



# Collingwood Museum 2025 Annual Report

Prepared by: Melissa Shaw, Museum Supervisor

## Executive Summary

In 2025, the Collingwood Museum followed the Collingwood Museum Master Plan: 2020 - 2025, focusing on community relevance, deeper engagement, and sustainable operations. The Museum continued to support the Town of Collingwood's Arts, Culture and Heritage Program, working to "recognize and strengthen arts, culture, and built heritage within the community" through Service 5.1: Conservation and Promotion of Heritage and Culture. Additional guiding documents included the Town of Collingwood Community Based Strategic Plan 2024 - 2028, specifically Pillar 2: Connected which seeks to "foster well-being, belonging, and understanding through spaces, places and activities". Throughout the year, the Collingwood Museum Advisory Committee played a key role in supporting staff and helping to achieve the milestones highlighted in this report.

Several factors contributed to the museum's success in 2025. A highlight was a travelling exhibit from the Canadian Museum of Immigration called A History Exposed: The Enslavement of Black People in Canada. A satellite display from the Sheffield Park Black History and Cultural Museum was also featured, demonstrating the vibrance and enduring nature of African Culture.

Seven temporary exhibitions enlivened the museum gallery and fostered meaningful collaborations with community organizations and industry partners. An additional travelling exhibit was secured from the Canadian Museum of Language, entitled Sign Languages of Canada.

In 2025, total attendance across onsite services and offsite special events reached 11,030, a 4% increase over 2024. This included 4,992 gallery visitors and 2,567 community members engaged at offsite events. An additional 1,274 visitors accessed the museum for its public washroom facilities.

The Museum Gift Shop generated \$18,038 in sales, while admission donations reached a new record of \$19,573, a 25% increase over 2024.

The museum's children's programs continued to be in high demand, achieving an 88% registration rate. In total, 42 three-hour programs were delivered to 590 children aged 6 to 12. Walking tour participants reached a record high of 421 attendees. Overall program revenue for all offerings, including walking tours and presentations, reached \$12,967, an increase of 27% over 2024. The new full-time education programmer position played a large role in these successes.

Two student programmers and one collections support staff member joined the team for the summer to deliver community programs and enhance the museum's online collections database. The Smart Bros. Limited Collection was selected for digitization in honour of the company's continuing legacy in Collingwood.

Throughout 2025, we remained actively engaged with our community and partners across all services. The achievements in this report demonstrate the strength and impact of these relationships.

## **Collingwood Museum Master Plan Status Report 2025**

### **Mission**

To be a relevant and engaging resource of Collingwood's heritage and collective memory.

### **Vision**

The Collingwood Museum will be an inviting and accessible resource for learning and information sharing. It will be the keeper of the community's stories and collective memory and the hub of the heritage sector in Collingwood. The Collingwood Museum will be relevant and engaging to our community, creating positive and meaningful interactions through its collections, programs, and exhibits.

### **Goals**

- 1) Become more relevant to our community
- 2) Become more engaging to our community
- 3) Improve sustainability measures of the museum's operation and collections

### **Review of Master Plan Goals, Objectives, and Indicators**

Data was collected in key performance areas to evaluate how we are meeting the goals and objectives set out in the Collingwood Museum Master Plan 2020-2025.

#### **Goal A: Become more relevant to our community**

##### **Objective 1: Improve awareness of the museum and its offerings**

- a) \$18,038 gift shop sales (9% reduction from 2024)
- b) \$19,573 gallery donations (25% increase from 2024)
- c) 26,685 website visits (35% increase from 2024)
- d) 311,124 Facebook reaches on Museum page; 3,175 followers; 228 new followers
- e) 907 podcast listens; 15 new episodes researched, written, and released totaling 280 minutes of content; 146 Spotify followers
- f) 635 newsletter subscribers (7% increase)
- g) 52 memberships - 31 individual, 12 family, 1 corporate, 8 lifetime (4% decrease)
- h) 230 photograph reproductions (33 personal/business; 19 corporate; 178 student research and community partnerships), representing a 76% increase over 2024

