

As the grand opening approaches, the momentous achievement represented by Touchstones Nelson seems supported by legions of dreamers, planners, donors and doers – many of them volunteers. All need to be thanked as much and as often as possible.

Shawn Lamb, as the former museum director, kept the flame alive, reminding the community of the crucial need for a new home for the artifacts of our heritage. Attempts were made to accomplish this but it was the Facilities Planning Committee, a volunteer citizens group, that started to pull the pieces together. They understood that the need for a new arena was tied to that for a new museum, archives and art gallery.

Creative thinking by City staff, recognizing the opportunity presented by moving city offices out of 502 Vernon St, and a successful referendum in 2003 set us firmly on the path to this week's celebrations. The conversion project itself involved extensive and varied contributions, from cash to in-kind, from time to talents.

One outstanding contributor has been Stephanie Fischer, who dedicated much of the last five years to accomplishing Touchstones Nelson. She started with the planning committee and ended as the project manager for the construction process. Stephanie is owed a special commendation for her creative talents, smart thinking and indomitable spirit.

For area residents, a Touchstones tour will not just happen when friends and relatives visit. Changing exhibitions, special programs, artist talks and the gift shop will draw you back time and again. "Meet me at Touchstones" will become an everyday phrase.

Individual admission fees were set at \$10 for an individual or \$25 for a family. This is comparable to other museums and galleries, and visitors to our community will see it as quite affordable. However, if you live close by to Nelson, consider buying a membership. It will save you a lot of money, and will be a signal of support to the volunteer-run society that operates Touchstones Nelson.

Four levels of annual membership are available. The Supporter Membership costs an individual \$25 or a family \$60. This gives you free admission to regular exhibits and to member events (e.g., art openings), plus the newsletter.

The Bronze Membership includes the above, plus a 10% shop discount, and a couple discount guest passes. This costs \$35 for an individual or \$80 for a family.

Up a level to Silver, and your benefits include more guest passes and free one-hour archival assistance, and the ability to rent the lobby for a discounted rate. That costs an individual \$70 or a family \$110.

The Gold Membership costs a simple \$250 and includes additional goodies, like a recognition plaque and travel tour options.

Remember the opening ceremonies begin at 11 am on Saturday, with the formal ribbon cutting by Lieutenant-Governor Iona Campagnolo. Other speakers include our MLA, MP and Mayor John Dooley. Following that, all exhibitions will open, and music, dance, a giant cake, and a terrific children's party will entertain. And of course memberships will be on sale!

For more information, check out [touchstonesnelson.ca](http://touchstonesnelson.ca). Many thanks to the Nelson Daily News for their very generous editorial and advertising support to Touchstones.