



OGNIWO
POLISH MUSEUM

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

January 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019

The Year at a Glance



February

Exhibit Opening

*The Poles in the Canadian Mosaic:
150 Years of History*

March

Lecture: Dr. Anna Muller

*If the Walls Could Speak: Inside a
Women's Prison in Communist Poland*

April

Workshop: Pisanki

April 6: General public

April 7: Iskry School of Dance

April 18: Holy Ghost School

May

Exhibit: Polish Exiles of WW2

*The 75th Anniversary of the Battle of
Monte Cassino*

*Commemoration of Local Heroes of
Monte Cassino*

In the Community

*Archives Presentation to Canadian
Polish Congress*

Museum Week May 13-19

Preserving the Past – Thinking for the Future

2019 was a productive year for OgniwO. Apart from our regular activities of researching and presenting exhibits, leading workshops, hosting lectures, and participating in various community events, our group of volunteers and staff also dedicated their efforts towards infrastructure upgrades and the processing and preservation of the Museum's artefact and archival collections.

In addition, a major milestone for OgniwO this year has been the creation of the OgniwO Endowment Fund, which will ensure the security of our collections and help support our cultural programming into the future.

We thank our supporters and visitors to our Museum from near and far, virtual and in-person. And most importantly, we thank our Volunteers for giving their time and their effort to the important goal of collecting, preserving, and sharing the stories of our community.

Events & Exhibits



Sunday, February 24, 2019 marked the opening of *The Poles in the Canadian Mosaic: 150 Years of History*, a travelling exhibit created by the Emigration Museum in Gdynia, Poland and the Canadian Embassy in Warsaw. The exhibit was brought to Winnipeg by the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Toronto and the Canadian Polish Congress, Manitoba Branch. The opening was

marked by the presentation of a Private Member's Resolution to Commemorate **200 Years of Poles in Manitoba**, presented by Kildonan MLA Nic Curry, whose grandfather Walter Curry's records form part of OgniwO's archival collection.

OgniwO partnered with the Department of German and Slavic Studies, University of Manitoba, to host **Anna Muller** (Assistant Professor of History, The Frank and Mary Pazierski in Polish/Polish American/Eastern European Studies at the University of Michigan-Dearborn) for two events. The first, a public lecture based on Dr. Muller's book *If the Walls Could Speak: Inside a Women's Prison in Communist Poland*, took place at the Museum on March 24, 2019 and was well attended.

On Sunday, May 19, 2019, OgniwO hosted the opening of a temporary exhibit prepared by Museum volunteer and Executive

July

Infrastructure
Lighting fixture upgrades

August

In the Community
Folklorama, Warsaw Poland Pavilion

Advance Polling Location for MB Election

September

Exhibit: Culture Days
Vintage Polish Posters
Lecture: Magdalena Blackmore
Hidden Messages as a Means of Communication

October

In the Community
Another installment of Historia: Poszukaj

Event
Annual "Raise Your Spirits" Fundraiser

November

In the Community
Wycinanki workshop for Iskry School of Dance

December

Infrastructure
Exterior Sign Replacement

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Director of **Polish Exiles of WW2, Krystyna Szypowska**. The exhibit, titled **The 75th Anniversary of the Battle of Monte Cassino**, was accompanied by the Museum's commemoration of Local Heroes of Monte Cassino. In attendance were members of **Polish Combatants Association Branch #13, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 246** and **Canadian Armed Forces**.



Culture Days Manitoba (September 27-30) were marked by an exhibit featuring **vintage Polish posters**. The exhibit was accompanied by a lecture titled **Hidden Messages as a Means of Communication** by **Magdalena Blackmore**. The exhibit received high reviews in the **Winnipeg Free Press** article "Communist-era Polish art on display" by Martin Zeilig, and was promoted by the University of Manitoba on social media. The poster exhibit also

served as a means of engaging with local youth when Ogniwio hosted a group of students from the **University of Manitoba** Polish Studies program for a special on-site lecture, which incorporated the posters on display as a teaching tool.