## **Objective 2: Clarify our role within the heritage sector**

- a) The museum coordinator served as a staff resource for the Heritage Advisory Committee
- b) The museum supervisor attended Unity Collective meetings as a staff resource
- c) Staff attended bi-monthly meetings with representatives from local museums
- d) Continued collaboration with heritage-minded community groups and organizations, including Sheffield Park Black History and Cultural Museum, the Craigleith Heritage Depot, Gaslight Theatre Productions, Collingwood Public Library, Beinn Gorm Highlanders, and Royal Canadian Legion Collingwood Branch 63

## **Objective 3: Clarify our role as a resource**

- a) 79 complimentary research requests completed by staff; 31 on-site researchers
- b) 89 students engaged in on-site and off-site education programs, including 51 during the GNE's Education Day
- c) 2,567 community interactions at offsite events (Town Job Fair, Terminals Presentation, EarthFest, Farmers' Market, School Fair, Sidelaunch Days, Great Northern Exhibition booth, Catulpa event, Downtown Christmas Markets)
- d) 421 walking tour participants
- e) 12 "Then and Now" articles in Collingwood Today featuring collections and stories from the museum, generating \$850 in revenue and 20,054 page views
- f) Continued partnership with Escarpment Magazine, featuring four scripts from the Stories from Another Day podcast, as well as photographs and additional information from the museum's collection. Approximately 50,000 readers per issue, totaling 200,000 readers for four editions.

## **Goal B: Become more engaging to our community**

### **Objective 1: Create a welcoming and usable space for the community**

- a) Four unique ground rental requests, resulting in 13 uses, including two return bookings, and two new bookings
- b) Museum Resource Room and Washroom Renovation Project was issued for tender and awarded with construction to commence in 2026
- c) New facility sign was added to the property along St. Paul Street
- d) Supervisor Shaw and Coordinator Cook attended the Emergency Preparedness and Response Workshop offered in Waterloo by the Ontario Heritage Emergency Response Network (ON HERN)
- e) Programmer Wilson attended the MuseumNext Museums and Public Programs Summit
- f) Staff participated in Customer Service Training, Museums in the Community Course through the OMA, Canadian Conservation Institute Photography Workshop, High Five Training, and First Aid Training

## **Objectives 2 & 3: Improve inclusivity efforts at the museum and create more opportunities for community interaction**

- a) 11,030 in-person visits at museum and offsite special events, including 4,992 gallery visitors. Respective increases of 4% and 9% over 2024.
- b) 590 attendees in 42 children's programs with 88% registration rate. 11 programs (or 26%) had waitlists. Four programs were added in 2025, increasing attendance by 4%.
- c) 573 in-person attendees at museum special events (Smart Bros Limited Community Celebration: 88, Live at the Station Booth: 164, Unity Collective Exhibit Preview: 7; Mobile Park Participants, 18; World War I Walking Tour, 11; Beinn Gorm Highlanders Anniversary Concert, 250; Shipyard Social: 83.
- d) The Sign Languages of Canada travelling exhibit was brought to Collingwood from the Canadian Museum of Language. Staff received positive feedback from visitors.
- e) Staff engaged a travelling exhibit, A History Exposed: The Enslavement of Black People in Canada, created by the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 in partnership with Dr. Afua Cooper and the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia. The exhibit was on display between June 17 and August 30, and created meaningful conversations between visitors and staff.
- f) Volunteers contributed 134 hours to museum programs and events

## **Objective 4: Create more opportunities to receive and respond to community feedback**

- a) Hardhats on Hurontario March returned for the annual Shipyard Social event. The Shipyard Social attracted 83 community participants. A sold-out screening of The Last Launch: The Rise and Fall of Collship was offered in conjunction with filmmaker Thomas Stubbington and Bell Fibe TV1, attracting 100 participants.
- b) Surveys were distributed to the Children's Program and Shipyard Social subscriber lists
- c) The museum launched a community engagement plan to receive feedback for a new master plan. Online and physical surveys were shared with community members, volunteers, and museum members. Staff received in-person feedback at on and offsite community events.

