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# **Multicultural History Society of Ontario**

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## **Reviewing the Year**

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**2019/20**

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## President's Message

I am pleased to present the annual report for the Multicultural History Society of Ontario. It outlines our achievements during the 2019/20 fiscal year.

Although 2019/20 was a year bookended by challenges – we moved in the summer and the pandemic struck in March – we undertook a wide range of activities that produced very satisfactory results. A standout, as in past years, was our work recruiting, training and supervising virtual volunteers in interview transcription and transcript editing. In addition, we continued our work in digitizing interviews and in re-arranging and re-describing our extensive archival holdings; we assisted students, educators, community historians, and heritage professionals in accessing resources and/or pursuing projects; we circulated exhibitions; we hosted a student residency; and we managed our Facebook page as an information clearinghouse on matters related to ethnocultural and Indigenous heritage. Finally, I would be remiss if I did not highlight our participation in collaborative government/community heritage strategy and interpretation initiatives.

We have long been interested in digital cultural heritage – the integration of cultural heritage with information and communication technologies. Digital creation, in particular, intrigues us since, through the creative processes of visualization, interpretation and presentation, it enables more direct, active and collaborative engagements with our pasts. So, we were pleased to assist a student from the Ontario



College of Art and Design (OCAD) University in the creation of an interactive, documentary website, *InChinatown-TO*, that includes photogrammetric imagery. The site gives us a glimpse of what is possible through the creative mining, reuse and remixing of high-quality digitized heritage resources.

A highlight of 2019/20 was the awarding of a second grant, in April 2020, by the Department of Canadian Heritage in support of our collaborative work with the Ojibway and Cree Cultural Centre (OCCC) on the interviews in the Nishnawbe Aski Nation

Oral History Collection. We are humbled by the trust that the OCCC has placed in us, and we are excited to continue our collaboration in providing culturally sensitive and culturally relevant access to the interviews and in enhancing their usefulness for Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners in educational settings.

I want to acknowledge the ongoing support provided by the Ontario Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries through its Provincial Heritage Organization Operating Grant Program.

None of our successes in 2019/20 would have been possible without the people involved in the Society's day-to-day operations. My thanks go to Carl Thorpe, Carolyn Braunlich, Winston Loui, Dora Nipp, Elizabeth Price, Dennis Moore and Cassandra Tavukciyan.

Professor E. Wayne Dowler  
President

# MHSO Achievements in 2019/20

## Undertaking Collaborations and Providing Advice

### ***National***

In 2019/20, we continued to serve on the Content Working Group of the National Heritage Digitization Strategy (NHDS), a collaboration of interested government and community stakeholders intent on establishing a coordinated approach to the digitization of collections in Canadian memory institutions.

On October 18, 2019, we made a presentation on the 'Digitization Strategy of the MHSO' to 150 in-person and 70 remote participants in the *Access to Knowledge Conference* held in Ottawa by the Canadian Research Knowledge Network (CRKN).



Opening reception for the *Access to Knowledge Conference*.

### ***Provincial***

We continued our partnership with the Ontario Heritage Fairs Association (OHFA). We were represented on the OHFA Board, and we arranged for prizes to be awarded at each of the 15 regional fairs scheduled for April and May. Unfortunately, the fairs were not held this year because of COVID-19 related concerns.

On June 30, 2020, we made a presentation in the Culture and Heritage Hearings of the Legislative Assembly's Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs in which we promoted the economic potential of digital cultural heritage and advocated for the implementation of measures to help realize this potential.

Artist's rendering of the foyer of the new courthouse where many heritage interpretative elements will be located.

### ***Municipal***

As in previous years, we were an active participant in the Heritage Interpretation Working Group (HIWG), advising Infrastructure Ontario on the heritage interpretation design plan for the new courthouse in Toronto. The courthouse is being built in an area formerly known as The Ward, a prominent immigrant neighbourhood in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## Preserving and Increasing Access to Archival Holdings

In 2019/20, we continued our efforts to preserve and increase access to primary source



materials documenting immigrant, ethnic and Indigenous experiences.

### ***Collection Preservation***

We digitized 1,370 interviews (1,900 tapes) in 2019/20. In undertaking this effort, we completed the digitization of the English-language interviews in the Society's core oral history collection, and we



increased the proportion of the core collection that is preserved in digital format from 36% to 58% – a substantial advance.

A kiln built in 1923 by North Carolinians, Henry A. Freeman and William Pelton, on their experimental tobacco farm in Lynedoch. Freeman and Pelton are credited with establishing tobacco farming in Norfolk County. The Delhi Tobacco Project Collection contains an interview with Helen Freeman. She was Henry Freeman's niece, and her father managed Henry's farms.