Ogniwio's popular **Annual Fundraiser** was held on Saturday, October 19. This year's theme was "U Cioci na imieninach" ("Party at Auntie's"). Supporters enjoyed a sampling of communist-era inspired wines and spirits (complete with made up labels) and home-made Polish delicacies as we celebrated in the style of traditional Polish family gatherings. A highlight of the sold-out event was the various renditions of *Sto Lat*, led by members of **Sokol Choir**. Thank you to our supporters and to our volunteers, without whom our work and this event would not be possible.



In the Community



A record-setting number of eggs were turned into Pisanki this year, thanks to our hardworking volunteers and some eager students. Our annual **Pisanki Workshop** included two sold-out sessions on April 6th and a special closed session on April 7th for students of **Iskry School of Dance**. Then, on April 18th, Ogniwio volunteers organized and instructed an on-site workshop at **Holy Ghost School**, showing over

200 students how to dye Easter eggs the traditional Polish way. This new way of connecting with some of the youngest members of Polonia would not be possible without our wonderful volunteers and in particular, **Ewa Wadowska, Wanda Slawik, and Ela Tukaj.**

In May, volunteers **Magda Blackmore** and **Marta Dąbroś** attended a meeting of the **Canadian Polish Congress (KPK)** to present information to its Executive and its member organizations about the work and mandate of the **Ogniwo Polish Museum Archives.** The presentation, which outlined the Museum's archival program and how it accessions, processes, preserves, and provides access to its archival records, sparked interesting discussion and was very well received.

May 13 to 19th marked international **Museum Week**, which brings cultural institutions from around the world together through the power of social media: seven days, seven themes, and seven hashtags. Ogniwo participated by highlighting various artefacts and archival records in its collections, as inspired by the daily themes, and connected with museums and museum lovers from across the globe.

August was busy with the preparations for the cultural display at **Folklorama**, which took place August 11 to 17 at Winnipeg's **RBC Convention Centre.** From August 6th to 12th, Museum volunteers mounted and manned a temporary exhibit at the **Warsaw Poland Pavilion.** Visitors were encouraged to take photos in front of our colourful display and post them on social media. The resulting Facebook and Twitter posts helped spread the word in a truly interactive way.

Between August 29th and September 5th, Ogniwo served as an Advance Poll Location for the Manitoba Election. Providing our space to our community for elections helps to bring new faces to the Museum and builds awareness of our programming while helping to support a vital function of democracy.



**PO POLSKU U DUCHA
ŚWIĘTEGO
SZKOŁA I KOŚCIÓŁ POD
WEZWANIEM ŚWIĘTEGO
DUCHA W WINNIPEG,
MANITOBA W KANADZIE**

Records from Ogniwo's archival collections were featured in the four-part collaboration between Michalina Petelska of the **University of Gdansk** and Magdalena Blackmore of the **University of Manitoba.** The project consisted of a series of short articles for the Polish educational website **HISTORIA: POSZUKAJ**, which aims to teach history to students and teachers via objects. The fourth installment featured **Winnipeg's Holy Ghost School.**

In November, the members of Ogniwo Polish Museum in Winnipeg remembered and honoured Pani Genowefa (Jean) Kuzia (nee Borowiec), who passed away on October 27, 2019. Pani Kuzia was a



founding member of Ognivo Polish Museum. She was instrumental in securing funding and a permanent building to house the Museum and its collections, as well as in incorporating the Museum as an organization. More than that, she worked tirelessly over many decades to secure donations of priceless artefacts and archival materials to document Polish history and culture, Polish settlement in Manitoba, and the work and contributions of Polish individuals and community organizations. She meticulously accessioned and described hundreds of items into Ognivo's catalogue. Without her foresight and dedication, much of this history would have been lost. We are grateful for her dedicated spirit and her contributions to the Polish community in Winnipeg, and vow to continue the important work Pani Kuzia started.

On November 27th, Museum volunteers held a special **Wycinanki workshop** for students of the **SPK Iskry School of Dance** on how to make traditional Christmas papercraft decorations. A record number of 40 young students attended this year's session.



Ognivo's role in helping to shape Polish migrant identity was highlighted in an academic article by **Michalina Petelska** and **Magdalena Blackmore**, "Museums of Migration: Migrants' Identity and Implementing the Museum's Mission Statement – Case Studies from Poland and Canada in Museums and Identities" in *Planning an Extended Museum*.

