



Osgoode Township Rural Museum

Strategic and Community Engagement Plan, 2019-2024

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Introduction

In 2019, the Osgoode Township Museum undertook a strategic planning process with an emphasis on community engagement. Owned and championed by the Board of Directors, this Plan will be implemented by staff and volunteers under the direction of the Executive Director. The planning process addressed three areas:

- Audience development
- Revenue generation
- Community engagement

These areas are not mutually exclusive, but rather intertwine with each other. Together they will carve out a strong ***value proposition*** for the organization, which makes the Museum unique and valuable to the community and answers the fundamental question of why it should exist. This Plan outlines the positioning and themes for the museum over the next three to five years, and will guide and inspire the organization – board, staff, and volunteers. This Plan develops new approaches to ongoing challenges, most notably connecting with the public and developing audiences over the long term, as well as positioning the Museum within Ottawa’s rural context and within the local history of Osgoode Township.

Charting the directions for the Museum’s near future, this Plan has been developed with full support of the board and staff, with extensive community consultation. The planning process was invigorating and motivating, and inspired the board, staff and community stakeholders to think broadly of what the Museum can become and where it is going. The board and staff have spent a good deal of time in 2018 and 2019 strengthening the organization, board and staff by undertaking governance, advocacy, community relations and fundraising training, meetings with key stakeholders and the community, in order to acquire the skills, tools and motivation to undertake a strategic and community engagement planning process. Additionally, several community consultations were held and a digital survey was administered to obtain additional feedback and input from community members.

Context

In June of this year, the City of Ottawa officially reached a major population milestone: one million residents. As the fourth largest city in Canada, Ottawa now joins Toronto, Calgary and Montreal in terms of population. However, Ottawa is unique in its mix of rural, suburban and urban areas. Ottawa has the largest rural area of any city in Canada. Eighty per cent of the city is made up of rural area, with only ten per cent of Ottawa's population living there. Some of rural residents live in villages, but many live in isolated communities or on farms. Thus a significant proportion of Ottawa's rural residents are closely linked to agriculture, with work, social and community life determined by agricultural cycles. Since amalgamation in 2001, many changes have occurred in Ottawa's rural areas. Diversity has increased due to migration, and there are fewer young people compared to the urban areas as there are fewer opportunities, transportation and social activities for them further out from the core of the city. Many rural areas lack key services such as child care, recreation activities, social services, stores and transportation. Rural communities are thus less close-knit than they used to be.¹

The Osgoode Museum (now *the Osgoode Township Rural Museum*) is one of the 11 City and community museums in Ottawa. Mostly funded through a service agreement with the City, the museum is required to write annual reports and to conform with the requirements of the funding agreement. In effect, the Museum has a close relationship with the City through this funding agreement. The Museum also regularly applies for other municipal, provincial and federal grants, although the funding landscape has tightened in recent years and there is an expectation that the cultural and heritage sector take steps to increase earned and contributed revenues. Additional feedback from the 2018 review of the Museum by the City of Ottawa Cultural Funding Unit was that the museum needed a clearer vision and model, an interpretation strategy that clearly focused on rural and agricultural stories, a space plan for the facilities and landscape, an audience and community development plan, and more diverse board and sources of funding to sustain the organization.

This Plan carefully positions the Museum within its rural context, using the specificity of locality as a key strength and point of identification for rural residents across the City of Ottawa, a social and cultural hub to Osgoode Township residents, and to attract visitors who are interested in agricultural history and discussions of the future of agriculture in today's world.

¹ RURAL RESIDENTS Equity & Inclusion Lens Handbook, City for All Women Initiative, 2018.

Consulting the Community

Community input was sought and resulted in fresh, new ideas not only for the museum's future, but also for a closer relationship between the community and the museum.

Survey results indicated that the museum should reach out to community associations, become more involved with schools, children and families, participate in more community events, and showcase local history that is relevant to the community, as well as activities from the past (like handicrafts.) As one respondent wrote:

“It can act as a gathering place for the community and help support education about the area's past, as well as keep old hobbies relevant by teaching the younger generation about them.”

