

# The Promised Land Chronicle

January 2009

Issue 1

## Annual General Symposium

The Promised Land Project is delighted to announce plans for its second General Symposium, which will be held in Chatham-Kent from Friday, March 13 to Sunday, March 15, 2009. This year's event features a revised format which, it is hoped, will make the event more engaging to the general public. "In making this year's Symposium more inclusive through special workshops and presentations aimed as much at the general public as our committed partners, we invite opportunities to brainstorm outside our own circle of researchers, while fulfilling one of our mandates for funding: to generate and disseminate as much knowledge to the public as possible." explains Devin Andrews, Community Coordinator for the PLP.

Some of this year's planned activities include: a workshop presented by Professor John Harris (University of North Carolina, Chapple Hill) on adapting history, family stories and letters for scripts and theatrical performances; a seminar presented by Ontario History and Social Science Teachers Association on the challenges in teaching African-Canadian history in schools today and; a presentation by Professor Brian Owens highlighting his collection of rare, original abolitionist writings housed at the University of Windsor's Leddy Library.

"Being the first of what we hope will be many public education conferences and forums," says Andrews, "we want to see full participation from all levels of the community. A successful 2009 Symposium will form a strong foundation for larger events down the road that will bring many visitors to the Municipality. This is Chatham-Kent's chance to shine since the Project will have a healthy turnout of national and international participants."

## Promised Land Project Hires New Chatham-Kent Based Community Coordinator

The Promised Land Project has begun the second year of its 5 year study with the hiring of a new Community Coordinator. Devin Andrews, will fill this new office on a full-time basis, giving the Project a locally based contact to assist researchers and partners with their work. The announcement comes as the Project looks to reenergize public interest and further engage community partnerships in the Project. "I am very excited to be joining the Promised Land Project at this critical time," says Andrews, "There is so much potential to educate the public, build new permanent and tangible resources for the community and foster increased economic spin-offs."

More than just a historical study, the Promised Land contributes to our overall understanding of the evolution of Canadian society through new insights on multiculturalism, civil rights, social justice, human migratory and settlement patterns and economic development. It aims to deliver "real world" benefits such as, new elementary and secondary school resources, public reference materials and economic development through arts, culture and tourism.

Having a Community Coordinator gives the Project its first locally based administrator. Devin Andrews will promote the Project, act as a resource and advocate for the local partners, serve as a link for university partners, and build new relationships at large within Chatham-Kent. "We are interested in exploring joint projects with any relevant interested party." Andrews explains, "Through collaboration we aim to not only change Canada's concept of the Promised Land Communities but also encourage new opportunities throughout Chatham-Kent." Anyone looking to work with the Project or desiring further information can contact Devin at the Park Ave Business Centre, 25 Creek Rd, Office 209, Chatham ON, N7M5J3, [dandrewsplp@gmail.com](mailto:dandrewsplp@gmail.com) and 519-360-1998 x4601.

## Promised Land Purchases Rare Archive

Devin Andrews, Community Coordinator for the Promised Land Project is pleased to announce that the Project has acquired a copy of the Black Abolitionist Papers on microfilm. This comprehensive collection represents the combined efforts of the world wide abolitionist movement during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Ranging from church sermons, correspondence and letters, newspaper articles, pamphlets and political speeches, these writings represent the efforts of the greatest black activists of their day to end the slave trade. Of particular note, multiple entries in the collection were written by individuals – like Mary Ann Shadd Cary – who have deep connections to Chatham-Kent.

"This is a great moment for the Promised Land Project," says Devin Andrews, "As the Project can begin to highlight not just academic achievements but now also achievements with community wide benefits."

The Project does not possess its own microfilm readers, so it has formed a partnership with the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, Chatham-Kent Public Library, where the microfilm will be permanently housed. In exchange for using this facility, the Promised Land will allow the microfilm to be available for members of the public when not in use by the Project's researchers. Once the Project concludes in the fall of 2012, it will give the microfilm to the Public Library's permanent collection so it remains in Chatham-Kent.

