



Ontario Visual Heritage Project

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HD Documentary on Manitoulin Island to Premiere in M'Chigeeng

LITTLE CURRENT, Ontario – September 9, 2008 – After two years in production, the Manitoulin Island installment of the Ontario Visual Heritage Project, entitled, 'Island of Great Spirit; The Legacy of Manitoulin' will be launched in M'Chigeeng at the Community Complex on Saturday October 4th, 2008. This free event will feature a screening of the two-hour, HD documentary film, which explores the intriguing history of the Manitoulin and its people through interviews with local historians, archival films and photographs, and re-enactments of historical events. To kickoff the evening, a reception will be held at 6:30pm, and the screening will begin at 7:15pm. The evening will wrap up around 10:00pm.

The Ontario Visual Heritage Project team, with the support of the Manitoulin Museums Association and other community groups, has been hard at work since funding for the project from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and FedNor was announced in July of 2006. Under the guidance of a steering committee made up of local volunteers from the historical community, over 30 historians were interviewed and the talents of 65 community actors were employed for the 40 re-enactments shot for the film. District museums and historical groups also played an integral role in the project by providing historic shooting locations and archival materials.

One of the goals of this not-for-profit project is to create multimedia tool kits, which are meant to teach, preserve and promote the history of Ontario to audiences young and old. The documentary is the central component of each project, and 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. The launch will celebrate not only the completion of the project and the history of the Manitoulin, but also the upcoming distribution of the multimedia tool-kits to every school, library, and museum in the district free of charge.

'Island of Great Spirit; The Legacy of Manitoulin' looks at the stories that make the district unique, and the events that contextualize the area within the bigger picture of our country. When discussing the Manitoulin Island project Director Zach Melnick said: "For thousands of years the Anishinabek have know that there was something special about Manitoulin Island, home of the Great Spirit. Over the years, a diverse population of peoples have made their way to the island, seeking to carve out a life amidst the landscape riddled with lakes and limestone. From the original Odawa inhabitants, to the other Anishinabek Nations that they welcomed to the land; to lumbermen, fishermen, farmers, and oil prospectors, the Island has always had a unique appeal. But don't take our word for it – this story is told almost entirely through the words of leading local historians, such as Alan Corbiere, Dr. Pat Julig, and Esther Osche, and through the mischievous deeds of Nanabush."

Under Melnick's direction, the Ontario Visual Heritage Project has seen success in seven counties in Southwestern Ontario, including: Haldimand, Norfolk, Brant/Brantford/Six Nations, Elgin, Oxford, Sarnia-Lambton, and Chatham-Kent. The Manitoulin Island project is the last of four projects that have been launched this summer, including: the District of Muskoka, the City of Greater Sudbury, and the West Parry Sound District. All four documentaries will be available in a box set of DVDs entitled "The Shield."

Orders for DVDs of 'Island of Great Spirit' will be taken at the Launch in M'Chigeeng. Attendees will have a chance to provide feedback to the producers before the DVD master is created. In October the DVDs will be available for purchase from island museums, and other partner organizations. For a full list of partner organizations, additional information on the launch, and high resolution photographs, please visit our website at www.visualheritage.ca.

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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