



Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol

# 2024 Annual Report







Corporation of the County of Huron

## 2024 Annual Report:

# Huron County Museum & Historic Gaol

### Mission

Huron County Museum & Historic Gaol engages the community in preserving, sharing, and fostering culture in Huron County.

### Vision

Imagine More: Exhibits, programs, and collections that reflect evolving community stories.

### Diversity Statement

The Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol designs its exhibits, programs, events, and services through a lens that includes a wide range of ideas, voices and viewpoints that reflect and engage Huron County's diverse community.

#### Huron County Museum

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#### Huron Historic Gaol

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#### Follow us:



@HuronCountyMuseum



# Museum Planning & Engagement

The five-year Strategic Plan was developed and introduced in 2019. During this period, the Museum aims to engage with more people to increase a shared understanding of our culture, leading to greater social cohesion and stronger Huron County roots. It will also be important to put strategies and practices in place to ensure the long-term sustainability of the organization. We understand that preserving the past means we will ensure future generations will have access to artifacts, places and stories.

With community, staff and stakeholder input the following goals are part of the strategic plan for the Museum and Gaol:

- Engage with more people
- Long-term sustainability

Throughout 2024, the Museum and Gaol worked to engage with people throughout Huron County and beyond both in-person and virtually. An increase of in-person programming and youth engagement, outreach and

events to connect with patrons; continuing collections projects focused on nomenclature and collections review; work towards the redevelopment of a permanent exhibit gallery to re-engage visitors; and production of new temporary exhibits for our visitors to visit in-person, were all part of the Museum and Gaol's work to ensure continued progress in the Strategic Plan. A new strategic plan was developed with community and staff input in 2024.

A Youth Strategy was developed to identify actions to further engagement through programmes, events, volunteer and job opportunities, and partnerships.

Throughout 2024, staff worked to develop a new multi-year plan to be in effect from 2025 to 2029. Surveys, focus groups and staff planning led to a new plan and related actions with the focus on storytelling, capacity and welcoming & inclusive initiatives. The new plan can be seen at: [www.huroncountymuseum.ca/strategic-plan/](http://www.huroncountymuseum.ca/strategic-plan/).





# Initiatives & Funding

The Huron County Museum & Historic Gaol successfully received the Community Museum Operating Grant in 2024 to assist with Museum & Gaol operations. Funding from the Digital Access grant through the Museum Assistance Program supported further digitization of the archival collection until the project ended early in the year.

Grant funding was received from Young Canada Works in Heritage program for summer staffing opportunities for the Museum & Gaol. The summer student projects focused on Museum & Gaol events, object cataloging, outreach assistance, and archival projects. Funding for two Young Canada Works Interns through the Building Careers in Heritage program was also received for staff to work with newly transferred collections.

To advance youth programming, funding was received from Compass Minerals to cover bussing fees for school groups that wish to visit in person or virtual program fees.

Sponsorship was received from Unifor 16-0 and the Lucknow & District Lions Club to complete fundraising for the redevelopment of the Northwest Gallery Industry exhibit gallery at the Huron County Museum. Individual sponsorships were also received for the Gaol, Archives, and other projects.

Fundraising for refurbishment of the Museum Theatre, including new seating, was initiated. A special event was held with Live History who presented “In Time”, an immersive historical experience that invited participants to complete escape room-style tasks, challenges and puzzles laid out around the Museum to help historical characters get back to their own time. Thank you to Country 104.9 for sponsoring the Live History event and to Compass Minerals for their generous donation to the theatre project.

“ The staff at the Huron County Museum are knowledgeable and passionate, always ready to share interesting insights and answer questions. The museum also hosts special events and rotating exhibits, ensuring there’s always something new to see.





# Exhibits



The Huron County Museum continued the multi-year collections exhibit series in 2024.

**Stories from Storage: Sleep In** was the second installment in the exhibit series with the beds, dressers and bedroom furnishing from Main storage. The exhibit series continues to allow for review of the collection with further required research, determination of provenance, condition assessments, and collections documentation as we continue to investigate each piece to determine its place in our collection. This is part of a multi-year exhibit series.



