



WORKERS
HISTORY MUSEUM
MUSÉE DE L'HISTOIRE
OUVRIÈRE

2020 Annual Report



A Year in Review

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President's Report



Comme vous le savez tous, le conseil d'administration (CA) du Musée de l'histoire ouvrière (MHO) a décidé d'annuler l'assemblée générale annuelle du 16 mars dernier dû à la pandémie. Par un vote tenu par courriel du 1er au 3 avril 2020 les articles 8.2 et 14.6 des statuts du MHO ont été suspendus. Le Conseil d'administration a été maintenu en place pour continuer le travail du MHO.

Le virus refuse toujours de collaborer. Aussi, pour assurer la sécurité des membres, le conseil d'administration a décidé de tenir l'assemblée générale annuelle en ligne en utilisant le système Zoom.

Les pandémies (SRAS, maladie de la vache folle, l'ébola, Covid-19) reviennent maintenant sur une base régulière et deviennent un nouveau mode de vie. Le CA et les membres devront sérieusement considérer amender les statuts du MHO pour pouvoir répondre à cette nouvelle réalité.

Malgré la pandémie, le musée a continué ses activités dans la mesure du possible. Au nom de tous les membres, je remercie les membres du conseil d'administration, les bénévoles, les employé(e)s qui ont relevé les défis posés par la Covid-19 et qui ont continué la mission importante de faire connaître l'histoire des travailleurs et des travailleuses non seulement de la région, mais aussi du Canada.

Comme nous le savons tous, 2020 a été dominé par la pandémie. Mais 2020 a été aussi l'année où le Musée a atteint un nouveau sommet financier. Pour la première fois, le total des revenus du musée a dépassé le \$ 100 000, pour un total de \$101 858. Espérons que nous continuerons sur cette lancée et que la fin de la pandémie n'entraînera pas une baisse des revenus.

Plusieurs projets sont sur le chantier. J'invite les membres à lire soigneusement le Rapport d'activité 2020.

Bravo à tous !

As you know, the Board of Directors of the Workers' History Museum (WHM) decided to cancel the annual general meeting scheduled on March 16 due to Covid-19. An e-mail vote held between April 1 and 3, 2020 approved that articles 8.2 and 14.6 of the By-laws be suspended. The existing Board of Directors was asked to stay on to see to the business of the Museum.

This virus is a tough nut to crack. Accordingly, the Board of Directors decided to hold the annual general meeting via the ZOOM platform to keep all members safe.

Pandemics (SARS, mad cow disease, ebola, Covid-19) are now a common occurrence and signal a new way of life. The BoD and all members may wish to give careful consideration to amending the By-laws of the WHM.

In spite of the pandemic, the Museum carried on with its activities as best it could. On behalf of all members, I would like to thank the Board of Directors, the volunteers, and the employees who have risen to the challenge of the day and have continued to fulfill the very important mission of the Museum to promote the history of local workers and all workers across Canada.

As we all know 2020 was dominated by the pandemic. However, 2020 was also the year where the Museum reached new heights financially. For the first time, the total revenues of the Museum exceeded \$100,000 as total income was \$101,858. Let's hope that the end of the pandemic will not lead to a drop in revenue.

The Museum's many projects are still underway. I invite all members to have a close look at our Activity Report 2020.

Hats off to you!

Wilbray Thiffault



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Board of Directors

President:

Wilbray Thiffault

Vice-president:

Robert Allen

Secretary:

Paul Harrison

Treasurer:

Barb Stewart

Members-at-large:

Penny Bertrand
Christine Goneau
Phillippe Trottier
Robert Hatfield
Ed Cashman
Arthur Carkner

Institutional members:

David Yazbeck
Richard Weintrager

Trustee:

Peter Cormier
Heather Stevens
Linda McLaren



Events Attended

Everyone was caught off guard with the COVID-19 virus that essentially shut down Ottawa, Canada and indeed most of the world in March of 2020. With the restrictions that shut down all in person meetings for most of the year, we found ourselves not having events to attend. All of the PSAC conventions were postponed to 2021 in hopes the virus would be under control by then.

We were able to attend two events in person in January and February. Both were a success.

