

Placentia Area Historical Society

P. O. Box 233, Placentia, NL, A0B 2Y0

Strategic Plan of the Placentia Area Historical Society

Introduction

The Placentia Area Historical Society (PAHS) descends from an organization set up in 1937 and is believed to be the second oldest historical society established in Newfoundland. The present organization was incorporated in 1972 and continues the work started in 1937 of preserving and promoting the history of this ancient French capital known as the Placentia Area. This includes the Town of Placentia, Ship Harbour, Fox Harbour and Point Verde. Currently (2011) there are seventeen members in the Placentia Area Historical Society; two of them are in Scotland and one is in England. The membership includes two ex-officio members, one who represents the Town of Placentia and the other who represents Castle Hill National Historic Site. Elected from the membership to take care of the day to day governance is a board of directors with an executive consisting of president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer.

The flagship in promoting Placentia's history is the O'Reilly House Museum. This former magistrate's residence, built in 1902, is itself of definite historic interest. However, as a museum, it has many artefacts and information related to the Basque, French, English, Irish and Americans who have been associated with Placentia's great history. These artefacts include a Basque will replica from 1563 and headstones from the 1600s, a Tipstaff and silver service presented by Prince William Henry (who became king of England). From more recent times, the O'Reilly House Museum has created a display related to resettlement, and also models of a former railway station and a cottage hospital constructed by model builder Bernard Penney.

In recent years PAHS has been looking at a number of development issues, such as: re-writing of by-laws, enhanced and computerized record keeping for acquisitions, development of a web site, risk management assessment, preservation issues and development of a three to five year strategic plan. This is in addition to some physical developments such as a new fence, walkway and erection of a small shed.

Following is our strategic plan which we will continue to review and revise as necessary

Vision

The vision of PAHS is to ensure that the communities of the Placentia Area know and continue to respects their heritage, a quality that can uplift and bring pride to its people and also encourage the development of a tourism industry.

Mission Statement:

To promote the study, knowledge, preservation and presentation of the history of the Placentia Area. (The area includes Town of Placentia, Fox Harbour, Ship Harbour and Point Verde.)

Goals:

- 1. Maximize the artefact collections of the O'Reilly House Museum to be fully representative of the area's history and ensure professional management of the museum.**
- 2. Create effective partnerships with appropriate organizations within and outside of the area that will benefit PAHS in meeting its stated goals and objectives.**
- 3. Increase efforts and approaches towards creating awareness of, interest in and support for promoting history of the Placentia Area locally and in the world.**
- 4. Promote enhanced knowledge of preservation skills and museum operations within the PAHS organization.**
- 5. Find new or increased ways to raise money to fully cover operating costs.**
- 6. Have highly effective record keeping systems that are practical to use and easy to maintain.**
- 7. Increase the awareness that the success of the PAHS organization is essential to all our other activities and seek to improve it.**
- 8. Improve the physical state and maintenance of museum building, grounds and signage.**

(These goals are repeated below with objectives and activities attached.)

Goal 1. Maximize the artefact collections of the O'Reilly House Museum to be fully representative of the area's history and ensure professional management of the museum.

Objective A. Study existing artefacts and identify any periods or activities in history that need to be recognized and are not.

Activity a. Seek appropriate Artefacts or ways to recognized missing periods or activities in history and seek support of the community.

Activity b. Enhance the display of information for the John Hamilton stone.

Activity c. Review the focus of the rooms upstairs and considerable possible changes, especially in master bedroom and maid's room.

Objective B. Contact donors who have loaned artefacts for over a decade to determine if they would like to offer these artefacts more permanently as a "gift" to the museum (as a gift, care and ownership of the artefacts is granted to the PAHS).

Activity a. Write a personalized letter to all owners of items placed on loan for more than ten years to determine if they will give the artefacts as a gift to PAHS. (Include mandate, goals and objectives in letter.)

Activity b. Encourage all new acquisitions to be given as a gift to PAHS, in accordance with acquisitions mandate, instead of as a loan.

Objective C. Encourage members and staff to take advantage of any professional training.

Activity a. Support training and have one or more active members take a least one training program per year.

Objective D. During the summer season operate the museum 7 days a week for a consistent set of hours each day, preferably during the period when the East Coast Ferry is operating.

Objective E. Seek to advertise opening times and attractions through appropriate paid or free advertising opportunities.

