



NANAIMO MUSEUM

TELEPHONE 250 753.1821 FAX 250 740.0125
info@nanaimomuseum.ca www.nanaimomuseum.ca

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Nanaimo Museum a Happening Place

Nanaimo, BC - One of the upsides of aging is a renewed interest in the past, making the Nanaimo Museum a happening place these days. The Museum will soon be housed in brand new digs at the Port of Nanaimo Centre, but volunteer extraordinaire Pamela Mar still thinks the best thing about the museum is the people.

“There are so many people to meet here,” she says. “You get to know the history of the area, and you even meet some of the people who have been part of making that history.”

When Mar began to volunteer with the Museum some 7,000 hours ago, she immediately gravitated toward the textile collection. She especially loved the clothing and accessories, and says her fascination with costumes dates back to her school days in England.

Until recently Mar did most of the organizational work on the textile collection herself, as well as planning and staging of costume exhibits. Mar says she considers herself fortunate that she has as much autonomy as she does. Many museums with staff don't allow their volunteers to prepare exhibits – and that, she says is the most fun of all.

“I have more fun than anyone else here,” she says. “If I had unlimited time I'd love to work here all the time.”

But Mar admits she feels extremely fortunate that in recent years she has been joined by other, exceptionally able volunteers. Pat McCann has worked in other museums and has good museum knowledge. Jose Hope and Betty Hamilton are talented embroiderers and sewers. And Vivian Frow is a trained conservator who has worked all over the world at prestigious museums as well as in the theatre.

Mar says that she welcomes the opportunity for a “new start” at the new museum.

“We expect to see more textiles in the new space. The public love it and we try to change displays as often as we can.”

The textile collection will share space with a new Sports Hall of Fame, which will be located in the lobby of the Nanaimo Museum's new space. It will be unveiled alongside the museum's exhibit space when the Port of Nanaimo Centre opens later this year.





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The idea for a sports hall of fame had been tossed around in Nanaimo for some time, says Debbie Trueman, the museum's general manager, but it wasn't until the museum was given the green flag to move to its new digs that the idea found firm footing.

"Nanaimo has a rich sports history but without a venue, there was no opportunity to develop the idea," she says.

Once the museum was given the go-ahead for its new space, the museum's board of directors decided to pursue the idea. A Sports Hall of Fame (SHOF) committee was then struck to take responsibility for finding inductees and for making decisions about the SHOF.

"For many years I have felt that our community does not do enough to preserve our history in sport," says Dave Bakes, who will head the committee. "My vision is that the Sport Hall of Fame will proudly acknowledge and professionally display our community history in sport for all to see, local citizens and visitors from around the world alike," he says.

Other opportunities to support the museum are now possible thanks to the generosity of three Nanaimo women.

Trueman says it came as a complete surprise that long-time member Hilda John had left a bequest of approximately \$85,000 for the museum in her will.

"It's the single largest personal donation the museum has ever received," Trueman says.

Her gift was followed by one from Mary Holmes, another long-time museum friend, who was prompted by the spirit of Christmas to donate \$10,000 for the new museum space. That donation, along with a small top-up by the Museum, boosted the total to \$100,000, enough to create an Endowment Fund for the Museum.

The Museum has since applied to the Vancouver Foundation's Renaissance Fund. If successful, they'll double the fund to \$200,000 and interest on the money will then be used each year by the Museum.

Any new money, including all profits from Jan Peterson's new book, *A Place in Time: Nanaimo Chronicles*, will allow the Museum to reapply for matching funds from the Vancouver Foundation.





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The Museum will continue to raise money to add to the Endowment Fund, but it first needs to reach its goal of \$1.16 million for the new museum space in the Conference Centre.

To date, the majority of the funding for the new museum has come from the City of Nanaimo and Cultural Spaces Canada, but corporate sponsors have also come on board. The Port of Nanaimo and Coastal Community Credit Union each are on board as Major Sponsors with donations of \$50,000, the Nanaimo Community Foundations has just donated \$25,000, while the Great Canadian Casino and Thrifty Foods each contributed \$10,000. The RBC Foundation added \$5,000.

The Museum's new 'Adopt an Artifact' program has also been a big success.

"People love the idea that they can see something concrete from the money they donate," says Trueman. "They become personally invested in the artifact they've adopted," she says.

Donations of \$5,000, \$2,500 or \$1,000 are required to adopt an artifact, and several are still available. Adoptions will receive a tax receipt to use for tax purposes.

The museum still needs to find approx. \$150,000 to meet its \$1.16 million goal, but Trueman hopes that efforts already in place with major sponsors should bring in the remaining funding.

"Once we've met our goal, we can then direct any donations to the Endowment Fund," she says.

For more information about the Museum, call Debbie or Arvon at 250-753-1821.