## **Goal C: Sustainability**

### **Objective 1: Ensure policies meet industry standards**

- a) Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG) received
- b) The new Collingwood Museum Master Plan was initiated with assistance from provincial advisor in preparation for 2026 - 2027 CMOG requirements
- c) Young Canada Works Grant funded over 50% of one programming position

**Objective 2: Bring collections management processes up to date**

- a) 19 gift forms issued, and 26 gift forms received for donations from 2022 - 2024
- b) 745 condition reports and 340 catalogue records created; 501 records updated
- c) 314 photographs, objects and archival records relating to Smart Bros. Limited were added to Past Perfect Online by the collections support seasonal staff member. An additional 76 Collingwood Terminals items were worked on, as well as approximately 240 records in the Railway Collection. Past Perfect Online records reached 1,092.

**Objective 3: Address facility capital needs**

- a) The Resource Room Renovation Project was tendered and awarded with construction to commence in January 2026. The new design includes three single-use washrooms, including one universal washroom compliant with Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The addition of a resource room will increase access to collections and research for community members and allow resources to be consolidated for public access.

**Objective 4: Ensure museum is sufficiently resourced to deliver its services**

- a) Received \$21,996 in provincial funding through the Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG), and \$7,996 through Young Canada Works
- b) The part-time programmer position was successfully promoted to a full-time position in the 2025 budget

# **Collingwood Museum 2025 Activity Report**

## **1. Temporary Exhibitions**

### **Dresses, Pucks, and Championships: Collingwood's Hockey Legacy, February - March**

This temporary offsite exhibit explored the local beginnings of both men's and women's hockey in Collingwood and included the game-winning puck from the Collingwood Blues' unforgettable victory at the 2024 Canadian National Junior A Championship. This exhibit was on display at the Eddie Bush Memorial Arena in February, the Central Park Arena in March, and the Collingwood Museum in April.

### **Travelling Exhibit: Sign Languages of Canada, March - April**

This engaging bilingual exhibit from the Canadian Language Museum explored six distinct sign languages used across Canada: American Sign Language (ASL), Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ), Maritime Sign Language, Inuit Sign Language, Oneida Sign Language, and Plains Indigenous Sign Language. Visitors discovered the rich histories, cultural significance, and evolving status of these languages, including their unique features and the communities that use them.

### **Growing Roots: The Legacy of Smart Bros. Ltd, 1890 - 1970, April - May**

This compelling multi-feature installation explored the history and legacy of Smart Bros. Ltd., one of Collingwood's most influential and enduring businesses. Artifacts and memorabilia loaned by Collingwood resident George Christie were featured in the Community Collectors exhibit to highlight the company's operations and its lasting connection to the community. A companion photographic display on the art wall featured photographs of iconic moments in Smart's history drawn from the museum's and private collections.

A self-guided driving tour brochure was also developed to coincide with the exhibit, taking participants across Collingwood to discover homes, former farmlands, and buildings connected to the company's operation.

In response to the exhibit's popularity, a permanent display was created featuring Smarts Bros. Ltd. artifacts and photographs. The driving tour brochure continues to be produced, and a virtual version of the tour has also been developed and is available on the Museum's website.

### **Travelling Exhibit: A History Exposed: The Enslavement of Black People in Canada, June - August**

The Collingwood Museum was honoured to present A History Exposed: The Enslavement of Black People in Canada, a powerful and thought-provoking travelling exhibition from the Canadian Museum of Immigration. The first of its kind, this national travelling exhibition sheds light on the often-overlooked history of slavery in Canada. A

satellite display from the Sheffield Park Black History and Cultural Museum was also on exhibit, demonstrating the vibrance and enduring nature of African Culture.

## **2. Community Collectors Series Installations**

### **Timeless Treasures: Celebrating Heritage Architecture and Award-Winning Restorations, February - March**

Presented in partnership with the Heritage Advisory Committee, the museum's Community Collectors exhibit, "Timeless Treasures: Celebrating Heritage Architecture and Award-Winning Restorations" explored Collingwood's rich architectural history. The exhibit featured notable local buildings, the architects who designed them, and the personal stories that shaped their legacy. Complementing the display, a selection of Heritage Restoration Awards from the past 20 years were presented on the art wall, celebrating the individuals and businesses dedicated to preserving our built heritage.

