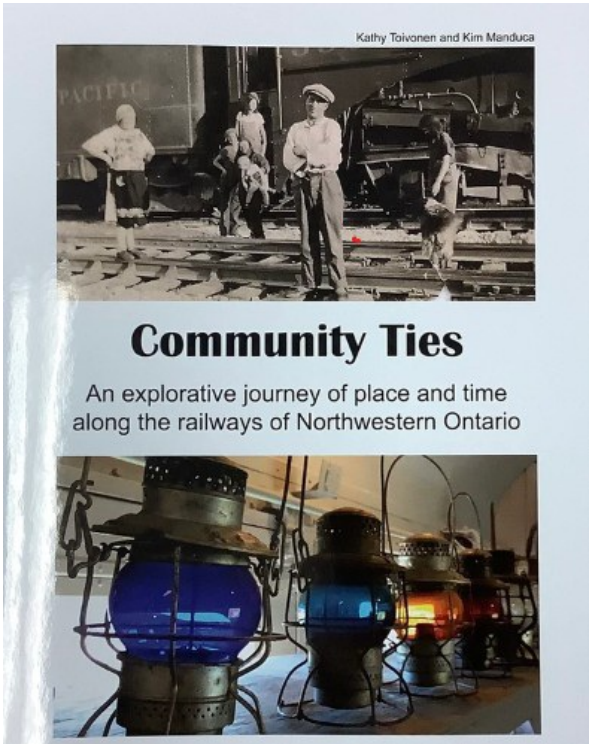
**Launched on an Inland Sea is** also on sale at Lakehead University's bookstore




Spine-tingling stories set on the north-west shore of Lake Superior.

## Community Ties: an explorative journey of place and time along the railways of North-western Ontario

by Kathy Toivonen and Kim Manduca. 116 pages.
Review by Barbara Yurkoski




This impressively researched and well organized book is actually several books in one. First, it is a comprehensive presentation of all the railways that have been built in Northwestern Ontario. Its seven sections cover the Canadian Pacific, National Transcontinental, Grand Trunk Pacific, Ontario and Rainy River, Canadian Northern Ontario, Port Arthur, Duluth and Western, and Thunder Bay railways. If this list sets your head spinning, the book opens with a helpful map covering two pages that shows all the railways at once and includes the names of stations and sidings. In addition, each section of the book begins with a list of the name changes that particular railway went through.

Secondly, the book is much more than a dry presentation of details. In each section, the reader tastes the realities of life in communities along the line, through short stories and many photographs. We read about the flat cars that in the early years, were the only means of travel for residents of remote railway towns. There are photographs of the personal rail cars that could be purchased from railway companies and driven on the rails, with a cautious eye out for approaching trains. Full-size coaches were transformed to schoolrooms with teachers' living quarters. Trains took orders and delivered supplies to the remote homes of section crew members and their families.

Interesting bits of trivia also dot the chapters: station names that are railway employees' names spelled backwards; an engine that remains sunk in Lake Superior; symbols used by depression area transients to alert fellow travellers to work available, friendly residents and dangerous dogs; the use of ice for air conditioning that continued into the 1970s; an evergreen tree tradition at mine sites near Atikokan; and many more.

Finally, for every location where something of interest remains to be seen, the GPS coordinates are given, making this a travel guide as well.

Everyone with an interest in railway history or walking the rail trails will want a copy of this unique book. It is available by contacting nworailways@gmail.com. A limited supply is also available at Entershine Bookshop and Authentique. The map can be purchased on its own and comes in three different sizes.

## Back in History: Big Raft Crosses Superior

*The Winnipeg Tribune*, 27 July 1912, p. 15

*Ashland, Wisconsin. July 27.* What is said to be the largest raft of 8-foot pulpwood ever successfully brought across any of the Great Lakes arrived here today from Port Arthur. It comprised about 4,000 cords and is valued at $30,000. The pulpwood is gathered at various places on Black Bay and Thunder Bay, near Port Arthur, and is made into rafts at Jarvis Bay. The tug *James Whalen* and *Laura Grace* in charge of the raft, averaged a speed of 1-3 miles per hour, making a distance of 127 miles across Lake Superior in 100 hours. (Note: $30,000 in today's money is equivalent to over $1 million.)

## *Canada Car and the Hawker Hurricanes*

This BBC documentary, available on Youtube, tells the story of the critical role Canada Car played in Britain's fight against the Luftwaffe, Nazi Germany's air warfare branch of the military. The Fort William company, which had never built airplanes, was chosen because of what the British considered its "remote" location, safe from attack by the Luftwaffe, which had been hammering factories in Britain. Under the direction of Chief Aeronautical Engineer Elsie MaGill, the factory produced almost 1500 of the one-seater fighter aircraft known as Hawker Hurricanes.

Watch this informative documentary about an important part of Thunder Bay's transportation history at:

**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3Bbpa2pKt8**

*Hawker Hurricane on test flight over Fort William. Photo: Public Domain*

## Looking Ahead at the Museum

### Historical Film Festival

We are excited to announce the upcoming fourth annual Historical Film Festival, taking place at the Auditorium on Thursday November 19, 2026. The festival will feature a film by Capt. Jack Kennedy, one of the first captains to operate the *Alexander Henry*.The film was taken by the captain while the vessel was breaking ice, setting buoys in navigation channels, and tending lighthouses. Board Member Craig Symington and Herb Daniher are coordinating the event! Other films will include:

- Gateway to Tomorrow, 10 min – Thunder Bay Museum
- A View from Up Here / Rough and Tumble Politics, 28 min – Sheba Films
- Journey Down the Nipigon River, 5 min – Nipigon Museum
- Canadian Bush Pilots 1930s, 8 min – NWO Aviation Heritage Centre
- Rocky Mountain Express, 45 min – TBRHS
- The Alexander Henry, 11 min – Transportation Museum of Thunder Bay

### AND

### A Major Anniversary

Next year, we are getting ready for a major milestone: the 10th anniversary of the *Alexander Henry*'s return to the city after many years in Kingston. Festivities are already in the planning stages. Further details will be shared with our members at our annual fundraising dinner in early spring.

## Transportation Museum of Thunder Bay

"Stewards of History"

**Chair:**
Wally Peterson
**First Vice-Chair/Operations:**
David Muir
**Secretary:**
Florence Braam
**Fundraising/Media:**
Paul Morralee
**Technical Consultant/Honourary Chief Engineer:**
Dave Benedet
**Directors at Large:**
Clive Dudley
Marlene Kohar
Darren Riley
Craig Symington

**Publications Committee:**
Chair, Elle Andra-Warner
Barbara Yurkoski, Newsletter Editor
tmtbnewsletter@tmtb.ca
Peter Fergus-Moore
Lorna Olson

**The Museum is located on Sleeping Giant Parkway, Pool 6 Dock**

**Reopens May 2027**

**Land, Sea & Sky**
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