

# Annual Report

2023-2024

1 Nov 2023 - 31 Oct 2024



operated by the  
Sooke Region Historical Society

# Year in Review 2023-2024

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## Port Renfrew

# Jordan River

Shirley

# T'Sou-ke

# Sooke

## Otter Point

# East Sooke Scia'new

**The Region includes  
the communities :**

East Sooke  
Jordan River  
Otter Point  
Port Renfrew  
Shirley  
Sooke



Botanical Beach, Port Renfrew



## Sooke Hills



# Purpose

**“The purposes of the Society are:**

- (a) To gather and preserve information, records, and objects of educational, historical and cultural value associated with the area, and without limiting the generality of the foregoing
- (b) To establish and maintain a museum for the purpose of preserving, recording and exhibiting for public enjoyment such material
- (c) To undertake other such activities, which from time to time, may be deemed appropriate.

## **Our Vision**

To be a community museum that makes a difference ... improving the lives of residents and visitors to the Sooke Region.

## **Our Mission**

Inspiring an appreciation of the Sooke Region’s past and its relevance to our present and future.”



# message from the Board President

I love my role promoting the Sooke Region Museum & Visitor Centre and advocating for the brilliant people who work and serve here.

Online reviews say the museum is a “treasure” and “little gem,” and “lots of fun,” the staff “exceptionally knowledgeable and helpful” and “one of the best ... places for souvenirs.”

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the vision and efforts of individuals and groups who came together to build the museum almost fifty years ago. Our community has vastly changed since then. What hasn't changed is the dedication of staff and volunteers.

History happens around us every day and the museum tells the important stories of the region, inspiring questions and curiosity. Connections to our past and knowing where we've been help our community chart the path forward.

The Sooke Region Museum plays a vital role bringing together generations, cultures, organizations, and places to help make sense of it all.

For example, the Detours exhibit highlights how people have moved around the region from the days of travelling by canoe to commuting by E-bike and transit. It gets us thinking about transportation when this issue is top of mind for many residents.

In 2024 we laid the groundwork to begin an ongoing conversation with the community. We'll be reaching out to the residents of the region, inviting you to let us know your feelings about the museum and hear your ideas to shape our future.

None of what we do is possible without valued staff and volunteers, loyal members, and generous donors and funders. My most heartfelt thanks to Executive Director Michelle Richard, Historian Elida Peers, and staff Patricia Handy, Beverley Myers, Willy Webb, Jason Arthurs, Emma Wilton, Angela Petrie, Sarah Wilford and all the summer students. Thank you to Sooke Region Historical Society board members Laurie Szadkowski, Georgia Medwedrich, Sheila Dobie, Rose Dumont, Rob Hill, Trevor Price, Neil Poirier, Laurie Wallace, Sheila Needs and Nadine Smith, along with Juan de Fuca liaison and electoral area director Al Wickheim, former District of Sooke liaison Dana Lajeunesse, and newly appointed councillor Kevin Pearson.

I'm grateful to BC Arts Council, Destination BC, BC Community Gaming, Capital Regional District, District of Sooke, Canadian Heritage, Young Canada Works and Canada Summer Jobs for continued financial support.

I am pleased and proud to work with the incredible staff and volunteers who bring history to life every day. Congratulations on this successful year.

Sincerely,  
Doni Eve  
President

# message from the Executive Director

Halfway through the year I started in this position, taking over from Lee Boyko who had been in the role for over 10 years. I learned quickly how the dedication and the passion of the people involved with the Sooke Region Museum & Visitor Centre keeps it going strong.

Staff ensure the collection is cared for, exhibits are well-researched and creatively presented, the gift shop is well stocked, program and event participants are having fun (while they're also learning about local history), that visitors are welcomed and informed, and buildings & grounds are well-maintained. All that with energy and passion.

Last year we said goodbye to two staff: Executive Director Lee Boyko and Programs Manager Elizabeth Shaw, and we thank them both for their contributions. We welcomed Sarah Wilford as Programs Manager, who has become an important part of the team.

Volunteers are essential to our success, assisting in all areas of operations. Some volunteers come weekly for the Night Market or year-round. Some we see for the very busy periods with school tours, while others visit periodically with gifts of time and knowledge. The Board of Directors is a special group of volunteers who provide governance informed by knowledge, experience, and community connections. Last year we said goodbye to Board Members Linda Gabriel and Tony Bastone, while we welcomed Sheila Needs and Nadine Smith.

Thanks to volunteers, we were able to open Moss Cottage and the Triangle Island Lighthouse during the Night Market last summer and present a new event, Sooke Spook in the fall. Volunteers prepare plan and organize for days leading up to, and rise early on a Sunday in June to invite the community to our annual Open House. Historian Elida Peers continues to volunteer her time, sharing stories, contributing to research, and supporting the museum in many ways.

