



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

COMMITTEE REPORT

To: Chair and Members of the Information, Heritage and Seniors Committee
From: [Jana Burns], [Wellington Place Administrator]
Date: Wednesday, November 10, 2021
Subject: WCMA Update

General Update

We are excited to announce our receiving the 2021 Guelph Mercury diamond award for the Reader's Choice Art Gallery/Museum category. We are also pleased to be fully open for meetings and events in Aboyne Hall, which seats 110, and Nicholas Keith, which seats 40.

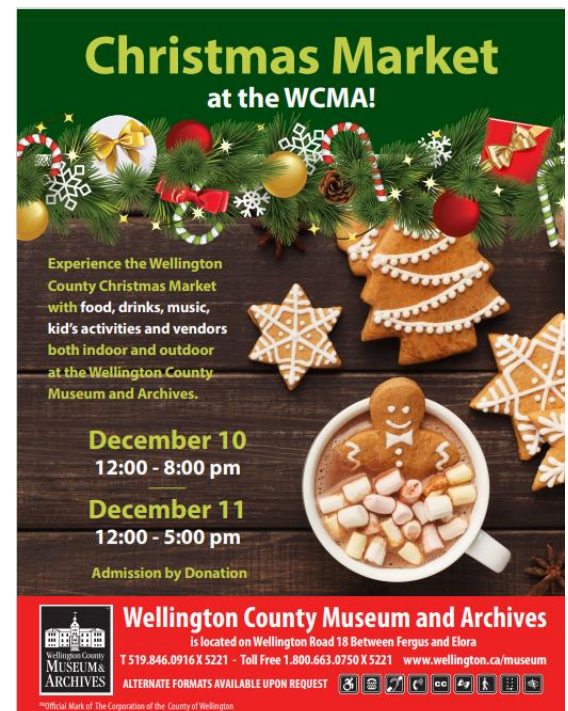
The final wedding of the year was hosted on our site this past week and autumn colours made for a stunning backdrop. November 5 marks our Remembrance Day Ceremony at 10:30am and we look forward to inviting the public back this year.

WCMA and Economic Development staff participated in a day of departmental updates, followed by a fire drill and fire extinguisher training provided by the Elora Fire Department. Aside from being fun, the exercise was valuable for updating our Emergency Manual and refreshing ourselves on the fire emergency routine at the WCMA.



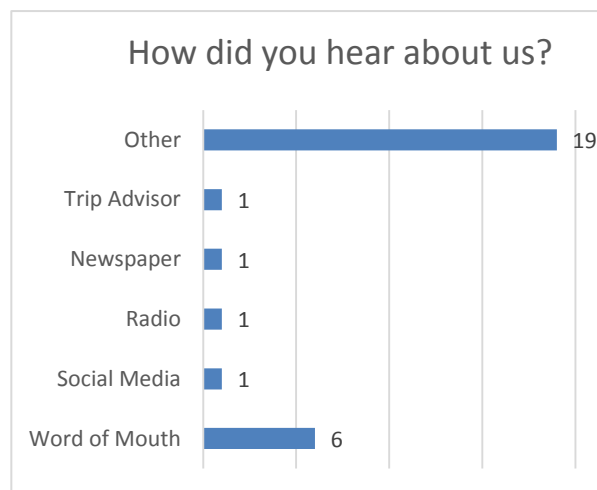
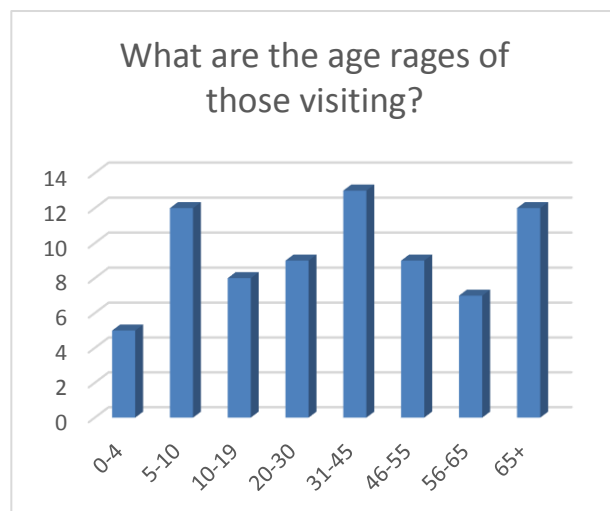
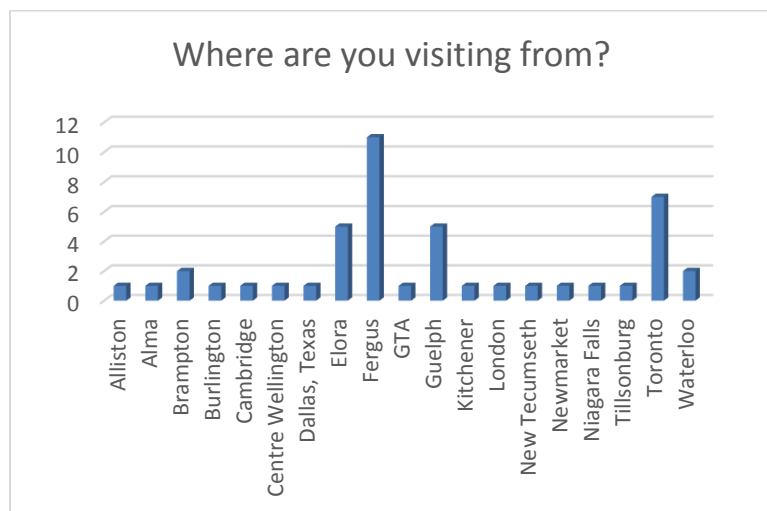
Christmas Market at the WCMA

