

VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Executive summary

What does a museum do? What is the purpose of a historical society? Museums and historical societies seek to preserve the histories of their communities by telling the stories of the past for the education of the present and the improvement of the future. The concept of a museum solely being “a building with old stuff” is changing, and the Victoria County Historical Society (the Society) has and is continuing to demonstrate this evolution toward a museum that provides dynamic, quality, educational programming to the public both inside and outside a building.

A museum brings economic value to a community. In 2016, in Ontario alone, tourism receipts brought \$1.2B and visitor spending contributed \$1B in municipal tax revenue. The 2017 Government of Canada Survey of Heritage Institutions reported museums and other heritage institutions in Canada generate over \$2.5B in revenue, attendance to all heritage institutions reached a record 75.3 million in 2015, and the heritage sector employs 36,300 people.

In Ontario, 84% of museums are municipally funded. According to the Ontario Museum Association’s 2014 report, municipal revenues represent over one-half of total revenues for museums with revenues between \$160,000 and \$1.9 million. Municipal revenues represent about one-third of revenues of the smallest museums with budgets under \$140,000. The report notes museums are significant economic drivers. Museums spend \$758 million in communities across the province; they employ 10,765 Ontarians. Museums are intertwined with the tourism industry and contribute to the \$28B cultural GDP.

The OMA report also notes municipal support is key to museum success. This has been demonstrated for the museums in Fenelon Falls and Bobcaygeon.

The Society has for the better part of the past 60 years managed to gather an impressive, sizeable collection of artefacts pertinent to the history of Lindsay and the (former) Ops, Emily and Mariposa townships. The collection includes approximately 10,000 artefacts (inventory is still in progress) valued at \$500,000 for insurance. The Society has also managed to maintain a public museum for most of those years.

A non-profit heritage organization, the Society is a registered charity that works to increase community awareness, appreciation, involvement, and support of the Olde Gaol Museum and Kawartha Lakes’ cultural heritage.

Business Strategy

Introduction

History of Victoria County Historical Society

The quest to preserve history in the Lindsay area began as early as 1900, and within a few years a group of prominent local citizens were seeking out meeting space in the basement of the Lindsay Public Library's newly opened Carnegie building. Early historians included Dr. George Hall in Little Britain and George W. Beall in Lindsay.

In its present form the Society dates back to 1957. Founding members began collecting artefacts that depicted early life in the county and established a museum in 1959 in the abandoned CPR Station on Caroline Street, but this facility was soon deemed to be too small for the Society's use as a museum. In 1962, the museum relocated to the Ernest Thompson Seton property, just west of the Lindsay Square Mall. In addition to the main building with displays of artefacts, the property also included a log cabin and an old barn. The cabin was originally built in 1868 by Robert Muir in Digby Township. It was moved to Lindsay and rebuilt in 1976. The barn and driveshed was built in 1854 by Col. Dennison of Coboconk. In 1997, the museum was put up for sale after deteriorating building conditions made it impossible to keep the environmental conditions required to preserve the artefacts. Until a new building was found, the museum moved into the Ontario Government building at 322 Kent Street West. With the construction of the SuperJail, the Society had the opportunity to move into the municipal jail on Victoria Avenue North. Fundraising efforts began, but it wasn't until 2011 when the Old Gaol Museum opened its doors to the public.

During the 1961 Victoria County centennial year, construction began on a purpose built museum. Located at 435 Kent Street West, the facility formally opened on July 4, 1962. Shortly before the turn of the twenty-first century, the Victoria County Historical Society began looking for a new place to exhibit its collection. Lindsay's old gaol became available in February 2003 with its close as a correctional facility, and in 2011, the new museum opened.

Mission

The Victoria County Historical Society (VCHS) is a non-profit heritage organization that works to increase community awareness, appreciation, involvement, and support of the Olde Gaol Museum and Victoria County's (City of Kawartha Lakes') cultural heritage.

Vision

Through the museum and its community outreach initiatives, the Society features, celebrates and shares educational content to the public based on significant events in Canada's history and how they link to the local community.

Value to Community

The richness of the history and education in quality programs and displays has an emotional impact that leaves visitors with a memorable experience.

The Society is incredibly fortunate to have an Educational Committee that is composed of retired teachers, volunteering their time to deliver programs to local students.

