

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
of the Niagara Historical Society
Thursday, October 15, 2015 at 6 pm

Dennis Kam welcomed members to the 120th Annual General Meeting of the Niagara Historical Society. As outlined in the circulated agenda, the following motions were agreed:

- A quorum was present with 36 members. Seven Board Members were present.
- Request to approve the Minutes of the 119th Annual General Meeting held Thursday, October 16, 2014 circulated earlier, moved by Jos Verweij and seconded by Neil Rumble. Approved.

Constitutional & By-Law Changes

Changes to the Constitution were made to reflect changes that are coming with the new Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act (ONCA) – see attached. There was discussion about the difference between Annual Meeting and a General Meeting as it was unclear (the term AGM will no longer be used).

A motion to approve the changes to the Constitution was moved by Julian Rance and seconded by Diane Hemmings. Approved.

By-Law changes that were approved by the Board at general meetings were provided to the members.

Finance and Administration Report

The Chair introduced John Sayers, Society Treasurer to present the financial report.

The audited financial statements of the combined Niagara Historical Society and Museum for 2014 showed a loss of \$ 32,151 for the year, compared to a budgeted loss of \$45,000. This includes an anticipated cost of some \$25,000 following a 2013 decision to employ Lord Cultural Resources, a specialist in global museum consulting, to study and report on future expansion and other needs. Accordingly, we are considerably under our budgeted loss – a good result!

With net current assets of \$ 74,108 at December 31st 2014 the Society and Museum remained on a viable financial footing. As with all charitable organizations, our financing is a combination of grants, donations and memberships. The grants include amounts from the Town, and from various provincial and federal programs which may be offered from time to time. As is intimated in the Report from our Auditors, income is not readily predictable.

Each year the Museum staff prepare a budget of all known or highly probable income and expenditures for the year. We are looking for more support from the Town, and are disappointed that, as the remaining entity in the Town that caters to both tourism and to the children of our area, our significant value is not always recognized. The 2016 details for the Society and the Museum, with comparisons to 2014 and 2015 are provided in the PowerPoint presentation made during the Annual General Meeting (see attached).

Each year Grants are sought, and if successful, received and expensed within the year of receipt. These Grants can be given to cover the costs of special exhibits, lectures, building improvements and repairs,

or acquisitions not fundable from normal resources. Most Grants have to be supported by proof of expenditure and therefore have minimal net effect on the bottom line.

The donation made to launch a Capital Fund to pay for future enhancements, including those coming from the Lord Study, is invested and available. The Board approved acceptance of the expansion plans included in the Lord Study and a full fundraising campaign will be required to cover the cost. Donations, Government grants, bequests and corporate support will all have to be sought, and actual improvements only commenced when substantially funded. Your Treasurer has recommended that a separate Budget for the expansion program be established when the wheels for the actual fundraising are put in motion.

With these initiatives Niagara-on-the-Lake has an opportunity to make the Museum an even greater attraction for both tourist and local residents by using modern techniques of display within a historic building for all to enjoy.

Appointment of Auditors:

A motion was made by John Sayers to appoint Bridgman and Durksen, Chartered Accountants, as the 2015 Auditors. Seconded by Suzanne Hebert. Approved.

Town Report

Jamie King, Town Representative, was unable to attend the meeting. Director Doug Phibbs updated the members on the new initiative being undertaken by the Town Liaison Committee. He reported that he and Faith Bell had been meeting with Councillors one-on-one to speak with them about the Museum's place within the community and the inadequate support we are receiving in comparison to other museums in the region. He stressed that one of the main goals of the Board is to move us out of the discretionary funding and into the Town's general budget. As a board we hope to gain more sustainable funding from the Town if we want to move forward with the future plans for the Museum.

Membership & Development Report

The following report was submitted by Elizabeth Surtees, committee Chair and circulated prior to the start of the meeting.

There are currently 402 members of the Niagara Historical Society, of whom 22 are part of the Phoenix Circle. This group is important to the sustainability of our organization since they directly contribute to our operational costs through their generous donation of \$500 per person.

