

# Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol



Public Business Plan

2016

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## 1. Executive Summary and Key Priorities

Huron County Council approved a strategic plan for the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol in 2013. Since then, the Huron County Museum has been following through on the action plan associated with the directions set out in the document. The priorities set out in the strategic plan ensure that the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol continues to have relevance to residents and thrives as a priority destination in the region for tourists. In 2011, attendance at the Museum was 9,928 and at the Gaol was 5,950. In 2015, through the door attendance was 16,306 and 9,335 respectively (or 23,192 and 15,167 including website and online collection statistics). In 2016, the strategic plan will continue to roll out and efforts will continue to maintain the increased usage and relevance of these sites.

Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol works closely with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport to ensure that the facilities operate within the parameters for community museums in Ontario. The standards serve to provide guidance and best practice for museums; and are also referenced in *Regulation 877 – Grants for Museums*, the provincial regulation that governs the allocation of operating grants to Ontario's community museums. Eligibility for these operating grants is contingent on museums meeting both the requirements in the regulation as well as the standards. Standards include, but are not limited to, those relating to governance, conservation and collections. A full list of standards is available online at [http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/museums/museums\\_standards.shtml](http://www.mtc.gov.on.ca/en/museums/museums_standards.shtml).

The Public Business Plan, 2016, supports the implementation of the Museum's Strategic Plan. Key priorities for the coming year – as set out in the Strategic Plan - include:

- Aligning physical facilities with future aspirations;
- Increasing access to the Museum;
- Increasing capacity and engagement in the areas of visitor service.

These priorities will be met through the support and collaboration of staff with the Museum's Collections' Committee, ongoing and creative use of technology and a focus on community dialogue and engagement through programming and exhibit development.

Key recommendations relating to resources include the further development of membership and sponsorship programs for the Museum as a way to increase self-generated revenue. It is also recommended that the Museum explore the development of a Foundation for the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol as a way to further generate support and sustainability of its programs and preservation of the collections.

## **2. Museum Mandate**

2.1 The History of the Huron County Museum dates back to 1951. Since that time, the scope of the Museum has increased to include the Huron Historic Gaol, the Huron County Archives, Tiger Dunlop Tomb and the Marine Museum. Throughout this document, the use of the term Huron County Museum assumes the inclusion of all of these programs and facilities unless stated specifically in the document.

The Huron County Museum facility located at 110 North St. Goderich, also houses the Corporate Records Centre for the County of Huron.

The history of the original Museum as a standalone site is available through the Huron County Museum's website:

The Huron County Museum is located in the original old Central School, erected in 1856. The original Museum collection was brought together by Mr. Joseph Herbert Neill (1884-1969) as a result of a lifetime of collecting. In 1948, he sold all of his 1,000 objects to the County of Huron for an average price of one dollar per object and with two conditions. First, that the County establish a public museum and second, that he be made the Curator for as long as he wished to hold the position. The doors of the Huron County Museum opened July 4, 1951.

Over the next fifteen years, Mr. Neill worked to complete exhibits and add buildings to the site of the Museum and by the time he retired in 1965 the Museum had grown to over 42,000 square feet filled to the rafters with artifacts from all over the County. Mr. Neill stayed on in the log cabin for the next two years.

In 1985, County Council decided to improve the physical plant of the Museum and four years later a brand new addition was opened that replaced all but the Central School building. This portion of the Museum saw major renovations in order to bring that structure up to current building and museum standards.

Today, the Huron County Museum consists of over 25,000 sq. feet of gallery and visitor support space and an additional 15,000 sq. feet of collections storage and maintenance space.

2.2 In 2013, the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol adopted new Mission and Vision Statements. The previous Mission Statement had been determined in the 1980s.

Updated Mission:

The Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol engage our community in preserving, sharing and celebrating Huron County culture.

Updated Vision:

The vision of the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol is to nurture and inspire heritage and culture through partnerships and collaboration in our communities.

Draft Mission and Vision Statements have also been created for the Archives located at the Huron County Museum:

**Mission:**

The mission of the Archives at the Huron County Museum is to identify, collect, preserve, inform, inspire, and provide access to valuable records created by the County and its residents.

**Vision:**

The vision of the Huron County Archives is to preserve and provide access to Huron County's historic records regardless of media or format and to serve as the continuing memory of Huron County and its people.

The draft mandate of the Archives located at the Huron County Museum is:

- To acquire, preserve, and make accessible non-governmental records;
- To provide assistance to local historical and archival organizations;
- To share knowledge through online resources, public programs and publications;
- To uphold trust and confidentiality.

