
Multicultural History Society of Ontario

Reviewing the Year

2021/22

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 2021/22 fiscal year.

It was a noteworthy year for the Society. On October 8, 2021, Canadians marked the 50th anniversary of the adoption of multiculturalism as official government policy. It is often claimed that, with this act, the centrality of cultural pluralism to Canadian identity was formally recognized. However, we at the MHSO see something more. As historians, we consider the policy significant because it emerged out of and draws attention to our histories of migration, ethnicity and Indigeneity, and the demographic and socio-political realities they produced. Of course we realize that the policy has itself been subject to the play of history. Although it was a response to a particular moment in time when Canadians needed an



Gordon Eby, a member of the normally pacifist Mennonite community, in military uniform during World War I.

alternative vision of the country, it is not fixed in the past, and its meaning and impact are constantly changing. For us, recognition of this fact provides a starting point for exploring the different ways in which Canadians have approached and interacted with one another over time.

Observing a significant anniversary was not the only highlight of 2021/22. Last year, we increased our focus on and understanding of family photographs. Work we undertook in re-arranging, re-describing and digitizing various collections led to the discovery of images at odds with conventional perceptions and prompted us to reflect on the role of family photographs in creating and maintaining identities in ethnocultural and racialized communities, on the ethics of depositing these photographs in institutions, and on the importance of preserving visual culture.

As in previous years, we attended to revenues in 2021/22. We increased 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 Reopening Fund for Heritage Organizations and the Ontario Small Business Relief Grant 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 2021/22 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 2021/22

Undertaking Collaborations and Providing Advice

Provincial

In 2021/22, we were honoured to support the Moose River Heritage and Hospitality Association (MRHHA) in developing its *More than 350 in 2023 Initiative* to mark the establishment of Moose Factory, one of Canada's oldest continuous sites of Indigenous-European "middle ground," and its longer-term *360° Economic and Community Development Plan*.

The Society and the Ojibway and Cree Cultural Centre (OCCC) are joint stewards of a collection of 300 oral history interviews conducted, in the 1970s and 1980s, with Elders and knowledge keepers in Nishnawbe Aski Nation territory. Initial work on the portion of the collection related to the James Bay Cree led the Society to the MRHHA, and a common interest in inter-cultural histories strengthened the connection. The result has been the development of a mutually beneficial relationship. While the

MRHHA has helped us better understand and work to achieve reciprocity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations and communities, we have served as an informal advisor to the MRHHA on many aspects of *More than 350 in 2023*. We have shared our heritage experience and contacts, and provided support in securing grants to help ensure the success of the initiative.

In 2021/22, we formed a partnership with Western Libraries and the Department of Languages and Cultures at Western University to create a digital archive and exhibit, hosted by Western, using materials from the Augusto Bersani fonds in our archives. Bersani was an anti-fascist activist and secret informant for the RCMP during the Second World War.



We continued our partnership with the Ontario Heritage Fairs Association (OHFA) in 2021/22. We were represented on the OHFA Board, and we gave a prize at each of the regional fairs held in April and May.

National

In 2021/22, we continued to serve as a member of the Advisory Committee of the National Heritage Digitization Strategy (NHDS).

Collecting, Preserving and Increasing Access to Archival Material

In 2021/22, we continued our efforts to collect, preserve and increase access to primary source materials documenting immigrant, ethnic and Indigenous experiences.

Collection Donations

Several years ago, photojournalist and travel writer Ruth Lor Malloy approached the Society about donating an extensive collection of photographs produced for her blog, *Toronto Multicultural Calendar*.

The born-digital images depict ethnocultural community festivals and events in the city. We concluded an agreement in 2015 and, as captions were written by the donor and a preliminary catalogue was produced, approximately 20,500 photographs were transferred to the Society. A further 10,400 were transferred in 2021/22.

Collection Re-Arrangement, Re-Description and Digitization

We continued work in 2021/22 on re-arranging and re-describing our collections in line with current archival practice. A seven-month student residency arranged through Toronto Metropolitan University's MA Program in Film and Photography Preservation and Collections Management (F+PPCM), as well as work undertaken by a volunteer and our Archivist, assisted us in this effort.



Mirunalini (Meera) Sivasegaran and Ketharini (Ketha) Sivasegaran with relatives at a wedding.