The Phoenix Circle enjoyed three special presentations this year. These were: a private viewing of John & Judith Sayers' extensive catalogued collection of ephemera; a visit to the Field House on Niagara Parkway to learn about the house's construction and interesting history; and a visit to Morningstar Mill. Regular membership fees remain at \$30 per individual and \$50 per family. These figures include digital delivery of all notices and newsletters, gift shop discounts and special members-only events, as well as free admission to the Museum and to our very popular monthly lectures from March to September. However, starting in January 2016, in order to curb the increasing cost of postage, an additional \$5 per household will be charged for mail delivery (hard copy) of our Newsletter should it be requested

(members will have to choose this option on their membership form). It should be further noted that hard copies of the Newsletter will always be available at the Museum for personal pick-up for those who prefer a hard copy but do not want to pay the additional postage fee. Members who choose to receive their newsletter by email will see no increase in fees.

Current activities of interest to all members include a full-day bus trip (on October 21) to view the Magna Carta exhibit at Fort York. Also in advanced planning stages is an 8-day tour next April of The Battlefields (WWI) in northern France. Anyone wishing to join this group should enquire immediately for last minute sign-up possibilities.

Also current is the seasonal draw for 2 wine hampers which will be drawn at the Phoenix Dinner, to be held at the Museum on Saturday, December 5th. Tickets are now on sale for this elegant evening which will be held here in Memorial Hall and promises a sophisticated start to the Holiday Season.

Physical Plant & Planning Report

The following report was submitted by Faith Bell, committee Chair and circulated prior to the start of the meeting.

There were no major capital projects conducted at the Museum during the current year. A complete walkabout conducted by the maintenance committee was carried out to look over the outside of the physical building and create an up to date list of maintenance issues to be addressed. We will be working through it through 2016.

Our lighting upgrade to LED has been completed throughout the Museum and we are happy to see the monthly hydro costs decreasing as well as the improved display lighting.

Potential Projects for 2016:

- The restoration of the front Portico on Memorial Hall - funding for which will be handled through grants.
- Fascia & Soffits – rot damage and painting
- Fence repairs – rot damage
- Window repairs on an “as needed” schedule

We want to thank all those persons who give their time and efforts to our building and grounds maintenance. Through their dedicated service and hard work, we reap the benefits of a historical site maintained beautifully for the use of all.

The Lord Report – Facilities and Feasibility Study

The Sub-committee received the final report from Lord Cultural Resources in December, 2014. It was presented to the board on January 29th, 2015 and presented to the general membership on April 10th, 2015. On May 28th, 2015 the board put forward and approved the following five motions:

Motion #1

“To approve in principal the recommended development strategy set out in Chapter 11, Pages 89 and following of the Lord Report to the Niagara Historical Society and Museum Board. Entitled Space and Facility Needs and

Development Strategy, as submitted in November 2014, and to authorize the development and implementation of project management and fundraising strategies and plans, in support of this development strategy.”

Motion #2

“To authorize the creation of a Fundraising Committee to support the approved Development Strategy, said committee to include at least two (2) Board members and up to five (5) other members of the Society.”

Motion #3

“To authorize the creation of a Project Management, Planning and Logistics Committee, charged with the implementation of the approved Development Strategy, and comprised of at least two (2) Board members and up to five (5) other members of the Society.”

Motion #4

“To direct the two aforementioned committees to report to the Board in collaboration with the Vice President, Physical Plant and Planning.”

Motion #5

“To authorize entering into a contract with ASI, Archaeological and Cultural Heritage Services, to undertake the mandatory archaeological study (Steps 1 and 2) on Museum Lands behind Memorial Hall, in the amount \$2,500 plus HST.”

The mandatory archaeological study (Steps 1 and 2) has been completed during the summer. A Fundraising Committee has been formed and we are continuing to develop a strategy and a campaign for fundraising.

We are in the process of updating and developing a new Strategic Plan that will take us to the Year 2020.

Publications and Communications Report

The following report was submitted by Denise Ascenzo, committee Chair and circulated prior to the start of the meeting.

The Society continued our quarterly newsletter as a communication piece to our membership. We are getting more and more members on our email list so that they can receive this digitally in order to reduce the cost of sending it out. We also continued to email out the weekly cultural newsletter to members and other contacts. This newsletter goes to hundreds of residents and organizations including the Shaw Festival, major hotels and B&Bs. It is a great promotional piece for the cultural institutions in town and increases our presence in the community by producing it.