January

- PSAC National Capital Regional Council meeting

February

- Heritage Day at City Hall

Our own events – Trivia Night, Storytelling evenings and CLiFF were also cancelled. We decided with CLiFF to just publish the announcements from CLiFF in Toronto so that our members and supporters could attend virtually whenever it was convenient for them.

We attended several events virtually by Zoom, including our monthly Board meetings and committee meetings. Our desk at 251 Bank Street was closed for most of the year.

A major change for us was the demise of 25One Community in July, but we were able to continue our lease with the building's owner. However, we decided to not extend our lease after January 31, 2021 and to look for new premises.



Projects

Never Forgotten

Work continued during 2020 to do subtitles since French actors to do the narration were not available for most of the year due to the virus. However, we were able to get the corrections that needed to be done finalized.

We hired a graduate student from the University of Western Ontario in London to prepare a study guide aimed at grade 10 students in Ontario about the On-to-Ottawa trek. As part of this, Juan Bello, the filmmaker, also worked on dividing the documentary into several chapters for use in classes. The final version will be released in 2021. We are going to have some DVDs for those of you who want your own copy.



E.B. Eddy

The exhibition at 251 Bank Street was closed during 2020 and will not be reopened. The exhibit artefacts will be on our website for viewing.





Pride Video

Work was restarted on finalizing our same-sex documentary. One of our summer students took the raw footage and produced a full length video titled What is A Family? The Struggle for Equal Benefits that was launched on YouTube in late November. By the end of 2020 we were close to 900 views on YouTube. We are producing some DVDs for those of you who want your own copy.



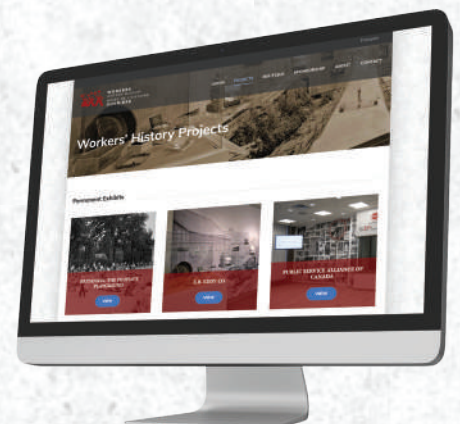
Website Redesign

We decided to do a major redesign of our website in June 2020. Due to problems with the French site and increasing problems with loading items to the site, we hired Marketing Breakthroughs to take this task on.

It turned out to be a bigger problem than expected with a lot of the French text disappearing on the site and having to have it translated. We owe a huge thank you to Nicole Gagnon, our volunteer translator, who spent many hours helping us out.

While we were pursuing this venture, we applied to the City of Ottawa for a grant under the Building Capacity Fund to help us further digitize our exhibits and other products we have created over the last ten years. We were successful and received \$9,600 from the City that we have to match. Work is underway and will be finalized in February 2021.

We hope you have checked out the new site and will continue to do so. We are always looking for input for some of the items on both the website and on our Facebook page. Contact info@workershistorymuseum.ca if you have an idea.





Women at the Bargaining Table. White-Collar Unionization at Carleton University

We extended our rights to use Helen Reddy's song "I Am Woman" in perpetuity with Universal Music. We are producing some DVDs for those who want their own copy.

2021 calendar



For the 2021 calendar we partnered with the North Lanark Regional Museum in Appleton ON to highlight working in the Ottawa Valley. This was a 14-month calendar for which we faced a number of obstacles caused by the appearance of the COVID-19 virus in March 2020. We had not made a final decision about some of the photos we wanted to use from Library and Archives Canada before they shut down in early March until the reproduction section reopened in September. However, we were able to get some of the photos from local museums around the Valley, but not all.

We were delayed in getting the calendar out to our members and supporters until mid-December. Thank you to supporters who have bought copies of the calendar as it was the only fundraising activity for 2020.

Thanks to our sponsors of the calendar: Union of Canadian Transportation Employees (UCTE); Union of National Employees (UNE); Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU); Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE); AGR Insurance Brokers Inc; and a new sponsor Fortune Farms; plus the City of Ottawa.

Bonnie Robichaud Book and Interview

Work continued during 2020 on our book about Bonnie Robichaud's historic fight against sexual harassment. With the help of an editor from Between the Lines, the book is nearing the final stages. We found out that Between the Lines will publish the book in 2022.

