

Harmful Language and Historical Content

Our Commitment

Fort Erie Museum Services is committed to preserving and providing access to the history of our community while fostering an environment of respect, inclusion, and learning. This commitment is guided by the Canadian Museums Association's [Ethics Guidelines](#) and supports the values outlined in the Town of Fort Erie's [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#), including equity, accessibility, accountability, and community engagement.

Our collections include artifacts, archival records, photographs, oral histories, publications, research materials, and other historical resources that document the people, places, and events that have shaped Fort Erie. These materials reflect the time periods in which they were created and collected and may contain language, descriptions, viewpoints, or imagery that are now considered outdated, offensive, discriminatory, or harmful.

As part of our responsibility to preserve the historical record, Fort Erie Museum Services does not alter original primary source materials when presenting them to the public. Historical documents, correspondence, publications, photographs, oral histories, and other records may contain terminology or perspectives that no longer reflect contemporary values or accepted language.

While we recognize that some of this content may be upsetting or offensive, these materials provide important evidence of the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which they were created. Preserving original records allows researchers and visitors to better understand both the events being documented and the historical circumstances that shaped them.

The presence of harmful language within our collections does not imply endorsement by Fort Erie Museum Services or the Town of Fort Erie.

Fort Erie Museum Services strives to use respectful, accurate, and inclusive language when describing and interpreting historical materials. We regularly review collection records, exhibition content, research materials, and online resources to ensure that descriptive practices reflect current professional standards and community expectations.

We acknowledge that terminology, conventions, and museological best practices evolve over time. Language that was considered acceptable in the past may no longer be appropriate today. As we identify outdated or harmful language in collection descriptions and other interpretive materials, we will work to revise those descriptions while preserving the integrity of the historical record itself.

We recognize that historical descriptions are not neutral, and neither are the institutions that create them. Collection records, catalogues, finding aids, and interpretive materials are created by people working within particular historical, cultural, and professional contexts.

Many descriptions currently associated with our collections were created years or even decades ago. As a result, they may reflect past assumptions, practices, or terminology that do not align with contemporary standards. We are committed to continually reviewing our work and improving the ways in which we describe and present the histories and experiences represented in our collections.

Our goal is to provide information that is historically accurate while also being respectful to the individuals, cultures, and communities who created, used, and are represented within the collections we steward.

Addressing harmful language in historical collections is an ongoing process. We understand that no descriptive practice is ever complete and that community perspectives, language, and professional standards continue to change.

Fort Erie Museum Services is committed to reviewing, updating, and improving collection descriptions and online content as resources permit. We view this work as continual and collaborative, and we welcome feedback that helps us better serve our community.

Contact Us

We seek to understand and improve the experiences of those who access and interact with our collections and online resources. Community feedback plays an important role in this process.

Please contact us if you would like to:

- Report harmful or offensive language in our collections or collection descriptions.
- Raise concerns about content available through our exhibitions, websites, or historical records.
- Ask questions about why historical materials containing harmful language remain accessible.
- Share feedback regarding our descriptive practices and ongoing review process.

Email: museum@forterie.ca

Fort Erie Museum Services acknowledges the work of museum, archival, and library professionals across Canada and internationally whose research, policies, and best practices have informed this statement and our ongoing work. We recognize that responsible description is a long-term and evolving process, and we remain committed to learning, listening, and improving.