

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Rebuilding Visitation and Looking to the Future

Year in Review

The museum's 5-year Strategic Plan—updated twice since 2018—continued to guide museum priorities. This report highlights the progress and challenges for each of the museum's goal areas as we began to recover from the effects of the pandemic during 2022.

Goal #1: Improve and enrich the visitor experience

Visitation: A priority for 2022 was to rebuild visitation after being hard-hit by two pandemic years.

The museum re-opened on weekends at Easter, as was the custom pre-COVID. Our summer student and president worked together during July and August, adding a regular open day on Fridays, as well as welcoming casual visitors on weekdays.

Group visits included 7 bus tours and tailored programs for a Gr 3/4/5 school class and Girl Guide group. A final push on attendance was reviving the museum's 5-day "Christmas at the Museum" event which attracted a record 257 visitors.

The year ended with a total of **2,187 visitors**, an excellent recovery. While attendance was below the 2019 record of 2,510, it was triple the number in 2020 (674) and more than double 2021 attendance of 1,049.

An extra open day on Fridays, bus tours and the popular Christmas special event pushed annual attendance to over 2,000 visitors.



Goal #2: Improve the care of the collection

Caring for artifacts and archival materials is core to our mission, but cataloguing and storing them properly is an ongoing, 5 to 10-year project. While hosting visitors took priority in 2022, our summer student catalogued items donated during the last two years.

Fundamental to looking after the collection is keeping the public and storage areas clean and organized—an ongoing challenge in an old building. Research and firsthand experience attest to the fact that visitors spend more time with displays that are less cluttered.



The archive room (above) got a facelift in 2019, but cataloguing the collection is a 5 to 10-year project. (left) Careful cleaning is a regular job for our summer student.

Goal #3: Strengthen the museum's sustainability

This goal identifies actions to sustain the museum's ability to fund operations and important projects, and ensuring an active volunteer group and leaders willing to serve on the board.

Donations: Income from donations improved in 2022 due to increased attendance, with an average donation of about \$3 per visitor.

New electronic pay options introduced in 2021 helped visitors who don't carry cash with alternatives to donate, but the pros and cons of a set admission fee are under discussion.

"An important way to increase donations is actually asking visitors to donate or reminding them in creative ways."



The museum introduced on-line donation options for the many visitors going cashless.

Grant Funding: Donations and a major bequest from many years ago help fund day-to-day museum operations, but the museum relies on grants for major initiatives. The pandemic years were hard on cultural institutions, and governments responded with improved grant funding.

Over the past two years, the museum has been awarded over \$100,000 in grants, a level not seen since the museum was being built in 2003-05.

Memberships: Without an in-person annual meeting when most members renew, the museum society held steady with 27 individual/family memberships representing about 45 voting members.

Volunteers: A key objective for 2022 was rebuilding the museum's volunteer team. Volunteer Coordinator, Ilse Phillips, managed the team which grew by 7 new recruits, ending 2022 with 26 volunteers. A huge "Thank you!" to you all!

The Board had 7 members in 2022. Board meetings, executive duties, administration, grant applications, group tours, *Pender Post* articles, social media, and summer student supervision—all these added up to board members contributing an estimated 900 volunteer hours in 2022.

2022 Grants

- **\$5,000** federal operating grant
- **\$73,659** from Heritage BC for 2-year building upgrades
- **\$5,998** Young Canada Works funding 75% of summer student costs (5th consecutive year)
- **\$1,300** from #19 on the Tru Value Foods Spirit Board
- **\$11,250** BC Arts Council grant for Exhibition Master Planning and Indigenous Engagement project
- **\$1875** CRD Grant-in-Aid of to offset "Christmas at the Museum" costs
- BC Arts Council grant for off-site storage was unsuccessful, but remains on our wish list



Behind-the-scenes volunteers, Blaine Marler & Mary Chamberland, cleared out the old cases for painting.



Long-time volunteer Elizabeth Preston brought the poignant WWI story of her grandfather, Harry Symes (right), to a wide audience as part of The History Channel's special "Our War".



New volunteers Jean DesChenes & John Pender regaled visitors with stories at Christmas.

UVic Anthropology student Ashlee Gregg was key to rebuilding visitation, welcoming visitors on Fridays and an open door most weekdays.



Visitors responded to social media promoting the presence of Pender musicians at Christmas at the museum.



The museum's well-used porch furniture was beautifully refinished in 2022.

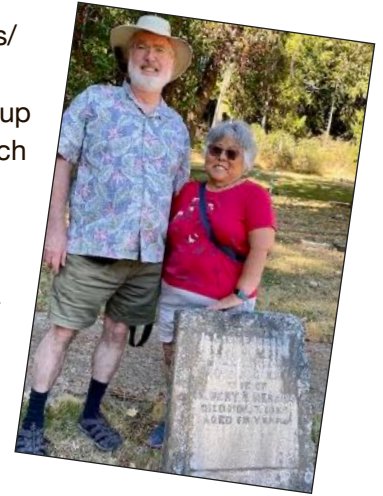


This group of Gr 3/4/5 kids are our future—our summer students, volunteers, and visitors.

Goal #4: Increase the awareness of the museum

The museum connected with the community in various ways throughout 2022. Tales from Pender's past were well-received by *Pender Post* readers who enjoyed articles based on interviews and memoirs. Regular social media posts sustained visitation, highlighting special events (e.g., Canada Day; Christmas; historic walking tours), and special displays).

The museum responded to some 35 emails/ phone requests for research or access to archival materials, often resulting in follow-up emails, phone calls or visits. We get as much as we give from these interactions.



It's satisfying when the museum can help a family discover their roots.

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

In early 2021, the museum was awarded a major grant for historic building upgrades (see p3). Funds remained in 2022 to install new blinds, do minor porch/flashing repairs, refinish porch furniture, and paint/update old display cases, work that ensures the integrity of the museum.

An Exciting Step into the Future

The museum's core displays have remained largely unchanged for 17 years. In August, 14 board and community members met for a 2-day workshop to develop an Exhibition Master Plan. Facilitated by a museum consultant who has worked with us over the years, the workshop resulted in a comprehensive plan for a phased-in revitalization over several years.

One motivator for this project was a lack of a meaningful Indigenous presence in our displays. As part of overall exhibit renewal, a sub-committee began an engagement process with the *W̱SÁNEĆ* People on how they wish their story to be told. A final revitalization plan awaits the outcome of this important work.

Revitalizing museum exhibits is an exciting, long-term project that will require significant capital over 5+ years. We look forward to the support and involvement of the community as we continue to connect past and present in new and engaging ways.

*Submitted on behalf of the Board
of the Pender Islands Museum Society
February 8, 2023*