In addition, the Archives has an important role to play in acting as official repository for inactive public and private records created by the Corporation of the County of Huron and its current and former municipalities.

The above vision, mission and mandate statements highlight the broad range of projects and responsibilities of the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol, including the Archives, beyond its function as a tourist destination. A partial list of 2015 research projects taken on in collaboration with the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol provides further illustration of the broad scope of work regularly undertaken by staff. Research projects in 2015 contributed to the following publications and projects (partial list):

*John Gentles in Kincardine* by Sylvia Hasbury

St. Georges Church (Goderich) stained glass window project by Eleanor Smith

Archaeological Assessment of the former Sunset Hotel site in Goderich – Timmins Martelle  
Heritage Consultant

Disney Family Articles by Steph Smith, *Goderich Signal Star*

David Yates Local History Articles, *Goderich Signal Star*

Knox Presbyterian Church (Goderich) Anniversary

*The Vimy Pilgrimage*, part of Norm Christie's The Great War Tour documentary series aired on TVO in 2015

University of Guelph Rural Diary Archives: <https://ruraldiaries.lib.uoguelph.ca/>

Huron Pottery Project – Moe Johnson

Research and primary materials from the Huron County Museum's collection were used in the creation of the works.

### **3. Museum Impact**

A 2003 article titled "Museums and Impact" by Carol Scott discusses the value of museums beyond economic rationalism. The article suggests that museums contribute to their communities in the following ways:

- Museums build social capital;
- Museums develop communities;
- Museums contribute to social change and public awareness;
- Museums build human capital;
- Museums provide economic benefits (tourism, stimulating the economy and through the creation of employment).

In recent years, the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol has made significant efforts and progress in establishing itself as a "community builder" and a leader in the heritage and culture sector in the region. In moving forward, the Museum will continue to function as a leader/mentor, working collaboratively to ensure the best possible outcomes for the sector overall in the region.

### **4. Strategic Directions**

4.1. As part of the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol's strategic plan, the following six priorities were identified:

1. Increase profile of the Museum;

2. Align physical facilities with future aspirations;
3. Increase access to the Museum;
4. Increase awareness and heritage network capacity through development of community partnerships;
5. Increase capacity in the areas of visitor service, marketing and communications;
6. Drive an increase in attendance through dynamic programming.

#### 4.2 Key Strategic Initiatives and Milestones

In 2016, particular attention and priority will be given to Objectives 2, 3 and 5.

##### **Strategic Objective 2: Align physical facilities with future aspirations.**

In order to ensure continued stewardship of artifacts and relevance in programming and exhibits, Huron County Museum must align its physical facilities with existing and future goals.

##### Key Strategic Initiatives in 2016

- Re-ORG initiative to evaluate and reorganize the Museum's collections both at the Museum and in off-site locations;
- Continued review of artifacts through the Collections' Committee;
- Development of a three year Exhibit Plan, as mandated by the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport;
- Coordinated evaluation of permanent exhibits through extensive public engagement.

##### **Strategic Objective 3: Increase access to the Museum.**

In order to ensure continued relevance and high visibility in the community, the Huron County Museum must continue to increase access to its facility and resources in innovative ways.

##### Key Strategic Initiatives in 2016

- Continue to provide access to Museum collections and research using social media and other online technology;
- Continue to offer programming on Thursday evenings and weekends to ensure access for families;
- Continue to develop and facilitate programming relating to outreach at local schools and other related sites;
- Continue to develop unique ways of telling stories relating to the history of Huron County and Huron County Museum collections; including through the use of video and other technologies (i.e. World War Commemorations Fund initiative).

**Strategic Objective 5: Increase capacity in the areas of visitor service, marketing and communications.**

In order to increase attendance and revenue, the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol will continue to develop innovative programs, marketing, communications and exhibits, leveraging partnerships in the community.

## Key Strategic Initiatives in 2016

- Continued use of social media to promote exhibits and programming at the Museum;
- Continued development of partnerships to ensure cross-promotion and increased marketing (such as Makers' Market, Lake Huron Learning Collaborative, Alzheimer's Society of Huron County);
- Explore partnerships packages with key tourism players in Huron County such as Blyth Festival Theatre;
- Partner with Huron Arts and Heritage Network in the development, implementation, marketing and Museum and Gaol related programming.