We also sat down and interviewed Bonnie for our website. Watch for it to be posted in March 2021. Hear in her own words what she faced at work and how she was successful at the Supreme Court of Canada.





Young Canada Works

The Workers' History Museum was again fortunate to receive funding from Young Canada Works (YCW) for the hiring of two summer students. We were able to get more funding than we had originally requested for which we were very grateful as this allowed us to finalize the video and complete more than we expected with the online exhibit.

Candide Uyanze was a student at the University of Ottawa who has now started her master's degree at Carleton University. Candide worked on producing a video based on the raw footage we had from prior years. In late November, we held a virtual launch of What is Family? The Struggle for Equal Benefits. We feel very lucky to have had Candide work with us on this video.

Jenna Emslie is a student at Carleton University working on her master's degree. She worked on the research and set-up of an online exhibit titled Pandemics, People and Public Health: Stories from the Frontline. The exhibit will address pandemics experienced by people in the Ottawa area over the last 130 years. We had delays with this project due to the shutdown of various archives during 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions. We are planning on launching it in 2021 depending on the continuing restrictions faced by us in Ottawa due to the virus.

Both students worked from home and did much of the work with little supervision. We thank them very much for their dedication to our museum in 2020.

Pat McGrath Scholarship

We did not have any entries for the scholarship in 2020 so it was not awarded. We believe this occurred due to the issues with the website redesign.

Other News

In late August, we were notified that 25One Community was folding but our lease agreement would continue without changes with the owner of the building at 251 Bank Street. We have continued with them for now as our lease is good until January 31, 2021. However, we have decided not to renew our lease at 251 Bank Street and we are currently looking for a new home.



Image Collection

The Museum's imagery collection has continued to grow steadily. The most notable recent addition are several hundred images donated by Ken Clavette of labour events in the 1980s, primarily in Ottawa and region. Digital scans of the hardcopy prints or, where available, negatives, were made and added to the database. In addition, in a series of Zoom sessions, Ken and several other activists from the period - Art Carkner, Bob Allen, and Penny Bertrand - identified when the events happened, what inspired them, and many of the individuals depicted, including a surprising number of prominent labour and government officials. The participants also shared their recollections of the events and personalities. Those sessions will be kept as oral histories and the details they recalled have been added to the data entries for the respective images.

A feature of the rejuvenated website is the Image of the Month, prepared by our image archivist. Since, by definition, these must be accompanied by interesting captions, the result has been considerable background research and occasional revelations of little-known aspects of the working and human history of the region or other obscure byways. This has led to the discovery of a remarkable online resource - newspapers.com - and some of the information will lead in due course to expanded website features.

Looking forward to 2021, a 1930s encyclopedia obtained for the Museum will be mined for its large selection of images and detailed explanatory text of industrial and workplace topics. It is a Canadian edition, which makes the extracts all the more pertinent.

It is worth noting that the image archivist is also the Museum archivist to the extent that an effort is made to have a photographer at all events where the Museum is involved or organizes, and quality images are obtained of all non-virtual exhibits. The archivist scans all hardcopy Museum announcements that come to hand, and screen-captures those distributed electronically. However, this informal practice necessarily has gaps, and efforts will be initiated in the coming year to assure that all such documentation is routinely submitted for archiving.

Museum members and supporters are once again reminded that the Museum welcomes all donations of artefacts, images and documents related to worker and organized labour history. Even if you are unwilling to surrender a hardcopy photograph of grand-dad at work or behind the plow, or his union card, the museum offers pickup, professional care and return of anything loaned for digitizing. To arrange this, contact images@workershistorymuseum.ca.

2021 News

We are pleased to have a co-op student from Algonquin College museum studies program to work on our collection for 4 months. Sam Derby-Wiman is in his final year at Algonquin. He should be able to finalize the cataloguing of our artefacts that was started several years ago. Again because of COVID-19, he will be working on this predominantly on his own.

Due to continuing COVID-19 restraints, the PSAC events that we would normally be attending are going to be held virtually. We are trying to think of ways for us to get involved with them.

Here's to another great year for the Workers' History Museum!