



CHAMPLAIN TRAIL MUSEUM AND PIONEER VILLAGE

STRATEGIC PLAN

JUNE 2020 TO MAY 2025





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Introduction

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF THE CTM

The Champlain Trail Museum and Pioneer Village is operated by the Ottawa Valley Historical Society, whose sole purpose is to oversee the operation of the museum. In 1955, a small group of dedicated historians came together with a goal of preserving the history of Pembroke and area. This was the beginning of the Ottawa Valley Historical Society (OVHS).

In 1957, the OVHS obtained the 1838 Lowertown schoolhouse and approximately two acres of land. The schoolhouse had served continuously as a place of learning for over a hundred years.

In 1958, the OVHS opened the Champlain Trail Museum, Pembroke's first museum, in the old schoolhouse. Through the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Dean Rogers, a large log home was reconstructed on the museum property and opened as a furnished pioneer home in 1965. The museum's collection grew steadily through donations and outgrew the physical capacity of the schoolhouse. In 1979, a new, much larger, museum building was opened.

During the summer of 1997, the museum acquired the Micksburg United Church, which was donated by its congregation. In 1999 the museum's collection of heritage buildings was enlarged with the addition of a restored blacksmith's workshop.

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

Today in the main gallery, or Founders' Hall, visitors will discover a replica of Samuel de Champlain's astrolabe. They can explore Pembroke at the turn-of-the-century by wandering through a Victorian home, viewing an early doctor's office and strolling past Pembroke's first motorized fire engine from 1923. There's also a re-creation of Lemke's General Store and a 1930s-era barbershop and beauty parlour.

The story of the timber industry in the Upper Ottawa Valley is represented by an authentic Cockburn pointer boat and a depiction of the life of a log driver. A large steam engine that once powered a lumber mill in Pembroke is also on display. Temporary historical-themed exhibits are in the main gallery as well.

Outside in the pioneer village, visitors learn about life through the eyes of a pioneer in this area. The large mural on the side of the Museum building depicts "The Pioneers of Pembroke Township 1820-1850." This mural is part of a large collection owned by Pembroke Heritage Murals.



Context

Operating Small Museums in Rural Communities

Museums are touchstones that create context for our lives and support a sense of belonging for residents. Rural museums often support necessary community roles beyond the preservation of artifacts. They are visitor information centres, social hubs, extensions of schools, referral centres and community partners in economic development.

The Ottawa Valley Historical Society is the custodian of a large collection of important artifacts that help tell the stories of Pembroke and area at the Champlain Trail Museum and Pioneer Village.

This museum is one of three in Renfrew County that is in the lucky position of being able to hire a qualified museum professional. Further to this, only two of the twenty-one museums currently operating in Renfrew County have the capacity to access Community Museums Operating Grant (CMOG) funding. Most of the county's museums are run by, or heavily rely on, volunteers for administrative and curatorial work. **The two paid curators in Renfrew County are required to handle administration and fundraising tasks, leaving insufficient time for curatorial work.**

Through the process of developing a strategic plan to guide and support the Champlain Trail Museum and Pioneer Village for the next five years, it is apparent that there are a number of fundamental operational issues that must be addressed for the longevity of the museum. Therefore, while it might be unconventional, several of the strategic objectives in this plan relate to the operational functions of the museum.

The Champlain Trail Museum is at a crossroads. When the museum has addressed some key operational issues surrounding funding and governance, it will be in a strong position to work on strategic goals such as cementing relationships with Indigenous leaders, engaging with youth and working with community partners to offer exciting exhibitions and programming.



Statements

Vision

Our vision is to inspire learning and creativity through a shared understanding of Pembroke and area's heritage.

Mission

Anchored by its collection of artifacts, the Champlain Trail Museum and Pioneer Village connects the history of Pembroke and area with contemporary life by telling compelling stories through exhibitions and programming for all ages.



Executive Summary

We have developed a five-year plan that:

- Takes positive steps to more accurately reflect the culture and histories of Indigenous communities.
- Engages more of the community by refreshing the content of our permanent and temporary exhibitions.
- Proposes solutions to the museum's funding gap.
- Outlines a plan for consistent branding and public communication.
- Bolsters the volunteer base, membership base and grows our audience.
- Updates the by-laws, governance structure and human resources process.
- Invests in physical assets and operational improvements.

Strategic Priority Areas

Exhibitions and Programming

Collections, Curatorial, Research

Educational Partnerships

Administration and Finance

Audience and Membership Development

Volunteer Training, Recruitment and Reward

Physical Premises

Branding and Marketing

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREAS AND OBJECTIVES

COLLECTIONS, CURATORIAL, RESEARCH

Display artifacts from the collection online, so they're accessible to all abilities, at all times.

EXHIBITIONS AND PROGRAMMING

Update the permanent and temporary exhibitions and programs to meet the expectations of contemporary museum visitors.

