

Kelowna Museums Society

Executive Summary

With roots that go back over 90 years, Kelowna Museums acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of our region. We hold collections in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations, and create inclusive and polyphonic space for dialogue about pasts and futures. Through exhibits, programs and communications, we enhance understanding, promote tolerance, and contribute to community health and well-being.ⁱ

To this end, we operate the **Okanagan Heritage Museum**, which also houses the **Central Okanagan Sports Hall of Fame**, **Kelowna Public Archives** – which serves researchers from all across the country - as well as the **Ursula Surtees Conservation Lab**, the only facility of its kind in the Interior.

Kelowna Museums also operates the **Okanagan Military Museum**, the only public military museum in BC. Through exhibits, collections, and educational programs this museum is an important place of remembrance and dialogue. In addition, the **Vince Bezeau Military Library and Archives** supports research for historians, writers, and families.

The iconic agricultural industry which shaped the Okanagan we know is featured at the **Okanagan Wine and Orchard Museum** in the **Laurel Packinghouse**. We also operate the Laurel as a community venue for public meetings, events, festivals, fundraisers and family celebrations. In 2019, we hosted **182** events at the Laurel.

Mission

The Kelowna Museums Society provides the public with educational exhibitions and programs that foster personal participation, stimulate curiosity, and engage the senses with the cultures, histories, and possibilities of the Okanagan region.

Vision

To inspire a community to be alive with its history – *connecting people and place*.

Values

Inclusive – Authentic –Inspiring

Community Outcomes

Kelowna Museums employs **fifteen** full time staff, plus **two to twelve** part time, intern, student and casual positions every year. We attract young professionals to Kelowna and offer quality, career building work. Even with the restrictions of COVID-19, during 2020 and 2021 we provided eight meaningful paid internships for recent graduates and twelve student positions.

In 2021 our payroll was **\$810,000** and we spent **\$1.3m** in the local economy.

The museum collection includes an estimated **500,000** objects that relate to natural history, peopling the land, building social and community life, and expressing intellectual and cultural life

In 2019, **34,277** people directly participated in museum activities and **26,280** participated in events at the Laurel Packinghouse, so our direct reach was **60,557**. Our rich program menu engages school children from every neighborhood, income level, and ethnicity with local heritage. In 2019, **22,228** people participated in educational programs for students, families, and adults. More than 13,000 of these were school children at **549** guided school programs.

Programs continued during COVID-19, with new offerings pivoting to digital and outdoor settings. In 2020, we presented **423** guided school programs. 152 were in-person and 271 were virtual field studies. We offered **92** public programs for 5281 adults and children in a mixture of virtual and in-person offerings.

In 2020, one teacher wrote, *“Just letting you know that AW did a super job on our recent virtual field trip with the museum! I am all too familiar with the challenges of entertaining students on a virtual learning experience so I can truly appreciate AW’s efforts. She was organized, fun and provided wonderful insight on our studies.”*

In 2020 we reached **9,883** followers with curatorial content on social media.

Through storytelling, partnerships and diverse programming, Kelowna Museums provides opportunities for the community to *“value its history, celebrate our heritage, and learn from our past to reconcile it with a better, more inclusive future we see for ourselves.”* At the same time, we add vibrancy to our urban centres, create connections, and enrich the cultural scene. We also serve as a regional hub for curatorial partnerships, mentorship, and training. These are some of the ways we support the **Official Community Plan and Cultural Plan**. A few examples are provided below.

In 2020 we launched *Los Tours del Museo*, **broadening our reach (Goal 9)** to Latinex newcomers to Kelowna and region and **celebrating the growing diversity of our community (Goal 6.2)**. In the first year, we attracted over 100 people from Mexico, Nicaragua, Colombia and other Spanish speaking countries to the museum for in-person tours in their native language. The response has been gratifying; families say learning about their new home at the museum helps them feel like they belong.

In 2021, we began utilizing the new Laurel Square an outdoor classroom (**Goals 5,6**). We offered historic walking tours, cemetery tours, programs by “bubble,” and even museum exit rooms. One adult wrote, *“I learned more history from this presentation than I have living here for 30 years.”*

In 2020, our Elder-led Nakulamen program series pivoted to a digital platform. In this way we are **removing barriers to access, sharing the story and learning from our past (Goals 3,5,8)** with more people from a wider geographic base. We are proud to reach Indigenous peoples from as far away as Ontario, who want to connect with and learn about syilx knowledge and culture.

On the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, we welcomed **450** learners into the museum to engage in thought provoking encounters about the impact of Indian Residential Schools on syilx communities to **connect and convene**, and to **learn from our past (Goals 5,10)**.

Our biggest priority at this time in our journey of reconciliation. While we have a long way to go, we are committed to walking this path in relationship with our Indigenous communities. We strive to include syilx knowledge, perspective and voice in our exhibitions and programs. The Board adopted the new Heritage BC Reconciliation Pledge and we were the first museum to sign the BC Museums Association Repatriation Call to Action.

¹ Canadian researchers have ascertained that 80% of Canadians consider museums trusted sources of information, and that those who participate in cultural activities report better health, better mental health, greater satisfaction with life, and possible a greater sense of community belonging.