- The programs are designed and delivered by the museum's Education Committee and are popular with area schools. They give children a window into local history through interpretation of and engagement with the museum's many artifacts.
- The programs have been developed by teachers and are directly aligned with the Expectations of the Ontario Curriculum. As such, they are a wonderful complement to what is being taught in area classrooms.
- The programs have been very well received. Students and teachers have responded enthusiastically.
- The programs offer a chance to honour the history of this area and to keep it alive for the young people who are growing up here.

Through the museum and programming, the Society has a reach that is world-wide with tourists from all corners of the world. The Society adds both economic and social value to the community at present and for future generations.

Reviews from TripAdvisor:

- "I didn't expect to be so impacted by my visit to the Olde Gaol Museum but I really was. It truly allows one to connect with the cruelty of our recent past and how hard the face of 'justice' can be to look at. The exhibits lend a reality to the experience of the people of the past. Also the stories that are featured really show the harsh reality of capital punishment and also the female experience as social deviants. Thank you for the opportunity!"
- "I visited the gaol house with my wife and elderly uncle, whilst on a holiday trip from the UK. I have to say my main reason for visiting was to see the Neil Young memorabilia. However, whilst I obviously enjoyed looking at one of my favourite musicians artifacts and information, the rest of the museum was well worth a visit too. The young lady who provided a guide service, was very interesting and informative, and the look around the gaol House was enjoyable. As someone else says, a hidden jewel."

Current Position

The industry of museums is currently in a state of flux. The act of viewing a collection of items is an activity that appeals to a waning sector of the public. These days, more and more visitors are looking to partake in memorable experiences. Museums are having to change what they do, moving away from collecting items to telling stories and creating programming that provides experiences. Collections won't disappear altogether, but artefacts will be carefully curated to preserve the heritage of the community, while also being used to inform and inspire programming.

For the past several years the Society has made adaptations to keep up with this transition period. Programming has included stage productions at the Academy Theatre. Speaking engagements have been held at nursing homes. The Society has produced publications, and hosted dinner events with musical performances. These programming events not only bring the museum out into the community, but also require collaboration with other organizations. While collaboration is inherently a good thing, it does increase the scale of an event, requiring longer preparation periods, larger venues, and bigger budgets.

Because the museum industry is changing, the sector is also altering the funding of museums. Over the past several years, operational funding has been excluded from grant monies, leaving museums to increase community programming, while also scrambling to raise operational costs through fundraising, and leaving much of the organization to be run by volunteers.

Achievements

Aside from the achievement of creating the Olde Gaol Museum, the Society has managed to attract national attention through its exhibition programming.

In 2015 and 2016, the *First World War Comes To Life* exhibit components, along with an interpretive staff of nine individuals, travelled across Canada, bringing local artefacts and stories to audiences in Gander, St. John's, Halifax, Louisbourg, and Montreal. Within Ontario, the project travelled to many destinations, from the shores of the Detroit River to Ottawa. This fully-animated, interactive exhibit shared the lesser known stories of Canadian men and women who served behind the frontlines during WWI. The project enjoyed a total attendance of well over half a million visitors on-site. Awareness about the project reached over one million Canadians through promotional campaigns and online presence.

Another exhibit that garnered national attention was *Their Votes Counted*. In 2017, this exhibit opened in Ottawa with Maryam Monsef, MP, on May 9 with a private reception on Parliament Hill. The exhibition marks the 100th anniversary of women voting for the first time in a Canadian

federal election. *Their Votes Counted* is a fully-bilingual, travelling exhibition curated by the Society in partnership with the Canadian Nurses Association and made possible through the Department of Canadian Heritage. The exhibit has so far travelled locally and to St. Boniface Hospital in Winnipeg.

Collection

The Society has an impressive collection of artefacts mainly from the Kawartha Lakes area representing everyday life from the time the area was settled to the 1940s. The main areas of the collection are costumes and accessories, glass, household furnishings and decorative arts and utility objects of the household or business. As well, the collection includes several one-of-a-kind pieces that highlight the medical profession in the former Victoria County, the agricultural history, children's playthings, First Nations' heritage, the Sir Sam Hughes Great War collection as well as other artefacts in a variety of categories.