Expand the museum's physical presence within Renfrew County.

Redress outdated Indigenous representation.

PHYSICAL PREMISES

A plan is created to resolve a list of required renovations and repairs to the main museum building and several pioneer buildings.

BRANDING AND MARKETING

Potential museum visitors receive consistent and compelling messaging about the museum.



CHAMPLAIN TRAIL
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VOLUNTEER TRAINING, RECRUITMENT AND REWARD

Increase the museum's volunteer base.

AUDIENCE AND MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Increase the museum's visitorship and memberships.

ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

The museum creates a foundation of financial health.

Update museum human resources policy, by-laws and governance structure as required.

Modernize and update museum human resources policy, by-laws and governance structure as required.

EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Boost engagement with youth and expand our relationship with schools.



The Strategic Planning Process

The strategic planning process took place from January 2020 to April 2020. It was developed by Placemaking Design (Anya Gansterer and Beth Kennedy) in conjunction with Angela Siebarth (museum curator/director) and the Ottawa Valley Historical Society board of directors.

Phase 1: Data Collection and situational analysis

IN-PERSON CONSULTATION

During the visioning sessions, stakeholders participated in a SWOT analysis covering collections, exhibitions, programming and community outreach. These sessions were attended by educators, volunteers, Indigenous partners, the curator, OVHS board members and community stakeholders.

PHONE CONVERSATIONS

Many stakeholders (including volunteers, Indigenous partners, curator, OVHS board members and other community stakeholders) chose to participate through phone conversations (due to pandemic). These conversations focused on audience and membership, marketing/promotion, human resources, volunteer recruitment, board governance, financial health and physical assets.

DIGITAL SURVEY

The survey was directed toward the general public and included questions regarding visitor experience, programming and the role of a museum as a public institution.

The survey was shared with the general public, members, partners and sponsors via social media, newsletter and specific email. Sixty-eight people completed the survey.

Phase 2: Strategy Development

Based on feedback from the stakeholder consultations and survey results, we updated the vision and mission statements, the strategic action areas, our goals and objectives and developed an action and implementation plan to achieve our goals.

The strategic plan was approved by the OVHS Board of directors on _____.

“I love the museum. I had a family pass last season and I will buy one again this year.” —*Survey comment*

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:

Update the permanent and temporary exhibitions and programs to meet the expectations of contemporary museum visitors.

ACTION	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE	COST
Develop a plan to refresh, rotate and renew existing permanent displays, which have been static for several years.	Year 1	Curator and exhibitions committee	Operating funds
Throughout museum, list potential areas to incorporate interactive activities to enhance user experience.			
Investigate the feasibility of constructing a temporary exhibition gallery inside the main hall to feature travelling exhibitions as well temporary exhibits developed by the museum.			
Apply for funding to construct a new temporary exhibitions gallery and update the permanent exhibitions.			
Incorporate a story telling voice into the interpretive information.	Year 2	Curator and exhibitions committee	Operating funds
Gather stories from Indigenous groups, historical documents, local lore and seniors.	Year 2 and ongoing		
Create an Indigenous narrative throughout the permanent and temporary displays. Weave Indigenous content and local stories more thoroughly throughout the museum's timeline.	Year 3		
Install new gallery and updated exhibitions in the first four exhibits.	Year 3		OTF Capital Grant

CRITICAL SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- A more diverse range of visitors see themselves reflected in the stories and content shared at the museum.
- Increase in members.
- Increase in volunteers.
- Increase in admissions and donation revenue.
- Increase in community partnerships and collaborations.
- Increase in visitorship from young families and youth.
- The display plan speaks to the wide range of cultural groups in Renfrew County.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:

Expand the museum's physical presence within Renfrew County.

ACTION	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE	COST
Work with strategic partners to install mini-exhibition displays at facilities outside of the museum that direct visitors to the museum.	Year 4 and 5	Curator and exhibitions committee	Funded via strategic partnerships and sponsorship

CRITICAL SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- Increased visits to the museum.
- Increased revenue via admissions.
- Increased membership.
- The museum has exhibits in various locations throughout Renfrew County, including libraries, shopping malls, schools, hotels, service clubs, local businesses, municipal facilities, town/city halls.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:

Redress outdated Indigenous representation.

ACTION	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE	COST
Build relationships via conversations, meetings and visiting Indigenous groups in Renfrew County.	Year 1 and ongoing	Curator and exhibitions committee	Operating funds
Create new permanent Indigenous exhibit informed by Indigenous cultural leaders.	Year 2 and 3	Curator and Indigenous consultant	Funded via a capital grant from Ontario Trillium Foundation

CRITICAL SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- Indigenous culture and history are accurately represented through the exhibitions.
- The museum reinforces and draws from partnerships with Indigenous cultural groups and leaders.
- Increase in revenue via visitors and admissions.
- Increase in membership.
- Increase in volunteers.
- Increase in strategic partnerships.