Activity a. Take advantage of any free advertising on Dept. of Tourism website.

Activity b. Announce programs through posters, emails, free ads on EastLink and on the PAHS website and other local websites.

Goal 2. Create effective partnerships with appropriate organizations within and outside of the area that will benefit PAHS in meeting its stated goals and objectives.

Objective A. Look at a tentative program to promote history in local schools.

Activity a. In co-operation with a school, develop simple bingo games based on the Placentia Area's history and test it in one of our schools. (Something similar can be considered for Castle Hill.)

Activity b. In co-operative with the town of Placentia create a Voice of Placentia Bay Exhibit to recognize the song writers, singers and story-tellers of the Placentia Area and those from Placentia Bay and separate up and set up an independent committee to run it with town appointing half and town appointing half.

Activity c. With the Placentia Bay Cultural Arts Centre share in appropriate programs that have a heritage component. The sharing could include: running programs, staff, space, publicity, etc.

Activity d. Investigate how PAHS might also share in such programs with Castle Hill National Historic Site, Memorial University, Provincial Government and other agencies with a historic interest.

Activity e. Make a special effort to share with Placentia Area Theatre d'Heritage in creating activities that will demonstrate our history.

Goal 3. Increase efforts and approaches at creating awareness of, interest in and support for promoting the history of the Placentia Area locally and in the world.

Objectives A. Have ongoing public relations program to keep community informed about activities of PAHS.

Activity a. Issue a press release after any significant event.

Activity b. Post activities on the PAHS website

Activity c. Encourage other members to learn how to manage the website. This ensures that someone will always be available to manage and make any required changes.

Objective B. Cooperate with other groups in supplying historic information or artefacts for special events.

Activity a. Share in Heritage Day with the Placentia Bay Cultural Arts Centre

Activity b. Share in planning special events such as Christmas Parade, etc.

Activity c. Make Annual Tea Party our signature event and ensure the inclusion of communities in the Placentia Area.

Objective C. Develop a program of activities to highlight the history of the Placentia Area.

Activity a. Seek to have a book written with an in-depth history of Placentia Area or if existing in French seek to have it translated.

Activity b. Get a copy of the paper by Michael McCarthy on the history of Placentia along with permission to make use of it in promoting our history.

Activity c. Hold annually the Tea Party and Presentation of Heritage Awards on first Saturday in August.

Activity d. In alternate years participate in the Doors Open program.

Activity e. Sponsor a regular Speaker Series to present talks about our history or readings by local authors or the sharing of some traditional activity.

Activity f. Seek to get a special name for the Speaker Series to make it stand out from other speaking events.

Objective D. Seek to have more of our print materials and the website in the French language.

Activity a. Identify possible help for French translation and consider developing a relationship with the Provincial Francophone Association and Parks Canada to help with this.

Goal 4. Promote enhanced knowledge of preservation skills within the PAHS organization and the community for protection of historical artefacts.

Objective A. Create opportunities for members and others to participate in workshops to learn preservation techniques.

Activity a. Arrange for the Best Practices workshop being offered by MANL to be run in the Placentia Area.

Activity b. At least once a year, at a PAHS meeting, review the report that has been prepared on the O'Reilly House Museum regarding conservation and set future goals and objectives accordingly.

Objective B. Have a supply of gloves and other materials on hand to ensure employees & volunteers can properly look after artefacts.

Activity a. During training of summer staff, include sessions on how to protect artefacts.

Goal 5. Find new or increased ways of raising money to fully cover operating costs.

Objectives A. Review ways of raising money on the internet to see how our website might be a funding tool for the purposes of donations, advertising for others, affiliate marketing or offering items for sale. (Such as reproductions of artefacts.)

Activity a. Explore opportunities to develop affiliate marketing in relation to history (such as Ancestry.Ca) in order to determine its feasibility for the PAHS website.

Objective B. Seek to identify one major fund raising activity that might be operated once a year to bring in funds to PAHS.

Objective C. Seek additional institutional donors to contribute annually to PAHS and or seek to have existing ones, such as the Town of Placentia or Dept. of Tourism, increase their contribution.

Activity a. Contact a number of large companies to see if they might be willing to support PAHS financially.

Objective D. Review the membership structure to see if new categories of members might be established, such as Corporate or Benefactor for those who might want to gift money or leave a legacy.

