



2015
ANNUAL REPORT

THE FERNIE &
DISTRICT HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

WHAT IS A MUSEUM?

"[museums are] institutions created in the public interest. They engage their visitors, foster deeper understanding and promote the enjoyment and sharing of authentic cultural and natural heritage. Museums acquire, preserve, research, interpret and exhibit the tangible and intangible evidence of society and nature. As educational institutions, museums provide a physical forum for critical inquiry and investigation. Museums are permanent, not-for-profit institutions whose exhibits are regularly open to the general public."

International Council of Museums

Museums often perform many other functions in communities, such as building community pride, increasing tourism, fostering economic development and providing entertainment.



PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Dave O'Haire
President

Welcome to the 2016 FDHS Annual General Meeting.

2015 was a year of heightened activity for the Society on all fronts.

The Museum's main floor exhibit, *This Is Our Fernie*, continues to impress locals and visitors from around the world. Our overall attendance increased by 30% in 2015, demonstrating the appeal of the Museum's new direction. Society memberships rose from 47 in 2014 to 117 in 2015. 32 volunteers contributed 2,709 hours in 2015, up from 1,047 in 2014. Donations to the museum grew from \$14,484 in 2014 to \$25,396 in 2015.

In the second floor gallery, the year started with the continuation of the *Olympic Spirit: Canada's Sports Heroes* exhibit. As part of the Museum's programming, three Olympic gold medalists came to Fernie, inspiring community leaders, local sports organizations and students.

The *Fernie At War: the Morrissey Internment Camp* exhibit commemorated the 100th anniversary of internment operations in the Elk Valley during the Great War during the summer.

The highly successful *Rise and Fall of Emilio Picariello* exhibit and its programming closed out the year, highlighting Fernie's colourful Prohibition history.

The Board of Directors also had a busy year in 2015, laying building blocks for the Society's future. To improve Board leadership, it unanimously adopted a policy governance model

created policies that better define the roles of the board, and developed a new four-year strategic plan.

We could not have achieved all of this without the tireless work of Ron Ulrich, Lori Bradish Cory Dvorak, our committed and enthusiastic Board members, and our many volunteers. The Society is also very appreciative of the support from our funders, partners and community.

In 2016, the Board will be focusing on the development of new by-laws to conform to the new BC Society's Act. It will also focus on fund development to help support our growing operations and community programming. To this end, the Society is pleased to welcome Gordon Sombrowski as the Chair of our newly formed Patrons' Council. This council of influential community members will assist with fundraising efforts, including the Museum's annual fall fundraising event.

On a personal note, I would like to thank Ron for his unwavering devotion to his job, the Board and members of the FDHS and for his personal expertise and hands-on or knowledge in all things museum, community, life, and politic. With his guidance, the growth and community popularity of our historical society and museum has reached a level of achievement second to none for a museum this size in the province.

I have had a very rewarding experience working on behalf of the members of the Fernie & District Historical Society. I wish the Board of 2016/2017 every success in the coming year, and I look forward to continuing my support.

OUR GUIDING **STRATEGIC** PRINCIPLES

- Build **Community** Support, engage and empower
- Build **Place** Foster a positive community identity and visitor experience
- Build **Memory** Preserve community memory
Create authentic meaning
- Build **Sustainability** Create operational sustainability
Govern with vision, transparency and accountability



IN REVIEW

2015

2015

COMMUNITY IMPACT

The Fernie Museum and Visitor Centre was enjoyed by **14,973** walk-in visitors in 2015, an increase of 21% over 2014. Visitation increased by 30% overall from 2014.

1,981 Fernie residents and visitors participated in community programming.

426 Fernie students participated in school programs.

Over **\$106,000** of supplies and services were purchased from local merchants and contractors.



STRATEGIES IN ACTION

BUILDING COMMUNITY



Museum staff and event volunteers at the *Under a 2015 Lens: Guilty or Innocent – the Picariello Trial Re-Examined* event. Over 75 people attended.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING

ADULT PROGRAMS | COMMUNITY EVENTS

In 2015, the Museum offered a range of programs that appealed to a diverse audience, in partnership with community organizations. A sampling of these programs include:

- *The Fundamentals of Leadership* lunch with Mark Tewksbury, in partnership with the Fernie Rotary Club.
- *Draw Weight: A Celebration of Canada's Curling Heritage*, with Olympian Kevin Martin in partnership with the Fernie Curling Club.
- *Rum Running and Whisky Six* bus tour.
- *Under a 2015 Lens: Guilty or Innocent – the Picariello Trial Re-Examined*
- *Buon Natale: Italian Christmas at the Fernie Museum.*

STRATEGIES IN ACTION

BUILDING COMMUNITY



Olympian Mark Tewksbury speaking to the Dolphins Swim Club.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING

SCHOOL PROGRAMS | YOUTH PROGRAMS

In 2015, the Museum developed a series of three new education programs and offered opportunities for Fernie's youth to interact with some of Canada's foremost Olympic heroes. Highlights of these programs include:

- *Respecting Diversity: Straight Talk From A Gay Jock*, Fernie Secondary High School rally with Olympian Mark Tewksbury on bullying and diversity.
- *Road to the Olympics with Mark Tewksbury* - Fernie Dolphins Club
- *Draw Weight Curling Clinic* with Kevin Martin, with a stream for high school curlers.
- *Fernie Museum Discovery Program* for students Grade 3 to 6.