As a community museum, we are fortunate to receive generous donations from community members. To preserve and interpret history and advance understanding of our region, we accept objects that support our mission and purpose. In addition to objects for the collection, we have also received gifts to improve the visitor experience. Last year the outdoor stage was renovated with a generous donation of cedar from a community member, and fresh paint by staff Jason and Willy.

Thank you for making me feel welcome, and I look forward to serving the community and our members.

Sincerely,

Michelle Richard  
Executive Director



# Historian Report

It is heartwarming to know that the museum set in motion by generous minded people five decades ago is continuing to serve the community, with all of us working together. The first meeting that actually set it in motion took place in 1974.

Those of you who read my weekly history column might have noticed that when I wrote about the Sooke Lions Club recently I mentioned that Lion Bob Anderson may be the only one of the original charter members who is still with us in Sooke.

Lion Bob Anderson is important to us as it was during his presidency, in March of 1974, that the Lions announced they would build a museum for Sooke.

To set this underway, they called for representatives from major organizations to attend a meeting to organize a historical society.

As I was the historian for Sooke Community Association and also for Saseenos School, it was natural that I would be at that first meeting in the hall. As you know, the rest is history - after a lot of struggles, the museum opened in 1977.

It opened because so many good people cared, and contributed so much history, and also because so many more individuals with ties to local history were present in that period, so different from today, with our current rapidly increasing influx of population.,

Readers may also have noticed that a recent column spoke of the Governor General of Canada, Romeo LeBlanc, who came to visit us in 1999 to commemorate the 150- years of harmonious relationship between the T'Sou-ke Nation and the incoming European settlers.

It was considered unique that such a relationship, though certainly not without some difficulties, has been almost singular in Canada and for that, we, as the immigrants, have much to be thankful for. I extend the most sincere appreciation to the many Indigenous community members in Sooke, and both to the east and the west, that I have been close friends with.

The main reason we were able to forge ahead and accomplish so much, that, very early on - we were recognized as one of the foremost small museums in Canada - was because of community goodwill and involvement.



# Historian Report

## continued

Goodwill, of course, comes from the people, who don't necessarily respond well to bureaucracy, but appreciate having their contributions valued and recognized.

With so much community help, we have done a lot, but there's more - still underway is the documentary film project on Woodside Farm, the oldest continuously operated working farm west of the Great Lakes. I pray we can complete this important untold segment of early BC history, It's where my next energy is going.

We have place a series of large reproductions around the room, for your enjoyment, each shoing important aspects of our history. There is so much for us to remember and celebrate.

A Victoria researcher who became a good friend of ours, Leona Taylor, went through the microfilm of early newspapers and shared many bits with us.

We all know about our famous All Sooke Day, but Leona came across some Victoria newspepr stories published just before it began in 1934. We thought you might all like to have your own copy of what those original articles actually said.

Elida Peers

# Collections

Collection includes 30,000 items  
13,289 objects  
10,121 photographs  
8,000 archival records

9,000 photos are online

## Resource Library:

organised using the Library of Congress system  
includes 815 titles  
self-published books  
bound copies of Sooke News Mirror since 1958



## Year at a glance

**21 donations included 173 objects**

108 of those objects were WWII letters sent home to Sooke by Frank Richardson

**3,000 items were processed**

these items were researched, moved into improved storage or  
accessioned into the collection

**1,500 items that were processed in summer 2024 were textiles**

did you know we have 59 doilies in the collection?

thanks to funding from Young Canada Works, two summer positions worked on the textiles  
collection, repaired, catalogued and moved items into improved storage area

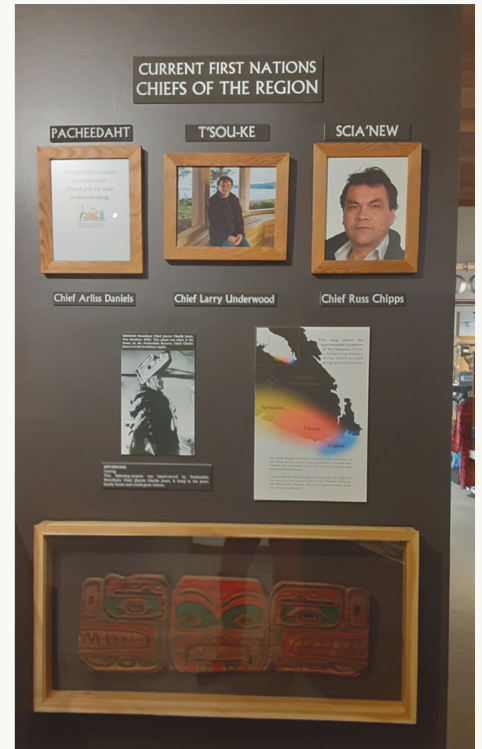
# Exhibits

## Refreshed Exhibits!

### Chief's Wall



The Chief's Wall was updated with images of recently elected chiefs of T'Sou-ke, Sc'ianew, and Pacheedaht Nations and a map showing their respective territories.



