



Ontario Visual Heritage Project

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

History of Ontario's Near-North Region Featured in New Documentary Series on TVO

TORONTO, Ontario – December 9, 2009 – Beginning on Saturday, January 9th the Ontario Visual Heritage Project series: ‘The Shield’ will premiere on TVOntario. This eight-part documentary series on the history of Muskoka, the West Parry Sound District, the City of Greater Sudbury and Manitoulin Island will air on Saturdays at 4:00pm and run until February 27th.

This dynamic series was shot in HD and is the work of professionals and local volunteers who gave their time to re-enact historic events, research local stories, make excursions to historic sites, and give interviews about their past. Funding for the not-for-profit project was secured from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, FedNor, and community groups in 2006. After engaging more than 250 actors, recording 150 video interviews, scanning more than 5000 archival photographs and sketches, creating 3D animations and an original score, and passing the scrutiny of local steering committees, four projects were completed in the summer of 2008 to create ‘The Shield.’ The projects included in ‘The Shield’ are: ‘Life on the Edge; Stories from Muskoka’s Past,’ ‘Riches Beyond Our Rocks; Stories from Greater Sudbury,’ ‘Rooted in Stone; Reflections on West Parry Sound’s Past,’ and ‘Island of Great Spirit; The Legacy of Manitoulin.’ Each project has been divided into two episodes for broadcast on TVO. However, viewers can still enjoy the full-length version of each project by purchasing a DVD from their local museum or not-for-profit group. Check out the project website, www.visualheritage.ca for a full listing of retail partners.

The Ontario Visual Heritage Project has previously seen success in seven other counties in Ontario, including: Haldimand, Norfolk, Brant/Brantford/Six Nations, Elgin, Oxford, Sarnia-Lambton, and Chatham-Kent. While regional television stations have shown many of the projects, ‘The Shield’ will be the first to be broadcast to a provincial audience.

“TVO is committed to programming that explores all aspects of Ontario's history and culture.

We are particularly pleased to bring our audience these fascinating, comprehensive films that really bring our province's rich local history to life,” says Christine Lee, head of History Acquisitions at TVOntario.

When discussing the series, Director Zach Melnick noted that his team is “always intrigued by the quality of the stories we find in areas that may not have received much attention in the past – the history of these communities is anything but ‘quaint.’ From the rebellion on Manitoulin Island, to the shipwrecks of Parry Sound, to the environmental devastation of Sudbury, and the battle over resources in Muskoka – looking beneath the surface revealed that there’s much more to the ‘near north’ than the cavalcade of colours.”

One of the goals of the Ontario Visual Heritage Project is to create multimedia tool kits to teach, preserve and promote the history of Ontario to audiences young and old. While the documentary is the central component of each project, it is augmented by: a website where the videos can be viewed in streaming media, a course-guide for educators, and an interactive DVD which allows viewers to access stories via a timeline, through their location, or according to their theme, and also includes 60 minutes of additional stories and content. In the spring of 2009, complimentary DVDs were sent to every school, library, and historic site in the Muskoka, Parry Sound, Sudbury, and Manitoulin Island areas. Visit www.visualheritage.ca to learn more about the project and how your community can get involved.

The Ontario Trillium Foundation is an agency of the Government of Ontario. For over 25 years, the Foundation has supported the growth and vitality of communities across the province. OTF continues to strengthen the capacity of the volunteer sector through investments in community-based initiatives. For more information, please visit www.trilliumfoundation.org.

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