

# THE LEARNING SERIES: CASE STUDY

## MUSEUM ON TOWER HILL

The Fall 2016, ArtsBuild Ontario (ABO) launched The Learning Series - a collection of workshops, webinars and resources that support our core programs, including SpaceFinder. Through The Learning Series, ABO aimed to deliver accessible and relevant information around best practices to support our creative spaces. Over the last two years, many of the areas covered in The Learning Series focused on the topic of creative space rentals.

We interviewed three webinar attendees to showcase their creative space, learn more about their projects and share what they gained from the program. This case study features Museum on Tower Hill located in Parry Sound, Ontario.

### MUSEUM ON TOWER HILL

The West Parry Sound District Museum, more commonly known as the Museum on Tower Hill, is uniquely situated in the centre of the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve - just steps away from Parry Sounds observation tower. Their 2,800 square foot facility provides the Museum with room for exhibits and programming that speak to the core culture of the West Parry Sound.



The Museum hosts a number of community events within their space, including meetings, workshops, special events and weddings to name a few. The Museum is also looking to complete a renovation of its existing space to meet the needs of the current community, which have changed since its construction in 1993. Nadine Hammond, Curator and Manager of the Museum, has attended some of the Learning Series webinars to understand best practices around space rentals to inform their current operations and future plans for the space.

### BEST PRACTICES APPLIED

The Learning Series provided the Museum with confirmation and reassurance that their rentals program aligns with other creative spaces in similar communities. This included best practices around space use, rental rates and policies. "A lot of the webinars were just confirmation that were on the right track

around best practices and how we handle our rentals,” shares Nadine. Space rentals have proved to be a key revenue source for the Museum.

The community’s needs have changed since the Museum on Tower Hill was first built in 1993. The Museum was intended to be a “big museum” for the community, with room to hold up to 16 staff in working areas intended for the research and preserve of artifacts. “The way it was intended to work is not working now. It would be great to make the Museum meet our needs better and we have ways to do that,” notes Nadine.



The Museum’s primary rental space is its gallery, a 900 square foot naturally lit exhibit space, which is usually rented for small gatherings that do not use the entire space. The Museum is looking at undergoing a renovation project that will leverage their existing facility and better serve the community at large. “In terms of capital projects, we’re finding out what the community needs, and I think there is need for small-medium meeting room,” notes Nadine. She believes that making their space more conducive for smaller groups that need space on an ongoing basis and/or one-time rentals will be key.

While the Museum makes plans to complete a feasibility study for the renovation project, they will continue to work with the community on growing their rentals program. The Learning Series and other ABO resources helped Nadine and the Museum realize that a change in rental rates was needed to both sustain the space and better serve their renters. Initially, the Museum had varying fees for businesses, charities and season activities. “Our rental rates hadn’t been updated in so long, and they were not covering costs, they were not generating revenue,” reflects Nadine. This required the Museum to approach their renters individually and implement a universal rate made applicable to all groups. While the change in rental rates has benefited the Museum, they are still paying attention to the needs of renters as they move forward with renovating the space.

## **WHAT’S NEXT**

The Museum is looking to its renters and the community to inform their renovation project, to meet their current needs in addition to the Museum’s organizational needs. Museum on Tower Hill is working on plans and funding to support a feasibility study and community consultation to inform their capital plans. They are also looking for new ways to improve their marketing and communications around their space rental offerings in the community.