For the last few years, we have been working to fill gaps in the Society's oral history collections related to collaborative projects

undertaken in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Delhi Tobacco Museum & Heritage Centre (DTM&HC) was one early partner, and the digitization effort we undertook this year benefitted the Centre as well as the MHSO. In 2018/19, our Archivist located and borrowed cassette tape recordings of interviews conducted in the Delhi Tobacco Project that had never been deposited in the MHSO Archives. These interviews were among the 1,370 digitized. The tapes were returned to the DTM&HC along with a donation – the digital files for the entire Delhi Collection of 235 interviews.

### ***Collection Re-Arrangement and Re-Description***

We continued our work re-arranging and re-describing our collections in line with current archival practice. For instance, using a standardized file-naming convention we had already established, our Archivist named the approximately 28,000 digital files that were produced when the 1,370 interviews were digitized. He then added the file names into the appropriate fields in the Society's item-level oral history collection inventories.

### ***Content for the MHSO's Digital Archive***

We undertook work in support of future content uploads to our digital archive. For instance, we continued discussions toward finalizing an agreement with the Archives of Ontario (AO) to borrow and digitize the approximately 84,000 historical photographs deposited in the MHSO fonds at the AO.

Our focus on the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Oral History Collection also continued. This unique collection contains over 300 interviews, in Cree, Oji-Cree or Ojibwe, with Indigenous Elders in remote communities in northern Ontario. The interviews were conducted some 40 years ago by the MHSO and the Ojibway and Cree Cultural Centre (OCCC). Having digitized the interviews in 2017/18, we continued work, in collaboration with the OCCC, to prepare them for inclusion in the digital archive. Our main concerns were transcribing the interviews and translating the transcripts. The OCCC engaged Indigenous

transcribers and editors with the language facility to undertake the work and, by the end of March 2020, there were 86 complete and 20 partially complete transcripts/translations, primarily for Cree interviews.



Marguerite Wabano is one of the Elders who was interviewed by the MHSO and OCCO in the early 1980s. When she died in 2015 at the age of 111, she was the oldest known survivor of Canada's residential school system.

Our very successful virtual volunteering program continued under the direction of our Outreach & Digital Archive Officer. Through the program, we produced some 150 interview transcripts, and we edited over 20 draft transcripts. A total of 82 volunteers were active during

2019/20, and collectively they contributed 3,000 hours of their time to transcription and transcript editing work.

## **Providing Services, and Undertaking and Supporting Programming**

### ***Research Assistance***

The oral history interviews, ethnic newspapers, historical photographs, and textual records in our Archives continued to attract researchers. In addition to making interviews available to the family members of narrators, we helped researchers access primary source materials on a wide range of subjects until March when the pandemic forced us to suspend on-site visits. Those our Archivist assisted included:

- a Toronto-based actor and playwright researching the activism of Black railway porters, from the early to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, against unfair employment practices and discriminatory immigration policies;
- a community historian and PhD candidate in Screen Culture and Curatorial Studies at Queen's University in Kingston researching the multi-faceted narratives related to the Vietnamese diaspora in Toronto;
- a MA student at the University of Ottawa researching the National Association of Canadians of Origins in India from its formation in 1976 to its dissolution in 1993;
- an instructor at the iSchool, University of Toronto researching the evolving relationships between libraries and immigrant communities in the GTA in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century;
- a music historian and collector from Los Angeles, California researching early Armenian sound recordings produced in North America;
- a writer associated with the Ignatianum Academy in Krakow, Poland researching the first wave of Polish emigration from Galicia to South America and Canada;

"You can well imagine how emotional it was for me to hear my mother's voice 28 years after her death. What a gift for my entire family ... my husband and me as well as my children and grandchildren!"

*Daughter of Pierina Vidotto*

- a PhD candidate in the joint Ryerson/York University Communication and Culture Program researching the newspaper journalism of Black women in Canada from 1880 - 1940; and
- an Asian Studies librarian at the University of Victoria researching two Chinese Canadian newspapers, *The New Republic* and *The World Journal Vancouver*.

### ***Student Placements and Interns***

We hosted Hillary Chang, a student in Ryerson University's Film & Photography Preservation and Collections Management MA Program, for a six-month residency beginning in January 2020. Our CEO, Dora Nipp, assembled a collection of over 1,300 photographs documenting the west coast lives of the extended Nipp family, to serve as the basis for Hillary's residency project. Although the pandemic interrupted her work, Hillary began the process of compiling a comprehensive, item-level inventory and creating thumbnail images of the photographs. She will return to the Society in 2020-2021 to finish inventorying, arranging and describing the collection, and re-housing and digitizing the photographs.



