



Links

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Ogniwo Polish Museum Society Inc.

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Welcome...Bienvenue...Witamy!

Perhaps you have passed this unimposing white building as you've driven down Main Street, on your way to some other destination. Perhaps you have even noticed that it is there. Little did you know that this was the home of the Ogniwo Polish Museum, and that a wealth of history, culture, and tradition is lurking just on the other side of the door!

Ogniwo (pronounced oh-GNEE-voh) means "links" in Polish, specifically links to the past. The museum fills a unique role, as it is the only organization of its kind in Canada. The museum's mission is to develop an awareness and understanding of the Polish experience in Canada in current and future generations of Canadians, presenting our stories through



exhibitions, presentations, workshops and special events. Its members share a vision of promoting of the Polish experience in Manitoba and Canada, the collection and preservation of artifacts reflecting both rural and urban lifestyles, and the exploration and exhibition of Polish history, traditions and folklore. It is a non-profit organization run completely through the efforts, energy, and devotion of volunteers.

So now that you know we exist, where we are located, and a little regarding what we're about, you're probably still thinking, "so what?".

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OGNIWO Polish Museum Society Inc.
1417 Main Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba R2W 3V3
Canada
(204) 586-5070
info@polishmuseum.com

Welcome *(continued from page 1)*

While our organization is driven to preserve the links to our history, we're also working to establish links with the present – with you – so that we are able to not just preserve memories to gather dust on a shelf, but so that this information brings meaning to those of us living in the here and now...so that information is exchanged and that we all have a greater understanding of each other.

So please think of this newsletter as a great big welcome mat meant for you. Please take a moment to read and explore through the different activities that are taking place in our organization. Perhaps some of them will capture your interest...well, actually, we hope that *all* of them will capture your interest – we're a pretty optimistic bunch! We hope that this will encourage you to come out and see one of our exhibits, take a workshop, or test out the waters and join us as a volunteer. You don't have to have a Polish background, just a healthy sense of curiosity.

We invite you to visit – serdecznie zapraszamy!
We hope to see you soon!

Doing Well by Doing Good

- Are you, or do you know someone who is enrolled as a student at a university or community college?
- Would you like to help a community (and earn a \$500 bursary at the same time)?
- Interested in developing valuable employment experience?

Youth Serves Manitoba allows full-time students enrolled in a minimum two-year program at the university or community college level to earn a \$500 bursary by volunteering at our Museum for a minimum 100 hours over the course of a semester (September to December, and January to May). If this is your final year of studies, you can also apply the bursary towards payment of your student loan.

If you are interested, please contact Christine Tabernor at 586-5070 for further information.

Celebrating Easter Traditions

The egg has been a powerful symbol of life in Polish folklore for over 1000 years. Many customs and traditions have arisen around the egg, but none more beloved and widely practiced than the making of "pisanki" – multi-coloured and patterned Easter eggs. Using nothing more than wax and dyes, a simple white egg becomes a miniature work of art. For centuries, Poles have used pisanki in a variety of traditions year-round including the all-important act of courtship; up until the mid-1800s, young Poles would identify the person they wanted to marry by giving them pisanki.

The Ogniwio Polish Museum is promoting the tradition of creating pisanki by presenting three Pisanki workshops before the Easter season. Workshops are open to people of all ages, and participants can chose to attend one or any combination of workshops, as there are no specific requirements or pre-requisites to attend. The workshops will take place at St. John Cantius Hall at the corner of Mountain Avenue and Arlington Street on the following dates:

- Saturday, April 1, 2-5 PM
- Sunday, April 2, 2-5 PM
- Saturday, April 8, 2-5 PM

The cost for each workshop is \$8 per participant. All supplies will be provided.



For further information regarding these workshops, please call either 586-5070 or 453-6610. Private workshops for larger groups can also be arranged.

Reserve a few hours this year to experience this creative tradition. Create a pisanka for yourself or for that special someone in your life.

Weaving an Amazing Tale

Upon entering a traditional Polish home, visitors could be struck by the colourful woven carpets that would adorn the walls. Regardless of whether they contained simple designs and were made of coarse wool or were made of much more refined materials and incorporated elaborate patterns or designs, kilims have been a popular decorative accessory in Polish homes. They helped to keep the home warm and added a distinctive decorative warmth as well.