Two partnership exhibits were also installed in the temporary exhibit spaces. These partnerships are important to allow for expanded stories to be presented in the Museum.

The **2024 Community Curators** display was developed with Huron County Children's Services. The display focused on the Huron Perth Children's Charter of Rights, using artifacts from the Museum's collection to illustrate the charter rights, along with family interactives.

'**beyond ana**' by Blyth artist Kelly Stevenson aimed to open the viewers eyes and hearts to the reality and humanity of those who live with illnesses that are so often misunderstood and caricatured as simply being "young women's diseases rooted in vanity."





# Mural Launch & Outreach Exhibits

The Huron County Museum celebrated the launch of a new mural in the Museum's lobby created by Anishinaabe artist Jeannette Ladd. The mural's imagery shows that everything is connected to the sun, moon, stars, nature, and water, which need to work in harmony to provide a good life for all. An Indigenous woman (protector) is wearing a traditional ribbon skirt and is connected to the sun (giizis) which gives life. Lake Huron's bountiful whitefish fill out the mural.

Indigenous people have called this land home for millennia and the Huron County Museum is focused on growing our understanding of local Indigenous cultures and histories by providing space to share their stories.

## The Outreach exhibit program was continued:

- George Allen's Carved Birds – Alice Munro Branch & Exeter Branch, Huron County Library
- Wingham Artifacts – Alice Munro Branch, Huron County Library
- Huronlea Homes for the Aged reminiscence case

Work continued in the permanent exhibit galleries with construction projects in the new Industry gallery on the upper floor of the museum. Installation of the full exhibit will take place through 2025. In the Military Gallery remedial evaluations and some repairs were completed.

“ Really lovely, and the story behind (the mural) is moving and makes me want to do more to take care of our water and nature, in a good way.





# Select Events & Activities

The Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol facilitated a variety of special events and activities over the course of 2024 both in-person and virtually.

## In-person presentations included:

- Dave Jacklin & Michael Molnar, Historic Settlement project – Former, forgotten or renamed hamlets and villages in Huron County
- Huron to Hollywood series - Celebrated professionals from Huron County working in the film and television industry – Curt Lobb, Mark Hussey, Jesse Sturdy, and Tim Long. Each event included a film screening followed by a conversation about their work and careers.
- David Scott, Huron Hockey Heroes.
- Jennifer Triemstra-Johnston, "Night Night: The Clothes We Sleep In" - A talk about the history of night clothes, pajamas and lingerie.
- Blyth Festival, screenings of Michael Ondaatje's *The Clinton Special: A Film About the Farm Show*
- Second annual Author Talk & Book Fair in partnership with the Huron County Library to spotlight local authors and stories.
- Sinead Cox, "What You Should Know about Treaties & Huron County"
- Professor Catharine Wilson, "Barn-Raising, Threshing and Quilting Bees" - Based on the research of farm diaries, including some from Huron County.

## Virtual presentations included:

- Molly Peacock, "Flower Diary: A Question-Provoking Painting by George Agnew Reid Returns Home" – A virtual webinar about Wingham-born renowned Canadian painter George Agnew Reid.



Thank you for hosting these fun Saturday afternoons. It's a perfect outing for me and my grandchildren. They love the crafts, making houses from cardboard, playing crokinole and, of course, visiting the train. And getting a candy stick treat to finish the day. Great way to spend a Saturday afternoon.







