



WORKERS
HISTORY MUSEUM
MUSÉE DE L'HISTOIRE
OUVRIÈRE

2021

Annual

Report



A Year in Review

Table of Contents

President's Report	3
Board of Directors	4
Events Attended	5
Projects	6
Summer Students 2021	9
Other News	10
Image Collection	11
2022 Plans	12



President's Report



Tous les membres du Musée le savent, malheureusement trop bien, nous sommes en pandémie depuis mars 2020. Il y a eu des conséquences positives et négatives sur le fonctionnement du musée. Comme vous le savez tous, le Musée de l'histoire ouvrière est un musée virtuel. Donc n'ayant pas de lieu physique, nous avons pu poursuivre nos activités sans interruption car comme vous le savez des musées ont dû interrompre leurs activités pour se conformer aux mesures décrétés par les gouvernement fédéral et provincial. Nous avons pu grâce à l'utilisation de la technologie moderne, comme zoom, fonctionner quasi normalement. Petite note, je suis le seul président à avoir présidé l'assemblée générale annuelle par zoom, et ce à deux reprises.

Cependant la pandémie nous a heurté sur le plan financier. Une de nos sources de financement sont les congrès et les réunions des organisations ouvrières. Nous pouvons y avoir un kiosque qui nous permet de ramasser des fonds par la vente de nos produits. Or les congrès et réunions se tenant par zoom, le musée est donc privé de cette source de financement. Et le problème pourrait perdurer après la pandémie, car certaines organisations considèrent la possibilité de continuer

leurs réunions sur zoom.

Un regard sur l'agenda proposé pour les réunions du conseil d'administration nous donne une bonne idée des activités que le Musée a poursuivi durant l'année 2021. On y retrouve les projets suivants : On-to-Ottawa/Never Forgotten; Bonnie Robichaud Book; Advertising; Website; 100 Years of Pandemics; Jewish Street Peddlers Graphic Novel; and 2022, 2023 Calendars. Les comités sont toujours au travail.

Et ceci sans compter sur les autres activités du Musée comme les campagnes de financement, les demandes de subvention, l'organisation de l'assemblée générale. Cependant le virus a eu pour conséquence de réduire à pratiquement zéro, la tâche de représentation du président.

Le virus n'a pas été un obstacle à la générosité des membres et des amis du Musée. Le défi du président a rapporté plus de 2 500 \$. Merci à tous pour votre générosité.

Le Musée se doit de poursuivre sa mission de faire connaître l'histoire des travailleurs et des syndicats. C'est une mission essentielle. Après tout, si on ne connaît pas notre histoire, on est condamné à la répéter.

As all members of WHM are fully aware, we've been in a pandemic since March 2020 which has had both a positive and negative impact on our operations. As you all know, the Workers' History Museum is virtual and so in the absence of a brick-and-mortar address, we were able to go about our work without interruption whereas many museums had to curtail their activities to comply with the measures decreed by federal and provincial governments. Thanks to modern technology such as Zoom, we have been almost fully operational. As an aside, I am the only president to have chaired the annual general meeting via Zoom, and this on two occasions.

The WHM has however taken a financial hit due to the pandemic. Amongst other sources of funding, we can usually count on conventions and meetings of labour organizations where we set up a booth to raise funds through the sale of our products. However, since conventions and meetings are now held on Zoom, the WHM is deprived of this source of funding. Moreover, this problem could outlast the pandemic as some organizations consider whether they should continue to meet on Zoom.

A quick look at the agenda of Board of Directors' meetings speaks volumes about the activities the WHM has pursued in 2021, namely the following projects: On-to-Ottawa/Never Forgotten; Bonnie Robichaud Book; Advertising; Website; 100 Years of Pandemics; Jewish Street Peddlers Graphic Novel; and the 2022 and 2023 Calendars. Our committees are still at work.

And let us not forget many other ongoing activities such as fundraising, grant applications, and organizing the AGM. Most unfortunately, the pandemic has resulted in the president being unable to do much in terms of the usual advocacy work.

Wilbray Thiffault



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
Megan McLeod
Richie Allen
Arthur Carkner

Institutional members:

David Yazbeck
Richard Weintrager

Trustee:

Robert Hatfield
Bonnie Robichaud
Linda McLaren



Events Attended

We were caught off guard with the COVID-19 virus that essentially shut down Ottawa, Canada and indeed most of the world in March of 2020.

