

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Potter's Field Project Honoured with Prestigious Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award

INGERSOLL, ON (April 22, 2026) — The Town of Ingersoll is proud to announce that the Potter's Field Project, a collaborative Western University research initiative conducted within the Ingersoll Rural Cemetery, has been awarded the *Lieutenant Governor's Ontario Heritage Award for Excellence in Conservation*. The award was presented on Friday, April 17, 2026, in a formal ceremony at Queen's Park by the Honourable Edith Dumont, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

The three-year initiative was a collaborative effort involving countless contributors, including the Ingersoll Rural Cemetery Board, the Town of Ingersoll, the Township of Zorra, and the Oxford County Library, among others.

The *Award for Excellence in Conservation* is a top-tier provincial honour that recognizes innovative and impactful projects dedicated to the preservation of Ontario's history. This recognition highlights the meticulous work done by Dr. Cody Groat, Western University, and his team to restore and honour the Potter's Field section of the Ingersoll Rural Cemetery, ensuring that the stories of those interred there are preserved for future generations.

Ceremony Highlights

The prestigious award was accepted by a delegation representing the heart of the project's success:

- Dr. Cody Groat, Project Lead.
- Debbie Johnston, Chair of Ingersoll Rural Cemetery Board of Directors.
- Isaac Bender (Woodstock), Rebecca Small (London), and Emily Kirk (London), the research students whose academic contributions were vital to the project's completion.

About the Potter's Field Project

The project focused on the historical "Potter's Field" area of the Ingersoll Rural Cemetery; traditionally a burial place for those without the means for private plots. Through extensive research and community collaboration, the team worked to identify those buried in the field and restore the site as a place of historical significance and reflection.

The project culminated in a public ceremony held on June 7, 2025, at 2 p.m. at the Ingersoll Rural Cemetery, where a monument was unveiled to honour nearly 400 individuals buried

in unmarked graves. The burials represent a diverse group of men, women, and children from the Ingersoll area who, due to financial hardship or circumstance, were unable to afford a marked grave.

While separate from previous regional accolades, this provincial award for Excellence in Conservation underscores the project's unique methodology and its contribution to Ontario's cultural landscape.

Quotes

“We are proud to receive this recognition for the Potter's Field Project. Our objective has been to treat the people who were buried in these unmarked graves with the respect and dignity that was often denied in their lifetime. We also recognize that this project has been an opportunity for us to demonstrate the ongoing economic disparity in our community and to advocate for people-oriented change.” – **Dr. Cody Groat, Project Lead, Western University**

“As the Chairperson of the Board, I was privileged to play a small part in the exciting historical discoveries that took place in the years leading up to the Unveiling Ceremony. With the support of all of the project partners, we have ensured that these local citizens will be remembered. I am very pleased to accept this Ontario Heritage Conservation Award on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Ingersoll Rural Cemetery.” – **Debbie Johnston, Ingersoll Rural Cemetery Board of Directors, Final Chair**

“This award recognizes the dedication of our community and researchers to uncovering and honouring our shared history. The Potter's Field Project is about more than just conservation; it is about dignity and appreciating every individual's place in the story of Ingersoll. We congratulate Dr. Cody Groat, Debbie Johnston, and all the amazing people who worked on this project for getting the recognition they deserve.” – **Brian Petrie, Mayor of Ingersoll**

“This award is a meaningful recognition of the care and collaboration behind the Potter's Field Project, and of the effort to honour the lives and stories that helped shape Ingersoll. I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Cody Groat, Debbie Johnston, and the many partners and volunteers whose commitment has earned this well-deserved distinction.” – **Marcus Ryan, Mayor of Zorra**

Photos



Isaac Bender (Woodstock), John Ecker (Ontario Heritage Trust, Chair), Dr. Cody Groat (Ingersoll Resident, Western University, Project Lead), Debbie Johnston (Ingersoll, Ingersoll Rural Cemetery Board of Directors, Final Chair), Rebecca Small (London), Emily Kirk (London)





John Ecker (Ontario Heritage Trust, Chair), Dr. Cody Groat (Ingersoll Resident, Western University, Project Lead), Honourable Edith Dumont (Lieutenant Governor of Ontario)

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Press Release from Ontario Heritage Trust: [Ontario Heritage Trust and Lieutenant Governor of Ontario recognize 2025 heritage conservation leaders](#)

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