### **Beinn Gorm Highlanders: Celebrating 25 Years, June - August**

This Community Collectors exhibit celebrated the history of the Beinn Gorm Highlanders. The exhibit explored the band's deep commitment and lasting contributions to the local community over the past 25 years, including their traditions and the vital role the band continues to play in local events and celebrations.

To mark this important anniversary, the Beinn Gorm Highlanders entertained 250 guests with a free evening outdoor concert on Tuesday, July 22 on the museum grounds. The evening celebrations continued with complimentary cake and beverages.

### **Souvenirs of Shipbuilding Days, September - December**

This final installation in the Community Collectors series brought together souvenirs, gifts, and keepsakes that carried the spirit of the shipyard into homes near and far. Each item offered a glimpse into the pride, resilience, and community spirit that defined Collingwood's shipbuilding story.

## **3. Permanent Exhibitions**

A compact exhibit was developed on the rise of steamship transportation on Georgian Bay, highlighting Collingwood's important role as a transportation hub during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Featuring paintings and artifacts, the exhibit explores how steamships and the railway connected Collingwood to communities across the Great Lakes and beyond.

The Growing Roots temporary installation about Smart Bros. Ltd. was transitioned to a permanent display based on its popularity. An interactive driving tour continues to accompany the display and remains available online.

A used exhibit case was purchased through GovDeals for installation in 2026.

## **4. Volunteerism**

The Collingwood Museum Advisory Committee met on nine occasions. Committee members included: Bob MacNair, Jacklyn Plater, Jennifer Belanger, Joanne Edwards,

and Ted Crysler. Councillor Christopher Baines attended committee meetings as an ex-officio member. Committee members and two community volunteers contributed 134 hours to special projects and events.

## **5. Community Programming**

### **Children's Programs**

The museum's popular roster of programs for children ages 6 - 12 returned in 2025 with 42, three-hour programs. Six P.A. Day programs, three March Break programs, and 33 summer programs were offered over the course of the year with a registration rate of 88%. The full-time Education Programmer position was approved in the 2025 budget and the position was filled in March.

Staff attended one elementary school fair to promote summer programs, interacting with 93 community members. A dedicated email list for program updates and information boasted 190 subscribers at the end of the year.

590 participants joined staff for active and heritage-inspired mornings at the museum throughout July and August. Two seasonal staff joined the team between May and August to assist in the planning and delivery of these offerings. One position was partially covered by a Young Canada Works Grant. The summer's weekly themes included: Oh, Canada, Ahoy!!!, Art & Artifacts, How Things Work, Collingwood Time Travellers, Mystery at the Museum, Tall Tales & True Stories, Wild Waters, and The Great Outdoors.

### **Special Interest Groups (On-site)**

#### **Beaver/Cub Scouts, September 17, 23**

Programmer Wilson welcomed three Scouts groups for after-hours programs. Each program consisted of one 30-minute lesson on shipbuilding, a small in-gallery activity, and a craft. Each session lasted approximately one hour in length. In total, 42 Scouts between the ages of 5 and 12 were welcomed.

### **School Groups (On-site)**

#### **Homegrown History Program, May 14**

An adapted Homegrown History PA Day Program was delivered to four home school students by special request. The program ran for two hours and included a lesson on early settler life in the Collingwood area, a walk to look at the public art at the Eddie Bush Memorial Area, and a yarn doll craft.

#### **Pretty River Academy, Downtown Walking Tour, June 3**

Thirteen students attended a one-hour walking tour with Programmer Wilson that explored Collingwood's downtown.

#### **Pretty River Academy, Game Changers Program, June 24**

23 students attended a three-hour program based on the June PA Day Program, exploring local sport heroes.