A few highlights include:

- The John McNeely McCrea wooden miniatures (on permanent loan from the Royal Ontario Museum)
- The Beall family scrapbooks, including drawings, photographs, and newspaper clippings of historic Lindsay
- W.A. Goodwin's artwork and related archival material
- Records and artefacts from the Edmund Gregory drug store -- the first drug store in Canada
- Bound hard copies of the Lindsay Post newspaper
- Archival material about the Hon. Albert E. Matthews -- Ontario's longest serving Lieutenant Governor
- Artefacts and archival material from the Lindsay Kinsman Band (courtesy of Chuck Golden)
- Uniforms of local women who served as military nurses during WWI
- Various artefacts, models, and archival materials covering the history and development of railways in Lindsay and surrounding area.

A collection of over 10,000 artefacts requires hours and hours of custodianship. In addition to environmental and pest control, the artefacts need ongoing maintenance to retain preservation. Some items require specialized conservation skills. A good example of this is Sir Sam Hughes's uniform. The Canadian Conservation Institute, Department of Canadian Heritage, heard about the uniform and offered to restore it at no charge to the Society, in the name of preserving this piece of heritage. This is merely one item in the collection. There are many more artefacts in need of such attention.

The collection is not capitalized but rather acquisitions are expensed in the year acquired. Contributed items are recorded as contributions and collections acquisitions at their fair value at

the date of contribution if the fair value is reasonably determinable. All preservation costs are expensed in the period incurred.

Proceeds from sale or disposition of items from the collection are internally restricted for reinvesting in the collection or the direct maintenance and preservation of the collection.

Currently, the Society is providing custodianship of the collection through the work of volunteers, but the collection belongs to the public. It has an insured value of \$500,000.

Capital Investment

The Society has made significant improvements to the building of more than \$500,000. The bulk of the funds required for these reparations came from fundraising efforts and grant contributions, including an Ontario Ministry of Culture, “SuperBuild” grant of \$479,000. The work to the building includes the addition of a ramp and stair lift for accessibility, the interior arched doorways, relocation of the stairs, accessible washrooms, reparations to the floors and ceilings, associated electrical work, installation of sprinkler system and fire alarm, roof reparations, and repointing of the exterior walls.

Constructed in 1863, the building is designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act. Historically known as the “County Gaol,” the Lindsay Jail is an important historic and architectural landmark with a long history in Lindsay. In 1861, Provisional Independence was granted to the County of Victoria and Lindsay was to become the County Town. J. Storm, a noted Toronto architect drew the original plans, Mr. Kestevan was the builder. The building was completed in 1863 and is constructed of limestone and white brick in Italianate design, quite common among 19th century jails, distinguished by strong symmetrical, round headed windows. Designation of the exterior portion of the building was recommended because of the historical and architectural significance pursuant to the provisions of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Competitive Advantage

The Victoria County Historical Society was established informally in 1957 and formally incorporated in 1976, making it the oldest historical society in the municipality. The Society established the first museum in the municipality in 1957. When the public hears “museum” or “historical society” they think of this Society and this museum.

One advantage for Society is the location of the Olde Gaol Museum in the former municipal jail. The historic building provides a venue that is different to the other museums in area. The building was constructed in 1863 and retains most of the original elements, including the jail cells, making for a unique venue that incorporates a prominent piece of the municipality's

history. The building has also been an attraction to production companies looking for a Victorian jail setting for filming movies and television programs.

Visitors to the Olde Gaol Museum enjoy learning about the facility itself, along with the history and heritage of Lindsay and the surrounding area. They are parents and grandparents wanting to share memories with children. They are tourists from far and wide. They are researchers and historians, writers and journalists. Visitors also include students from the local schools; teachers incorporate visits to the museum as part of the curriculum.

The Society tends to not think of the other museums in Kawartha Lakes as competitors because the Society's collection does not duplicate or replace the work of the other museums. The Society's collection and interests focus on Lindsay, and the (former) Ops, Emily and Mariposa townships. These former townships do not have museums. Occasionally, a collection or exhibit may overlap with the work of another museum in Kawartha Lakes, and in that case, the Society prefers to work with other museums in partnership and collaboration to the benefit of all.

