

## OGNIWO POLISH MUSEUM SOCIETY INC.

### ANNUAL REPORT

**1 January – 31 December, 2013**

as presented at the Annual General Meeting February 15, 2014

The year 2013 was a year of completion and refurbishing for the museum. We began the year with newly refinished floors, a new heating/cooling system and insulated crawl space. We then replaced various aging pieces of equipment, such as a dehumidifier, a shop vac, entrance carpets, tables, etc. We also repainted the exhibit hall and the washrooms. Our facility has never looked better.

#### Events & Exhibits

In February we had our second annual fundraiser showcasing Polish beers and the foods that they are served with. The event was a great success and warmly received by all participants, and we continued to learn how best to organize and manage such an event. A Winnipeg Free Press photographer was on hand to capture our supporters having a good time.

Our major exhibit of 2012, “Polish Posters: Hidden Messages as a Means of Communication” was extended until end April 2013, due to popular demand. The amazing research and presentation of this topic drew much praise from the community, thanks to Dorothy Paryzek for her work in bringing this project to fruition. Also worth mentioning, is that over 30 original posters were donated to the museum for our collection.

Our Pisanki workshops prior to Easter were again well attended and are becoming easier to run with the assistance of a newly developed Powerpoint slide show. Thanks go to the volunteers who coordinated this event. We also had great attendance for a presentation on April 21<sup>st</sup> by Krystyna Szybowska entitled “From Siberia to Cyberia”, with good media coverage.

Our next exhibit (May 21 – June 25) gave us a chance to present the artistic creations of Peter Kaczmarek – long-time stage and set designer for CBC Winnipeg and distinguished member of our local Polish Canadian community. Capitalizing on our new gallery look, the exhibit was stunning to look at and very well attended. We will continue to explore new opportunities to feature other Polish Canadian artists in the future.



The summer of 2013, saw a return to our participation in Folklorama. The exhibit was presented off-site at the Warsaw Pavilion, Glenwood Community Centre. Most of the exhibit elements were recycled from previous years and put together by Wanda Slawik. However, since this was a new venue for us, it allowed us to note

the items that attracted the most attention, traffic patterns of visitors and to plan for a new and improved exhibit for 2014. Thanks go out to all our volunteers who manned the exhibit throughout the week.

Our final exhibit in 2013 was *Dance Through Time – A Reflection of Polish Folk Culture in Winnipeg*. This exhibit was launched at the start of Manitoba Culture Days, with “doors open” to all. The exhibit focused on the history of dancing from 1925, key factors that influenced the art form in Winnipeg, and showcased some interactive elements that really created a buzz with our audience. Dance steps moving around the room that “taught” each step or dance figure and a backstage costume change area provided accents to a colourful display. This exhibit will conclude at the end of February 2014.



Preliminary planning has begun on a new exhibit for the museum: “In My Words” about stories of Polish immigrants. We hope to combine historical records and artefacts with more recent oral history records to bring a personal touch to this subject. Research and writing will begin in 2014 with projected exhibition dates in the spring of 2015.

As part of our lecture series, we hosted a book launch with author Jadwiga Kaczmarzyk-Byszewska and her book *Gościncamy Kanady na Tropach polskiej Kultury* or *Canadian Trek of Polish Culture*. Her presentation and discussion of how she came to write this book, her highlights of artists from across Canada proved very interesting to those that participated.

An ambitious program of lectures is planned for 2014, beginning with a discussion of the life and writings of Janusz Korczak, well-known and much translated author of children’s books, followed by Toronto author Aga Maksymowska and her book “Giant”. Further lectures are planned for the fall of 2014 focusing on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Sokol Polish Folk Ensemble, and a report/discussion of the Solidarity-era immigrant oral history project undertaken by M. Blackmore.

We were also able to partner with our sister organization, the Polish Women’s Federation Branch #7, and support their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations. We were happy to host their historical exhibit for 2 weeks in November and end the year praising the achievements of this small, yet influential, organization.

### **Project Grants**

Although we did not apply for any new Heritage Project grants in 2013, we were busy completing the requirements for grants approved in 2012. These included the Polish folk dance exhibit, and an oral history project, which will focus on Polish immigrants to Canada of the 1980s and 1990s.

We did, however, receive approval and funding for the first time from the MB Historic Resources Branch for an operating grant as a Level II status Community Museum that was retroactive for 2012. This translated into another successful application for the year 2013 as well.

### **Infrastructure**

As mentioned previously, we were able to complete some long-overdue improvements to the museum through a federal infrastructure grant that was approved in late 2012. The work was completed in early 2013 and was the result of a very successful fundraising campaign. Other improvements continued throughout 2013; most notable were the upgrading of toilets, installation of a new 10-gal. hot water tank, as well as installation of energy-efficient fluorescent task lighting in the basement storage area.

### **Professional Development**

Professional development continued for our members in 2013. The AMM course: "Museums and Education" was attended by Alycia Walichnowski, who should complete her Certificate Program in Museum Practice in 2014. Our other student pursuing this program (Elizabeth Tabbemor) has unfortunately moved to the UK in 2013 to pursue a Master's degree, but hopes to further her museum knowledge there.

### **Collections Management**

We continued to reorganize our collection storage area with pre-existing shelving and cabinets. However, we were also able to construct new storage units for large items, thanks to the volunteer efforts of Herman Meyer. With the installation of new task lighting, this area is becoming a much more efficient and safer place for our collection.

We also attracted a new volunteer who is currently working on her Masters in Archival Studies. Marta Dabros has embarked on creating a new library system for our collection of books, and will also make recommendations for preservation of some of the archival materials that we currently possess.

The focus for 2014 will be to continue this work by creating a summer work program for Ms. Walichnowski and Ms. Dabros with the assistance of some government funding.

### **Financial**

The effort to improve our bottom line in 2012 spilled over into 2013. Beginning with funding our infrastructure campaign, our annual fundraiser and successful attainment of an operating grant, we have replenished our coffers and placed the museum on a very sound financial footing. Improvements and acquisitions continued throughout 2013, resulting in lower overall costs for future maintenance and repairs. We have also increased our GIC investments at Entegra Credit Union by \$9921, which will allow us to tackle future projects.

### **Community Involvement**

The Museum continued to partner with other organizations throughout 2013 with exhibits, workshops and other community special events. Included in these were the Kresy-Siberia Foundation, the Friends of the

Creche (St. George, MB), the Warsaw Pavilion organizing committee, Folklorama, and the Polish Women's Federation Branch #7.



Another project that is still in its infancy, is a partnership with the Freeman Family Foundation Holocaust Education Centre, Jewish Heritage Centre to bring a travelling exhibit to our museum that focuses on the stories of Polish Jews in the ghetto of Lodz, Poland.

Respectfully submitted,

C.M. Tabbernor  
President

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