Samra Sheikh, the F+PPCM Program student who served her residency with the Society in 2021/22, approached us hoping to work on a South Asian collection. Lacking a suitable candidate in our holdings and seeking donations, we sought out and made arrangements to borrow a collection of photographs from the Segaran/Sivasegaran family. We had worked with this Tamil Canadian family some 30 years ago when we mounted our exhibition, *Safe Haven: The Refugee Experience of Five Families*, in the Royal Ontario Museum. The Segarans were one of five families highlighted in the exhibition. Under our supervision, Samra produced a comprehensive, item-level inventory of the photograph collection – approximately 1,700 images – adding geographical and socio-cultural contextual information where possible through her research. She then scanned and re-housed the photographs. We have secured the family's permission to retain copies of the digitized images in our archives.



Buckets of fruit on the Eby family farm.

Maria-Julia Tavera-Colugna, a former intern from the F+PPCM Program who volunteered with the Society in 2021/22, worked on the Gordon C. Eby Photograph Collection. This collection of family photographs dating from the early 20th century includes many images depicting agriculture as practised by the Mennonite community in Waterloo. She completed the re-housing and scanning of approximately 1,250 prints and negatives.

In 2021/22, our Archivist, Dennis Moore, undertook substantial collections management work on the hardcopy newsletters in our holdings. As a result of his efforts, a preliminary, item-level inventory has been produced for 1,125 titles (almost twice the originally estimated number) created by/for 46 ethnocultural,



War brides and their children en route to Canada.

racialized and Indigenous communities. He also began work on devising a RAD-compliant arrangement scheme for the newsletters.

Contextual Content for the MHSO's Digital Archive

We undertook work in 2021/22 in support of future content uploads to our digital archive.

Our very successful virtual volunteering program continued under the direction of our Development Manager, Elizabeth Price. In 2021/22, we produced 73 interview

transcripts through the program, and we edited (either first or second edits) 98 draft transcripts. (A Young Canada Works student, Kaileigh La Belle, edited an additional 54 draft transcripts.) Forty-seven volunteers were active during 2021/22, and collectively they contributed 2,319 hours of their time to transcription and transcript editing work.

In 2021/22, a York University history student, Emily Masci, serving an experiential education placement with the Society produced an introduction to the 34 interviews with Dutch war brides in our core oral history collection. This introduction will serve as a model for introductions to other identifiable groups of interviews.

Providing Services, and Undertaking and Supporting Programming

In 2021/22, we continued to provide services, oftentimes virtually, and to undertake and support programming.

Research Assistance

The oral history interviews, ethnic newspapers, historical photographs and textual records in our archives continued to attract researchers in 2021/22. 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 professor of sociology at St. Lawrence University in New York conducting research on how Turkish Armenian migrants to Canada have navigated various political and social landscapes in their home and adopted countries;
- a student in contemporary history at the Università di Pavia in Italy investigating memory and identity formation processes within the Ukrainian diaspora in Canada during the Cold War;

"Yes, the sound is good. Actually, it's awesome! I haven't heard my grandfather's voice in 40 years."

Grandson of Oreste Marini

"Our family is so grateful for the project you've put together and for the opportunity to hear my grandfather's story again. Thank you for your help with this!"

Granddaughter of Ferdinand Berencz

"I've had a chance to listen to the interview in its entirety. It was amazing to hear my grandfather for the first time in memory! I shared the interview with family members who enjoyed it as well."

Grandson of Julian Wielgosz

- a professor of history at Wilfrid Laurier University undertaking a mapping and digital storytelling project comparing the spatial histories, from 1900 to 1920, of Brantford's Armenian, Italian and Chinese migrant communities;
- a student in museum studies at the University of Toronto exploring how museums and heritage institutions collect, interact with and exhibit histories of migrant communities focusing, in particular, on Serbian Canadian heritage in Ontario;
- a community historian from the Slovak Canadian community conducting research on Gabriel Kurdel, an influential member of the community and editor, during the 1930s, of the Slovak-language newspaper, *Slovak v Kanade*;
- a student in immigration and settlement studies at Toronto Metropolitan University investigating how South Asian migrants, who came to Canada from the 1960s to the 1980s, maneuvered strategically within the immigration system and exercised agency;
- a student in editorial and production design at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico conducting research on the Spanish-language press in Canada, notably *El Popular*;
- a filmmaker developing a television project on the Central Ukrainian Relief Bureau and its work relocating displaced persons out of Europe after the Second World War;
- a professor of Italian food studies at the University of Toronto Mississauga working on a digital exhibit project, *Mapping Italian-Canadian Foodways in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area*;