It has been decided by the Publications Committee to delay the release of the Community Centre Mural book until after this year’s AGM. There were several reasons for this: we still have not received a full release, in writing, from the Town. We have also had to play around with the size of the book and reformat everything in order to keep the printing cost lower. At the size we had originally hoped, we would have had to print 1000 copies and incur an expense of \$10,000 in order to keep it in a good range for retail (\$20). The final publication will be smaller in order to price it in a sellable range.

In April we launched a new book by Dr. Richard Merritt, TRAINING FOR ARMAGEDDON: Niagara Camp in the Great War, 1914-1919. Richard Merritt donated the money to pay for the publishing and printing of the book so the 500 copies we received are pure profit for the Museum when sold. We had a very

successful launch and the book has been selling very well with members and locals, so it has been a great fundraiser for the Society.

We have reached out to libraries all over Ontario to try and get the book in as many communities as possible and will be approaching other historical societies in the province to promote it. We received \$600 from the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission grant to go towards marketing bi-nationally. We are going to use this to advertise in Buffalo, drawing attention to the Polish Army chapter.

Managing Director's Report

Amy Klassen presented the following Managing Director's report:

COLLECTIONS

Over the past year, 35 separate donors have contributed to the collection. These donations represent over 420 separate items. Highlights to the collection from 2014/15 include:

- Rocking Chair from Queen's Royal Hotel
- Polish Army Belt Buckle, WW1
- Items belonging to the Ure Family
- 12 Watercolour and 2 Oil Betty Lane Paintings
- Model ships of the Chippewa and Cayuga
- Powder Horn, originally belonged to Secord Family
- 2 original cartoons of Lord Mayor Greaves and Jamboree, 1955

Since the last AGM the Museum has deaccessioned over 77 items from the collection that are unrelated to NOTL or are duplicates.

The Museum is continuously working on the digitization of our collection through photographing objects and scanning archives. As of today we have 3,212 items online with more work from our summer students to be added shortly.

Tami was asked by Doug Phibbs about the status of the donation of the St. Mark's collection. She reported that we are going through the process to receive their archival collection, but that their silver communion sets will not be donated. At this time the Church does not want to permanently donate them since they are used during special services. The Museum does not want to take them as a "long-term loan" as it is not good museum practice to do so.

We are always looking for new and exciting pieces of Niagara-on-the-Lake history, especially for Queenston, St. Davids, Virgil, McNab and Homer where we are currently lacking. We are also looking for items relating to the First World War and the Polish Army at Niagara Camp.

Collection Review

The Museum is planning to complete a collections review before 2018. This is meant to assist in our effort to ensure adequate space for our collection. Many museums that started very early have collections that don't necessarily fit their collecting mandate. We are looking to deaccession artefacts or archives that have no connection with NOTL. However, there are items within the collection that arrived very early (ie. during Janet Carnochan's time) that we do not want to deaccession because of their connection to our institutional history. The tasks of this review include:

- conduct a review process location by location in the storage rooms.
- assess the use, value, significance and preservation capabilities of items in our collection using a simple chart system to “grade” the artefacts
- review the results and present the findings to the Collections Committee for review and recommendation. (possibly deaccession)
- find an appropriate home for anything that is planned for deaccession (institutions, educational collection, or sale at auction)

This review of the entire collection, item by item, began in January 2015. At this time, Storage Room B and Memorial Attic collection Review has been completed, as well as approximately 55 textile boxes and 72 shelves in Storage Room A. Work is ongoing in Storage Room A. Work is ongoing in the Vault with approximately 15 boxes completed.

Research

Since January, the Museum has responded to and helped with over 109 research requests.

Our Research Services were closed due to a collections storage renovation project. It reopened in March 2015. Amy thanked all of our Collections volunteers for their contributions, hard work and dedication to the Historical Society over the past year.

EXHIBITIONS

Last November, we launched an exhibition titled ***Enjoy Your Stay: Historic Hotels and Inns of Niagara-on-the-Lake*** which focused on some of Niagara-on-the-Lake’s hotels such as the Queen’s Royal. The exhibit was very well received by both members and visitor.