Staff have been busy planning a Christmas Market for December 10 and 11. The Market will take place both indoors and outdoors and will include local food, drinks, music, chestnuts roasting on an open fire, children's activities and approximately 60 vendors selling handmade fares. We see this as an opportunity to use our beautiful, central site to promote shopping local and to make the holiday season special for our communities.



WCMA Summer Survey

45 surveys were received, providing us with valuable information on our site and offerings. The feedback aligns well with our Action Plan themes, and has provided for good discussion amongst staff. Visitors were split by those who were registered for concerts or events and those who spontaneously dropped by. We were blown away by the number of visitors who said the building and grounds drew them to stop as they were passing by, many traveling in pairs. We recognize that we need to commit much greater strategic efforts to market ourselves, especially online. The pandemic brought a considerable number of people from our own community who had previously never visited us. We were pleased to see that efforts towards attracting new demographics are showing some results.



What surprises you about the site?

- Didn't realize the history of the building and that these sorts of places existed in Ontario. Very interesting and sort of sad story.
- Everything about the top floor - permanent exhibits. Was shocked by these but really enjoyed them.
- All of it was interesting and new.
- Loved the chickens.
- The history of the Poorhouse was fascinating.

- The foresight of the founders in re-adapting and conserving a heritage building into a museum and archives.
- Lots of space, cleanliness, friendly staff, children's programming at reasonable cost.
- I like the way the barn was used to teach about the history of farming.
- The beauty of the building and the sad history made me cry.
- The amount of local history I didn't know about.
- Children of the poorhouse and Dr. Groves records made me think about recent residential school grave discoveries. Interesting that most of the inmates were white, not First Nations.
- The movie theatre.

What would bring you back?	Respondents
New exhibits	16
Tours or lectures - Poor House information, more exhibits about the Poor House	7
More historical exhibits and collections from the 1800's and early 1900's	2
More kids interactive exhibits, scavenger hunts, programs.	8
Concerts throughout the year	1
Holiday themed events.	2
The beautiful grounds	1
Miscellaneous	6

What do you think we could add or change?

- More kids programming and activities
- Would love to see a room set up like what the original building looked like. Replicate one of the wards, infirmary, jails, etc.
- More signage for parking and where the entrance to the museum is located.
- Outdoor exhibits for large artifact displays and indigenous history relevant to county.
- More live farm animals
- More art shows
- Two permanent exhibits could use a refresh - the Indigenous exhibit and the log cabin exhibit
- More interactive and family oriented exhibits
- More regular, recurrent programming (e.g. weekly for 4 weeks)
- Washrooms should be gender neutral.
- More old items and historical exhibits
- The lighting was too dim to see on the second floor.
- More information about the poor house, it's history, the children and where they went. The children's stories.
- The displays contain a lot of text, hard to follow, must be highly literate.

WCMA staff have met to discuss each of the above mentioned suggestions and we are incorporating these ideas into our planning.

Programming

In October, the Museum hosted eight cemetery tours to a total audience of 240 people. New this year was a sold out Murder Mystery evening, where most participants came dressed in costume and enjoyed the food, with two thirds also having purchased refreshments. October also saw the delivery of 75 crafts to families across Wellington County, and a Crime Scene Investigation themed PD Day Camp including finger printing and evidence gathering activities for children. Aside from staffing costs, these events cost \$1,408 and raised \$6,484 in revenue. We have an additional PD Day Camp with a Hakuna Matata Disney theme November 26.

#hopeandhealingcanada

On November 19, the WCMA will welcome encaustic artist Tracey-Mae Chambers to our site to complete an outdoor art installation as part of her #hopeandhealingCanada series. Chambers is a member of the Métis Nation of Ontario and initiated this project as a way to spark discussions, promote healing, and foster connections in communities across Ontario.

The strain and trauma brought on by the pandemic and recent discoveries of children's graves at former residential school sites spurred Chambers to create a series of temporary installations constructed of red string. Red represents blood, passion, anger, danger, power and a slur against Indigenous peoples. It can also represent courage and love, an important focus of Chambers' work. The vibrant red string is intricately woven and intertwined with the natural elements of the chosen site, which at the WCMA will include our historic gates at Wellington Road 18 that bear the name "Wellington Home."