### **School Groups (Off-site)**

The Great Northern Exhibition's Education Day attracted three classes and 51 students to the Collingwood Museum's booth where students enjoyed a slideshow about the GNE's history and a cork boat craft kit. 100 kits were distributed at the 2025 fair.

### **Presentations**

Five local Probus Clubs requested presentations by staff, resulting in outreach to 700 community members. Presentation topics included the Collingwood Museum, the Collingwood Shipyards, and Smart Bros Ltd. This increase in outreach was largely due to promotional efforts by the Collingwood Museum Advisory Committee.

### **Walking Tours**

20 walking tours were delivered in 2025 with 421 participants. Tours included: The World War One Walking Tour (6), Arts and Heritage Walking Tour (5), Haunted Tour with Dean Hollin (3), Downtown Walking Tour (2), and West Walking Tour (1). Special Tours included the OBIAA Downtown Tour, OSUM Downtown Tour, and Remembrance Day Grounds Tour. Four local Probus Clubs participated in the tours due to the promotional efforts of the Collingwood Museum Advisory Committee.

Additional guided tours included the Museum Gallery and the Museum Storage Rooms with participants totaling 37 and 47 respectively.

## **5. Special Projects and Events**

### **Gift Shop**

The Gift Shop continued to attract visitors to the building and provided takeaways that extended the museum experience at home. In total, 1,452 items were purchased resulting in \$18,038 in sales. Popular sellers included branded clothing (244), magnets and postcards featuring local scenes (346), and youth games and activities (377). In 2025, 212 visitors attended the museum to specifically visit the gift shop.

### **Stories from Another Day (SFAD) Podcast**

Researched and written by volunteer Ken Maher, this popular podcast entered its fifth season, continuing to entice listeners to travel through the past to learn about the people, events, and stories that have informed Collingwood's development. In total, 280 minutes of content was created over 15 new episodes. The podcast catalogue was accessed 907 times by listeners across the country and around the world in 2025. The podcast attracted a following of 146 Spotify followers.

### **Family Day, February 17**

Despite stormy weather, staff welcomed 52 visitors during extended Family Day hours between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Visitors enjoyed free admission, gallery scavenger

hunts, and button making with family and friends. Free stickers and a chance to win a complimentary family membership were also offered.

### **Master Plan Engagement and May is Museum Month**

Public engagement for the new Master Plan launched on April 29 with the release of the Community Engagement Survey, inviting public input on programs, services, and the museum's future direction. Throughout May, a series of open houses provided behind-the-scenes tours of collections and offered residents the opportunity to share feedback in person. On May 17, staff and committee members hosted a booth at the Farmers' Market to promote the survey and engage with the community. The community survey closed on May 31 and garnered 117 responses.

### **Smart's Community Celebration, May 24**

Staff welcomed 88 community members for an unforgettable celebration of Smart Bros. Ltd. Participants explored the exhibits, reminisced with fellow community members, and shared memories and stories related to this important local business. Participants were encouraged to bring photographs and objects for a special show-and-tell. A group photograph was taken with a reproduction Smart Bros. Ltd. delivery truck. Refreshments and small treats were enjoyed by all.

### **Sidelaunch Days, August 9**

Museum staff participated in Sidelaunch Days, Collingwood's annual waterfront festival celebrating our community's rich marine heritage. Throughout the day, staff connected with 388 visitors along the Promenade. Our tents featured a selection of gift shop favourites and museum programming staff hosted a hands-on craft station where 83 participants created their own mini cork boats. Our participation was very well received and resulted in merchandise sales totaling \$987.

### **9th Annual Shipyard Social, September 5, 6**

This year's expanded two-day event began on September 5, with a sold-out special screening of *The Last Launch: The Rise and Fall of Collship*, a five-part docuseries created by local filmmaker Thomas Stubbington. The free event, sponsored by Bell Fibe TV1, took place at the Simcoe Street Theatre and officially kicked off the annual event.

