Multicultural History Society of Ontario

Reviewing the Year

2020/21

President's Message

I am pleased to present the annual report for the Multicultural History Society of Ontario (MHSO). It outlines our achievements during the 2020/21 fiscal year.

It was a challenging year for the MHSO. The pandemic forced the closure of our archives for many months, the cancellation of bookings for our exhibitions, and the suspension of our oral history training workshops. We pursued various heritage stewardship and education efforts nonetheless, producing some very satisfactory results.

Our virtual volunteering program was a standout in 2020/21. Having devised and perfected virtual management processes in past years, we were able to continue, without interruption, recruiting, training and supervising volunteers in interview transcription and transcript editing.

A Toronto storefront photograph from the Duncan McLaren Collection, a focus of work in one of the student residencies arranged through Ryerson University's MA Program in Film and Photography Preservation and Collections Management.

In the face of COVID-19 constraints, collaboration gained increased importance for us. Although it too was hampered by forced closures, we continued our work with the Ojibway and Cree Cultural Centre (OCCC) in Timmins on interviews in the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Oral History Collection. Our shared goal is to provide culturally relevant access to the interviews. We also strengthened our relationships with university and college heritage preservation, information management, and museum technology programs. The student internships and residencies that we hosted as a result allowed us to continue our work in re-arranging and re-describing our extensive archival holdings and in digitizing our photograph collections. They also enabled us to create some virtual programming.

Maintaining sufficient revenue was a concern in 2020/21. We made a concerted effort to increase the number of university subscriptions to the online version of our *Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples*. We also secured pandemic-related financial support from the federal and provincial governments through the Emergency Support Fund for Heritage Organizations, the Ontario Small Business Support Grant Program, and the Canada Emergency Business Account Program. We are grateful for this support.

I want to acknowledge as well the annual funding 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 2020/21 would have been possible without the people involved in the Society's day-to-day operations. My thanks go to Carl Thorpe, Elizabeth Price, Dennis Moore, Carolyn Braunlich, Dora Nipp and Winston Loui.

Professor E. Wayne Dowler
President

MHSO Achievements in 2020/21

Preserving and Increasing Access to Archival Holdings

In 2020/21, we continued our efforts to preserve and increase access to primary source materials documenting immigrant, ethnic and Indigenous experiences.

Collection Re-Arrangement, Re-Description and Digitization

We continued our work re-arranging and re-describing our collections in line with current archival practice. A two-month student internship and two eight-month student residencies arranged through Ryerson University's MA Program in Film and Photography Preservation and Collections Management assisted us in this effort. During their placements, which were supervised by our Archivist, Dennis Moore, the students also undertook substantial digitization work.

Flood in Whitefish, Ontario, 1928. Photograph from one of the Society's Finnish photograph collections.

Maria-Julia Tavera-Colugna worked on the Gordon C. Eby Photograph Collection, a collection of prints and negatives dating from the early 20th century. The images depict agriculture as practised in the Mennonite community in Waterloo. She inventoried (a comprehensive, item-level inventory), re-housed and scanned 477 photographs during her summer internship and as a volunteer in the following months.

Gymnastic Club, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1935. Photograph from the Workers' Sports Association Photograph Collection.

Victoria Gomez worked on collections of prints and negatives related to displaced persons' camps in Europe after the Second World War – the Bohdan Panchuk Photograph Collection and the Stanley Frolick Photograph Collection dating from 1942-1947, and the MHSO Displaced Persons Conference Photograph Collection dating from 1985. She also worked on several smaller collections. She inventoried, re-housed and scanned 518 photographs.

Shadio Hussein worked on Toronto streetscape and storefront collections – the David Coleman, David Levine, Duncan McLaren, Richard Dibon-Smith and Vincenzo Pietropaolo Photograph Collections – dating from the 1970s and 1980s. She also worked on the Workers' Sports Association Photograph Collection and the Peter Belluz Family Photograph Collection, as well as several as-yet-unnamed Finnish Canadian photograph collections. She inventoried (revised inventories in the case of the streetscape and storefront collections), re-housed and scanned 986 photographs.

A Toronto storefront photograph from the David Coleman Photograph Collection.

In 2020/21, our Archivist undertook substantial collections management work on our audio archival holdings. He documented the contents of 557 CDs. He also edited a significant number of digitized interviews – he trimmed out static/dead air, split combined files, and so on – thereby creating new, more comprehensible streaming, web and access versions of the digital files.

Contextual Content for the MHSO's Digital Archive

We undertook work in 2020/21 in support of future content uploads to our digital archive.

Our focus on the Nishnawbe Aski Nation Oral History Collection 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 activity this year was transcribing interviews and translating transcripts. The Indigenous transcriber and editor engaged by the OCCC undertook work on 27 Cree interviews.

Marguerite Wabano is one of the Elders who was interviewed by the MHSO and OCCC in the early 1980s. Before her death in 2015 at the age of 111, she was thought to be the oldest living survivor of Canada's residential school system.

Our very successful virtual volunteering program continued under the direction of our Development Manager. Through the program, we produced 159 interview transcripts, and we edited

(either first or second edits) 109 draft transcripts. Sixty-six volunteers were active during 2020/21, and collectively they contributed 3,588 hours of their time to transcription and transcript editing work.

In 2020/21, we worked with Professor Michel Hogue at Carleton University to integrate MHSO oral history interviews – specifically, interviews with American war resisters (Vietnam War) who relocated to Toronto and established a community centred on Baldwin Street – into a second-year history course he was teaching. Students annotated the interviews under Professor Hogue's direction, and he then created composite annotations for ten transcripts. He gave us the transcripts for our digital archive.

Ragnarokr Leather Cordwainery, Baldwin Street, Toronto, ca. 1970.

