



Annual Report of the Directors of the Pender Islands Museum Society for 2025

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2025 Board of Directors

Executive

Simone Marler, President
Kate Waygood, Vice-President
Mary Chamberland, Treasurer
Linda Wein, Secretary

Directors

Doug Bolton
Greg Forsyth
Elizabeth Preston
Dianne Wilson

Year in Review

As 2025 began, plans for a full year of 20th Anniversary Year special events, displays, and programs were well under way. This priority dominated 2025 while other projects emphasized permanent display changes, storage, and long term exhibit renewal.

Visitation

A record **3,561** visitors came to the museum or attended an event in 2025, up 54% over 2024, and 30% above the pre-pandemic record of 2,510 set in 2019. Various factors played into this astounding result: special events; being open 4 full days/week during July and August; and an upswing in tourism, especially from Canadians travelling “at home”. All this was made possible by the unstinting support of volunteer board members and hosts, with support from a talented summer student.

Special Events & Programs

The museum’s 20th anniversary year began with the February 14-23 ***Treasures from the Museum Attic*** special exhibition. The 10-day at the golf club—a unique space—featured never-before-seen artifacts in eight themed displays. Over 300 people, mostly local, responded enthusiastically.

Before opening for the season on the April 18-20 Easter weekend, most of the museum’s **permanent displays** were simplified, grouped by theme, and given new interpretive labels. The space was opened up, providing room to include several of the “Treasures” exhibits. Visitors commented positively on the changes.

In April and May, the museum hosted four **group tours**. This number was less than last year because 2025 was a planned “off year” for the tour company that brings most bus tours to Pender. The museum provided an historic talk for 80 yacht club members at Easter, after which a flotilla of boats came to Roesland for a museum visit.

Building local awareness focused on **guided walks**. Most popular were four historic cemetery walks, with requests that they continue in 2026. The museum also hosted a Gulf Islands National Park Reserve interpreter who presented a recurring native plant program and walk on Fridays.

July 17-20 marked a **special anniversary event** celebrating the museum’s official opening on July 16, 2005. Over 150 people responded to our invitation to bring their own picnic, with the museum providing lemonade, lawn games, heritage craft demos, and music.

Taking the museum into the community continued from Aug 14-Oct 17 with ***Behind the Scenes***, an exhibition at the library featuring pictures and paintings of island places. The pieces were exhibited again at the museum at Christmas after valuable wall space was freed up by removing an old display case.

At year-end, our 5-day ***Once Upon a Pender Christmas*** special event returned, with all the trimmings of the season, and 176 visitors rounded out a memorable anniversary year.

Regular social media posts, bulletin board posters, and paid ads raised **awareness** of temporary displays, special events, and extended open hours. The museum was the subject of a feature article in the fall 2025 edition of *BC Magazine*. Roadside signage worked well to remind visitors of museum hours and events

Care of the collection

After years of looking for much-needed **off-site storage**, the Wein family kindly donated the use of a storage container in April. It was not easy deciding to store large artifacts that had been on display for 20 years, but the board supported this essential step to making new/changing displays possible.

Building maintenance requires ongoing attention, and pest control is a stubborn issue in a museum housed in a 120-year-old building. An infestation of silverfish—which love eating old paper—yielded to pest control during 2025. Fire remains the single biggest risk for the museum, and despite best research efforts, installing a fire suppression system remains a challenge at this time.

Cataloguing the collection saw modest progress in 2025, with our summer Museum Assistant adding South Pender School records into the museum’s database. As well, a newly retired archaeologist began documenting the Menzies Collection of Indigenous artifacts for the Royal BC Museum, and the two historic marker cairns at the Pender Canal were thoroughly cleaned.

Museum Sustainability

The in-person AGM in February coincided with the “Treasures” exhibition and facilitated a major increase in museum society **memberships**. The 79 individual/family memberships represent well over 100 voting members.

Museum finances had a good year in 2025, reflecting donations from the increase in visitation. Visitor **donations** averaged about \$4 per visitor. A major boost came from a single donation of \$9,900. Just over \$19,000 in **grants** offset the costs for the “Treasures” exhibition (CRD), summer student (Young Canada Works), general operations (Victoria Foundation), and a website update project (Legion). A detailed 2025 financial report is attached

Behind the 20th anniversary events, work moved ahead on **future museum plans**. In early 2025, the museum self-funded \$15,000 in consulting fees for an interpretive plan and scale model to visualize exhibition renewal. Two grant applications (\$30,000 each) to move ahead to the next phase proved unsuccessful. The board continues to explore scope, timing, and funding options for the project.

The year ended with **28 volunteers**, most of whom served as hosts during regular museum hours. One volunteer hosted every Friday during July and August, and two new volunteers came forward to transcribe and digitize various memoirs and diaries. And one person offered to help clean the museum on a regular basis! A huge “thank you” to all.

Volunteer Coordinator Ilse Phillips managed the volunteer program with support from Elizabeth Preston. Two outstanding **volunteer recognition** events came together in 2025: a volunteer-only “sneak peek” for the “Treasures” exhibition on February 13, and a wonderful afternoon tea at the museum in mid-November.

The **Board** had a full slate of eight directors in 2025, all returnees from 2024. Board meetings, executive roles, museum administration, grant applications, bus/group tours, *Pender Post* articles, and social media—all added up to over a thousand hours of invaluable support during our 20th Anniversary Year.

Looking ahead

2025 was a stellar year, but I’m not sure we’ll soon beat that record visitor count! New volunteers and directors are often surprised at what it takes keep a small museum going, and more importantly, successful. As president, it’s my job, I think, to look ahead, to organize and promote this gem of a museum, and invest my time thinking about it. The fact that volunteers respond and help, that islanders donate precious things and come back with their guests, and, mostly, that people visit and share their own stories, is a huge privilege. Thank you.

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

