Our Cultural Moment this month celebrates The Township of Wellington North

The Corporation of the Township of Wellington North was formed by the amalgamation of the Township of Arthur, Village of Arthur, the Town of Mount Forest and the Township of West Luther, effective January 1st, 1999.   The Incorporated Municipality was named the Township of Wellington North in April 1999.

The former **Township of Arthur** and former **Village of Arthur** was named after Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, the English general who was responsible for the fall of Napoleon. Provincial Land Surveyor John McDonald surveyed it in 1841-42. The Government laid out the Owen Sound Road (O.S.R.) from the Township of Nichol to Owen Sound. The land along the O.S.R. was surveyed into 50-acre lots. Once the land was surveyed, development was fast. Settlers came from Ireland mostly, but also from Scotland and England and the establishment of saw and gristmills sparked growth in the community. The first post office was established in Kenilworth in 1848 and later that year one was opened in Arthur. Schools were first established in 1849 and in 1851, a post office was opened. The first Catholic Church was a log building built in 1852 near Kenilworth. Hotels were needed for the traveling public providing food, rest and entertainment. By 1871, there were 15 hotels between the Village of Arthur and Mount Forest. The first record of the township is in the minutes of a council meeting held in the courtroom of Arthur on January 21, 1850.

The former **Town of Mount Forest** was originally known as Maitland Hills because it was believed that the Saugeen River was the Maitland River. The name was later changed to Mount Forest in 1853. Francis Kerr surveyed the Village into village lots in 1853. The first public school was built in 1856 and by 1864, the population of Mount Forest had reached 1185 and qualified as a Village. By 1879 Mount Forest had reached Town status. The first issue of the Mount Forest Confederate was printed in 1867 and for the first year, the newspaper was sent to village residents free of charge. The 1871 directory stated that Mount Forest had 10 hotels, 8 churches and 18 stores and later that year, the first train entered Mount Forest, drawn by a wood-burning engine.

The former **Township of West Luther** was originally in the possession of the Mississauga Indians but became part of a tract of land signed over by them to the government in 1818. In 1854, George McPhillips surveyed the land and at the same time he was surveying Melancthon Township. Progress in the Township was very slow as the land was almost completely covered with timber and swamps. In the early 1870s, during a dry summer, fires broke out which burnt off the muck and leveled most of the timber, which improved development. The township developed rapidly once the Toronto; Grey & Bruce Railway was built in 1871. As the Grand River runs through the whole length of East Luther they needed many bridges, unlike West Luther who needed roads badly. For a long time, the people of East Luther were able to elect a majority in Council and money was spent on building bridges that caused problems that eventually led to the separation of the township. In 1879, the West elected a majority and quickly prepared a bill to separate the township. In 1881, the Ontario Legislature passed a bill dividing Luther Township into separate townships, West and East Luther.