The planning process also took into account successful examples from other museums that had similar mandates, sizes and rural/suburban locations.

The Museum of English Rural Life (MERL)

The MERL achieved worldwide fame recently through an unexpected Twitter posting of an “absolute ram” (an archival photo of a very large sheep.) A savvy and irreverent social media manager played up this incredible popularity and encouraged its new fans to get to know the museum, and the museum continued to set itself apart through the use of funny online content and social media experimentation. The MERL has been able to connect with a new audience with engaging and unique local content that has value for audiences.

Museum Neuköln

This small neighbourhood museum in Berlin achieved international status by winning the Council of Europe museum prize in 1987 because of its new concept of focussing on social memory of the surrounding community. The museum has a local focus with a permanent, interactive exhibition on the history of the community. Annual temporary exhibitions are accompanied by programming and events of the same theme. All have tremendous input from the community, and thus the museum has a strong focus on local and everyday culture in relatable and relevant ways.

Canadian Canoe Museum

The Canadian Canoe Museum recently undertook a strategic plan refresh that resulted in very clear strategic directions that chart the course for further community engagement, sustainability, Indigenous relations and the stewardship of a collection of national importance and one that can be used for the future. The museum has been extremely successful in attracting funds (to the tune of \$65M) for a new facility, in part because of the careful alliance with residents, community leaders and First Nations, with a statement of the economic impact of the museum revitalization.

Strathcona County Museum & Archives

The Strathcona County Museum & Archives occupies the first Fire Hall in Sherwood Park, and preserves the history and heritage of Strathcona County, thus it is both a museum and an active archive. The museum has positioned itself as an educational community service for the public. Important values for the organization are public engagement and benefit.

Mississippi Valley Textile Museum

The Mississippi Valley Textile Museum has done a remarkable job at connecting the town of Almonte's rich textile history as well as the current creative and "maker" flavour of the town today with the museum. Focussing both on interpreting the history of the local woollen industry and contemporary fibre arts and education, the museum has been able to offer visitors a wide variety of exhibitions and events that keep the museum fresh and relevant, making it a strong community hub that not only reflects the community, it also helps make it.

Goulbourn Museum

The Goulbourn Museum is located in a small, one-room schoolhouse south of Stittsville, with an adjacent storage building. The museum does an excellent job engaging local families and visitors with programming and activities that create engagement with local history and the collection. Focussing on activities such as "play", "discover" and "community", the museum has been able to captivate current audiences with the past.

Thematic Overview

Input from the community and the museum board and staff was used to create a new thematic overview for the Museum’s programming, events and activities over the next three to five years.

Educational Resources

Local Stories

Diversity

Extension and Outreach	Community Cultural Hub	Telling Inclusive Stories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Develop school kits to lend out ⇒ Broaden curriculum links outside of history to be relevant to students ⇒ STEAM focus (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) using contemporary trends in agriculture ⇒ Create programming on the science of agriculture (with partners) ⇒ Showcase local trades ⇒ Day on a farm programming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Showcase what makes the community unique (architecture, equipment) ⇒ Increase visibility through better signage ⇒ Create a Community Gallery for community-hosted exhibitions ⇒ Use social media to tell local stories and increase engagement and participation ⇒ Focus on events to bring people to the museum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Tell stories of the “New Pioneers” to focus on new Canadians/new faces in the community ⇒ Showcase women revolutionizing agriculture, today and from past stories through the museum’s collection and archives ⇒ Tell local Indigenous stories ⇒ LGBTQ youth in rural communities

SWOT Analysis

The board and staff recognized current key strengths and weaknesses of the organization, and identified potential new directions based on opportunities and threats.