STRATEGIES IN ACTION

BUILDING PLACE



Presentation of *Convictions*, a 1920s-style radio play during Chautauqua 2015. 443 people attended.

2015 CHAUTAUQUA

In 2015, the Museum resurrected the Chautauqua, a cultural festival held in Fernie between 1917 and 1935, as an event celebrating local arts and heritage.

The three-day festival included the opening of the Picariello exhibit featuring Fernie artist, Giselle Amantea, a showing of the *Filumena* opera at the Art Station and a full day of historic music, drama, walking tours, curator talks and other heritage-themed entertainment.

In 2016, the Museum in partnership with numerous community organizations will expand Chautauqua to a four-day event that will include a heritage marketplace, art walk, Ktunaxa cultural demonstrations, a fall fair and tours of heritage buildings. Guest speaker is Lynne Bowen, author of the award winning book about British Columbia's Italian history, *Whoever Gives Us Bread*.

STRATEGIES IN ACTION

BUILDING PLACE



Kevin Allen, volunteer guide, with a tour in June, 2015. Twelve walking tours were offered in 2015.

HISTORIC WALKING TOURS

In 2015, the Museum presented two themed historic walking tours of Fernie.

This Is Our Fernie expanded on themes explored in the Museum's main floor permanent exhibit of the same name. This 1.5 hour tour also used the Museum's 2004 Walking Tour Brochure as a basis. The walking tour was delivered by three of the museum's dedicated volunteers: Terri Tombosso, Kevin Allen, and Gordon Sombrowski.

Picariello's Fernie highlighted the Roaring 20's and the intriguing life of Emilio Picariello, a successful Italian entrepreneur turned bootlegger whose path led to infamy and murder. Experience the rich history and culture of Fernie, BC through the life and times of one of Fernie's most notorious residents and business tycoons.

STRATEGIES IN ACTION

BUILDING MEMORY



ELK VALLEY INTERNMENT OPERATIONS

RESEARCH | EXHIBITION

In 2014, the Museum began working with local researcher Daniel Ste-Marie and Sarah Beaulieu, a PhD candidate from Vancouver, BC, to research the designation and internment of Austro-Hungarians in the Elk Valley during the Great War.

The research resulted in an exhibit that opened to the public from June 5 to September 6, 2015. The exhibit opened 100 years almost to the day of the beginning of internment operations in Fernie.

The second initiative was a three-day symposium to present new research in this field and develop strategies to further research, present and commemorate this chapter of the Elk Valley's history.

STRATEGIES IN ACTION

BUILDING MEMORY



PROHIBITION and EMILIO PICARIELLO

RESEARCH | EXHIBITION | PUBLICATION

In 2014, the Museum launched a social history research project on Prohibition in Fernie with an emphasis on one of Fernie's notorious businessmen and bootleggers, Emilio Picariello.

The research resulted in an exhibition, *The Rise and Fall of Emilio Picariello*, which opened September 17, 2015 and ran to February 14, 2016. The Picariello exhibit is scheduled to travel to museums and community centres from 2016 to 2019.

In 2016, the Fernie Museum, in partnership with Oolichan Books, will publish a book which expands on the information presented in the exhibit.

STRATEGIES IN ACTION

BUILDING MEMORY



FERNIE COMMUNITY MEMORY PROJECT RESEARCH

Following research for the Morrissey and Picariello exhibits, museum staff and external researchers realized the tremendous gaps in our documentation and knowledge of Fernie's early history. Many of the stories and traditions of people who lived in Fernie from its earliest days to the 1960s are in jeopardy of being lost if we do not capture the personal experiences of our community's elders within the next 10 years.

Launched in late 2015, the Fernie Community Memory Project will document family and community stories and traditions to pass onto future generations. The Museum will begin the project by documenting Fernie's Italian heritage in 2016/17 and our Slavic history in 2017/2018.

