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Since KAM's inaugural meeting in 1980, our members have played a vital role not only in shaping the organization itself, but also in strengthening the Kingston and Area cultural heritage sector. Through their dedication, expertise, passion, and spirit of collegiality, they have embodied the belief that **we can do better together**.

The Kingston & Area cultural heritage sector is as diverse and vibrant as the people who support it. Over the years, countless community volunteers and cultural heritage professionals have contributed to KAM and the sector, each leaving a distinctive and lasting mark on the cultural heritage landscape. These awards are intended to honour and celebrate those individuals and their enduring contributions.

The KAM Awards of Excellence is a peer recognition award program, where KAM members both nominate individuals in each category. There are five categories for the KAM Awards of Excellence: **Governance; Practice & Programming; Leadership & Innovation; Mentorship; and Volunteerism**. The award categories are named in recognition of past KAM members who have notably influenced KAM and/or our regional cultural heritage sector for the better within these areas.

The KAM Awards of Excellence 2026 nomination cycle is now open. Please see Page 3 for more information on Award Categories.

Members or organizations can nominate one individual per category. Deadline for nominations is **13 March 2026**. Please send the completed nomination form to managing.director@kingstonmuseums.ca with "**KAM Award Nominations 2026**" in the subject line. Recipients will be notified in April 2026, with award presentations at the KAM AGM 2026.

Nomination Guidelines:

- i. Nomination Forms are available for download from the KAM website:
<https://www.kingstonmuseums.ca/get-involved/kam-awards-excellence>
- ii. These awards recognize individuals who exemplify the attributes and capacities captured through these award categories.
- iii. The nominees must be current or former cultural heritage staff or volunteers from a recognized KAM membership organization or hold/have held an individual membership.
- iv. The nominator must be a member in good standing, either through a KAM member organization or hold their own individual membership. The nominator may only submit one nominee per category per nomination cycle.
- v. Current KAM staff are not eligible for nomination.
- vi. Current KAM Board members are eligible for nomination, but if nominated, may not participate in award adjudication.
- vii. Current KAM Board members and KAM staff cannot provide letters of support for any nomination.
- viii. Once an individual has been awarded a KAM Award of Excellence, they are not eligible for nomination in that same category for a period of 3 years.
- ix. It is understood and appreciated that the contributions of many of the individuals within Kingston's cultural sector are well-known. However, the ultimate success of their nomination will be closely dependent on the quality and completeness of the nomination form, regardless of the nominee's reputation.
- x. Nominators must submit two signatures of support for the nomination from other KAM members.
- xi. The nominator may submit two additional supplementary documents to support their nominee's application as appropriate.

Adjudication:

- i. After nominations are determined to be eligible and complete, the KAM Board will meet to adjudicate the submissions. Each nomination will be considered against the awards criteria and the nomination considered to best meet the criteria will be selected as the winner for the year.
- ii. Awards will be presented at the KAM AGM.

The Paul O. Robertson Award for Leadership and Innovation






With permission: Edgar Tumak / Robertson family

Paul is remembered with equal praise and commendation for his contributions to the heritage sector, not only in Kingston but Ontario as whole. Paul spent his career working towards creating a more diverse and inclusive sector. Paul was particularly proud of his work with the Kingston and Area Indigenous leaders guiding the City of Kingston - Cultural Services towards Truth and Reconciliation efforts. Paul was also an advocate for the 2S LGBTQIA+ community in museums across Ontario. Paul contributed to many heritage organizations, in particular the Ontario Museum Association of which he served as President from 2019 to 2021. KAM held a special place in his heart as he helped it grow and

thrive into the organization it is today such as through the City of Kingston Heritage Fund. Paul's unfailing dedication and vision for cultural heritage, and his connections to friends and colleagues, persisted until his passing from cancer. Three weeks before his death, he still made a presentation to Gananoque Town Council encouraging their support for the 1000 Islands History Museum and partook in meetings with the Museum of Health Care, OMA, and KAM. He will be missed by all those who had the privilege of knowing him, but his work and dedication will be a lasting legacy to our region.

A nominee for this award category exemplifies the following:

-  The ability to inspire productive action in oneself and others during times of creation, invention, uncertainty, ambiguity, and risk.
-  Demonstrates the ability to both think and influence others to create “new and better” ideas to move towards positive results.
-  Creative, collaborative, curious, courageous, resilient, and committed.

