



# Heritage Project underway at The Jungle Farm

**For Immediate Release, June 3, 2024:** The Jungle Farm is embarking on a multi-step project that honours the long heritage of its Antler Hill area farm.

The Jungle Farm is celebrating 126 years with the same family continuously farming the land and are committed to exploring the connection of the land to Indigenous history in the area. Leona and Blaine Staples are fifth generation direct descendants of the farm's settlers, and Leona's great-grandfather began a vital tradition that has created a rich resource. He, and all subsequent stewards of The Jungle Farm, left a patch of land completely untouched.

"We know this little forested area is a source for scientific, cultural and historical information, and we can't wait to find out what this unbroken part of our land will reveal," said Leona. "We are researching the history of the area through existing sources, and we are excited to be working alongside Knowledge Keeper, Clare Butterfly, to identify the Indigenous significance of the site. Clare joined us on an initial walk of the forest and he seems just as excited about the potential of exploring this further and sharing what we discover with others."

Plans are to establish an informational Forest Walk when the research is complete and share that information with visitors to The Jungle Farm, which includes multiple school field trips, seniors' tours and individual farm visitors. A series of interpretive plaques will guide visitors through parts of the forest on pathways, which will be levelled and cultivated using only materials found in nature. A small gathering area with benches will be installed to make the area more reachable for seniors and visitors with disabilities, and the intention is to continue to leave the land as unbroken as possible.

"We want to share each step of our discovery and have started a Heritage Project page on our Jungle Farm website to capture information as we go along," said Leona. "But then we thought why stop there! We want to generate an information exchange where members of the community, particularly seniors, share their own heritage stories. We've developed an easy form to capture a short blurb about their early lives, no matter where their homeland is. We wanted to connect it with food, because our entire work is to help people understand, grow, and eat healthy food. We also know that food is a key component in people's heritage stories – helping in the family kitchen, gardening together, sharing festive meals. We can't wait to hear people's stories – and there's an opportunity to share a recipe and a photo – all of which will become part of the Heritage Project webpage and may even become part of our Jungle Farm history cookbook, which is a future project."

The Jungle Farm team is planning a series of engagement sessions with senior groups in the area, and encourage people to get involved by visiting the Heritage Project page on The Jungle Farm website.

"Everything here is full of life and story. You can romanticize Indigenous culture, but these plants have been here forever and you can do the exact same thing with them today," said Clare Butterfly. "You are paying homage to what this land was and still is, and you are coming at this in a respectful way. A designated pathway so that others can learn on the land is great – it's a very cool spot. You're stepping into a different world when you're back here. What a unique situation, to be farming a popular public u-pick farm and have this interpretive trail through a different way of life all in the same spot. You are in a great place here. It's so cool that you want to do this."

To read more about the Jungle Farm Heritage Project, or to submit your own short heritage story, visit the [Heritage Project webpage at this link](#). The project is funded in part by the New Horizons for Seniors Program and is expected to be completed early next spring.