Activity a. Consult current membership and others on ideas on how to best do this and try a system of corporate memberships.

Goal 6. Have highly effective record keeping systems that are practical to use and easy to maintain.

Objective A. Maintain computerized acquisitions records and where appropriate, make sure these are backed up with copies stored offsite.

Activity a. Train staff and interested members in use of the archival computer program.

Activity b. Organize the museum office so there is an effective filing system.

Objectives B. Maintain an effective financial bookkeeping system to properly record revenue and disbursements, safeguard cash and keep members informed of status.

Activity a. Do a review of financial bookkeeping procedures to see: how we handle cash and other income, the issuing of receipts and how we report to members, if expenditures are being approved at meetings, audits, handling of tickets at museum, safeguarding of funds, etc. and recommend any necessary improvements.

Goal 7. Increase the awareness that the success of the PAHS organization is essential to all our activities and seek to develop it to be a highly successful group.

Objective A. Encourage all members to be aware of and skilled in organizational development techniques and approaches.

Activity a. Watch for opportunities for any interested members to participate in workshops on planning, communications, meeting management, financial management, governance.etc.

Activity b. Encourage social activities for members such Christmas dinner, refreshments at meetings, etc.

Activity c. Periodically, do reviews regarding how the organization is functioning.

Activity d. At least once a year do a risk management review.

Activity e. At least once a year, review the strategic plan to review what is being accomplished, keep it up to date and members aware of its contents.

Objective B. Have a well organized and trained staff.

Activity a. Review train materials for summer students and make any necessary improvements.

Goal 8. Improve the physical state and maintenance of museum building, grounds and signage.

Objective A. Repair any damaged or deteriorating parts of the building.

Activity a. Repair roof leaks and interior ceilings and eventually aim at getting a torch-on roof.

Activity b. Inspect clapboard and other areas of rotten timber and have replaced.

Activity c. Remove bushes on southeast side of building.

Activity d. Improve signage especially one near the bridge.

Activity e. Seek to have a directional sign to museum posted on TCH.

Strategic Analysis

As part of our planning, on several occasions we have done a strategic analysis of our situation, examining our **strengths, weaknesses, opportunities** and **threats** (SWOT analysis). The main things that came up were:

Strengths:

- We have a good museum and some outstanding artefacts.
- We have a quality membership with a high level of skills and knowledge suited to the needs of the organization such as: writing, speaking, graphic design, photography, research, public relations, museum training, website design, organizational development, meeting management, bilingual ability, knowledge of our history, leadership experience, good connections in the community, and much more.
- High interest and willingness to participate by members.
- Good community support, including such things as the town taking care of our insurance and making an annual financial contribution and doing things on its own to support heritage development.
- Our own website online that is easy to maintain.
- Some regular income
- Nearby parking
- New computer with acquisitions program
- Connections with other provincial heritage groups

Weaknesses

- Short season
- Insufficient and irregular funding
- Lack of space
- Lack of volunteers for some activities

Opportunities

- Draw more on skills of members
- Make use of others in community
- Explore the use of other historic spaces in community as part of the museum program
- Ongoing archaeological digs in community
- Development at Long Harbour related to nickel.
- To partner with the new Placentia Institute of Newfoundland Studies

Threats

- East Coast Ferry could be removed
- Poor ferry schedule
- Loss or reduction of student programs
- Possibility of damage, theft or fire at museum
- Possibility of the loss of any funding we now obtain
- Further decline in the population
- Negative effects of development at Long Harbour

Several times over the past year, we have held some discussions on risk management and identified the following:

Risk management assessment

In doing a risk management assessment the PAHS determined the following:

- Possibility of theft of funds and artefacts or damage at museum
- Possibility of sexual or other harassment charges when you have staff and visitors
- Someone getting hurt on property

- Any unfair treatment of staff or visitors
- Waterline freezing and destruction over the winter

Risk management

In order to strengthen risk management, we developed the following:

- Carry insurance including Directors and Officers Liability and Public or 3rd Party Liability
- Include awareness of these issues in training for staff
- Have first aid equipment available
- Post numbers for Fire, Police, Ambulance and Board members for use of staff.
- Waterlines can be turned off and drained during winter and safe antifreeze placed in toilet, etc.
- Seek to have no less than two workers on duty at any time especially when they are youth.