The J. Ross McKenzie Award for Mentorship








With permission: McKenzie Family and RMC Museum

J. Ross McKenzie was the first professional curator for the RMC Museum in Kingston, working in this position from 1990 to his formal retirement in 2015. Like many who work in cultural heritage, his background and experience were varied. He graduated from RMC in 1970 and served both in Canada and in Germany as a Dragoon (Armoured Corps). When he first started as Museum Curator, it was only part time, and he also worked as Liaison Officer, then eventually as Associate Registrar of RMC, until becoming the full-time Curator in 2006. Ultimately, he would spend almost 50 years either in ‘uniform’ or working DND Public Servant.

Other than his early Regimental Service, most of his career was spent at RMC – from cadet, to officer, to civilian staff – likely a record in the history of RMC.

Ross passed away in 2019 but is remembered not only for his passion and expertise in local and military history, but for his mentoring and coaching of the many students, RMC cadets, emerging sector professionals and colleagues that crossed his path over the years. He valued kindness and personal responsibility, was generous in sharing his expertise and interests, and recognized that everyone has a story to tell. He imbued these values in his work, and both KAM and Kingston & Area cultural heritage is the richer for it.

A nominee for this award category exemplifies the following:

-  Demonstrate an exemplary commitment to the cultural heritage sector by enthusiastically and respectfully sharing their expertise, skillset, and knowledge in a mentorship capacity.
-  Eagerness to invest in others, willing to be a sponsor/ally, to share and create opportunities for success and growth.
-  Gives honest and productive feedback.
-  Supporting and mentoring others with challenges or issues that they may be experiencing.
-  Values reflective listening and empathy.




The Bill Visser Award for Governance



With permission – Bill Visser

This award recognizes the highest degree of integrity, ethical conduct, and best practice that can be shown by a member of a Board. This award is named for Bill Visser, a self-described non-sector professional and “amateur enthusiast in things that tell us where we came from and why things are the way they are,” who volunteered on the KAM Board of Directors for over 10 years, sharing his perspective as a community member and cultural heritage visitor and offering his experience and expertise of municipal procedures and activities for the benefit of KAM and its work. His commitment to improving practice and impact continues to resonate and positively influence KAM board operations today.

A nominee for this award category exemplifies the following:

-  Is a current or former Board member of a recognized KAM member organization or group.
-  Has left a legacy of excellent or improved governance efforts of which the positive effect on the organization continues to be visible.
-  Exemplifies strong leadership, good management, effective partnerships and creative thinking.





The Tabitha Renaud Award for Volunteerism



With permission: Tabitha Renaud and Murney Tower Museum

Tabitha Renaud has left an unforgettable mark transforming many organizations — including the Murney Tower Museum, KAM, Kingston Regional Heritage Fair, and the Kingston Historical Society — into more modern, professional, and vibrant entities. Since 2011, she has volunteered with various around Kingston, leaving a remarkable volunteer legacy and exemplifying hard work, dedication, and devotion to the community. From serving on the boards of KAM, KHS, and Beyond Classrooms Kingston to taking on executive, administrative, and leadership roles at the Murney Tower Museum and the Kingston Regional Heritage Fair, Tabitha has played a crucial role in shaping Kingston's museums, heritage sites, and organizations. As a volunteer, she consistently went above and beyond her duties, dedicating her time and resources to support the Kingston heritage sector with enthusiasm and generosity, sharing her knowledge, skills, and expertise to assist her colleagues.

A nominee for this award category exemplifies the following:

-  Devotes an abundance of their time and resources, and is passionate about helping others
-  Sets the example for how just one individual can make an enormous impact in their community
-  Vision for the community, strives to bring people together, believes in the value and importance of contributing to their communities
-  Is a true role model for other volunteers in their organization or in the community




The Ann Blake Award for Practice and Programming



With permission: Ann Blake & Beyond Classrooms Kingston

Ann Blake's distinguished career spans nearly three decades in the areas of programming and museum education. In 2014, Ann was instrumental in establishing the charity Beyond Classrooms Kingston as a way to engage teachers and students by immersing them in cultural heritage sites for a week of learning. Her mentorship and support inspired countless colleagues, volunteers, educators, and students within our community over the years. Ann especially shone when working with students in museums who gravitated to her assurance that we all had stories to uncover and tell and every question had value. Ann's belief that it takes a community to make a museum successful propelled her, throughout her career, to pioneer many partnerships between museums and the community. Her work continues to have a lasting impact.

A nominee for this award category exemplifies the following:

-  Contributes exemplary professional practice and/or programming within Cultural Heritage provision.
-  Establishes and shapes professional standards, ethics and opportunities that evolves cultural heritage in productive and impactful ways.
-  Generates new cultural heritage provision – either in terms of product or improving accessibility and relevancy to diverse audiences.