

## OGNIWO POLISH MUSEUM SOCIETY INC.

### ANNUAL REPORT

**1 January – 31 December, 2012**

as presented at the Annual General Meeting February 23, 2013

The year 2012 will be recorded in our history as a banner year. We attained or exceeded goals that had been on our wish list for a long time. The momentum gained from these successes will carry us forward into a period of continued growth. We could not have done this without the hard work of our volunteers, especially from those who decided to reach for the stars.

#### Events & Exhibits

In February we started the year with a new idea to fundraise and attract attention through our Vodka-Tasting evening. The novelty of pairing Polish vodkas with select Polish h'ors d'oeuvres was a great hit with all who attended. History about the making of Polish Spirits was also well received and helped educate attendees on alcohol production in Poland.

In April, our lecture "Your Roots are Showing", presented by Lisa Abassi from the Eastern European Genealogical Society drew a capacity crowd. This topic is one that we should present again in a few years. However, registration will be a must!

We also hosted an exhibit in cooperation with the Canadian Polish Congress (Manitoba Branch): "In the Footsteps of Polish Pioneers in Manitoba" that documented Polish settlements throughout the province, focusing on churches and cemeteries.

Our final exhibit for 2012 ran from September to December, and was featured during the weekend blitz of Culture Days: "Polish Posters: Hidden Messages as a Means of Communication". Thanks to great research work and some amazing examples of Polish poster art within our own community, this exhibit garnered a lot of positive attention. The exhibit will conclude in April, 2013.



#### Project Grants

We were successful in receiving grant approval from Manitoba Heritage Branch for 3 different projects in one year. These were for our Polish Posters exhibit, an upcoming Polish folk dance exhibit, and a new Oral History project, which will focus on Polish immigrants to Canada of the 1980s and 1990s. The first exhibit was completed in 2012, while the latter two projects will be completed in 2013. We also applied for the first time to the MB Historic Resources Branch for an operating grant as a Level II status Community Museum.

In response to an unexpected donation from CZAS Polish Press (after liquidation of assets), the Board approved the installation of a floor-to-ceiling bookshelf to be built in the office and become our reference library. This was completed during the summer by volunteers and is now being filled with accessioned books.

### **Infrastructure**

Throughout the winter and spring of 2012, environmental testing equipment was used to determine any problems and issues within the physical environment of the building where we host our exhibits and store our collection. Thanks to the Association of Manitoba Museums and their Cultural Stewardship Program, we were able to not only borrow their equipment, but also receive a comprehensive report showing the results of the data logger. As a result of this report, we were able to identify priorities that needed immediate attention, as well as the focus to apply for an Infrastructure Grant.

A federal grant program was discovered that seemed tailor-made for our purposes. The most critical items on our wish list were identified: a new high-efficiency furnace and air conditioning system, insulating and sealing the crawlspace and refinishing the wood floor in our exhibit area were targeted. Since this was a “matching” grant program (50% funded by the Western Diversification grant and 50% by other sources), we also applied to the Thomas Sill Foundation, and then later Great West Life, for assistance. Meanwhile, a fundraising campaign was also carried on with significant success among the Polish community organizations, as well as some private donors.



The formal announcement of approval of federal funds was made on November 13<sup>th</sup> by Member of Parliament Joy Smith, with work beginning almost immediately. Installation of the furnace and A/C system was completed before the end of November, while the flooring work was begun just before Christmas and completed by mid-January. The final element of the project (insulation of crawlspace) was completed immediately after the New Year.

The success of our fundraising campaign will allow us to finish some minor building improvements in 2013, such as a new hot water tank, a new dehumidifier for the collection storage area and some additional artefact storage units.

### **Professional Development**

Professional development continued for our members in 2012. Courses in “Collections Care and Preventive Conservation” as well as “Museums and the Community” were attended, and we participated in the Annual Conference of the Association of MB Museums. Internally, a new volunteer was given training on our Virtual Collections software and has begun accessioning the backlog of books in our collection.

As a result of our focus on other priorities, we did not schedule any lectures for the fall months. However, the lecture series will continue in 2013, and several topics are being prepared and lecturers engaged.

Classes and workshops in 2012 again included Easter egg decorating (pisanki) as well as Christmas Szopki (nativity scenes), conducted for both children and adults. We also participated in Polish Fest at Garden City Community Centre, demonstrating bird motifs in folk paper crafts.

### **Collections Management**

Our collection was also under review in 2012. With some new shelving units built by volunteers, we have been able to reorganize some of our artefacts and create a safe, stable environment for them. We hope to continue building more shelving to take advantage of our basement area in the most efficient and effective manner, while improving our collections storage methods. Thanks to the efforts of one of our volunteers, our Collections database was successfully transferred to a new computer. This was done to safeguard the data already stored, since the original computer was almost 16 years old!

### **Financial**

The effort to improve our bottom line in 2012 met with unqualified success. Beginning with the fundraiser in February and ending with our infrastructure funding campaign in the fall months, 90% of our requests and applications garnered positive results. However, since several of our projects will not be completed (at least financially) until 2013, the year-end financial report only gives a partial picture. The true surplus will be identified in the first quarter of 2013 and in conjunction with a strategic planning initiative, these funds will be earmarked for future improvements and growth.

### **Community Involvement**

The Museum continued to partner with other organizations throughout 2012 with exhibits, workshops and other community special events. Dropping our admission fees and creating a free admission policy did not affect us negatively, since private donations more than made up for the admissions revenue of past years. As a result, we saw an increase in student and seniors visitations. We have also received more regular press coverage from the Community Newspapers for our events.



Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C.M. Tabbernor".

C.M. Tabbernor  
President