- In-person and virtual education programs were provided for groups throughout the year including school & classroom visits, Kids 'n Dads evening programs, seniors groups, and youth groups. PA Day camps and four weeks of summer STEAM Power day camps were facilitated. Staff would like to thank the following guests and organizations that came to present during summer camps this year County Children Services, Goderich Air Cadets, Goderich Yacht Club, Siwi Vodden (Indonesian dance workshop), Huron County OPP, Huron Area Search and Rescue, John Meyers (Behind the Bars volunteer), WorkHorse Strength and Conditioning, Bob the Fossil Guy, Maitland Valley Conservation Authority, and Huron Backyard Ecosystems.
- In-person events included Make a Mess, Walking Scrabble, Stuffie Sleepover, Multilingual Movie nights, Family Day programming, Archives Awareness Week, International Museum Day, Historic Places Day, Cow Appreciation Day, Behind the Bars at the Gaol, Ghost Tours, Halloween Trick or Treating, Gaol Boo-tiques, a Holiday Open House, and Christmas at the Gaol Tours. The annual Textile Show and Sale was also facilitated by the Huron County Spinners, Weavers & Quilters guilds at the Museum. Partnerships with other departments included a County Job Fair and Maple Mania events, and with local organizations included Blyth Festival talks and the Maple Leaf IODE Christmas House Tour.
- Outreach programs and presentations were provided for a number of groups including Library branches, Exeter Villa, Alzheimer's Society, OneCare, Huronview & Huronlea Home for the Aged, Huron County Clerks & Treasurers Association, EFTO, Galleries Ontario, Goderich Probus Club, Wingham & Area Historical Society, Goderich Adult Day Centre, Goderich District Collegiate Institute, Ontario Ancestors Huron Branch and other County Departments.
- The Museum & Gaol also attended community events providing outreach displays and activities at local school community nights, Goderich Volunteer Fair, Huron County Pride Festival, Goderich Children's Festival, Huron Multicultural Festival, Wingham Homecoming, Air Force Day (RCAF 100th), Huron County Library Summer Reading Program, Blyth Festival, Huron County Plowing Match, Seaforth Fair, the Belgrave Elementary School Fair events, and the Goderich Salt Festival, and No Hate in Huron.

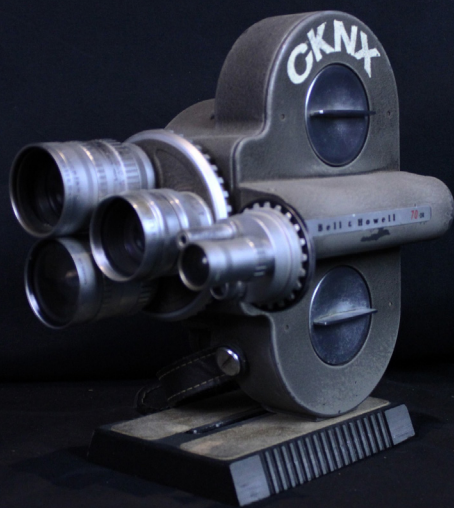




# Collection Highlights

There were 77 new accessions in 2024. The following items are a representative sample of items donated to the collection:

- Artifacts and archival items from "Romper Room", Miss Eva, a teacher on the CKNX television show "Romper Room" from 1960-1963
- Editor's chair from the *Exeter Times-Advocate* newspaper
- Silk/wool artwork of Goderich Harbour
- Nurse's uniforms worn at Alexandra Marine & General Hospital in 1950s
- Hair wreath with family photograph inset in shadow box
- Linen and lace weaved at Hawkins Mill, Port Albert
- Transfer of items from the former North Huron Museum Collection.



# Collections

Collections staff worked throughout 2024 with database upgrades, file updates, artifact cataloging, digitization, and deaccessioning at the Huron County Museum. A portion of archival collections were relocated in main storage to make room for open storage artifact viewing on the second floor. A full inventory of the artifacts displayed at the Historic Gaol was also completed.

Work continued on the addition of artifacts to the PastPerfect online collection database finishing the year with 7,916 artifact and photograph records available on-line to researchers.

Assistance was provided to local municipalities regarding historic collections. Staff worked on the review and transfer of artifacts deaccessioned after the closure of the North Huron Museum. In 2023 & 2024, 5,509 artifacts and archival items were transferred to the Huron County Museum Collection from North Huron. Work will continue in 2025 to complete the transfer and catalogue of all items in the museum collection.

The 2024 Collections Committee met through the year to discuss Museum & Gaol collections issues including the collection, policy review, storage & space needs, deaccessioning, and site planning.

## Collections Committee Members consisted of:

Louise Dockstader (Chair), Sally Leitch (Vice-Chair), Rhea Hamilton-Seeger (Past-Chair), Deb Sholdice, Deb McAuslan, Anne Tafeit, Patti Lamb and Shelley McPhee-Haist, and Bill Vanstone (Councillor).