Throughout the year, Museum volunteers contemplated their role in **Reconciliation**. Because Ognivo is located on Treaty 1 lands, it is the role and duty of our community to formally and informally acknowledge our responsibilities and our place as settlers in a colonial society. This year, we called on ourselves to learn about the histories of Indigenous peoples in Canada, to bring awareness of these histories and experiences to Polonia, to consciously consider our role as settlers to this land, and to open ourselves to learning from Indigenous knowledge keepers, storytellers, Elders, and others who may be willing to teach us new perspectives. This critical work will continue to be a priority for Ognivo in 2020.

Collections Management

Accessioning donated artefacts is a never-ending job. It is thanks to our Collections Manager, **Alycia Walichnowski**, that this work is being done. This year, the system Ognivo relied on to catalogue and accession its artefact collections crashed, resulting in a temporary return to manual record-keeping.



However, our forward-thinking volunteers were already on the case: Alycia and **Christine Tabernor** have been engaged in the development of a custom-built digital **collections management database**, in cooperation with a number of other local cultural institutions. All funding requests to various sources have been approved, the technical software is being developed (a first version has been tested by partner museums and being re-worked, with a second version forthcoming). A new laptop will be purchased to support the new database system. OgniwO's work towards the Collections Management upgrade project has been made possible in part through a grant from the **Polish Consulate General** in Toronto.

Giving and Receiving

This year, OgniwO undertook a significant and historical step in planning for its financial future and for the long-term security of its collections by partnering with **The Winnipeg Foundation** to create an **Endowment Fund** under the **Manitoba Heritage Trust Program**. The Province of Manitoba will stretch gifts to the fund by \$1 for every \$2 given, up to a maximum of \$170,000. Gifts to the fund are invested in perpetuity and the annual income generated for grantmaking is distributed to the Museum, which will be used to support its programming. The establishment of the fund was marked by a very generous endowment from Polish community leader **Mr. William Tishinski**, as well as through donations made to the fund from the community, the Endowment Fund had reached a total of \$46,191.45 on December 31, 2019.



Further development of OgniwO's archival collections was made possible through another **Documentary Heritage Communities**

Program (DHCP) Grant from **Library and Archives Canada (LAC)**. LAC awarded another \$30,000 to continue the work of processing, preserving, and making accessible our invaluable archival records, both analogue and digital. The DHCP grant allowed OgniwO Archives to process the records of the **Canadian Polish Congress, MB Branch; the Polish Fraternal Aid Society of St. John Cantius**, and the **Nicolaus Copernicus Observance Committee of Manitoba**, as well as community leaders **Edward Hubicz**, and **Sophie de Witt**. In addition, the grant permitted OgniwO to digitize a number of textual, photographic, audio, and video records in its collections. A digital exhibit incorporating some of these records is slated to launch in early 2020.

A grant from the **Community Places Program** via the **Winnipeg Foundation** was approved to



complete the electrical work required to manufacture and mount a new electric exterior sign, as well as install new LED track lighting and fluorescent fixtures. We especially acknowledge the work of volunteers **Ela and Walter Tukaj, Christine and Dennis Tabbernor, and Ola Tutaj**, who helped to coordinate and manage the electrical and infrastructure projects.

University of Manitoba student **Sara Szewczyk** received OgniwO's student scholarship for volunteering 100 hours at the Museum, helping with various events, artefact accessioning, exhibits, and workshops. We are grateful for Sara's hard work and encourage other students to apply in 2020!

Financial Update

The Museum was the recipient of several sizeable private donations during 2019. Details of our financial year are provided in the 2019 Financial Statements.

Community Involvement

The Museum continues to support a variety of groups and activities in Manitoba, creating partnerships with:

- Warsaw Pavilion organizing committee – Folklorama 2019
- Consulate of Poland in Toronto, Honorary Consul for Poland in Winnipeg
- University of Manitoba, German and Slavic Studies
- Canadian Polish Congress, MB Branch
- Cooks Creek Heritage Museum
- Iskry School of Dance
- Polish Gymnastic Association Sokol Winnipeg
- Canadian Polish Women Federation Branch No. 7.
- Polish Fraternal Aid Society of Saint John Cantius