STRATEGIES IN ACTION

BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY



ANNUAL FALL FUNDRAISING EVENT FERNIE FRIDAY NIGHT SPEAKEASY

Held on October 30 from 8:30 pm to 1:00 am, the Fernie Museum held its inaugural heritage-themed annual fundraising event. 100 people dug out their flapper dresses and fedora hats for this illicit party featuring:

- Jazz music by the Hark Raving Sirens and the Andre Wickenheiser Quartet
- Burlesque entertainment by the Circus Insomniacs and Heavy Petal Burlesque

The event sold out in one week and was sponsored by the Park Place Lodge, with wine sponsored by xx. Ticket sales were matched by the Fernie Scotiabank, allowing the museum to raise nearly \$5000 for its first event. The Museum will host a similar event with a 1940s theme in 2016 with a goal of raising \$12,500 for museum operations.

STRATEGIES IN ACTION

BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY



L to R: Dave O'Haire, Rod Geddis, Natalie Fisher, Ron Ulrich, Lynn Loken, Annie McFarlane, Laura Nelson, Terri Tombosso, Pierre Alleyn, Allan Phillips, Sylvia Ayers

BOARD GOVERNANCE

POLICY DEVELOPMENT | MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT | STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Board developed and implemented a governance structure that supports community engagement and policy development. The Board developed governance policies; this was adopted in April 2016.

The Society's membership also grew from 47 in 2014 to 117 in 2015. Much of this growth came from membership sales related to museum programming and events.

Art show and sale with Laura Nelson also helped generate revenue for museum operations.

A new strategic plan was developed by the Board and Museum staff for 2016-2020.



Rum Running and Whiskey Six Bus Tour



Buon Natale Community Christmas event



Official opening of the *Fernie At War: the Morrissey Internment Camp* exhibit



STRATEGIC DIRECTION

2016

2020

STRATEGIC VISION AND DIRECTION

In 2020, the Fernie Museum will be connecting people in the community with each other and the history of this place through modern, innovative and culturally significant experiences which help generate a sustainable operating funding model.

BUILD COMMUNITY

Bring together cultural, artistic and heritage organizations to formulate a cohesive master plan to promote the community as a cultural centre.

Develop and deliver diversified programs in partnership with other organizations to target audiences based on age, interest, demographics.

Create greater awareness of the role of the museum within the Elk Valley region by making presentations to schools, community organizations, and businesses.

BUILD PLACE

Create programming experiences based on culturally significant themes/places that build connections, understanding, knowledge, and respect for place.

Create memorable experiences and increase visitation by integrating technologies relevant to our target audiences.

Grow our physical capacity by nurturing shared space opportunities.

STRATEGIC VISION AND DIRECTION

BUILD MEMORY

Within the museum's resources, adopt and implement accepted standards and best practices for collections management and conservation.

Catalogue the archival collection and assess the current object collection.

Develop and implement a community records and memory collection and preservation strategy.

BUILD SUSTAINABILITY

Grow our earned revenue to 30% of the museum's annual budget.

Build community support through membership and fund development.

Create a marketing and communications strategy that promotes the museum to the community and within a regional cultural tourism strategy.

2015

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Fernie & District Historical Society would like to extend thanks to our many funding partners, sponsors, community partners and volunteers, without whom the operation of the Fernie Museum would not be possible.

FUNDING PARTNERS

- Government of Canada | Canadian Heritage
- Province of BC | BC Arts Council, BC Lotteries Fund, RMI
- City of Fernie
- Canadian First World War Internment Recognition Fund,
- Columbia Basin Trust | CKCA
- Government of Switzerland
- Regional District of East Kootenay
- Simon Fraser University

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Programs: City of Fernie Public Works Department, Fernie Curling Club, Fernie Nordic Society, Fernie Rotary Club, Knox United, Teck Resources
- Tourism: Fernie Chamber of Commerce Tourism Fernie, Destination BC
- Culture: Fernie Arts Station, Fernie Heritage Library, Crowsnest Museum, Frank Slide Interpretive Centre, Oolichan Books

SPONSORS

- Angela Moran's Studio
- Ann's Independent Grocer
- Best Western, Fernie
- Canadian Tire, Fernie
- Fernie Lodging Company
- IGS Group
- Island Lake Lodge
- Kooconusa Campsite
- Mow and Snow
- Oolichan Books
- Park Place Lodge
- Rizutto Construction
- Rocky Mountain Optometry
- Save-On-Foods, Fernie
- Scotiabank, Fernie
- Starbucks, Fernie
- Teck Resources

VOLUNTEERS

The Board wishes to thank all those who have volunteered on the Board and have assisted with events and exhibits in 2015. 32 Volunteers contributed 2709 hours in 2015.

A special thank you to our guest Daniel Ste-Marie and Sarah Beaulieu for your generous volunteer support of the Morrissey exhibit and to Adriana Davies for your tremendous work on the Picariello exhibit.