“My children participate in the excellent summer programming.” —Survey comment

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:

Display artifacts from the collection online, so they're accessible to all abilities, at all times.

ACTION	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE	COST
Identify which artifacts to display online.	Year 2	Curator and collections committee	Funded by a partnership grant via Ontario's tourism organization.
Use Past Perfect program to write interpretive information for each artifact, geared toward the fact that it's online.			
Work with a professional photographer to coordinate a photoshoot of the museum exhibits.			
Work with web developer to create online access to exhibits and collections.			
Work with OHTO to access funding for this initiative.			

CRITICAL SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- The collection is available to the general public.
- Increased website traffic.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:

Boost engagement with youth and expand our relationship with schools.

ACTION	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE	COST
Engage with the school board's Indigenous consultants.	Year 2	Curator and education committee	Operating funds
Support a youth-led focus group to assess how the museum can meet the needs of youth.	Year 2 and ongoing		
Work with Renfrew County District School Board (RCDSB) students and the IT department to have students identify a display/ area in which they'd like to develop an interactive exhibit.	Year 3		
Work with the RCDSB to integrate museum artifacts into across-the-board curriculum learning (i.e. outreach presentations, educational kits, e-learning).	Year 3 and ongoing		
Continue to work with local schools by inviting them for field trips and helping to coordinate.	Ongoing		

CRITICAL SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- More youth are engaged in museum activities.
- Schools see CTM as an integral asset to their curriculum.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:

The museum creates a foundation of financial health.

ACTION	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE	COST
Form a new fundraising committee consisting of a board member and two members of the community with proven fundraising experience.	Year 1	Curator and fundraising committee	Operating funds
Conduct a review of the funding options available (public and private) that support the museum's strategic plan.			
Prepare presentations and host meetings with strategic partners, (such as government officials, corporate members, partners and individual community members) to assess where collaboration and/or potential funding opportunities may develop.			
Review the curator's current work plan and schedule to reorganize her time to allow her to focus on grant applications and other funding options to support the strategic direction of the museum.			
Apply for funding.	Year 1 and ongoing		

CRITICAL SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- More revenue in reserves.
- No longer drawing on reserve funds for operating costs.
- Successfully receive grants.
- Less reliance on monthly events for income.
- Relationships with strategic partners are renewed and fostered.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:

Update museum human resources policy, by-laws and governance structure as required.

ACTION	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE	COST
Establish a committee to review by-laws and governance.	Year 1	Board of directors, museum allies and curator	Operating funds
Identify by-laws that require updating.		Board of directors and curator	
Review and update by-laws as required.			
Review and update governance structure as required with a goal to stability and transparency.			
Revise the human resources committee to include one board member and two non-board members who have HR experience, in order to have an objective viewpoint to assess HR concerns.		Board of directors	

CRITICAL SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- Board and curator roles are more clearly defined.
- Defined roles lead to individual accountability.
- Staff feel supported by a professional human resources system.
- By-laws reflect contemporary situation.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:

Increase the museum’s visitorship and memberships.

ACTION	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE	COST
Invite youth to join a focus group to assess how the museum can meet the needs of youth.	Year 1	Curator	Operating funds
Leverage the new branding and the revamped exhibits to engage with audiences, volunteers and members.	Year 2 and ongoing		
Develop and deepen relationships with community partners whose membership or clientele are potential museum users.			
Create customized membership packages to appeal to a range of museum users, <i>for example</i> : a family package might include a discount on summer programs; the student package might offer some free hours researching in collections; a schools’ package might offer discounted rates; a seniors’ package; an events package.			

CRITICAL SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- Potential visitors receive consistent and compelling messaging about the museum to encourage visiting the museum.
- Visitor numbers and memberships increase.
- Increase in donations, increase in revenue from admissions.
- More likes and shares on Facebook.
- Website traffic increases.
- Increase in youth participation at the museum.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:

Increase the museum's volunteer base.

ACTION	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE	COST
Form a volunteer recruitment committee composed of the curator and two volunteers.	Year 1	Curator and volunteer recruitment committee	Operating funds and New Horizons for Seniors Program
Update the volunteering policy and procedures document.			
Create a welcome package clarifying the roles of volunteers, to whom they report and work schedules.			
Create a volunteer recognition plan.			
Create a clear and engaging call-to-action to recruit new volunteers.	Year 1 and ongoing		

CRITICAL SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- An increase in the number of volunteers.
- Volunteers feel valued.
- Volunteers have clear duties and responsibilities.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:

Resolve required renovations and repairs to the main museum building and several pioneer buildings.