"It is just too significant a purchase to keep to ourselves." says Andrews, "Especially if it were to just sit on our shelves unused most of the time. Currently local researchers have to travel to Detroit to access the closest copy available to Chatham-Kent researchers. Now you no longer have to cross an international border, or make the longer trip to Toronto to pursue your work. It's a win-win, and just seemed like the right thing to do."

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## What is Community Based Learning?

“Community-based learning, a form of experiential learning, links the classroom to various communities outside of the university, so that engagement with the community and academic study strengthen one another. Students will be required to reflect critically on their structured activities within public, government, NGO or advocacy groups, and so to connect experience with academic and personal learning.”

**-Maxine Dubuc, Manager Community Based Learning, Huron University College**

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### Happy New Year from the Community Coordinator

As I spend these closing moments of the work day before the start of my Christmas break writing this greeting, I realize how easy it is in this line of work to think of time in the passage of semesters and seasons. Yet on the other side of the hustle and bustle of the holiday season stands a different milestone. A new year is on the horizon. So before the Dickensian atmosphere passes much too fast by me yet again and I find myself back at the daily grind, I wish to reflect just a moment on 2009.

I am thrilled to be part of this project with you. In the months ahead I hope to meet with those of you whom I've yet to see face to face. ***I want to know exactly what it is you think the PLP can be and what we can do for you.*** This is a two-way partnership, but we don't know what you want if you don't tell us. Once we know what each other expects to get out of the arrangement, we can set about accomplishing our goals.

My own first goal comes in March, when I know I will see each of you at the General Symposium. It will be a lively and fascinating discussion not just on the state of the PLP but also on a wide variety of topics relevant to our work. Book your travel arrangements!

This year will also see the launch of the PLP's own website, where we can promote the project and quickly share findings and accomplishments. This is all the more important as a means of quick and easy communication as we prepare to welcome new partners and collaborators both in southern Ontario and around the world.

It is an exhausting agenda for 2009 – indeed this short list of mine barely gets us to spring – but an exciting one! So as we ring out the old, more importantly let's ring in the new! May this be a year of great achievements for the Project.

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The Promised Land has now added a Community Based Learning component to the project. Currently, summer research students are employed by the PLP to conduct research critical to the overall Project which is very different from the Community Based Learning approach. Through Huron University College, students fill placements within partner agencies which are important to our mandate and equally important to his or her academic studies. Then, with a critical eye, report back to faculty on their valuable learning experiences “in the field” for credit, rather than receiving direct remuneration.

The PLP is excited to be integrating this dynamic learning experience for university students. It is a win-win scenario, providing more students than previously possible, with practical experience - which fulfills one of our CURA mandates - while leveraging more human capital for our partner agencies to carry out their work.

Plans are already being drafted for the first CBL students to be placed with the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, on a joint PLP initiative. The first students will be on the job next school year.

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## Announcements and Achievements

- Dr. Era Agbor Richard of the University of Buea (Cameroon) has recently joined the PLP research team. Dr. Richard is a specialist in African Diaspora and the Back to Africa Movement and will be studying the connections between the Dawn and Chatham Settlements with Africa. Welcome aboard Dr. Richard!
- You are reading the first edition of the Promised Land Chronicle. It will be a periodical newsletter produced by the office of the Community Coordinator as a means of keeping all partners informed of developments. But it is not just a record of the accomplishments within this office. As a partner, the responsibility for communication - much like our success - is a collective effort, so don't sit on the sidelines. If you have a story, development or achievement related to the Project contact the Community Coordinator and share it for the next edition of the Chronicle!
- The official website of the Promised Land Project is in its final phase of construction and should be on-line by the end of January. This early version will promote the Project to the media, potential new partners and the general public. In time, it will also serve as an on-line forum for existing partners to communicate individually or in chat sessions and be a repository of shared material and PLP research databases.
- The PLP is looking at ways to assist Christ Church Dresden with their 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. This local landmark church is not only important to the region's Anglican community but was an important player in the abolitionist movement. It was for a time the home church for the Rev. Thomas Hughes and congregated by significant personalities such as William Whipper.