That said, the Society is at a disadvantage to the museums of Fenelon Falls and Bobcaygeon, as those museums receive municipal support. This advantage allows these museums to focus on providing better experiences for visitors because they do not have to provide for their own operating costs.

Marketing strategy

Marketing currently includes press releases (which are frequently enacted upon by local newspapers for full articles and interviews), printed poster campaigns, social media marketing, and-- perhaps the greatest marketing asset-- word-of-mouth. The Society believes in building relationships with its audience and visitors, making the time to provide each guest with a memorable experience that translates to repeat visits. Unless grant funding includes advertising, there is no budget for marketing in operational costs, making the Society largely dependent on word-of-mouth.

Visitors to the Society's museum tend to fall into a few of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism's categories of tourists: family memory builders, knowledge seekers, up & coming explorers, connected explorers, and solitaires. As a strategy, the Society tends to focus marketing efforts on reaching those specific target audiences.

Operational plan

The museum's day-to-day operations currently includes seasonal hours. After the Victoria Day

weekend in May, the museum opens to visitors for full-time hours until the autumn when the museum closes for viewing except by appointment. During the summer season, student employees, hired under a federal grant, are essential part of operations by providing the visitors with tours, by providing programming, and performing other essential tasks. Through the dormant half of the year, the visits are by appointment only, but staff and volunteers continue to work behind the scenes preparing exhibits, researching, planning programming, applying for grants, collaborating with other organizations, managing the collection, and much more. Current year-round staff includes a researcher, administration assistant, data entry, and exhibit development-- all on a volunteer basis.

The current seasonal operations excludes the museum from most grant sources, and over the next three to five years, the museum needs to move to full-time, year-round hours and hire full-time paid staff in order to qualify to apply for these grants. The museum has also been advised to open for evening hours, but will need to hire staff to be available for these hours.

Collection management is currently being done by volunteer staff at the museum and by board directors-- none of whom are qualified curators. The Society immediately requires a curatorial assessment by a qualified curator with knowledge of local history to "right size" the collection and provide direction for future acquisitions. Then, the museum needs access to a curator on a regular basis to assess donations and advise on storage and restoration needs. While grant funding could be sought for the curatorial assessment, regular access to a curator would need to become part of operational funding.

[See attached SWOT analysis of collection management -- Appendix]

Facility Requirements

The Society requires a space to display artefacts from the collection, environmentally-controlled storage space to preserve the collection, office space (for records management, research, and administration), and space to provide programming including educational programming for school visits.

Currently, the facility is an old jail, a designated heritage building. But this does not always have to be the location of the museum.

In the future, the Society would like to see itself in a cultural centre, a shared space with the Kawartha Art Gallery, and other community partners, where programming would be facilitated alongside display space for some of the collection. The Society would like to see the collection in rotation while being housed in environmentally controlled conditions in a proper archive.

Human resources plan

It takes many people to run a museum. Although in the past the Society was able to employ full-time and part-time staff, currently the museum is run entirely by volunteers and a volunteer board of directors.

Board of Directors

President/Chair

Vice-President

Secretary

Treasurer

Directors - 11 positions total

Staff

Manager (Vacant)

Curator (Vacant)

Conservator (Vacant)

Registrar/Data Entry (Volunteer)

Educator (Volunteer)

Interpreter(s)/Museum Tour Guide(s) (Summer Students)

Exhibit Designer(s) (Volunteer)

Volunteers

Education Committee

Fundraising Committee

Gardener & Groundskeeper

While the Society desperately requires a curator, the biggest gap in the team is a foundation executive director, someone's whose sole job is to establish and grow a community foundation that will support the Society's operational and capital costs. Ideally, this foundation will work for both the Society and the Kawartha Art Gallery in a partnership, and eventually, roll into the community centre's foundations.

Business support organizations

There are many organizations the Society has been working closely with-- Kawartha Art Gallery, Spinners and Weavers, Trillium Lakeland District School Board-- but perhaps the biggest partner and source of support is staff, management and Councillors of the City of Kawartha Lakes.

Financial Information

Capital Assets

The Society's average annual revenues is less than \$500,000 and as a result, the Society is not required to record capital assets on the statement of financial position and amortize the costs over the estimated useful life. Purchased capital assets are recorded at cost. Contributed capital assets are recorded at fair value at the date of contribution. Additions to capital assets, both purchased and contributed, are recorded as capital purchases in the statement of operations in the year of acquisition.