## 5. Overview of 2016 Special Events, Exhibits and Research:

Major exhibits and programming for 2016 include special March Break programs as well as a new evening 'Prom' event being offered for adults. New components to permanent exhibits will be developed and implemented in 2016 relating to funding received through the Government of Canada's World War Commemorations Fund. In addition to the programs outlined above, the Museum will continue to partner with community organizations in order that other events such as The Makers' Market will be offered on site seasonally (November – April).

EVENTS

HURON COUNTY MUSEUM

FAMILY DAY

February 15

MARCH BREAK MUSEUM QUEST

March 14 – 19

POETRY SLAM

April 14

INTERNATIONAL MUSEUM DAY

May 18

CLUB HURON PROM

June 11

BEHIND THE BARS

Tues., & Thurs  
from July 5 –  
August 25

TAMING OF THE SHREW

Driftwood Theatre  
at the Gaol  
July 13

MUSEUM FRIENDS HALLOWEEN

MAIN STREET

October 31

REMEMBRANCE DAY OPEN HOUSE

November 6

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

December 4



Huron County

Museum & Historic Gaol

STORIES OF IMMIGRATION

April 5 – October 15

HOME IN HURON

April 30 – September 12

HURON COUNTY ART SHOW & SALE

October 16 – December 18


[www.huroncountymuseum.ca](http://www.huroncountymuseum.ca)


[facebook.com/huroncountymuseum](https://facebook.com/huroncountymuseum)


[instagram.com/huroncountymuseum](https://instagram.com/huroncountymuseum)


[@hcmuseum](https://twitter.com/hcmuseum)

2016 EXHIBITS

In addition to the programs and exhibits outlined above, original research being conducted at the Museum will contribute to the following *external* publications and projects in 2016:



Local history books – *East Ashfield History Book*, *Sallows Postcard Book*, *Sharp's Creek*

Reprinting of the *161<sup>st</sup> Battalion Book* by Yvonne Reynolds

Mariner's Service

Blyth Festival Theatre's original World War I play

2016 *internal* original research projects include (representative sample):

Home in Huron Exhibit

Migration Stories Exhibit

World War Commemoration Videos, Huron County

161<sup>st</sup> Battalion Commemoration Event

Behind the Bars, 2016

Salt Tourism Interactive Map

"Museum Secrets" Workshop Series

Ontario Genealogical Society (Huron Branch) Presentation – WW I Nurses from Huron County

Huron County's Indigenous History

## **6. Resources Needed to Meet Goals and Objectives**

### **6.1 Government Funding**

Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol receives the majority of its funding from the Corporation of the County of Huron. In addition to this support, some funding is received by the Museum and Gaol through the Community Museums Operating Grant. Any significant capital initiatives are overseen by the Property Services Department of the County of Huron.

The 2016 Public Business Plan of the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol assumes a decrease of 0.03% in the overall funding for the Museum and a decrease of 0.24% of funding for the Gaol from the Corporation of the County of Huron over the 2015 budget.

The amount of annual Provincial operating funding for 2016 is assumed to remain frozen at current levels. Should a decision be made in the future to decrease the months the Museum is open, Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol would no longer be eligible for core Community Museums Operating Grant (CMOG) funding.

Capital projects to be overseen by Property Services in 2016 include the completion of an accessible washroom and automatic door openers at the Museum as well as new signage for the Huron Historic Gaol.

## 6.2 Staffing

Full-time staffing levels will be maintained at existing levels in 2016.

Museum leadership continues to work with staff to re-work and clarify processes and workflows to increase capacity and ensure resources are deployed as effectively as possible.

## 6.3 Self-generated Income

A portion of revenue for the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol comes from user fees (for example - memberships, admissions, rentals, research inquiries) and from donations. Since 2011, user fee income has increased from 46,054 to 77,878 (2015 unaudited financial statement). Donations have increased from 6,111 in 2011 to 9,790 in 2015.

The Museum will continue to develop and promote membership and sponsorship packages as a way to increase self-generated revenue. The recent member partnership with Bruce County Museum, Grey Roots, Waterloo Region and Simcoe County Museums is representative of the kinds of programs that will be further developed to help increase members.

## 6.4 Philanthropic Plan

Currently the Museum does not have a Philanthropic Strategy. As a result of research undertaken in the creation of the 2016 Museum Business Plan it is recommended that Museum and Huron County leadership explore the possibility of developing a Museum Foundation to further generate support and ensure sustainability of its programs and the preservation of the Museum's collections.

Financial assistance of a Foundation would provide further opportunity for conservation, programming, research and exhibit development at the Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol.

## Sources Referenced:

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