



Annual Report of the Directors of the Pender Islands Museum Society for 2024

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2024 Board of Directors

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Year in Review

As in previous years, the museum's strategic plan, most recently updated in 2022, continued to guide our priorities for 2024. This report highlights the progress and challenges for each of the five strategic goals.

Strategic Goal #1: Improve and enrich the visitor experience

Visitation: A total of **2,311** visitors visited the museum or attended a museum event in 2024, just over 8% less than in 2023. This was primarily due to not having a student-and-supervisor team to welcome drop-in guests outside of regular open times during the summer months.

Summer student supervision is almost a full-time volunteer role for the museum society president, with support from the treasurer. The board supported a break from this responsibility for 2024, and hired host, Kelly Irving, to maintain Friday open hours during July and August. The museum relied on a dedicated team of volunteer hosts to keep the museum open on Saturdays and Sundays from Easter to Thanksgiving, 2024.

Programs & Events: The February presentation of *A Cedar is Life* documentary film attracted 77 attendees. It was part of the museum's ongoing efforts to bring Indigenous heritage to life. In April and May, museum volunteers hosted 157 guests on guided tours, some of which involved multi-day island visits. Working around the daily South Pender road closure meant adapting itineraries to ensure a successful experience. The museum appreciates the private landowners and businesses that supported these visits.

August and September saw the museum offer four historic cemetery walks. The popularity of the first two led to having to schedule two more, bringing the total to 88 participants in all.

The museum provided extensive support to the Farmers' Institute's for its 125th anniversary in advance of the Fall Fair. Volunteers also engaged with 128 fairgoers who enjoyed the museum's interactive "What's It?" game.

Museum renewal: The development of an exhibition master plan has been part of the museum's strategic plan since its first iteration in 2018. Key drivers included the need to update and simplify museum exhibits and to address the absence of a meaningful Indigenous presence. BC Arts Council funding facilitated the development of the settler era portion of the plan in 2022, with the Indigenous engagement part of the plan to follow.

As part of an engagement process with the W̱SÁNEĆ People, the museum gave remaining grant funds to the South Pender Historical Society to support its project to record Elder stories. This work was completed in early 2024 with major themes integrated into the exhibition master plan.

The board held a day-long workshop in November to review and endorse the final plan. In December, the museum engaged Lime Design out of Victoria to develop an interpretive plan and scale-model of future museum exhibits. Revitalizing the museum is a long-term project that will require significant capital over several years.

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

Without a summer student, cataloguing the collection received less attention in 2024. Nevertheless, the museum accepted donations of materials important to island heritage. Each offer from a donor is reviewed, and if the decision is "yes", the item's provenance is recorded for future inclusion in a public database. An in-person visit to see an item often helps build relationships and awareness of the museum's acquisition policy.

The museum continued to search for off-site storage, which is an essential pre-cursor to exhibit renewal and key to reducing risks to the collection.

Research is also integral to operating a small museum. Preparing materials for tours and *Pender Post* articles; responding to inquiries for family or organizational histories; and even modest changes in displays—all rely on ongoing research to ensure accuracy, to uncover hidden stories, or to locate relevant visuals.

Strategic Goal #3: Strengthen the museum’s sustainability

This goal identifies actions to sustain the museum’s ability to fund operations and 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 2024, averaging about \$5 per visitor. Guided tours made a significant difference with a set museum admission of \$10/person, plus the donation of guiding fees from driving/walking tours.

Memberships: The in-person annual meeting in February 2024 facilitated museum society memberships and renewals, resulting in 28 individual/family memberships, representing over 40 voting members.

Volunteers: We were saddened by the passing of two volunteers in 2024. Lisa Christensen was still new to volunteering when she died in early 2024. We missed her enthusiasm. With the passing of Jim MacDonald in November, we lost a host with deep roots in island history and a kind presence with visitors.

We ended 2024 with 24 volunteers, most of whom served as hosts during regular museum hours, with others regularly working behind the scenes. A huge “thank you” to all.

Volunteer Coordinator Ilse Phillips managed the volunteer program. She took a well-deserved break during the second half of 2024 when her duties were shared by two board members. We welcomed Ilse back in early 2025.

The Board had a full slate of eight positions filled in 2024. Board meetings, executive roles, museum administration, grant applications, bus/group tours, *Pender Post* articles, and social media—all these added up to an estimated 800-900 hours of invaluable support during 2024.

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

The museum connected with the wider community in various ways in 2024. Stories of Pender’s past were well-received by *Pender Post* readers, who enjoyed articles based on quality research and in-person interviews.

Regular social media posts, 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 and special events.

Goal #5: Improve the quality of the building

After two years of intensive work in 2021-22 on building upgrades, actions in support of this goal were a lower priority for 2024. Those efforts were key to maintaining the old Roe House for future exhibit revitalization.

Looking ahead

A major focus for 2024 was preparing for the future. Planning for a comprehensive renewal of museum exhibits reached a key milestone when the museum hired a professional designer. As the year ended, work got under way on a first step to turn a written plan into a 3-D model of how the museum space could be transformed.

Much work lies ahead in terms of community and Indigenous engagement and fundraising, but we are buoyed by a vision of a museum that will be relevant to a new generation of residents and visitors for years to come.

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