Providing Services, and Undertaking and Supporting Programming

Despite the closure of our archives for much of the year, we continued to provide services, oftentimes virtually. We also made one of our first forays into virtual educational 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. Those our Archivist assisted included:

- a MA student at the University of Guelph researching the efforts of the Chinese Canadian community to commemorate Chinese railroad workers, efforts that culminated in the establishment of the Chinese Railroad Workers Memorial in Toronto in 1989;

"We listened and it was wonderful. There aren't words to describe how meaningful this recording is to our family. Thank you to you and the entire team. It will be something we (and our heirs) treasure forever."

Grandson of Frank Braun

"What a sweet surprise to hear her voice again. … Thank you ever so much for helping bring her back to us!"

Granddaughter of Frederica Filiatrault

"This is very special because my father now has Alzheimer's and was an only child so our family history is not well documented. This interview will help to shed light on a number of things. Just in the first two minutes I found out how she got here and no one ever knew."

Grandson of Smaro Pavlakis

- a professor in the History Department at York University researching the experiences of women who came to Canada under the West Indies Domestic Scheme, the main means of immigration from the Caribbean to Canada prior to the inauguration of the point system in 1967;
- an independent researcher working with Historica Canada exploring, for a potential Heritage Minute, the personal experiences of Jewish orphans in the War Orphans Project, a project that brought Holocaust survivors to Canada in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War;
- a community historian investigating the establishment of a Greek communal language school in Toronto in 1921 under the auspices of St. George's Greek Orthodox Church and community efforts, more broadly, toward language retention;
- a PhD student from the University of Turku, Finland collecting information on potential source material for her dissertation on workers' social and cultural experiences ca. 1890-1940 in geographically isolated work environments, such as lumber camps, in the Great Lakes region, and the kinds of meanings and values these experiences assigned to manliness and masculinity in the contemporary context of ideal manhood;
- an independent producer engaged by Historica Canada researching, for a documentary podcast, Jean Lumb and her efforts to save Toronto's Chinatown; and
- a PhD student in Jewish History at Stanford University investigating the politics of transnational Jewish activism during the Cold War and the Russian-speaking Jewish diaspora.

Educational Programming

On June 22, 2021 – the 15th anniversary of the federal government's official apology to Chinese Canadians for imposing a Head Tax on Chinese immigrants from 1885 until 1923 and for banning them from entering the country from 1923 until 1947 – we staged *Head Tax Redress: Voice, Presence, Power*, a virtual roundtable with community activists and Head Tax payer descendants. The roundtable, which was supported by York University's Centre for Asian Research, was the creation of Dora Nipp, the MHSO's CEO, and Elliott Gini, a student from Centennial College's Museum and Cultural Management Program who was interning with the Society. Roundtable panelists included Susan Eng, Avvy Go, Amy Go, Tom and Marion Lam, Brad Lee, Karin Lee and Gary Yee – community activists who spear-headed the redress campaign and/or played a pivotal role in the campaign's success. The panelists shared campaign stories and reflections, and they participated in a question-and-answer session.

Head Tax payer James Pon and redress activist Susan Eng at the apology ceremony in Ottawa on June 22, 2006.

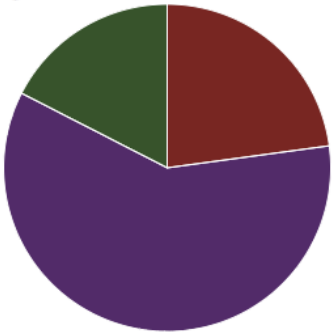
Support for Educational Programming

In 2020/21, we provided images and interviews for use in cultural heritage and public history initiatives such as the following:

- the digital collage, *Jacobs, Spiegel and Bennett Also Served,* produced by artist Alysa-Beth Engel for an online art exhibition, *She Also Served: Jewish Canadian Servicewomen in the Second World War*, mounted by the University of Calgary as one component of its interactive website, *She Also Serves: Jewish Women in the Canadian Armed Forces*;
- the third video, *Victories Won and Continued Challenges,* in a video series produced as part of the educational initiative, *Challenging Racist "British Columbia": 150 Years and Counting*, undertaken by the University of Victoria and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives to mark the 150th anniversary of British Columbia joining Canada;
- the 2020 Toronto iteration of the exhibition, *The Natalie Brettschneider Archive,* an ongoing project of artist Carol Sawyer, mounted in the Koffler Gallery;
- the digital exhibition, *Glimpses into Chinese Immigration in Canada: The New Republic & The World Journal Vancouver Newspapers*, created by the University of Victoria Libraries; and
- the historical plaque, *Early Greek Orthodox Community*, produced by Heritage Toronto.

Multicultural History Society of Ontario
Financial Report
July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021

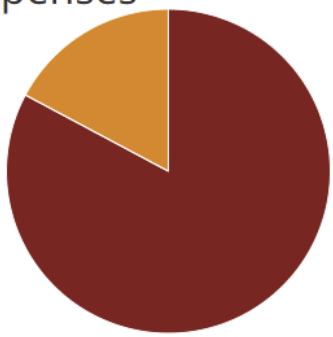
Revenue



- Receipted donations $37,669.00 (22.85%)
- Non-receipted donations $0.00 (0.00%)
- Gifts from other registered charities $0.00 (0.00%)
- Government funding $98,404.00 (59.68%)
- All other revenue $28,802.00 (17.47%)

Total revenue: $164,875.00

Expenses



- Charitable programs $96,293.00 (82.79%)
- Management and administration $20,022.00 (17.21%)
- Fundraising $0.00 (0.00%)
- Gifts to other registered charities and qualified donees $0.00 (0.00%)
- Other $0.00 (0.00%)

Total expenses: $116,315.00