

<b>Meeting Date</b>	June 24, 2025
<b>Subject</b>	Comprehensive Report Regarding Heritage Renfrew and the Town of Renfrew
<b>Road to 2035</b>	Will support an accessible, supportive, and age-friendly community by advocating for community health & wellness through strategic partnerships.
<b>Recommendation</b>	That Committee of the Whole recommends that Renfrew Town Council have staff bring forward a draft Memorandum of Understanding between Heritage Renfrew and the Town of Renfrew in order to clearly define the partnership between both entities and further that this MOU be part of the Mayor’s 2026 budget considerations.
<b>Originator</b>	Kelly Latendresse. Director of Community and Recreation Services   Library CEO
<b>CAO Review</b>	As requested by Council in the notice of motion, this report details out several communications and collaboration efforts between Town staff and Heritage Renfrew.  Gloria Raybone, CPA, CA, Dipl.M.A. – Chief Administrative Officer.
<b>Financial Comment</b>	When reviewing and adopting the memorandum of understanding, Council will have the opportunity to determine what sort of financial support they are willing to provide to Heritage Renfrew and how this is to be funded within the operating budget in 2025 and moving forwards.  Mitchell Ferguson – Acting Treasurer/Manager of Finance
<b>Committee and Council Timing</b>	To be considered on June 24, 2025 for final adoption by Council on July 8, 2025.  A motion to defer discussion was passed during Committee of the Whole on June 24, 2025. The matter is to be brought back to Committee of the Whole on July 8 for further discussion.
<b>Background</b>	At the May 13 <sup>th</sup> meeting of Council, a motion was passed directing staff to bring a comprehensive report detailing the historical interactions and communications between Town Staff and Heritage Renfrew, as well as recommendations on how to establish a formal partnership between the Town and Heritage Renfrew to:

- Enhance support for heritage initiatives.
- Address any existing barriers to effective communication and collaboration.
- And further, that staff be directed to assist Council in prioritizing the development of this partnership to ensure Heritage Renfrew receives the support it needs to fulfill its mission and contribute to the community of Renfrew.

The following report outlines the timeline, nature, and outcomes of interactions between Town and Library staff and Heritage Renfrew from June 2023 to May 2025. It highlights collaborative efforts, grant support, and communication challenges encountered during this period.

Before proceeding, Town staff wish to stress that we recognize and deeply appreciate that Heritage Renfrew is operated by passionate volunteers. As with many non-profit organizations, volunteer recruitment and retention are ongoing challenges. Despite these constraints, we want to acknowledge that Heritage Renfrew plays a vital role in preserving the history of Renfrew and making it accessible to the public.

## **Options**

The options available to the Town are noted below:

1. Enter into a MOU with Heritage Renfrew which clearly outlines the support that will be provided by the Town, including monetary. To ensure that Heritage Renfrew can meet its mission.
2. Continue with informal outreach as Town staffing resources allows, ensuring that Heritage Renfrew continues to be invited to events and programs, and is informed of grants which may allow them to fulfill their mission. Heritage Renfrew can also continue to apply yearly to the Grants to Community Partners, which is their current source of Town funding.

## **Impact of Options**

### **Section 1: Communications and Interactions**

#### **Renfrew Public Library and Heritage Renfrew**

Timeline: 2015 - 2019

Upon being hired by the Town of Renfrew, one of the first visits as Library CEO was to Heritage Renfrew. Mr. Fraser and his volunteers are a passionate group. The library has a local history section, but library staff are constantly referring people to Heritage Renfrew. The library also ensured that when their new website went live, Heritage Renfrew was linked directly under Local History on the Library's site.

Mr. Fraser mentioned at that time that their space was very limited and potentially was in jeopardy. There had been discussion that if the library was successful in a large grant application for renovations that perhaps a space could be carved out for Heritage Renfrew. The application was unsuccessful, and this possibility was no longer an option.

### **Arts, Heritage, Culture Master Plan**

Town staff ensured that Heritage Renfrew was included in the Arts, Heritage, Culture Master Plan focus groups, and Mr. Fraser spent the entire afternoon with the consultants during one of the sessions held at Town Hall. Doug Fraser also participated in a joint online discussion with the consultants, NHA Museum and McDougall Mill Museum.

### **McDougall Mill Museum – Curator/Archivist**

Timeline: May 2024 – May 2025

#### **Key Activities:**

- Responded to multiple requests for historical images (e.g., St. Joseph's Academy, 1855 town plan).
- Invited Heritage Renfrew to participate in events such as Museum Night, a Golden Age Centre talk, and the ACH Plan Trillium event.
- Engaged in discussions about archival materials and digitization support.
- Attempted collaboration on a Documentary Heritage Communities Program (DHCP) grant.
- Added a link to Heritage Renfrew on the Town's website.
- Conducted historical research using Heritage Renfrew's archives.