We hoped that things would return to normal in 2021 but this was not the case 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 originally scheduled for 2020 were postponed to 2021 in hopes the virus would be under control by then. This was not the case and all events were held virtually which meant we were unable to attend and have kiosks at the conventions.

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 lease at 251 Bank Street was up on January 31, 2021 and we decided with the situation of the pandemic not to renew. We are looking for a new home but not in a hurry to find a physical space as we are still holding meetings virtually. This appears to be what will happen in 2022 as well.



Projects

Never Forgotten

Work continued during 2021 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.

In 2020 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 2022. We are going to have some DVDs for those of you who want your own copy.



Website Redesign

Our redesign of the website continued in 2021 as 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.

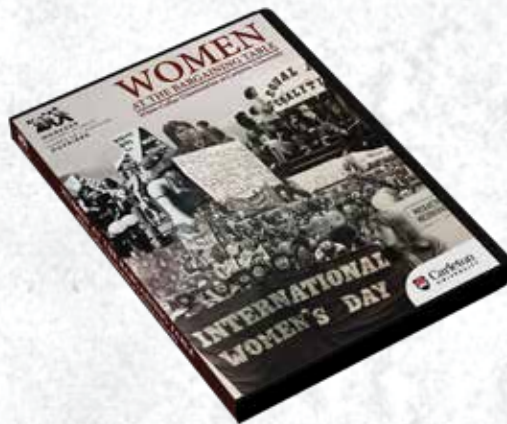
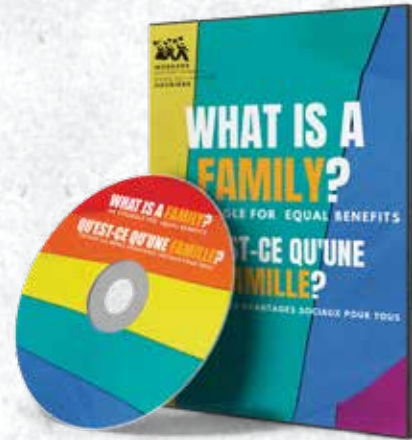
We hope you have checked out the new site and will continue to do so. We are always looking for input for some of the items on both the website and on our Facebook page. Contact info@workershistorymuseum.ca if you have an idea.





What is A Family? The Struggle for Equal Benefits

By the end of 2021 we were over 1200 views on YouTube. We have produced some DVDs for those of you who want your own copy. The cost is \$20. Contact the treasurer@workershistorymuseum.ca for more details.



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 have produced some DVDs for those who want their own copy. Contact the treasurer@workershistorymuseum.ca for more details.

Bonnie Robichaud Book and Interview

Work continued during 2021 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 to be released March 8, 2022.

We sat down and interviewed Bonnie for our website. It was 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.





2022 calendar



For the 2022 calendar we decided the theme would be **Saluting Essential Workers**. We focused on workers that were not receiving national attention. This included grocery store workers, bank tellers, hydro workers, dentists, interpreters on Parliament Hill, firefighters, CRA Taxpayer Services agents, teachers, lab workers from Natural Resources in Sault Ste. Marie who made 1,500 litres of hand sanitizer that they donated to groups around the Sault and maple syrup producers. We also want to thank Dr. David Dean from Carleton University for providing copies of stamps from around the world that celebrated workers during COVID-19.

Thanks to our sponsors of the calendar: Union of Canadian Transportation Employees (UCTE); Union of National Employees (UNE); Union of Taxation Employees (UTE); National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE);

Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU); Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW); AGR Insurance Brokers Inc.; Fortune Farms; plus the City of Ottawa.

Calendar sales have been good and we say thank you to everyone for supporting this project as it was our main fundraising activity for 2021.



Summer Students

The Workers' History Museum was again fortunate to receive funding from Young Canada Works (YCW) to hire a summer student Meranda Galupe-Paton.



Meranda is currently pursuing her Master's studies at Carleton University in Public History with a specialization in Digital Humanities. With a passion for Ottawa history and creative storytelling, she worked on researching and writing our next graphic novel in the Capital History Comics series. This installment focuses on the early years of the Jewish community in Ottawa, highlighting the work of peddlers across the city and beyond. The comic is currently with Chapter 1 Studio for the design and will be released in 2022.

We also wanted to hire a student to do translation for the summer in order to give Nicole Gagnon a much needed rest after doing all the translation for the website in 2020 and in early 2021. The student who was most qualified and who we hired was Louise Meloche. She is an older student studying translation at the University of Ottawa. Unfortunately, she was unable to qualify for YCW funding but we hired her anyway. She was an exceptional find and worked on reviewing the French website to correct

any errors that occurred during the original postings, translating tributes to people we are remembering, translations for the calendar, translations of items for the blog and general announcements. No picture available.

