



## Annual Report of the Directors of the Pender Islands Museum Society for 2023

Issued February 11, 2024

### 2023 Board of Directors

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#### Executive

Simone Marler, President  
VP Vacant  
Mary Chamberland, Treasurer  
Linda Wein, Secretary

#### Directors

Doug Bolton  
Elizabeth Preston  
Kate Waygood  
Regular Attendee: Ilse Phillips, Volunteer Coordinator

### Year in Review

The museum had a busy and successful 2023. Our 5-year Strategic Plan continued to guide museum priorities for the year. This report highlights progress and challenges for each goal area as the museum recovered from the effects of the pandemic.

### Strategic Goal #1: Improve and enrich the visitor experience

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**Visitation:** Volunteer hosts kept the museum open Saturdays and Sundays from Easter to Thanksgiving 2023. Our summer student and president worked together from late June to Labour Day to add open times on holiday Mondays and Fridays, while also welcoming casual visitors on many weekdays. Special programs included 11 bus/group tours, tailored programs for Girl Guides and a summer youth camp, and the popular 5-day “Once Upon a Yuletide” special event from Dec 26-30.

A total of **2,522** visitors came to the museum in 2023, slightly above pre-pandemic attendance of 2,510 in 2019. Attendance included **89** attendees at the museum’s annual meeting presentation in February but did not include the interactions with over 150 attendees who came to the museum booth at the Fall Fair, the CRISP Festival, and the Yuletide Fair.

**New/Changing Displays:** The museum promoted five new/special exhibits in 2023, including: the history of sports; a display on notable Pender women; the addition of a MacDonald family panel; a temporary installation of baptismal gowns; and a Christmas dinner setting featuring the loan of the Spalding family dinnerware from the 1890s. The museum also loaned the Patchwork Quilt and interpretive information for a SGI Quilt Guild gathering in June.

### Exhibition Master Planning process

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The development of an Exhibition Master Plan in 2022 laid the groundwork for a future exhibit renewal process. One of the reasons behind this effort was the absence of a meaningful Indigenous presence in our museum displays. During the year, the museum continued a grant-funded engagement process with the WSÁNEĆ People on how they wish the story of their relationship to these islands to be told. This is a gradual process with many groups calling on the same Elders for their time.

As part of the process, the museum hosted two well-attended Indigenous Elder storytelling events in July and August. In the fall, the museum cooperated with the South Pender Historical Society to combine the museum’s remaining grant funds with theirs to support a project to record Elder stories. A final Exhibition Master Plan awaits the outcome of this work in 2024.

Revitalizing museum exhibits is a long-term project that will require significant capital expenditures over 5-10 years. We look forward to the support of the community as we continue to connect past and present in new and engaging ways.

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

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A highlight for 2023 was the transcription of the 780,000-word **Victor Menzies Diaries**. Funded in part by a BC Historical Federation grant, the project ensures the survival of this 90-year record of settler life from 1885-1977.

Caring for artifacts and archival materials is core to our mission, but properly cataloguing and storing them is an ongoing project. Our summer student added a record **500 items** to the database which is accessible through the museum website.

In consultation with the Canadian Conservation Institute on building issues, their advice is to prioritize fire prevention. Given the complexities of our situation, we continue to focus on **off-site storage** options with our leaseholder, Parks Canada. Long-term, off-site storage is also key to making space for new donations, reducing risks, and exhibit renewal.

### **Strategic Goal #3: Strengthen the museum's sustainability**

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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.

**Funding Sources:** Income from visitor donations was steady in 2023, with donations averaging less than \$5 per visitor. New electronic pay options have helped, but a key factor is asking visitors directly for donations. Guided bus/group tours made a significant difference with a set museum admission of \$10/person, plus the donation of step-on guiding fees from day-long driving tours around the island.

A major bequest from years ago mostly funds day-to-day museum operations, but the museum continues to pursue grants for major initiatives. Highlights for 2023 include:

- Federal Young Canada Works funding of **\$5906** for 75% of 2023 summer student costs (6<sup>th</sup> consecutive year)
- BC Historical Federation award of **\$5,000** to transcribe the Victor Menzies diaries
- CRD Grant-in-Aid of **\$1810** to offset costs for "Once Upon a Yuletide" event Dec 26-30 (received in Jan 2024)
- Community support for #19 on the Tru Value Foods Spirit Board yielded **\$1,050**
- Remaining portion of **\$2,716** of a BC Arts Council grant of \$11,250 for Exhibition Master Planning

**Memberships:** Reinstating the in-person annual meeting in February 2023 facilitated a modest increase in museum society memberships, resulting in 26 individual/family memberships, representing 40 voting members.

**Volunteers:** Volunteer Coordinator Ilse Phillips managed the recruitment, scheduling, and recognition of museum volunteers. We were pleased to end 2023 with 26 volunteers, most of whom act as hosts to keep the museum open during regular hours, plus a few people who work behind the scenes. A huge **"thank you"** to you all.

The Board had 6 of 8 board member positions filled in 2023. Board meetings, executive roles, museum administration, grant applications, bus/group tours, *Pender Post* articles, social media, and summer student supervision—all these added up to an estimated 800-900 hours throughout 2023.

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

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The museum connected with the community and tourists in a variety of ways throughout 2023. Tales from Pender's past were well-received by *Pender Post* readers, attested by articles based on well-researched stories and interviews.

Regular social media, bulletin board posters, and paid ads sustained community awareness of temporary displays, special events, and extended open hours. Roadside signage worked well to remind visitors of the museum's open times.

### **Goal #5: Improve the quality of the building**

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After two years of intensive work in 2021-22 on building upgrades, actions in support of this goal were a lower priority for 2023. This earlier effort was key to maintaining the old Roe House and readying it for future exhibit revitalization.

### **In conclusion**

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The museum's displays of artifacts and archives—brought to life by interested and interesting volunteers—provides visitors with tangible connections to our island heritage and what makes us the community we are today. Thank you.

*On behalf of the Board, this report was prepared by Simone Marler, President, Pender Islands Museum Society*