In April, we opened ***Life Under Canvas: Niagara Camp 1915-1919***. The exhibit has was guest curated by Richard Merritt and has been very popular. We were able to put up our newly acquired original bell tent and brought in several loans from private donors.

Our summer student, Shelby, installed several new displays upstairs in Memorial Hall including a collection of hats and shoes. We also hosted a small travelling display from the Archives of Ontario in the same gallery. ***Enslaved Africans in Upper Canada*** was on display from June – September.

In 2016, we will celebrate 120 years of collecting with ***Janet’s Gems***, a look at some of the early pieces that were collected by Janet Carnochan.

Thank you to all the volunteers and staff who have assisted with these exhibitions over the last year. Our exhibitions budget is very small compared to most other museums, but we are able to put together quality displays that are informative, engaging and receive great visitor feedback.

By far our biggest project in 2015 has been an Audio Visual component to our permanent exhibition galleries. Thanks to generous funding from David Murray and Elizabeth Surtees, we have produced nine short focusing on major themes in Niagara-on-the-Lake’s history. These videos will be accessed by museum visitors in the galleries through the use of handheld tablets. Tonight at our AGM, we are officially launching the project and hope that you will all take an opportunity to try it out. We want to thank Barbara Worthy for writing and producing the videos, Vince Ierulli of 12th Street Productions for video production and editing, and Creative Bytes Studios in St. Catharines for developing the app.

Video on the 20th Century was shown.

MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

Website visits: As of August 31st we had over 11,000 website visitors, which is an increase over last year. These numbers do not include additional Museum websites such as *Niagara on the Eve of War*, our Memories of Niagara oral history site, and the online collections database.

The museum has also continued to maintain community awareness in the local newspapers through articles or advertisements. And we continued to do outreach through events like Canada Day in Simcoe Park and the Peach Festival on Queen Street.

Visitation: Visitation from January to September, 2015 compared to the same period in 2014 has seen a very small decrease. However, our numbers for tour participants increased by 52%.

Social Media: We have over 1,309 followers on Twitter and 663 'likes' on our Facebook Page, both of which have increased significantly over the past year. Social media allows us to reach out to different audiences by posting information about our events, our collection and other historical articles of interest.

PROGRAMS & EVENTS

Our **Great War Lecture Series** was very well received by members and the community. There were 489 participants this year plus our final lecture this evening. This lecture series was generously sponsored by Geoffrey and Lorraine Joyner and Niagara Finest Inns.

From June to September, we conducted our **historic walking tours** of Niagara-on-the-Lake on Saturdays and Sundays and saw an increase in participation this year. We will be looking at ways to increase marketing next year to make this program grow even more.

The **Past is Present Festival** was held on August 3, 2015. We had free admission, a heritage bake sale, live music, a treasures sale, button making and historic demonstrations from 11 am to 4 pm on the Museum grounds. Over 600 people attend the event! This is by far our biggest day of the year in terms of attendance and engaging new visitors.

Our summer camp, **Kid Curators**, was sold out for both weeks this summer. In July, the theme was recreation and leisure and included a play at the Shaw Festival as well as historic sports like lawn bowling. In August, the theme was agriculture and the children were able to visit some specialty farms and make some food using historic recipes. A special thanks to the NOTL B&B Association and the Shaw Festival for their sponsorship of this program.

The popular **Theatrical Cemetery Tours** returned on September 18, 19, 25, 26 at 6 pm, 7 pm and 8 pm. Characters covered a range of time periods this year. Since we received a grant from the Province of Ontario to fund the expenses, all ticket sales were profit.

In October, we partnered with Bravo Niagara on their **North Star Festival** by hosting their symposium in Memorial Hall. Several speakers presented on various aspects of the Underground Railroad, Black History and the North Star.

This year, the Museums of Niagara Association (MONA) received the Niagara Investment in Culture grant to produce a series of events at local museums called **First Fridays**. We are participating along with Port Colborne Museum, Niagara Falls History Museum and St. Catharines Museum. The purpose of the event is to bring in a younger demographic (19-35) although all are welcome. Each event has a different theme and features live music, entertainment, activities and food and drink by the Smokin' Buddha. Our event is called the "Mustache Bash" (for Movember) and will feature mustache selfies, music by Aaron Berger, a display from the Northern Beard Company, a historic mustache game, donations to the Movember campaign and more. Tickets are \$10.

