

**ON THIS DAY IN CANADIAN HISTORY:
THE REAL 'WINNIE' THE POOH TURNS 100**

August 24th marks the 100th anniversary of the real black bear that inspired the world's most famous literary bear –

Ryerson University to host new exhibition this fall to celebrate Canada's connection to Winnie-the-Pooh

TORONTO, August 18, 2014 - One hundred years ago this week, on August 24, 1914, the real bear behind the world's most famous bear, Winnie the Pooh, was born. And while she began as a Canadian black bear cub, today Winnie-the-Pooh has over seven million Facebook fans, has been published in over 45 languages and has sold over 20,000,000 copies around the world.

To explore this remarkable true story, Ryerson University will unveil a new exhibition, *Remembering the Real Winnie: The World's Most Famous Bear Turns 100*. The exhibition, hosted by the Ryerson Image Centre and sponsored by Scotiabank, will open to the public on November 6, 2014 and appear until December 7, 2014. Numerous historic items from the Colebourn Family Archive will be on view, including photographs and ephemera such as diaries, letters, newspaper clippings and a full veterinary kit from the period, which will be shared with the public for the very first time.

At the onset of the First World War, a Canadian soldier and veterinarian named Harry Colebourn made a stop at the train station in White River, Ontario where he met a trapper that was selling a bear cub. In a snap decision that would change the course of literary history, the Captain bought the cub for \$20, and named her Winnie, after his hometown of Winnipeg. Winnie traveled overseas with Colebourn's regiment, becoming a proud mascot and beloved friend to the other soldiers. When the time came to go to the front lines in France, Colebourn donated Winnie to the London Zoo in England, where she became the inspiration for author A. A. Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh.

Remembering the Real Winnie: The World's Most Famous Bear Turns 100 is the result of a multi-disciplinary team that has explored the history through multiple perspectives. It focuses on the role of photography within the archive, positioning the collection of images alongside other original artifacts. The exhibition will explore the themes of veterinary practice during World War I; military life at camp and at the front; as well as the genesis and popular legacy of Winnie-the-Pooh. The central feature of the exhibition will be Harry's never before displayed wartime diaries which will provide the narrative through-line; they will be displayed at intervals throughout the exhibition in order to carry the viewer from 1914 when Harry leaves for England to 1919 when he donates Winnie to the London Zoo.

"Winnie-the-Pooh is one of the most significant and beloved characters in children's literature and I think people will be excited to understand that the story of the *real* bear behind the fictional one is equally inspiring," said Lindsay Mattick, Harry Colebourn's great granddaughter and Ryerson alumna.

To complement the exhibition, a multi-faceted website will be launched in the fall of 2014 that will make the entire collection digitally accessible to scholars and the general public. The site will include cutting-edge interactive storytelling features, allowing for the development of international online dialogues. Students, recent alumni and faculty from across the Ryerson campus have come together to co-develop the project.

"We are thrilled to be exploring the cultural significance of that moment in a way that only Ryerson can - through an innovative approach that allows our various departments to collaborate and bring to this collection to life in a way that is thought provoking and meaningful," said Ryerson President Sheldon Levy.

Beyond the exhibition, the history of Harry and Winnie will also be explored in an upcoming children's book (to be released in 2015 by Little Brown in the U.S., Harper Collins in Canada) by Lindsay Mattick. Film rights to the book have been acquired by Hollywood production company RatPac Entertainment.

<http://www.ryerson.ca/ric/exhibitions/TheRealWinnie.html>

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