### **Community Outreach & Programs Supervisor**

Timeline: June 2023 – February 2025

#### Key Activities:

- Initiated contact in June 2023 for mural images and visited the archives.
- Discussed a potential Heritage Story Walk, which was declined due to a lack of available volunteers.
- Invited Mr. Fraser to a community showcase in July 2023 (no response received).
- Provided ongoing support and clarification regarding grant applications and Town funding processes.

#### Grant-Related Support:

- Assisted Mr. Fraser with the DHCP grant and the Town's Grants to Community Partners program.
- Clarified the Town's grant intake cycles (March and September).
- Explained that Heritage Renfrew must apply annually and does not receive automatic funding.
- Addressed confusion over missed deadlines and delayed funding in 2024.
- Provided updated forms and guidance for 2025 applications.
- Emphasized the need for final reports before new grants could be issued.

### **Library Adult and Teens Programmer / Outreach Coordinator**

Timeline: June 2023 – February 2025

#### Key Activities:

- Storywalk Collaboration (June–July 2024): Reached out to Mr. Fraser for historical stories. Visited the archives on July 9, 2024, for over four hours. Discussed collections, QR code ideas for downtown, and Mr. Fraser's interest in relocating the archives to the library due to lack of internet access.
- Membership Interest: Expressed interest in joining Heritage Renfrew. Mr. Fraser offered to send a membership form and e-transfer instructions but was not received by Town staff.
- Ghost Walk Event (September 2024): Requested help identifying historical deaths for a themed event. No response received.
- Digitization Grant (November 2024): Forwarded a Library and Archives Canada grant opportunity. Mr. Fraser acknowledged but no further response received.

- Assessment Rolls Inquiry: Responded to Mr. Fraser's inquiry by coordinating with Town staff and relaying the process.
- External Referrals: Referred Mr. Fraser's contact to the Renfrew BIA and suggested a collaborative walking tour.

### **Overview of Interactions and Communications**

Across all departments, staff encountered recurring communication difficulties when engaging with Heritage Renfrew. While in-person meetings were often productive and cordial, follow-up communication—particularly via email—was inconsistent.

Several requests from Town staff for materials, responses to event invitations, and grant-related follow-ups went unanswered. A key barrier identified was the lack of internet access at the Heritage Renfrew archives, which significantly limited timely correspondence and digital collaboration.

Additionally, staff efforts to support Heritage Renfrew through grant applications and community programming were sometimes hindered by missed deadlines, unclear expectations, and limited volunteer availability on the Heritage Renfrew side. Despite Town and Library staff providing clear instructions, updated forms, and even limited staff time to assist with applications, some initiatives could not move forward due to these constraints. These challenges were compounded by the Town's own limited resources and the need to equitably support all non-profit organizations operating within the community.

We want to stress again, that we recognise the challenges faced by non-profit groups, including limited volunteers. This is in no way faulting Heritage Renfrew, just pointing out the challenges.

### **Section 2: Moving Forward**

Town and Library staff have made consistent and good-faith efforts to engage Heritage Renfrew in community programming, historical preservation, and funding opportunities. While some initiatives were successful, others were hindered by communication gaps and resource limitations on both sides. Moving forward, continued collaboration will benefit from clearer expectations, improved responsiveness, and mutual recognition of the resource constraints faced by both volunteer-run organizations and

municipal departments. Below are some suggestions for creating a path forward.

### **1. Addressing Communication Barriers**

A key factor is in understanding what Town staff are able and not able to do. There are not enough staff resources to write grant applications for outside organizations, however staff have sent through possible leads on grants and offered assistance with the process. Should something arise that the Town can partner on, then Town staff can provide more assistance with the process.

Town staff will continue to reach out and engage with Heritage Renfrew. Community Services and Library staff engage with local non-profit groups as time and resources allows. There is also an evening being planned for the fall where all non-profit organizations will be able to engage with one another and with the community to (hopefully) attract more volunteers. Staff will continue to ensure that Heritage Renfrew is kept updated should they wish to participate.

### **2. An MOU with Heritage Renfrew**

As with the NHA/NHL Museum, and the Golden Age Activity Centre etc., Heritage Renfrew is a non-profit organization. Currently the Town provides yearly funding to the NHA/NHL outside of the Grants to Community Partners budget. The Town has a formal MOU with the Golden Age Activity Centre in order for that organization to fulfill its mandate.

In order to effectively ensure that Heritage Renfrew continues to fulfill its mission, the recommendation is that Council enters into a funding agreement and Memorandum of Understanding with Heritage Renfrew. An MOU will ensure a clear path forward for Heritage Renfrew and will clearly define the Town's role as well.

Should Council wish to explore an MOU, Council may wish to direct staff to explore this type of agreement in more depth and bring forward a draft agreement for review.

Respectfully submitted for your consideration.