



***“Building on the past to forge a prosperous, green, creative and inclusive future”***

**January 2024 Newsletter Volume 4, Issue 1**

***HAPPY NEW YEAR!***

***WE’VE CLAIMED IT, NOW LET’S NAME IT!***

**What’s in a Name?** Names are not just labels, the best ones are catchy, memorable, unique. They’re marketing tools and they encompass the essence of the message we want to convey. “The Up Top Sports Shop”, name tells what they sell, with a lofty twist. The name of the “Manitoulin Makers Co.” in Gore Bay assures customers they are getting locally-made products, as does “Manitoulin Soap Factory” and “Manitoulin Chocolate Works”. Some names play on words, like “Huron Island Time” on the beach at Providence Bay, “The Cutting Edge” hair salon in Manitowaning, or “Beam Paints and Colour” in M’Chigeeng, a family name that just happens to be perfect for Anong Beam’s business.



The Old School will have several functions, as our motto indicates: with connections to the past, to a prosperous economy, to an eco-friendly future, and to the arts and crafts community. It will be accessible and welcoming to everyone. The main level, which we are working to open this summer, will be a centre for arts and crafts with studios, a gallery/store, and workshops. Almost all the artists and crafters participating will be from Manitoulin or Northern Ontario. Products range from beautiful paintings to practical fabrics. Workshops will cover a cornucopia of offerings.

**You can help - put on your creative thinking caps!** We’ve come up with a few names for this new centre, and **we’re asking for new suggestions.** We’ll collect your suggestions and send a list for you to vote for your preferred name. Here are some

ideas: Central Art Hub, “The Central” (for short), Creative Life Centre, The Artful Hub, The Artful Hub at the Old School, and MOSAIC: Mindemoya Old School Arts In Common.

## ***2024 IS SHAPING UP TO BE VERY EVENTFUL!***

The majority of the space available on the main level has been provisionally rented, with ten artists and craftspeople indicating they will rent space in the Old School starting July 2024. This is fantastic, considering that there is still much construction and retrofit work to be done before we can open. They are showing great faith in FOMOS’ ability to raise the funds quickly. July 1st is less than six months away!



**So far, so good!** In our Fall campaign, we raised \$72,000, including another very generous donation of \$50,000 from the Douglas A. Smith Family Foundation. That is amazing! Almost everyone was a member and/or previous donor, showing great support for the Old School! The median donation was \$100, and seven donors gave \$1,000 or more. We are working on plaques to recognize them. We are grateful for every donation, whatever the amount. A huge thank-you to all!

*visit their space  
on the main level.*

Our immediate retrofit task now is to remove the attic insulation so that an engineer can get a good look at the roof structure. Then we’ll put in new insulation.

We are seeking funding from government agencies, but they do not fund the entire costs. We have to demonstrate that the funding from the agency or agencies plus our funds will completely cover the renovation expenses and allow us to start up. At the end of the agency-funded project, we open the doors! Time is running short.

So how will we reassure the agencies when we do not yet have the funds in place? We are working on applications from companies, foundations and as many agencies as we can, but they all take time. It’s a race!

***Working on Many Fronts at the Same Time***

We have another **50/50 raffle** in the works. Watch for more information on social media and our website. If you are available at any time to sell tickets PLEASE let us know.

We will be holding another online **Art Auction**. Once again we hope to showcase local art or that of members. Last year's offerings were spectacular. This year we plan to have them on display earlier so you have a chance to see them up close and personal and also have a chance to bid in person.

### **Mark your calendars**

**Saturday June 22nd: Our annual Yard / Bake / Trunk sale** will be happening. If you wish to sell items, bring your car, pay a nominal fee and sell your items without unloading. We won't be accepting donated items for the main sale. Again this year we will have some **antiques** for vintage lovers. It's a great time to stock up on home-baked goodies, quirky gifts and maybe enjoy a scrumptious bowl of homemade chilli.

**Saturday August 10: Old School Bash and BBQ** This event may have a new name but you can still enjoy many of the same activities along with some great new additions. Mark on your calendar and bring the whole family!!! Rain or shine, we have you covered for what will be a fun-filled day.

**We are counting on our friends to help us with the next step.** You may know of a business or foundation that might be willing to donate, if we approached them. Suggestions are welcome. Even better, could you do a little research, tell someone who works for the business about this fantastic project? Maybe you could break the ice?

**If you can, please donate (again) at this crucial time. Remember that you can receive a tax receipt for donations of \$50 or more but this must be done in the following way.**

**Write** a cheque to the ACO (Architectural Conservancy of Ontario)  
**Mail** the cheque to FOMOS at P.O. Box 107, Mindemoya, ON P0P  
1S0

~~A tax receipt from ACO will arrive in the mail.~~

**If you do not require a tax receipt, you can donate any amount directly to Friends of the Mindemoya Old School.**

**Send an email transfer to**  
mindemoyaoldschool@gmail.com

**OR**

**Go to our website**

**[www.mindemoyaoldschool.ca](http://www.mindemoyaoldschool.ca)** and follow the instructions.

**OR**

**Write a cheque to FOMOS** and mail it to  
FOMOS, P.O. Box107, Mindemoya, ON P0P 1S0

**All donations of \$1000 or more will be recognized with a plaque.**

We can ALWAYS use more volunteers in various capacities. Please reach out if you can spare some spare time to help. There are many areas where help is always welcomed.

## **2023 WAS SUCH A BUSY YEAR!**

Your board members and volunteers have devoted countless hours to reach this stage. Just look at what you have helped us accomplish last year!