One of a number of early wedding photographs taken by professional photographers in the Nipp Family Collection.

### ***Educational Programming***

To celebrate Black History Month 2020, our exhibition, *Many Rivers to Cross: The African Canadian Experience*, was displayed at Macaulay Heritage Park in Picton during the month of February. The exhibition generated so much interest that Prince Edward County requested two extensions of the loan period, initially to May and then to October.



Installation of *Many Rivers to Cross: The African Canadian Experience* at Macaulay Heritage Park in Picton.

On May 31, 2020, we collaborated with the York Centre for Asian Research in launching the Asian Heritage Month Virtual Digital Workshop Series. In the inaugural virtual workshop, Dora Nipp, our CEO, and Hillary Chang, our student resident from Ryerson University, gave a

presentation, “The apple box in Aunt Susie’s basement: portraits of Chinese families in Canada.” The talk was inspired by Hillary’s residency project.

### **Support for Educational Programming**

We provided photographs and interviews for, and lent our community-oriented programming expertise to, exhibitions, websites and public events such as the following.

- The Dragon Centre Stories Commemoration Project undertaken in October 2019, prior to the closure of the mall, by a collaboration of community and heritage stakeholders dedicated to



chronicling and promoting the history of the Centre and Scarborough’s Chinatown. The Society contributed photographs taken in 1991 by a summer student, Heidi Arras, in an MHSO initiative to document Toronto storefronts and street scenes.

The Tai Cheong Supermarket inside the Dragon Centre on Glen Watford Drive, Scarborough photographed by Heidi Arra, MHSO. The Dragon Centre, which opened in 1984, was North America’s first indoor Chinese mall.

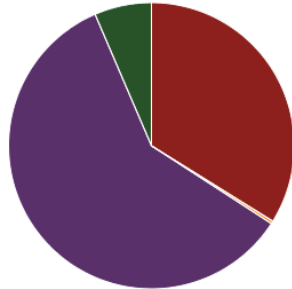
- An exhibition, ‘Reflections’, mounted by the Lithuanian Museum-Archives of Canada in November 2019 to commemorate the 70th anniversary of Canada’s only Lithuanian newspaper, *Tėviškės žiburiai / Lights of Homeland*, by telling the story of its editors and publishers and by showing how the publication has changed over time. The exhibition included excerpts from an interview that the MHSO conducted in 1977 with Pranas Gaida, one of the newspaper’s more prominent editors.
- An interactive documentary website, *InChinatown-TO*, exploring the history of Toronto’s Chinatown. Produced by Lilian Leung, a graduate student at the Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) University, and launched in March 2020, the site combines interviews (including an interview the MHSO conducted with Jean Lumb in 1985) and archival images (360 photographs from the MHSO Archives, the City of Toronto Archives, and the Toronto Public Library) with photogrammetric renderings and imagery created by Lilian.
- A multi-year, York-University-led research initiative entitled, “Blackness in Canada: Transforming the Nature Not Just the Face of Social Science Research.” The MHSO is a community partner. One of the first activities in this initiative was a two-day conference, “Blackness in Canada Policy Networking (BCPN) Conference: Critical Issues for Building Robust Community-Academic Alliances” held at York University, February 4-5, 2020.

# Multicultural History Society of Ontario

## Financial Report

July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020

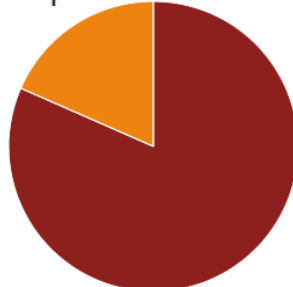
### Revenue



- Received donations \$76,845.00 (33.84%)
- Non-receipted donations \$708.00 (0.31%)
- Gifts from other registered charities \$0.00 (0.00%)
- Government funding \$134,858.00 (59.39%)
- All other revenue \$14,677.00 (6.46%)

Total revenue: \$227,088.00

### Expenses



- Charitable programs \$164,133.00 (81.57%)
- Management and administration \$37,078.00 (18.43%)
- Fundraising \$0.00 (0.00%)
- Political activities \$0.00 (0.00%)
- Gifts to other registered charities and qualified donees \$0.00 (0.00%)
- Other \$0.00 (0.00%)

Total expenses: \$201,211.00