Former shipyard workers, their families, and community members joined the popular Hardhats on Hurontario March on September 6, travelling from Town Hall to the Museum, led by Town Crier Ken Templeman and Piper Ken Maher. Following the march, Mayor Hamlin offered welcoming remarks, the annual group photograph was taken, and guests enjoyed a lively social gathering for the remainder of the afternoon with food and refreshments. Participants also enjoyed the Shipyard Souvenir Showdown, a friendly game that encouraged interactions with the Souvenirs of Shipbuilding Days exhibit to tally up the different shipyard keepsakes they have collected over the years.

### **Great Northern Exhibition (GNE), September 19 - 21**

Staff returned to the GNE with a booth featuring gift shop items, a slideshow showcasing historic photographs, and our ever-popular button maker. The museum participated in Friday's Education Day and welcomed school groups to the booth for a short presentation about the GNE's history.

100 free cork boat kits were distributed throughout the event. The kits highlighted Collingwood's shipbuilding history and included a wooden boat craft and a history passport with stickers. Staff engaged with 1,247 community members and processed \$1,345 in merchandise sales over three days.

### **Community Collectors Night, November 19**

Museum staff and members of the Collingwood Legion welcomed visitors to the Community Collectors Night held in the Atlantic Room at the Royal Canadian Legion. Participants brought military items, sharing stories of family members, and asked questions about additional resources to help further research.

### **Giving Tuesday, December 2**

The Collingwood Museum's 2025 Giving Tuesday campaign used a targeted social media strategy to raise awareness of the museum's efforts to preserve artifacts, share local history, and keep Collingwood's stories accessible for generations to come. The campaign emphasized how donations directly support collections care, digitization projects, and public access to collections. \$1,275 in donations was raised through this campaign.

### **Downtown Christmas Markets, November 28 & December 12**

Museum staff participated in two Downtown Christmas Markets hosted by the Collingwood Business Improvement Association (BIA). Total community interactions amounted to 424, and total sales reached \$530. Get Your Ship Together hoodies were offered at a 20% discount for each market and throughout December. Inclement weather prevented staff from participating in the final market on December 19.

## **6. Collections**

30 offers of artifact donations were received by staff and presented to the Museum Advisory Committee for approval. In total, 39 offers were researched by staff prior to recommendations for acceptance or return to avoid duplication and ensure relevance to the collecting mandate. 77% of donations offered met the collecting mandate in 2025.

### **The Ursula Heller Photograph Collection**

In December, the Collingwood Museum entered into a multi-year purchase and copyright transfer agreement with photographer Ursula Heller. The photograph collection includes 79 rolls of black and white film and over 300 prints captured in 1978, during a pivotal time in Canadian shipbuilding. The collection offers rare glimpses into areas of the Collingwood Shipyards never seen by the public, and captures personal moments and stories that reveal the strength and pride of local shipbuilding families.

## **7. Research and Publication**

Museum staff continued to communicate research and collections knowledge to the public, membership, and email subscribers through exhibitions, programs, newsletters, and social media posts. The monthly partnership with Collingwood Today's "Then and Now" series shared research, photographs, and object collections. In total, 12 articles were published. Additionally, four issues of Escarpment Magazine featured Stories from Another Day podcast scripts and photographs from the permanent collection. Topics included local hockey, the early police force, Smart Bros. Limited, and Clyde Aircraft.

178 archival photographs were requested and provided for student research and community partnerships.

## **8. In the News**

Staff participated in numerous interviews on CTV Barrie, including promotional coverage for the two travelling exhibits – Sign Languages of Canada, and A History Exposed. Staff were interviewed on 97.7 FM for Sign Languages of Canada, May is Museum Month, A History Exposed, and the Shipyard Social. The Art and Heritage Walk was featured by On The Bay.

## **9. Building Maintenance**

- a) Quarterly maintenance of HVAC and repairs as needed
- b) Annual electrical inspection completed by Electrical Safety Authority
- c) Monthly health and safety inspections
- d) Facility cleaning by contracted service provider
- e) Annual fire inspection and monitoring of alarm systems. Mac-Tech continued to provide year-round security services.
- f) Monthly pest inspections by contractor
- g) Annual roof inspection completed with minor repairs