Last November we presented **Pack Up Your Troubles** on Remembrance Day. The performance was a collection of wartime words, music and songs presented by local actors and musicians, and the audience was encouraged to sing along. We will be doing another version of this event this November 11th at 7 pm.

Other events and programs for this year include

- Hosting the Famous & Infamous biography series monthly from March to November
- Outdoor viewing of *War Horse* on June 4th and a Car Rally on June 6th
- Two book launches for authors who are members of the Society
- Bus trip to Fort York for the Magna Carta exhibit on October 21st
- Theatrical reading of *Painting Churches* on October 23rd
- Presentation by the Niagara Area Paranormal Society on November 21st

GRANTS

We finished up three grant funded projects from 2014 at the beginning of 2015:

- **New Horizons for Seniors:** funds assisted with the costs of our 2015 lecture series and the exhibition "Life Under Canvas".
- **Museums Assistance Program (MAP) of the Department of Canadian Heritage and the Ontario Trillium Foundation:** Renovation of our archival storage room was completed in March.
- **Veterans Grant:** Funded the research and development of a First World War video experience on the Commons (a second grant application to produce the project was rejected).

Other successful grants for 2015 include:

Young Canada Works: We hired three summer students this year through this grant along with a generous donation from an anonymous donor. John Alexander Raimondo worked on digitizing more artefacts from the collection, Shelby Payton worked on digitization as well as exhibitions in upper Memorial Hall, and John Nail worked on archival digitization, research requests and assisted with our children's program.

Community Museum Operating Grant and Heritage Organization Development Grant: These are annual grants that we receive totaling \$16,900.

Bridge Commission Grant: We received \$600 towards publicity from "Training for Armageddon" by Richard Merritt.

Ontario Seniors Grant from the Province of Ontario – We received \$5,000 to produce this year's Theatrical Cemetery Tours.

Shaw Preview Grant: We received \$750 towards the Kid Curators program.

There were 4 more grant applications submitted throughout the year for various projects that are still pending.

OTHER

Our Annual Volunteer Appreciation Day was held in April, is a special opportunity to recognize our many volunteers who are the backbone of the Society. They take part in all aspects of our operation from collections to special events to maintenance. This year we highlighted our gardening volunteers with a presentation by committee Chair, Dennis Kam. We also nominated 5 volunteers for the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards: Chris Allen (20 years), Lois Chapman (10 years), Betsy Masson (10 years), David Murray (10 years), Clara Tarnoy (10 years), and Julian Rance (5 years). They received the awards in May, 2015.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the Museum staff Amy thanked to Dennis Kam, who stepped in for another year to serve as President when last year's elected chair had to step down. Dennis has done a wonderful job leading us through the last several years and guiding us into planning for the Society's future. He will continue on in a Past President role on the board and we know that he will remain an active volunteer. She also thanked Tami for all the hard work she has done covering Sarah's maternity leave.

Suggestions were made by members to include a First Nations exhibit to support the opening of the Landscape of Nations memorial.

Nominating Committee Report

Dennis Kam introduced David Murray, Chair of the Nominating Committee, to present the slate of officers for 2015/2016. See attached report circulated by mail prior to the meeting.

David Murray made a motion to accept the Board as presented. Seconded by Deborah Paine. Approved.

Dennis Kam announced the appointment of the Nominations Committee for 2016: Dennis Kam (Chair), David Murray (Chair), Neil Rumble, Chuck Jackson and Molly Enns. Moved by Craig Tallman and seconded by Julian Rance. Approved.

President's Report

Dennis welcomed our new Board members and thanked our outgoing members, Terry Boulton and Karen McGrath, for their service on the Board. He noted that we are a vibrant institution because of the work of Sarah and Amy, but also because of the dedication of our many volunteers and the support from our membership at events and fundraisers. He expressed that he had enjoyed his time as Chair of the Board and looks forward to continuing his involvement with the Society as a volunteer.

Closing remarks

Dennis introduced Sarah Kaufman who presented Amy with a gift and cake in honour of her 15 years with the Society.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:20 pm and members were invited to enjoy some refreshments. Motion to adjourn moved by Chuck Jackson and seconded by David Murray.

Secretary: _____

President: _____

Date: October 15, 2015