Revenue Recognition

The Society follows the deferral method of accounting for contributions. Restricted contributions are recognized as revenue in the year in which the related expenditures are incurred. Unrestricted contributions are recognized as revenue when received or receivable when the amount to be received can be reasonably estimated and collection is reasonably assured.

Contributed Services

Volunteers contribute a significant number of hours per year to assist the Society in carrying out its activities. Because of the difficulty of determining their fair value, contributed services are not recognized in the financial statements.

Allocated Expenses

The Society's primary operating activities consist of operating the "Olde Gaol Museum" in Lindsay, Ontario. Common general support expenses are allocated by identifying the

appropriate basis of allocating each component of expense, and applies that basis consistently each year.

Administrative salaries and wages are allocated to certain special projects based on the amount of time spent on these special projects during the year.

General museum overhead and other operating expenses are allocated to special projects on a reasonable and consistent basis.

[See Cash Flow Statement attached -- Appendix .]

Financial Forecast

Short Term

Financial considerations for the short term focus primarily on fundraising events to cover operational costs. These events need to assure the public that the museum is not closing and also serve as reminders that the museum is ever-changing; exhibits are not static and programming is constantly under development.

These short-term events should help to build museum membership and increase the number of tours and small donations. The Society intends to make the museum a prominent tourist destination for Lindsay and all of Kawartha Lakes.

The Society has the support of the local media, as well as many local organizations. Without paying for marketing, the Society has experienced good attendance at events and expects to continue to do so in the future.

In the short-term, the Society will be bringing in temporary exhibits. These displays will be available for three weeks at a time with the aim to increase the number of visitors to the museum, and to remind the public that one visit is not enough; the museum is changing.

In the short-term, the Society is building relationships with other organizations. The Society currently partners with the Spinners and Weavers, who share space in the museum; with Lindsay Little Theatre; with I.E. Weldon's students and teachers; with various church groups; and will continue to build these relationships over the next year through a variety of programming. The Society is also partnering with the Kawartha Art Gallery. The Society has also invited Sweet Kitchen Lindsay to collaborate on upcoming events and to make use of the community room. And the Society will continue to look for other opportunities for collaboration.

These short-term solutions also include bridges to longer-term funding strategies, because the Society is cognizant of volunteer-burnout and donor fatigue.

Long Term

Long-term planning focuses on funding operational expenses at a sustainable level through fewer events, so as to decrease the likelihood of volunteer burnout and donor fatigue, but also to build flexible funding to cover operational costs regardless of the museum's location.

When looking long-term, the Society would like to build a healthy base of museum patrons and members. The Society will continue to solicit sponsors for exhibits and seek donor funding on a larger scale.

The Society intends to build a relationship with Curve Lake, who have already provided curatorial assistance with the collection, and to continue to promote truth and education. The Society does not intend to replace the work at Curve Lake but to provide opportunity for farther reach and a wider audience.

The Society intends to explore use of a Community Foundation to build funds that will cover operational costs. This option is new to the community as a whole and to the Society in particular, so time is needed to educate the Board and the public. The Society will also explore options such as a group foundation with other museums and a partnership foundation with the Kawartha Art Gallery.

The Society will continue towards completing the inventory process and curating the collection to a more sustainable size. This will require some time to justify the collection and de-access items, but will ultimately result in lowering costs long-term. The collection belongs to the public, and the Society hopes in the long-term there will be means of proper storage to preserve items of local value.

The Society intends to build operational funding into grant proposals wherever and whenever possible. The changing requirements of grant funding is showing that operational costs won't be included. The Society needs to explore options and look at other funding models.

The Society intends to further its relationship with the Kawartha Art Gallery, while educating the public on what this partnership means, on what a combined art gallery and museum means for the community, while preparing for the eventual community centre. There is a public education component that needs to take place so the community understands the benefits associated with a combined program for the museum and art gallery. While at the same time, the Society believes both organizations need to spend time devising a proper business model and plan for

future collaborations and partnerships. Museums with art galleries disqualify for some grants, so time is required to figure out future funding models and other grant sources, if need be.