



Annual Report of the Directors of the Pender Islands Museum Society for 2021

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2021 Board of Directors

Executive

Simone Marler, President
Sandy Auchterlonie, Vice-President
Mary Chamberland, Treasurer
Elizabeth Preston, Secretary

Directors

Doug Bolton
Rob England
Kurt Leavins
Bill Phillips
Regular Attendee: Ilse Phillips, Volunteer Coordinator

Year in Review

Our 5-year Strategic Plan continued to guide museum activities during 2021. This report highlights progress and challenges for each goal area as museum operations adapted to ongoing pandemic constraints.

Strategic Goal #1: Improve and enrich the visitor experience

Visitation: Total attendance for 2021 was **1,049** visitors. While well below the record attendance of 2,510 in 2019, visitation for the year grew by 55% over the low of 675 visitors in 2020. The goal of “enriching the visitor experience” wasn’t easy with open hours delayed until mid-June and limited to afternoons only. A self-guided brochure continued to help visitors engage with displays on their own while safeguarding interactions with volunteer hosts.

Pre-COVID, our guestbook consistently showed visitors hailed from (in order) Pender Island; Vancouver Island-Lower Mainland; rest of BC & Alberta; and Washington-Oregon. As travel eased, we saw these visitors return, minus US guests. Special events—a major source of visitation pre-pandemic—did not occur in 2021.

Special tours: The museum hosted 7 special tours/programs outside of regular open times, including family groups/researchers; Parks Canada seasonal staff; and the Grade 2/3 class from the Pender School. Planned bus groups for April/May had to cancel but have rebooked for Spring 2022.

Temporary displays: Although space is limited, four temporary displays were developed in 2021: 1) 60th anniversary of the Gulf Islands Patchwork history book; 2) porch display of 1960s summer vacation items; 3) a collection celebrating the long tradition of island picnics; and 4) a Driftwood Centre display on the history of island healthcare, marking the 40th anniversary of the clinic. Most artifacts for this display came from a medical collection that had never been unboxed.

Strategic Goal #2: Improve the care and knowledge of the collection

Preserving artifacts and archival materials is core to our mission and proved to be an area we could work on during 2021. Following the 2020 upgrade of our small archives room, we continued to catalogue 350 items, including books, documents and records. For example, our summer student painstakingly catalogued three sets of records related to the development of Magic Lake Estates. A start was also made on cataloguing the medical collection.

The purchase of a new scanner and computer facilitated this effort. Work also proceeded on the organization of the on-line collection of old photos where Steve England and Sandy Auchterlonie’s contribution is much appreciated.

While incremental storage space has been created in the past 4 years, long-term storage must be addressed. This is a key step to make room for new donations of significant local items and long-term renewal of exhibits.

Strategic Goal #3: Strengthen the museum’s sustainability

This goal identifies actions to sustain the museum’s ability to fund ongoing operations and important projects, as well as ensuring an active volunteer group and leaders willing to serve on the board or in special roles.

Making it easier to donate: The museum relies on donations to help cover every day operating costs, but increasingly visitors don’t carry cash. To address this situation, the museum purchased simple equipment for online donations. Getting volunteers comfortable with offering this donation option on a consistent basis will take time.

Funding Sources: With income from casual donations in decline, the museum relied on grants for operations and capital projects. The highlight was the museum's hard work to land a **\$73,659** Heritage BC grant for protective upgrades to our 113-year-old building, plus a new accessibility ramp. Other important funding sources included:

- Federal Young Canada Works funding of \$5,861 which covered 85% of 2021 summer student costs;
- Community support for #19 on the TrueValue Spirit Board yielded \$1,500; and
- Shell Canada's "Fueling Kindness" grant of \$971

The museum applied for a \$5,000 Federal operating grant in October 2021, with monies received in January 2022.

Memberships were a challenge in a year without in-person events (when most members renew). Nevertheless, the museum society had 25 paid memberships representing about 35 individuals; down from some 60 memberships in 2020.

Volunteers: Volunteer Coordinator, Ilse Phillips, continued to connect with our 16 hosts—along with two new volunteers—who contributed some 175 hours to ensuring visitors had safe, enjoyable visits. With several volunteers on pandemic "hiatus", we look forward to bringing them back in 2022 to share their love of island history with our visitors.

The Board had a full slate of eight board members for 2021. Board meetings, executive roles, grant application preparation, group tours, *Pender Post* articles, social media, and summer student supervision—all these added up to board members contributing an estimated 750 hours in 2021.

Strategic Goal #4: Increase the awareness of the museum and what it offers

Even with a "quieter" year, the museum was in front of the community in a variety of ways.

Pender Post: Tales from Pender's past are well-received by readers, attested by 10 museum articles that featured well-researched stories from interviews, memoirs, diaries or archival materials.

Social Media: Thirty-one social media posts engaged the community and sustained weekend visitation, resulting in hundreds of comments and "likes" across Facebook group sites e.g., PI Market, Old School Group; PI Forum; Parks Canada). This work helped reinforce temporary displays, PP articles, events (e.g., Canada Day, May 16 Census Day), open hours, and included daily posts on the 40th anniversary of the Health Centre for the May 17-22 Museum Week.

Information requests: We handled about 40 emails/phone requests for help with research or access to historic photos and archives, many resulting in follow-up emails, phone calls or visits. These were as simple as working with another museum, or as poignant as helping the person looking for clues to her Japanese grandparents' time at Hope Bay in the 1910s. We respond to these requests by contacting old-timers or doing research. We tend to get as much as we give.

Goal #5: Improve the quality of the building and site

Major Infrastructure Project: In February the museum was awarded a grant of \$73,659 for historic building upgrades under a program called the Unique Heritage Infrastructure program. Heritage organizations across BC put in applications that totalled five times the amount of available funds, so our success is remarkable.

Funding included four main projects: protect and repair the 113-year-old windows; replace wooden gutters in the old style; rebuild the entry ramp with longer-lasting materials; as well as some work in the attic. As a donor-funded museum society, these major maintenance projects (and others) were on our radar but beyond our capacity to do altogether or in this way.

As of year-end, the project was 90% complete, with final details expected to resume this spring for completion by late early summer.

Looking Ahead

In early December, Board Members met in person to update the museum's 5-Year plan. Museum displays have been largely unchanged for 16 years and Strategic Plan 2022-2026 prioritized the need for exhibit renewal to occur over several years. This became especially clear during 2021 because of the absence of a meaningful Indigenous presence in our museum displays.

The museum closed out 2021 by applying for two major grants to fund 1) an Exhibition Master Planning & Indigenous Storyline Consultation process; and 2) Additional off-site storage, also needed to facilitate eventual exhibition renewal. We look forward to sharing more about these important efforts with the community during 2022.

Prepared by Chair, Simone Marler, with input from the board of the Pender Islands Museum Society.