



OGNIWO Polish Museum Society Inc.

Polskie Towarzystwo Muzealne OGNIWO

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2022 Annual Report



In 2022, OgniwO Polish Museum continued its recovery process from the Covid pandemic. We began to see more normal operating activities, with a gradual return of both volunteers and visitors to our space, a resumption of regular Open hours, and a collective sigh of relief to be able to gather together again. Although there were still some issues that had to be worked through, we were able to present and participate in more events over the past two years.

Events and Exhibits

Our continuing exhibit from Fall of 2021 – *Smacznego!: Polish Food Traditions Then and Now* - continued to resonate, highlighting the historical, social, and cultural impacts of Polish cuisine on our communities. The exhibit also helped us frame some of our other events, including Folklorama.

With Folklorama back on, we were able to bring the tastiest portions of the *Smacznego* exhibit to the Polish Pavilion downtown. Our volunteers were happy to connect with visitors at the cultural display and bond over food traditions and food memories. We handed out unique Polish recipe cards and asked visitors to write down their fondest food memories on a sharing board. We were not surprised to see that the word “Babcia” (*Grandmother*) featured prominently in so many of the food memories shared. Overall, many positive comments were received from



visitors, as well as reminiscences of favourite foods, kitchen aromas, and various ethnic traditions from around the world. Thank you to volunteer members Ela Tukaj and Ola Tutaj for their help in staffing the display.

Our children's programs included age-appropriate interactive quizzes with the food theme, do-it-yourself Pisanki kits, and making Christmas paper ornaments. Thank you to volunteers, including Ela Tukaj, Sara Szewczyk, and Ewa Wadowska, for their assistance with these events.

With the help of a federal Reopening Fund for Heritage Institutions, the Museum was able to refocus on its archive and artefact collections. Supplies were purchased, training of new volunteers was reintroduced, and photography training was provided by professional photographer Mirek Weichsel to help produce quality photos of artefacts for our digital Collections Management system.

The Museum continued its work on accessioning, describing, and making available its archival collections. Archivist Marta Dabros supervised volunteers working through a number of small archival projects, including a digitization project using the newly purchased oversize scanner. Our Collections Manager, Alycia Walichnowski, and Director Christine Tabbernor continued work as part of a joint working group with other Manitoba museums on the development of a new collections database that will house the descriptions of our artefact collections and make them available via a new online portal called *Musetoba*.

Volunteers continued to work on our next exhibit, *They Left a Legacy*. With the assistance of the Manitoba Heritage Grants program, we were able to purchase several new frameless glass cases through a local supplier. Volunteers Christine and Dennis Tabbernor spent a few days putting together these professional cases. The finished results are fabulous and will help the Museum to display not only the exhibit for which they were bought, but also future exhibits. Researchers Magda Blackmore, Marta Dabros, Dan Stone, Bozena Langtry, and Christine Tabbernor continued putting together the stories that will be featured as part of this exhibit in 2023.

The Polish Dance Ensemble SPK Iskry conducted oral history audio/visual sessions at Ogniwo Polish Museum over several weeks, in preparation for their 50th anniversary in 2023, with the assistance of historian and Director Magda Blackmore. These recordings and the film being produced will be donated to the museum as part of the Iskry archives.

With the assistance of instructor Katarzyna Rdzanek-Hodor, we were able to open the museum for two six-week sessions of beginner Polish Language classes for anyone interested. The classes were a success and participants were eager to continue learning on their Polish language journey.



We welcomed our friends again for the **Raise Your Spirits Fundraiser**, held on Saturday, October 22nd, 2022. The theme was a **1970s House Party- Prywatka z lat 70**, where guests were encouraged to wear 1970s garb and participate in an evening of 1970s music, great food, and beverages. We were also able to partner with the

Baltic Brothers Crafted Infusions to learn about the Polish tradition of infusing flavours into vodka and to sample their creations. A great time was had by all.

In the Community

In-person meetings began again in our building, not just for Ogniw, but also our partner organizations: the Polish Women's Federation Branch #7, St. John Cantius Fraternal Aid Society, the Polish Studies Endowment Fund Committee, and an annual meeting of the Manitoba Division of the Canadian Polish Congress.

Museum representatives were pleased to host Consul General of the Republic of Poland, Magdalena Pszczolkowska, on her visit to Winnipeg. We toured the exhibit and collections spaces and discussed how the Museum can further its mission to develop an awareness and understanding of the Polish experience in Canada through exhibits, lectures, and workshops. We also discussed the crucial role that our museum plays in preserving and making accessible the histories and documentary heritage of our community through its artefact, archive, and library collections.



Our President, Marnie Masiowska, was featured on Radio Polonia to present Easter greetings, to speak about Ogniw Polish Museum, and to highlight some of our upcoming events.

We participated in a Paint Afternoon with our sister organization, the Polish Women's Federation, where participants were able to complete an art project under the tutelage of local Polish artist Wioletta Los.

Museum members showed support for our friends in the Polish Dance Ensemble SPK Iskry, contributing \$290 of individual funds to their fundraising efforts for an excursion to perform in British Columbia.



Ogniwo was also happy to participate in the Cooks Creek Heritage Day at Cooks Creek, MB, with a small exhibit to support the event, thanks to Collections Manager Alycia Walichnowski and Director Magda Blackmore.

Helping us to move along our journey of Reconciliation and knowledge, our members participated in a Learning Circle at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) at the University of Manitoba. We received an overview of the history of residential schools and day schools, as well as a contemporary history of the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement. Members also had a tour of the small gallery space, including the sacred



Bentwood Box, which received expressions of reconciliation from across the country as part of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This was a truly moving event for all of our members who were able to attend, including Marta Dabros, Wanda Slawik, Elizabeth Hogue, Magda Blackmore, Ela Tukaj, Ola and Mary Tutaj, Dan Stone, Bogusia Dittmar, and Marnie Masiowska.

Giving and Receiving: Grants, Endowment Fund

The grants generated by various levels of government went a long way in helping us remain financially viable in 2021. Their continued assistance in 2022 was instrumental in focusing our efforts toward reopening and recovery, as well as training new volunteers. Through the Canadian Heritage Fund (federal) and its Museum Assistance Program portal, we received a total of \$9000.

The Community Museums Level II grant (provincial) was applied at the pre-pandemic rate of \$3150, even though our museum would not normally have qualified under the categories of Total Days/Hours Open both in 2021 and the reopening phase of 2022. Their trust in our returning to “normal” was very much appreciated. We thank our Treasurer, Bogusia Dittmar, for her excellent bookkeeping.



Our Ogniwo Endowment Fund with the Winnipeg Foundation, under the auspices of the Manitoba Heritage Trust Program, continues to grow, with year-end fund results of \$175,750. Its growth over the three and a half years since it was established has been phenomenal, and is especially due to the continuing large donations from Will and Mavis Tishinski. To commemorate their significant contribution, the Ogniwo Board decided to name our library in their honour. A private

reception was held to unveil the new nameplate and to thank the Tishinski family for their philanthropy. In attendance were Tishinski family members, Ms. Cathy Cox MLA (then Minister of Sport, Culture and Heritage who initiated the Trust Program), representatives from Polish organizations as well as Museum members.

Building Improvements

General maintenance continued throughout 2022, but a new dehumidifier in the basement storage area was needed to replace the old one that finally died. We were also able to install a new wireless front doorbell, thanks to Ela and Walter Tukaj.

Thank You

The museum is a non-profit charitable organization and we could not have done any of these things without the hard work of our volunteers and the continued support of the community around us. We thank you for your continued support and look forward to bringing you more community programming in 2023.