We kicked off the year with February's **HERITAGE WEEK** Celebration and market at the Mindemoya Community Centre. Joanne Smith's book *Tales of the Mindemoya Old School* has been a big hit. Lillian's of M'Chigeeng was one of the craft vendors attending. And there was live musical entertainment!



The Spring **YARD, TRUNK AND BAKE SALE** was a bonanza for treasure hunters and foodies alike. Volunteer Marie Sloss is pictured selling delicious treats made by many volunteer bakers. We also welcomed several trunk sale vendors with a variety of items.

The **BIRTHDAY BASH AND BBQ** saw perfect weather and record numbers of attendees who enjoyed the many activities throughout the day. The second **FOMOS 50/50 DRAW** netted the



winner \$2500!! Thanks to Kat's Pet Supplies and Williamson's Pro Hardware for selling tickets. Thanks also to Foodland and to the volunteers who sold tickets there. 1000 tickets were sold!



The second annual **ART AUCTION** showcased some of the amazing talents of twenty artists, and some very lucky people are now enjoying beautiful works of art in their homes. Our sincere thanks to these artists. This pottery by indigenous potter David Migwans from M'Chigeeng was one of the beautiful pieces auctioned.

We partnered with **THE ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVANCY OF ONTARIO** to provide TAX RECEIPTS for donations. The ACO is a charity with a mandate to preserve historical buildings like the Old School. Thanks to an amazing group of supporters, donations kept coming even after the matching deadline.

JD Construction installed our very eco-friendly and locally sourced **NEW ROOF**. Steel roofs like this one from TerraStar Building Products in Manitowaning can last twice as long as asphalt roofing, and they can be recycled at the end of their life. The light grey we chose reflects sunlight, reducing air conditioning costs.

## **WE CAN DO THIS...TOGETHER**

The following editorial reprinted from the Manitoulin Expositor more than a year ago illustrates well the long road we've travelled together. The new roof is the most tangible, visible evidence of our achievements in 2023, but that is only the icing on the cake.

### **Friends of the Old School a case study in community action**

Editorial reprinted with permission from the *Manitoulin Expositor*, October 12, 2022

*The days of the Mindemoya Old School building in Mindemoya looked to be destined for the wrecker's ball a couple of years ago, coming right down to the wire as Central Manitoulin council pursued plans for a multi-plex community centre that would replace the antiquated Mindemoya arena. Observers of the debate at council could be forgiven for thinking the demise of the historic building was a fait accompli—a done deal—given the seeming intransigence of a couple of council members and the allocation of budget dollars for the demolition.*

*But then something changed.*

*A small but determined group of community members came forward to advocate for the preservation of the historic edifice. At first, the group was just a collection of individuals who attended the public input sessions held by council to express their dismay at the demolition plans.*

*That gained little traction.*

*It's easy to make suggestions, to offer alternatives or to hypothesize alternative solutions if one doesn't have any skin in the game council members pointed out, going on to set up a committee to move forward with the multi-plex plan.*

*Individuals concerned about the fate of the building looked abroad for support, bringing in historical preservation architects to assess the building and prepare a report.*

*Still little traction. There was no viable business plan. No-one willing to step up and put the aforementioned "skin in the game," noted council. With no sustainable or viable business plan to assess, the wrecking ball moved closer.*

*Seemingly insurmountable concerns abounded. Asbestos' hoary head was raised (without a lot of evidence to support the concerns), roof repairs were cited as being too expensive to tackle, the heating system was a bust, buried oil tanks presented an environmental nightmare—the list was extensive.*

*The group of like-minded individuals bent on saving the Mindemoya Old School realized that, without a well-organized local champion, the building was doomed to demolition—nobody was going to ride in on a white horse from off-Island to save their damsel. So, they created a champion, going on to form Friends of the Mindemoya Old School (FOMOS) and incorporating as a not-for-profit—literally creating that champion.*

*There was still a mountain ahead for that champion to climb—but now there was a champion.*

*That was just the beginning, of course, there was still that business plan and viable path forward to sustainability to come up with. So, they did. COVID threw some serious curves into the mix, making getting those plans together even more challenging for a group of volunteers. But dogged determination and the willingness by several individuals to put their own skin forward bought extensions of deadlines that culminated in a business plan.*

*Studies concluded that the asbestos concerns were overblown, the buried oil tank failed to surface, and a major donor offered to step up on the roof repairs. Surveys were conducted and estimates made, funding sources researched and applications made.*

*Thanks to the hard work and determination of FOMOS members, that business plan proved to be the final link in a chain that would bring enough council members onside and willing to give FOMOS a chance.*

*This past week, an open house invited the public in to see just how solid the old building's bones are and to allay some of the rumours and disinformation swirling around debate on the building's fate.*

*If ever there were to be a case study on fighting city hall, FOMOS could write the book. From fait accompli, to organized advocacy, to rolled sleeves and opened wallets, chapter by chapter, FOMOS has inched the Mindemoya Old School building back from the precipice of oblivion. A small group of individuals with passion and dogged determination can indeed fight city hall.*

*The verdict is still out on the Mindemoya Old School. There is a lot of work to be done, money to be raised and regulations to be met, but judging from the past few years, FOMOS will likely prove equal to the task—provided the community gets behind them.*

*If anyone deserves the chance, it is them.*

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FOMOS, Box 107, Mindemoya, ON P0P 1S0 [www.mindemoyaoldschool.ca](http://www.mindemoyaoldschool.ca)  
[mindemoyaoldschool@gmail.com](mailto:mindemoyaoldschool@gmail.com) Facebook: Mindemoya Old School