

# PRESERVING A LINK TO OUR LITERARY PAST

*Community volunteers keep the doors open at Lakefield's Christ Church*

**Christ Church Community Museum**  
Queen Street  
Lakefield, ON



**Thanks to strong volunteer dedication, this small chapel on Lakefield's main street opens seasonally for worship and as a community museum.**

## The Spark

As a touchstone in the community with links to Canada's early literary history, this chapel was partially restored in the 1960s – a project that was taken up again and completed by local volunteers over the last 15-20 years. While the building retains its role as an occasional place of worship, the volunteer committee that manages it has recognized and strengthened its importance to the broader community.

## Their Journey

Wanting to preserve this landmark and celebrate the area's literary connections (to 19<sup>th</sup> Century authors Catherine Parr-Traill and Susanna Moodie, as well as more recent authors such as Margaret Lawrence and John Craig), the church restoration committee evolved into the Christ Church Community Museum – a registered charity, that is an ecumenical committee of the St. John Baptist Anglican Church.

This Committee was tasked with the mandate to undertake the restoration of the chapel and its adjacent graveyard, while operating the community museum. They methodically planned and implemented a series of projects over 15+ years, funded through a wide range of fundraising activities and partnerships that further strengthened the chapel's place in the heart of the community. Several organizations and businesses provided grants, materials, or in-kind contributions, and the strong volunteer labour force helped implement the projects.

Involving heritage conservation expertise at key points, and having strong leadership to guide the process, the Committee has achieved remarkable results on the chapel's condition. Over the years,

### *Preserving a Link to our Literary Past: Christ Church Community Museum*

the work has included roof replacement, structural upgrades, masonry repairs, new furnace, reconstruction of a historic wood vestry, and rehabilitation of interior finishes.

By hosting authors' events for the annual Lakefield Literary Festival and publishing a self-guided walking tour of historic Lakefield, the museum contributes to the town's tourism economy and builds further bridges with other local groups.

### The Take-Away

Building on a passion for local history, and being deeply rooted in their community, the Christ Church Community Museum Committee has successfully implemented an ambitious long term plan for their beloved chapel. The scale of the Committee's operations as a social enterprise and tourist attraction matches their capacity, and capitalizes on the energy of motivated volunteers.

### Links:

- <http://stjohnslakefield.ca/index.php/christ-church>