Both of these students were essential to us getting our projects completed or ready for design work. They worked from home and did much of the work with little supervision. We thank them very much for their dedication to our museum in 2021.

We were pleased to have a co-op student from Algonquin College museum studies program to work on our collection for 4 months. Sam Derby-Wiman was in his final year at Algonquin. He was able to get a lot of the outstanding items catalogued of our artefacts that was started several years ago. Again because of COVID-19, he worked on this predominantly on his own.



In December, we hired Jenna Emslie who just graduated from Carleton University with 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* in 2020. The exhibit will address pandemics experienced by people in the Ottawa area over the last 130 years. Delays with this project due to the shutdown of various archives during 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions have resulted in it not being finalized in 2021. We are planning on launching the final exhibit in February 2022.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we thank all four students/graduates for their exceptional work and for helping us create professional work during 2021.



Pat Mcgrath Scholarship

We did not have any entries for the scholarship in 2021 so it was not awarded.

Other News



We started an informal partnership with Fortune Farms to sell their maple syrup as a fundraising event for the Museum. We sold 31 litres in the fall and will do a major announcement in February for the 2022 maple syrup season. We hope that people will continue to support this venture.

We held our annual President's Challenge in November and December with the President matching the first \$500 in donations. This year thanks to everyone being generous, we raised over \$2,500. This money will help cover costs for several projects.

Local artist, c.j. fleury, a well-known figure in the Ottawa area is donating a chair entitled *Belief* to the Museum once we have a place to display it. The chair was created as a homage to the tradesmen at the Municipal Workshops in Ottawa. We are very pleased to accept this artwork.





Image Collection

The Museum's photographic operations enjoyed a sudden upswing in the summer of 2021 when it became apparent that more images were needed of Workers' Coping with the Pandemic, the theme of the 2022 calendar, whose launch was to be in September. In quick succession, calendar project head Barb Stewart reached out to her personal contacts and arranged for photo shoots at her bank, neighbourhood grocers, and a fire station. Photographer and image archivist Paul Harrison appeared at the appointed times to record the workers' performing in personal safety gear and conducting the protocols imposed by the pandemic, and topped off the coverage with a visit to his dentist, where staff and clients posed during an actual dental procedure. With the necessary release permissions by the facility operators and persons depicted, the images obtained not only enhanced the calendar, but have become a fine, unique addition to the Museum's collection.

Paul also commenced scanning and absorbing a 1930s encyclopedia obtained for the Museum. The images and accompanying text, all of which are copyright expired, contain an astonishingly detailed record of work performed in dozens of industries as varied as tea production, gaslight plant design and operation, ice-making and transport, household utensil manufacture, and much, much else. This project will continue throughout 2022.

Historical images are sometimes in themselves an inspiration for research and exhibition. An example is one in the collection of the Rideau Canal locks next to the Chateau in Ottawa. Some of you may remember it among the website's Images of the Month series. A close look at the vessels downbound revealed a tug named the "Alva". Curious about what of its history might remain, Paul pursued the matter, and the result was a website feature dealing the surprisingly eventful history of the tug itself, the family that owned it, and the transport system it served. If interested, check Learn / What's Happening on the website.



Looking forward to 2022, the Museum hopes to hire two summer students whose task will be to complete the digital record of the artefact collection. A large part of this will involve photographing from multiple angles all of the artefacts, under properly controlled lighting with catalogue numbers and a colour swatch included. While not technically difficult, preparing a facility and lighting, and then swapping the artefacts through at a reasonable pace, will be a challenge, to be followed by a laborious post-processing exercise before the images can be absorbed into the digital collection catalogue. Still, once completed, the Museum will be in a better position to loan out or consider exhibits involving our holdings.

Museum members and supporters are once again reminded that the Museum welcomes all donations of artefacts, images and documents related to workers 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.



2022 Plans

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

January through December: Partnering with Fortune Farms to sell their maple syrup. The cost is \$25 a litre for either amber or dark.

January through August: Working on the 2023 calendar highlighting tradespeople

February – March: Launch of Pandemic online exhibit
Launch of Bonnie Robichaud's book
WHM Annual General Meeting on March 16th

April: Launch of the Jewish Street Peddler's comic book

Summer months: Hiring 2 summer students to work on the collection

We do hope to be able to have some in person events later in 2022.

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