ACTION	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE	COST
<p>Prioritize and begin implementing renovations and repairs, such as:</p> <p>Pioneer Village: Replace Kids' Day shelter roof and Pioneer Home roof, replace stone lifter wheel, rehabilitate wheels on logging cart, rehabilitate artifacts.</p> <p>Main Museum: Entrance porch roof, main building roof, install change tables in the washrooms, replace faucets in washrooms.</p> <p>Procure quotes based on prioritized list.</p>	Year 1	OVHS maintenance committee	Building repairs are funded via not-for-profit revenue from local charity bingo.
<p>Enact monthly maintenance and site inspections in order to be proactive on addressing potential infrastructure issues.</p> <p>Apply for infrastructure funding for identified renovations and repairs to various buildings to supplement bingo revenue.</p>	Year 1 and ongoing	Curator	Operating funds

CRITICAL SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- The buildings and grounds continue to be well maintained spaces that are inviting and safe for the public.
- Potential maintenance issues are identified in a timely manner and preventative actions are taken.

“The grounds are great for photography.” —*Survey comment*

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:

Potential museum visitors receive consistent and compelling messaging about the museum.

ACTION	TIMELINE	RESPONSIBLE	COST
Conduct an audit of the communications platforms currently used and develop a strategy for effectively communicating with specific groups for specific events as well as the general public.	Year 1	Summer student staff	Canada Summer Jobs student funding
Work with a consultant/graphic designer to host a visioning session with key stakeholders to update the existing logo and identify key descriptive words and content for the museum. The consultant/graphic designer will create a style guide to support the curator/board and volunteers in projecting a consistent brand for the museum.	Year 1	Curator and branding/marketing committee	Operating funds
Work with the Ottawa Valley Tourism Association (OVTA) and Ontario's Highlands Tourism Organization (OHTO) to coordinate photoshoots, and collaborate with other Ottawa Valley museums to share the cost of professional fees.	Year 1 and 2		

CRITICAL SUCCESS INDICATORS:

- The museum has a consistent brand and style guide to apply across all communications, publicity, website and printed promotional materials.
- The museum has an archive of professional photographs and videos that support current tourism marketing trends as well as the museum's new style guide.
- The museum has a better understanding of the museum's audience for effective communication and promotion.
- Increased visitation.
- Increase admissions revenue.
- Increased volunteerism.

APPENDIX 1: SWOT ANALYSIS SUMMARY

KEY STRENGTHS

The museum has a robust collection of artifacts that reflect the heritage of Pembroke and area.

Museum programming is innovative and well attended.

The museum has been officially designated a strategic partner by the City of Pembroke.

The current membership and volunteers are loyal and hard-working.

Good use of social media to engage people in experiencing artifacts from the collection.

The museum has a human resource committee and policy.

The board takes ownership of and is proud of the museum.

Museum has savings and is in a position to cover funding gaps in the short term.

The pioneer village and grounds are in good shape and well maintained.

KEY WEAKNESSES

Lack of staffing resources and funding to complete accessioning process for collections.

The permanent exhibition does not change often.

The permanent exhibition does not accurately or effectively reflect Indigenous cultural and history.

Museum programming has low engagement with youth and young adults.

The museum lacks a physical presence in the local and broader community.

The audience and membership is not growing and a high percentage of the membership is from only one age group (seniors).

The brand communication is not consistent across all the platforms.

The museum exhibits and collections are not available digitally.

No clear call-to-action for volunteers at the museum.

The board does not have a succession plan.

The museum currently has a funding gap.

A number of roofs need repairing.

KEY THREATS

Potential damage to the collection via inadequate storage facilities.

Decrease in funding from traditional sources to support the development of new exhibitions.

People may not be interested or able to gather in large groups as a result of COVID 19.

Not enough staff time to achieve all of the goals.

Staff and volunteer retention.

Aging volunteer and membership base.

Operating funding is hard to come by.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

Work with other museum institutions and partners to fill the funding and staffing gap to accession collection.

Work with Indigenous cultural leaders and organizations to incorporate new exhibits and interpretation.

Connect with high schools and youth groups to learn directly from youth about how they want to engage with the museum.

Engage with strategic partners to create more physical presences of the museum in public spaces in the community.

Introduce new exhibitions and content to engage with new audiences and grow membership.

Work with a designer to create a style guide for the museum's communications.

Work with OHTO to access funding for creating virtual exhibits.

Work with professional HR people to establish an arm's-length HR committee for the museum.

Work with strategic partners and shift the curator's time to pursue other funding opportunities.

Apply for capital grants to support physical upkeep and renovations.

APPENDIX 2: EVALUATION

The museum will assess and evaluate its progress in achieving the strategic objectives relative to the vision statement by creating weekly, monthly and annual work plans. At monthly OVHS board meetings, the curator and the OVHS board will assess the progress that has been made and address any barriers and/or challenges that have arisen in the process of meeting those objectives.



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