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Laurier Brantford YMCA project moving into next phase

BRANTFORD –The shoe is amazingly intact, especially given its age. Buried for likely one hundred or more years, this relic belies the craftsmanship of its original maker. Was it a sample from the Agnew shoe company that started in Brantford in 1879 and went on to become a national chain of 104 stores, or perhaps the handiwork of William Dutton, one of the city's earliest cobblers who set up shop on Colborne Street in 1822? That is still being determined. Either way, this simple pegged shoe tells part of the story of Brantford's people and its past, a story that can now be told with new insight.

The shoe is but one of nearly 400,000 artifacts unearthed at the site on Colborne Street in Brantford that will become the future home of the new health, fitness and aquatics complex being built through a partnership between the governments of Canada and Ontario, Wilfrid Laurier University and the YMCA. Archeological discovery work at the site was completed at the end of 2015. Archeologists are now working through the trove, cataloging and photographing each item, and researching their origins.

"The sheer volume of archeological material unearthed at the site did add to our project timelines," said **Brian Rosborough**, the senior executive officer at Laurier's Brantford campus. "However, the discoveries made at the site are exciting, and add a new and important dimension to this project. They tell the story of the people who have called this area home from as far back as 500 BCE to the 21st century. Our archeologists have referred to this as the most significant archeological discovery in Ontario since the construction of the Sky Dome. As a university, we're thrilled to be part of such compelling finds."

Among the items unearthed at the site are several coins including one featuring Sir Isaac Brock, and an Upper Canada sloop penny from the 1820s; pottery shards from the Late Woodland peoples; and relics from the early European settlers, including a pipe bearing an effigy of Punch from the popular Punch and Judy puppet shows, and tableware, including a delicate Davenport teacup. Rosborough said that work will be done to determine the best way to share some of the discovered objects with the public. "There's been a great deal of interest in these objects," he explains. "Exploring how best to display them and make them available to the community will be a priority."

With archeological work complete, construction is set to begin. A sequential tendering process is being employed. Final site preparation work should wrap up by the end of February, with construction work beginning later this spring.

Unearthing an archeological bounty of this significance requires the investment of additional time and resources, which added to the project timelines and budget. "Both the YMCA and Laurier have stepped forward with additional funds," explained **Kyla Kumar**, vice president, Marketing & Communications, YMCA of Hamilton, Burlington, Brantford. "We're working through design efficiencies and with our other partners and stakeholders to close the remaining gap. We are committed to delivering the building and programming that the public is expecting. We're excited to be advancing into the construction phase for a Centre that we know will significantly enhance community health across the Brantford Region."

The building site is located on the south side of Colborne Street, between Grand River Hall and the municipal parking walkway, opposite Harmony Square. The facility will include an aquatic centre for teaching, fitness, therapy and leisure; multi-purpose spaces for fitness classes and social, educational and cultural programming; teaching spaces for community education; cardio, strength and weight areas for individual fitness, and community-based health care programs; and large gymnasium and large multi-purpose studios. It is anticipated to open in late 2017/early 2018.

The facility will serve residents of Brantford, Brant County and Six Nations, the postsecondary institutions in the community, as well as visitors. Images of select items from the archaeological dig are available upon request.

PROJECT QUICK FACTS

TOTAL PROJECT SIZE	118,000 SQUARE FEET
TOTAL ARTIFACTS UNEARTHED	NEARLY 400,000
UPDATED PROJECT BUDGET*	APPROXIMATELY \$66MILLION

[*INCLUDES ARCHEOLOGICAL COSTS, AND ADDITIONAL SITE PREPARATION COSTS]

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