# Conservation

Collections staff from the Huron County Museum worked on rehousing and consolidation of a variety of collections in the Main Storage Area. A major initiative in 2024 was a full review and conservation cleaning of artifacts on the main level of storage.

A site review for operational and capital projects was conducted with Museum and Property Services staff. Replacement of Museum theatre seating / room refurbishment, completion of the accessible front walkway, log cabin use considerations, and site building updates were discussed.

# Research

Research regarding treaty territories that cover what is now Huron County (Treaty #29 and Treaty #45 ½), the Huron County House of Refuge, and program-related content was completed.

Collections research focused on incoming transfer collections and exhibit research focused on artifacts to be featured in the Stories from Storage series.

An article about Joseph Herbert Neill and the development of the Huron County Museum was published in the 2024 Threshers Reunion magazine.







# Professional Development

Staff participated in a variety of workshops and webinars over the course of the year including those offered through Canadian Museum Association, National Trust, University of Waterloo, RTO4, Ontario Ancestors, and various local and museum-related organizations.

Staff took part in a County of Huron leadership training, departmental training focused on Bias/Microaggression awareness, and Active Bystander training. Various staff were certified in First Aid training, WHMIS and Worksite Safety Fall Protection (working from heights).

Museum staff attended conferences of the Canadian Museum Association, Archives Association of Ontario, Museum Games & Play Summit, Future of Museum summit, and Huron County Cultural Summit.

The Huron County Museum & Historic Gaol are active members of the Huron Heritage Roundtable, Huron Perth Middlesex Museum Network and the PastPerfect Users group.

## Staff

Beth Rumble, *Director of Cultural Services*  
 Elizabeth French-Gibson, *Senior Curator*  
 Sinead Cox, *Curator of Engagement & Dialogue*  
 Jeremy Allin, *Visitor Services Coordinator*  
 Michael Molnar, *Archivist*  
 Christi Hudson, *Registrar*  
 Michael Roy, *Education & Program Coordinator*  
 Amy Zoethout, *Marketing & Branding Coordinator*  
 Keith King, *Exhibits & Collections Assistant*  
 Jim Seale, *Fundraising*  
 Jacob Smith, *Digitization - Special Projects*  
 Noah Chapman, *Collections Intern*  
 Evelyn Riddell, *Collections Intern*

## Student Museum & Gaol Assistants

A.J. Sylver  
 Adam Britton  
 Alice Bosch  
 Ben Baker  
 Chloe Oesch  
 Claire Howard  
 Darian Mero  
 Kyra Lewis  
 Nolan Riehl (co-op)

## Volunteers

Thank you to our many volunteers who provided **2,103** hours of volunteer service during 2024.





# Marketing & Promotions

Social media posts, newly researched blog posts, press releases, interviews with local media, and participation in a variety of video series, all added to the regular marketing and advertising to promote the site, collections and resources of the Museum & Gaol. To promote the extensive collection of artifacts and archival materials held at the Huron County Museum, a new series of social media promotions were started and featured a rotation of themes – What Is It Wednesday, Collection Highlights, Staff Picks and New to the Collection.

Social Media Followers (December 2024)		
Facebook	Instagram	MailChimp - Subscribers
4,369	2,006	859



## Attendance

2024 Site Visits		Museum	Gaol
Individual Admissions		7,680	9,745
Individual Admissions – Huron County Library Card		2,094	789
Education & Youth Programs (in-person & virtual)		2,864	1,567
Special Events, Public Programs, Presentations		2,435	2,888
Outreach (in-person & virtual)		3,809	126
Groups		176	171
Object Depositors, OGS, Researchers, Volunteers, Others		1,358	995
Meetings, Rentals		2,144	152
<b>Annual Total</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>22,560</b>	<b>16,433</b>
Comparative Years		2023	14,406
		2022	14,320

“Another great visit to the Museum. We come here for every visit to Goderich. Don’t miss the two headed calf - one of the kids favourites.”