153rd Battalion Colours

The WCMA is completing a thorough examination of the 153rd (Wellington) Battalion Colours, which were presented to the Battalion on October 6, 1916 and deposited with St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Fergus on March 30, 1917 for safekeeping when the Battalion proceeded overseas during the First World War.

The Colours have remained on respectful display at St. Andrew's since that date, and the WCMA is grateful for their loan so that staff can examine and document them for our records.

The Colours consist of two flags, the Sovereign Colour (also known as the King's Colour) and the Regimental Colour. Following tradition, the King's Colour is based on the national flag, in this case the Union Flag (Union Jack). The Regimental Colour bears the name and motto of the 153rd Battalion, "Virtutis Fortuna Comes," fortune is the companion of virtue, or Fortune Favours the Bold/Brave. The arms are based on the Duke of Wellington's arms, surrounded by maple leaves and surmounting a beaver that represents Canada.

Both flags were made of weighted silk with gilt embroidery and finished on three sides by a heavy gold metallic fringe. They remain on their original wooden pikes which were cut down to fit into a



display case, but still retain their original lion and crown finials. Due to the delicate nature of weighted silk and heavy fringe, the flags are presently in extremely fragile condition.

At the outset of this project, it was the intention of WCMA staff to examine the flags and offer assistance in cleaning and conserving the flags to professional museum standards. Further research has revealed that when a regiment is disbanded and their Colours are “laid-up,” they are traditionally left to decay naturally and no conservation is attempted to extend their life. With this in mind, the WCMA is consulting with the Directorate of History and Heritage (Department of National Defence) to determine what course of action, if any, is appropriate to take before the Colours are returned to St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church.

The above Regimental Colour (front) shows the diagonal fading, tears and missing silk, and darkened fringe.

The below image depicts the Union Flag canton on Regimental Colour, showing “shattered” silk (fracturing due to degradation).



The below displays the King’s Colour (front) showing some missing and unraveled sections of fringe.



Historical Background

The 153rd "Wellington" Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force was organized in December 1915 and recruited local men from throughout Wellington County and the City of Guelph. The battalion received its Colours in a public ceremony at Exhibition Park in Guelph on October 6, 1916. The flags were presented by Miss Holliday and Mrs. Perry, President and Vice President respectively of the Wellington County Women's League, the organization that funded their creation. The Colours were blessed by Archdeacon Gilbert F. Davidson of St. George's Anglican Church (Guelph), assisted by Rev. Captain William Ernest Hindson, the Battalion Chaplain. The Colours were then presented to the Commanding Officer of the Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Thomas Pritchard, and Adjutant Captain Roy Allan Paul. At the conclusion of the ceremony, the Battalion "Trooped the Colours" past the assembled dignitaries and crowds before returning to training manoeuvres. We are grateful to Councillor Jeff Duncan for facilitating the connection with St. Andrew's Church, providing us the honour of this project and showing The Union Flag in the Remembrance Day Ceremony November 5, in addition to our County Council Cultural Moment this month.



The above image depicts the Presentation of Colours to Colonel Shannon, Officer Commanding, First Military District (A1955.19.15)



The above image shows the Archdeacon Davidson blessing the Colours, October 6, 1916
(A1955.19.15)



The above image shows the Colour Party with 153rd Battalion in background (A1955.19.15)



The above image shows the Trooping of the Colours (A1955.19.15)

The Archives

In October, Archives staff answered 29 phone calls and responded to 60 emails as well as processed 22 photo reproduction orders. 63 members of the public visited the Archives Reading Room.

Inquiries from the public this month included: obituary search in the Arthur Enterprise; research into a Breadalbane recipe book; accessing family files; research for bypass coming to St. Anderson Street in Fergus; Guelph Advertiser from the 1850's; Beatty Barn books; Nichol Township map and tax assessment rolls from the 1860's; Belwood property history research; Maryborough Township family history; Stephen Thorning historical index cards and resources relating to the history of Aboyne.

Images from our collection were used for the following purposes: commercial advertising display; heritage consultant's report; online article for an obituary; family history publication; online newspaper article; publication in a book; parents' anniversary gift; podcast and website; display in a retirement home and the Dictionary of Canadian Biography.

Archives staff, Karen Wagner, Lisa Harrison and Kyle Pugh were involved in their first live Facebook event on Ask the Archivist day, October 13 thanks to the expert assistance of Communications Officers, Kayla-Wray Amy and Rachel Wilson. This event gave the public an opportunity to connect directly with staff to ask questions and learn about how they are working to preserve, protect and share the County's archival resources.

<https://www.facebook.com/wellingtoncountymuseum/videos/841945443158668>



Rachel Wilson filming Lisa Harrison as she describes the different types of photographs in the Archives collection.

Recommendation:

That the WCMA Update be received for information and forwarded to County Council.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jana Burns'.

Jana Burns
Wellington Place Administrator