- a student in historical theology at McMaster University investigating the roles that African Canadian pastors have played in Black communities through an examination of the life and service of Reverend William A. White;
- a community historian from the Danish Canadian community documenting the life of Bertel Fuglsang, publisher of the Danish-language newspaper, *Viking*;
- a student in history at York University specializing in migration and food history exploring the Gerrard India Bazaar in Toronto and its development as an ethnic enclave from 1970 to 2000;
- a student in architecture at the University of Waterloo, who was intent on exploring 'home' in relation to international belonging, examining how Hong Kong Canadians remember, inhabit and imagine their homes; and

- a student in history at Carleton University working on an historical documentary on the war resisters (Vietnam War) who came to Toronto in the 1960s and 1970s, specifically those involved in the Baldwin Street community.

Educational Programming

Multiculturalism was adopted as official government policy in Canada on October 8, 1971. Because of her association with the MHSO and her own work and activism, the *Canadian Geographic* commissioned our CEO, Dora Nipp, to write an article to mark the policy's 50th anniversary in 2021. The article, "50 years of multiculturalism: Where lived experiences make history," was one of five commissioned by the magazine. Published online on October 6, 2021, it reflected on the importance of chronicling migrant, ethnic and Indigenous stories as an essential means to understanding Canada in the 20th century and beyond.

On November 16, 2021, Dora Nipp made a presentation in the Oshawa Historical Society's Guest Speaker Series. Entitled "Growing Up Chinese: Canadians without belonging or citizenship," the presentation explored how the Chinese Canadian community resisted racist legislation and policies to establish its place in Canada.

Support for Educational Programming

In 2021/22, we provided images and interviews for use in cultural heritage and public history initiatives such as the following:

- the re-conceptualized exhibition, "*...and still I rise*": *African Canadian Workers in Ontario 1900 – 2000*, launched as a virtual exhibition in 2021 by Hamilton Civic Museums as part of Hamilton 175, a digital commemoration of the 175th anniversary of Hamilton's incorporation as a city;
- *Derailed: The History of Black Railway Porters in Canada*, the multi-media virtual exhibition with dramatic monologues performed in Toronto's Union Station produced by Myseum of Toronto;
- the exhibition, *Hardship and Resilience: The History of Ukrainians in Kenora*, mounted by the Lake of the Woods Museum;
- the Heritage Toronto digital tour, *Riding the Waves: Toronto's Latin American Community*;
- the tribute to No. 2 Construction Battalion, a segregated, non-combatant unit of Black soldiers who served during World War I, performed at the opening of the 2022 Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo;
- the website, *Ukrainian Heritage Day 2021*, developed as a primer for non-Ukrainians and people of Ukrainian heritage not involved in everyday community life; and
- the article on Portia White, "Singing Sensation Portia May White Wowed Audiences in the 1940s," published in the December 2021–January 2022 issue of *Canada's History*.



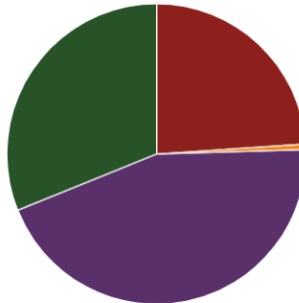
The original " ... and still I rise" exhibition mounted in 2003 by the Workers Arts and Heritage Centre in Hamilton.

Multicultural History Society of Ontario

Financial Report

July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022

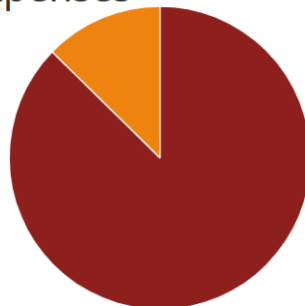
Revenue



- Receipted donations \$33,550.00 (23.94%)
- Non-receipted donations \$828.00 (0.59%)
- Gifts from other registered charities \$0.00 (0.00%)
- Government funding \$62,169.00 (44.36%)
- All other revenue \$43,588.00 (31.10%)

Total revenue: \$140,135.00

Expenses



- Charitable programs \$96,946.00 (87.32%)
- Management and administration \$14,082.00 (12.68%)
- Fundraising \$0.00 (0.00%)
- Gifts to other registered charities and qualified donees \$0.00 (0.00%)
- Other \$0.00 (0.00%)

Total expenses: \$111,028.00