



OGNIWO POLISH MUSEUM SOCIETY INC.
1417 Main Street, Winnipeg, MB R2W 3V3

2023 Annual Report



A Note from the President

Welcome – Witamy!
How do we measure a year?

In 2023, we opened a large exhibit, hosted a pisanki workshop, 2 wycinanki workshops, and a Christmas handicrafts workshop.

We held 3 conversational Polish language courses for adults, transferred over 400 artefacts to the public-facing website of our Musetoba database and scanned over 1,000 images of archival data. We surpassed 1,000 followers on Instagram and operated a budget of over \$28,000.

All those beautiful displays of culture and history do not just happen – our volunteers bring it into existence through hours of work. None of this would be possible without our Board, members, and volunteers. I want to express a big thank you for their hard work, dedication, time, energy, passion, and vision. It is amazing to witness what happens when we work together: we create something larger than ourselves, something permanent, something lasting, for our community now and for future generations.

Events and Exhibits



We were happy to share our culture with Winnipeggers and visitors from near and far at the Folklorama Polish Pavilion cultural display at the RBC Convention Centre for a week in August. Our theme was Polish folk dress – the history and traditions associated with clothing in various regions of Poland.

On Sept. 14, 2023, we held the official launch of our newest exhibit, "They Left a Legacy," featuring stories of some of the remarkable individuals who helped build and shape

the Polish community in Manitoba. This exhibit is the next chapter in our quest to present the stories of Polish immigrants to Canada and was the culmination of two years of volunteer work. Using documentary archival materials, oral histories, as well as many artefacts associated with the individuals from our collection, we were able to highlight the contributions and achievements of Polonia members from the early 1900s to present day. The exhibit also featured several new 'frameless' glass display cases that were purchased through the funding of a Manitoba Heritage grant.



As part of the exhibit launch, we were pleased to host guest lecturer Dr. Michalina Petelska, Assistant Professor at the Institute of History of the University of Gdańsk, who gave a fascinating overview of her research into migration museums.

We were joined at the exhibit launch by representatives of the Polish Canadian Women's Federation Branch #7, the Canadian Polish Congress Manitoba Division, Polish Combatants' Association Branch #13, the Eastern European Genealogical

Society, and the University of Manitoba German and Slavic Studies Department, as well as our exhibit sponsors, the Polish Fraternal Aid Society of St. John Cantius and Holy Ghost Fraternal Aid Society. A big thank you to our sponsors and our Museum volunteers!

Collections Management

The Museum continued its work on accessioning, describing, and making available its artefact and 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 Secretary Christine Tabbernor

continued work as part of a joint working group with other Manitoba museums on the collections database that will house the descriptions of our artefact collections and make them available via a new online portal called *Musetoba*.

The collection also grew physically. With the funding received from the federal Recovery Fund for Heritage Organizations received in late 2022, our volunteers were able to purchase new shelving to store the collection, much-needed supplies to protect and preserve these items and create a new hanging storage solution for rolled tapestries and textiles. Volunteers re-organized the storage area, carved out a larger footprint for our archives, erected new shelving for artefacts, built coroplast storage boxes for clothing, hats and headpieces and encased the new storage shelves with protective sheeting.



In the Community

With the assistance of instructor Katarzyna Rdzanek-Hodor, we were able to open the museum for three 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.

Workshops were presented to children and teens of the Polish School of Dance SPK Iskry by Ogniwo volunteers Bożena Langtry, Ela Tukaj and Ewa Wadowska and to St. Joseph the Worker school by Alycia Walichnowski. Using coloured paper, scissors and glue, works of art were created in the age-old method of Polish *wycinanki*. The children's gathering for St. Nicholas day also featured traditional Christmas crafts – paper chains, colourful roosters, hanging mobiles, all ready to adorn Christmas trees at home. We would like to thank the School of Dance SPK Iskry for the great time we spent together!



Ogniwo was also happy to participate in the Cooks Creek Heritage Day at Cooks Creek, MB, with a small display to support the event, thanks to Ela Tukaj, Katarzyna Rdzanek Hodor, and Alycia Walichnowski.

In October, Ogniwo members attended our the Polish Women's Federation Branch #7 fundraiser. We continue to support our sister organization by attending their events, as well as providing them a space to hold meetings.

Giving and Receiving: Grants, Endowment Fund

At the end of fiscal year 2022, the federal government Department of Canadian Heritage made available the Recovery Fund for Heritage Institutions. Ogniwo's application focused on the need to improve our collections management storage system and resulted in \$4000 that we were able to utilize in 2023. The provincial Community Museums Level II grant was granted 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 just over \$192,000.

Building Improvements

In preparation for a new exhibit, it was time to spruce up the walls of our exhibit space. Thanks to volunteers Christine Tabbernor, Magda Blackmore and Boguslaw Dittmar, the painting transformation was complete. The dark walls, in tones of blue, have helped set off the text panels, photos and display cases.

It was also time to refurbish our security system. The decision was made to increase the number of smoke detectors (especially in the storage area) as well as to transition to a cellular, wireless system that will be responsive even during power failures.



Financial Update

The financial statements that were presented at the Annual General Meeting in early March 2024 reflect a year in transition. Accrued funds from end of 2022 allowed us to complete some major projects in 2024, but painted the Profit & Loss statement in 'red' ink when compared against 2023 income revenues. Added to this was the difficult decision made by the Board to not hold a

fundraiser in October, due to donor burnout and financial struggles created by Covid. On a positive note, our current account balance was able to withstand the higher expenses, so the museum has weathered this storm and will continue to manage its resources carefully in 2024.

Reconciliation

Our members are continuing on our journey of Reconciliation. Ogniwo is a signatory member to the Winnipeg Indigenous Accord and we continue to learn about and discuss our treaty obligations as settlers. In 2023, we researched opportunities to further educate ourselves and to undertake cross-cultural exchange and knowledge transfer. We began plans to host a Polish-Metis beading workshop with the Seven Oaks/Ross House Museum, which we hope to bring to fruition in 2024 and open to the public.

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 2024.

