



AMIS ET CHAMPIONS DES MUSÉES

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Features

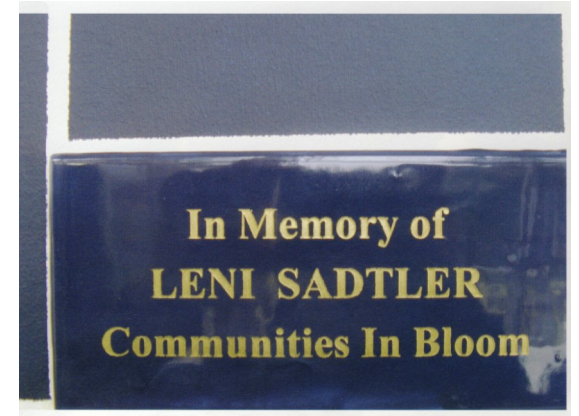
20 Cover Story

Museums, private financings and subsidies

Muse contributor Michel Hellman provides an overview of how museums in Canada raise funds and thank donors.



Mur des donateurs au Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre.
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The Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre, located in a small town of 5,000 people in northwestern Ontario, recently unveiled its “donor wall.” For the past six years, members of the community—families, businesses, and individuals—have donated amounts ranging from \$100 to \$1,000 to purchase personalized ceramic tiles. These tiles were then placed on a large wall, each one becoming part of a larger mosaic (created by a local artist) representing the northern lights. Donors could also submit contributions—such as a comment, anecdote, or memory explaining their connection to the municipality—for inclusion in a “visitor book” that was subsequently printed and distributed for free.

By creating an artistic donor wall, and by adding a personal touch in the form of the visitor book, the Red Lake Regional Heritage Centre has found a tangible method of thanking community members for their donations. This initiative is a good example of a fundraising campaign that is effective, simple, and elegant.

Red Lake could be considered a “remote community,” and its museum could be described as a “local museum,” to borrow a phrase from Philippe Dubé, professor of museum studies at Université Laval. Local museums of this kind play a crucial role in their community. Their modest scale favours a closer relationship between the visitor and the exhibits on display, as well as between the visitor and the staff working there.

As discussed earlier, this type of museum, especially if located in the north, has to rely mainly on financial support from government. But that doesn’t mean they can’t run effective fundraising campaigns. These don’t necessarily have to be complicated or involve a huge amount of resources. A dinner/dance, ball, or other type of show is not always the ideal fundraising solution, and may involve significant expenses. In remote communities, it’s important to “think small,” advises Michèle Alderton, director of Red Lake’s museum. A number of small-scale events may prove more profitable than a large, complicated campaign. The key is learning how to make the most of the available resources without being afraid to ask for help.