

Newly Completed Donor Wall Unveiled

By Jennifer Thurbide

Over 100 residents and area visitors gathered at the Red Lake Heritage Centre this past Saturday to watch the unveiling of the completed Donor Wall. Started in 2004 as a major fundraiser for the Heritage Centre, the wall displays the names of individuals, families, corporations and government sponsors who provided financial contributions to the centre through the mural tiles. Now completed the tiles make up a massive artistic image of the northern lights.

Michelle Alderton, Curator for the Heritage Centre welcomed attendees and introduced speakers Pastor Brian Falkenhort and Artist Cheryl Wilson-Smith. The audience was awed by stories of the extensive work that went into each tile as Wilson-Smith described the painting, firing, glazing and installation process that was undertaken for each tile. As tiles vary in size completion time was staggered with some larger tiles requiring more than two weeks to be ready for the engraving process. The finished project of 1106 tiles took six years and was not possible without the tireless work of Chris Fleming, Doug Dickson, Cheryl-Wilson Smith and Sara Cuthbertson.

As a fundraiser sale of the tiles has provided a net profit of about \$75,000 which ranged in price starting at \$125 to \$1000. The largest contributors were Rob McEwen at \$250,000 which was matched by Goldcorp providing over \$500,000 to the project. Alderton says funds raised were initially used to complete construction of the new building and is now being used for supplies and seed money for grants to

enhance the experience the Centre provides. "The money has gone towards various exhibitions and supplies for exhibitions," says Alderton. "Often times we get grants for special projects but we only get a portion of the grant so 50 per cent so the money that we raised went to match those grants and make these projects a reality. Examples of some of the projects that we were able to accomplish with some of the donor wall are like the art banners, the outdoor art gallery, the Fire 14 display, buying supplies like foam core and supplies like that, the fur trade exhibit, pretty much all the exhibits that you see in the Heritage Centre today were done because we were able to pay our share."

Although all of the names appearing on the wall are worth mentioning, one small tile stands out specifically to Alderton. In 2006 a group of canoeists came through Red Lake on their way to Woodland Caribou Provincial Park from Solhull, England and paid a visit to the Heritage Centre. Seeing the wall, which was still having tiles added to it, chose to purchase a tile to leave something of themselves in the area. Stories like this are what makes the wall an extraordinary project notes Alderton.

Many tiles purchased by individuals and families are former residents with fond memories of growing up in the area.

"The wall allows me to recap the past for the benefit of the future and to reinforce roots that have become thinned from living all across Canada in the past 38 years," said former resident Paul Labine in an email to the Centre earlier this year.

*Continued on page 15
See Donor Wall*

Michelle Alderton stands along side of the newly unveiled Donor Wall on July 24, 2010. The Donor Wall is a permanent fixture at the Heritage Centre. Photo by Jennifer Thurbide



Donor Wall Continued from page 9

"The wall also gives me a sense of permanency that Red Lake won't disappear into a ghost town like so many other towns and communities in Ontario (and BC)." Labine grew up in the area and make a special trip to the area from his current home in British Columbia to see the completed product.

Attending on behalf of the Liedtke family Ruth and Joe Liedtke were surprised and excited to see so many people out for this special event. "[the wall] is really well done and we are really proud to be a part of it," says Joe when asked of his impressions of the wall. "We wanted to be a part of the whole effort to get that museum built. We decided last year after it was advertised and our friends were putting one on the wall."

With this fundraising project completed, the Heritage Centre is now looking for new projects to generate fundraising dollars and grants to keep working on new and innovative displays. Currently Heritage Centre staff is working with a film crew and Science North to complete a series of interactive displays to enhance the exhibition room.



Members of the Red Lake Heritage Centre Board of Directors, along with Michelle Alderton, unveil the completed Donor Wall on July 24, 2010. The Donor Wall is a permanent fixture at the Heritage Centre.

Photo by Jennifer Thurbide