What are kilims? The term *kilim* simply refers to a flat woven carpet, a kind of rug without any pile or knotted fluff, or a coarse, thin hand made carpet. The Polish kilim is part of a large international family that has different names in different languages: Afghanistan shares the same name of kilim, while in Ukraine it is known as *chylym*, in Syria and Lebanon it is called *chilim*, and in Iran *gelim*. As the saying goes, a beloved child has many names. It also has many homes; while it is believed that these weavings originated in the deserts of Africa or the wide open spaces of Central Asia, they have made their way into the traditions of a number of European cultures, including Scandinavia, Romania, Hungary, as well as Poland.

Polish kilims reached their zenith in the form of *Polonaise carpets*, 17th century Persian rugs woven in silk, gold and silver threads. They are named Polonaise because they were first exhibited in Poland and bore the Polish royal family's coat of arms. Today's kilims are much simpler in scope. Despite being made of wools instead of silks, they are still treasured artworks. Their warm tones and frequent depiction of fields and village life are a beloved reminder of a simpler time. To see examples of this beautiful artform, please visit our current exhibit – **Threads: Polish Weaving Culture**.

Expanding Our Horizons

Don't have time to hold a garage sale? Feel like cleaning out your attic? Please don't throw away those historic artifacts! The Ogniwio Polish Museum is researching the life of Polish pioneers in Canada. In order to do this, we need your help! We are searching for artifacts that date back to pioneer times, from both rural and urban settings, including:

- Photographs
- Books
- Paintings
- Embroidery
- Toys
- Army memorabilia (e.g., uniforms, medals, etc.)
- Clothing, including Polish regional costumes
- Letters
- Home furnishings
- Wood carvings
- Knitted or crocheted items
- Songs (both sheet music and recordings)

Donations can be brought to the Museum on Tuesdays from 7 to 9 PM and Thursdays from 11 AM to 3 PM, or by appointment (please call 586-5070 to arrange a time). You can also contact Mrs. G. Kuzia at (204) 453-6610 if you have any questions regarding the donation process. The Ogniwio Museum will ensure that donated artifacts will be maintained with the greatest care.

Artifacts from this era are rapidly disappearing. Please help our museum to accurately represent this historical period - your donation will have a significant impact on future generations of Canadians.



Be Our Hero!

There is a very creative element to volunteering at a museum – coming up with exhibit themes, selecting the artifacts, and then putting the actual display together. There is also a precision aspect – research, ensuring accuracy of facts, cataloguing artifacts and making sure that they are safely stored.

One aspect that is not always considered is the financial. There are numerous expenses that are part of operating a non-profit organization. From the creativity involved in mounting exhibits to the day to day requirements of maintaining the actual building that houses the museum and its collections, there are constant financial demands.

In order to continue to stay vibrant, we are always looking for heroes to help us out. We welcome your financial donations. Each contribution is eligible for a charitable receipt that can be applied to your next income tax return.

Are you interested in being our hero?

Please send your donation to:

Ogniwo Polish Museum
1417 Main Street
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For more information, please call
(204) 586-5070 or send us an email at
info@polishmuseum.com

Join Our Ranks!

Interested in learning more about Polish history, culture, and folklore? Would you like to discover more about pioneer life in Manitoba? Are you looking for an opportunity to volunteer a few hours per month while learning new skills? The Ogniwo Polish Museum is looking for you!

Who are we?

Ogniwo is a non-profit organization committed to the promotion of the Polish experience in Canada through Polish history, traditions, folklore, and through the preservation of the history of Poles in Manitoba.

What do we do?

Ogniwo currently carries out its mandate through the preparation and presentation of exhibits and workshops. We are also beginning the process of computerizing our record management system in order to improve its accuracy and efficiency.

Ogniwo collects and preserves artifacts reflecting both rural and urban lifestyles of Poles in Canada as well as researching the history of pioneer life.

What can we do for you?

Joining the Museum can offer a number of exciting opportunities:

- Meet new people
- Discover Polish history, culture, folklore, and the history of Poles in Canada
- Learn how to create exhibits and organize demonstrations
- Practice traditional folk arts and crafts
- Participate in organizing and running special events

These are just a few of the possibilities.

How can you join?

Membership dues are currently \$20 per year. To join or for more information regarding Ogniwo, please call 586-5070 or e-mail info@polishmuseum.com.