<p style="text-align: center;">STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Public is becoming more aware of programs and events ➤ Popular artifacts in the barn ➤ Social media presence is growing ➤ Board has good connections to potential sponsors ➤ Board has lots of skill sets to be leveraged for events etc. ➤ Board has connections for fundraising 	<p style="text-align: center;">WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Very little earned revenue ➤ Low diversity in revenue streams ➤ Staff contingent is too small to deliver more initiatives ➤ Museum is far away from downtown Ottawa as a stand-alone attraction (but could be combined with other activities or as a stop along the drive) ➤ Board needs more diversity (age, socio-cultural background, skill sets etc.), to breathe new life into the board culture
<p style="text-align: center;">OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ High volume Bank Street traffic ➤ A number of culturally diverse organizations within the community to be tapped into ➤ Indigenous local history ➤ Content on women in agriculture ➤ Local food and drink producers ➤ National associations like DFC could be leveraged ➤ Local business like John Deere ➤ Many families live in the immediate community and within the former township boundaries, and beyond 	<p style="text-align: center;">THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Main funder is concerned about the museum’s direction and funding ➤ Community may not be willing to pay for extra services the museum provides

Foundation Statements

In determining the market positioning and future of the museum in the community and the City of Ottawa, the Board of Directors and staff created a set of Foundation Statements that reflected the organization's strategic directions and its reason for being. Included in these statements are a Value Proposition, which demonstrates the alignment with the community, and the uniqueness of the museum in a competitive market. Along with these revised foundation statements, the board and staff chose a new name to reflect better the brand and identity of the organization.

Vision: We foster a sense of community identity by inspiring curiosity about our shared rural life, past, present and future.

Mission: For residents of, and visitors to, the Nation's Capital, the Osgoode Township Rural Museum tells the story of the people and heritage of Osgoode Township and surrounding communities to exemplify the role that rural heritage has in the life of our city.

Mandate: The Osgoode Township Rural Museum's mandate is to collect, preserve, display, study, interpret and make accessible the material and cultural heritage of the Osgoode Township as a means to further the understanding of the former Osgoode Township's significance to the greater Ottawa community as an example of rural and agricultural life.

Value Proposition:

The museum is Ottawa's rural heartbeat, cultivating close connections to Ottawa's unique agricultural heritage.

Name: Osgoode Township Rural Museum

Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective 1

Creating diverse stories of rural life in Ottawa's past, present and future

- 1.1 The organization will build relations, make connections and collaborate with diverse groups in the community.
- 1.2 The organization will develop an Indigenous Engagement Plan to include First Nations stories in programming, events and activities.
- 1.3 The museum will explore new themes such as the role women played and continue to play in agriculture.
- 1.4 The museum will research and incorporate stories of LGBTQ members in rural communities.

Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective 2

Becoming a community hub

2.1 Create a space plan with appropriate museum, public and event spaces, indoors and outdoors.

2.2 Increase visibility with better signage, especially on Bank Street.

2.3 The museum will showcase what makes the community unique.

2.4 The museum will develop a Community Gallery space for community-hosted exhibitions.

2.5 The museum will use social media to tell local stories and increase engagement and participation, and use digital means to attract and engage children, youth and families.

2.6 The museum will create a new food tourism strategy, focussing on events, such as top chef Farm to Table dinners, to attract visitors to the museum on a regular basis, in partnership with economic development and tourism partners, as well as local vendors.

Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective 3

Becoming a centre for learners of all ages

3.1 Identify synergies with local school boards and post-secondary institutions, with a focus on educational partnerships, programming, and knowledge creation and exchange.

3.2 Develop new educational programming with partners on STEM learning in agriculture.

3.3 Develop educational resources for local schools using local content from the museum.

3.4 Curriculum links will be broadened to include STEAM, trades and daily life themes.

3.5 The museum will develop programs and activities for seniors in the community and for those visiting (e.g. senior's homes tours).

Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective 4

Building a sustainable future

4.1 Diversify sources of earned and contributed revenue.

4.2 Attract corporate and individual sponsorship of key programs, exhibits, events and activities.

4.3 Resource the organization with personnel and succession plans that ensure a competent, dynamic and diverse team of board members, staff and volunteers.

4.4 Establish a capital fund to implement the Space Plan, including renewal of the barn as a much-needed community programming and event space.

4.5 Develop a bus tour strategy to attract a thriving bus tour trade for the museum.

Thank you to the City of Ottawa for their financial contribution in the development of this Strategic and Community Engagement Plan.