### Exploring & Charting



The updated display includes maps, images and information about the Spanish and British explorers who arrived on these shores of T'Sou-ke territory in the 18th century.

Objects are also included that invite visitors to touch canvas map reproductions, a compass and a spyglass.

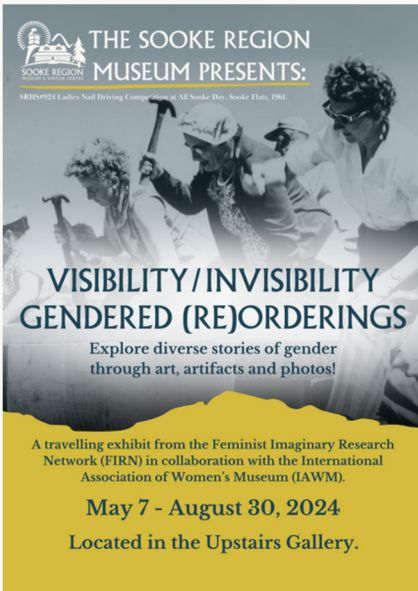


Refreshed exhibit styles and techniques, like the 'touch' elements, are a pilot for a more comprehensive refresh at the Museum.





# Exhibits



poster image SRHS#924

Ladies nail driving contest at All Sooke Day, Sooke River Flats, 1961.

## Visibility / Invisibility: Gendered (Re)Orderings

*7 May - 30 August 2024*

Curated by a collective, which included Nabila Kazmi from the University of Victoria, this exhibit featured artifacts, art, photos and narratives to illustrate gendered experiences and existence.

The exhibit included personal stories from all over the world and carefully selected objects from the Sooke Region Museum collection to encourage us to consider what visibility, invisibility and gender identity mean in our daily lives.

## Detours: Bypass the Expected

*October 2024 - December 2025*

*Opening event: 17 October*

Moving around the Sooke Region is not always done in expected ways. In this exhibit, we look at the unexpected ways people have moved through the Region, by water, wheels, foot, and air!

Living and working around the Sooke Region means thinking outside the box (or the lines of the road!). We don't just use roads. People move around this region on trails, through water, and air.

Thank you to the following local businesses who help us move around the Region AND who have sponsored this exhibit: West Coast Express, West Coast Collision, West Coast Outdoor, Benjamin Moore Pacific Paint Sooke, and BC Transit.



clockwise from top: exhibit poster image, installation image, Brother Rick and Jackie DeYaeger (Planes) at the opening event



# Exhibits

## Polemaker's Shack



Leck Wojtala, Morgan Hind and Finley Arthurs, Clarkston Construction



Thanks to the generous donation of skilled labour from Clarkston Construction, the Polemaker's Shack has been stabilized.

The Polemakers' Shack is divided into two areas: the larger for the horse, hay and harness, and the smaller area for the polecutter's living quarters. The polecutter went ahead of loggers to remove tall, slender trees that would make good utility poles. This shack was pulled through the forests in the 1940s and moved to the museum in 1988.

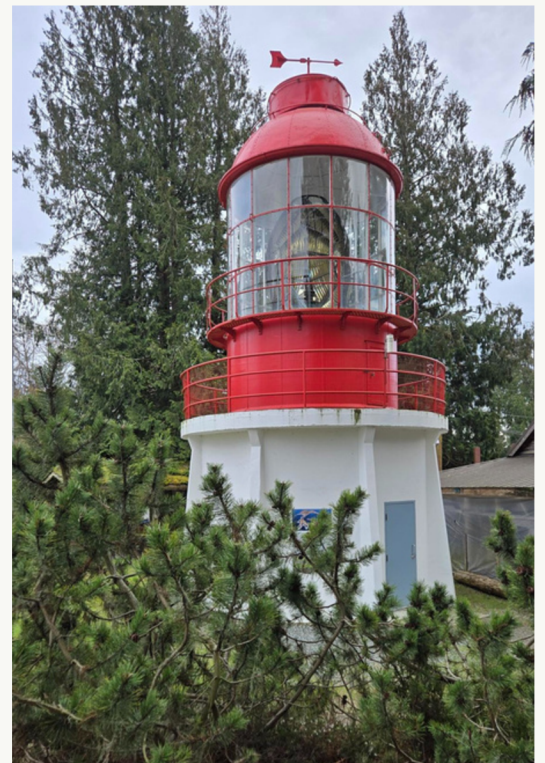
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## Triangle Island Lighthouse



Painting of the Triangle Island Lighthouse exterior was completed, returning the dome structure to a recognizably vibrant red.

This completes work that was started the previous year to update interior and exterior interpretive panels.





# Programs

## School Tours

We offer school tours for elementary students in the Sooke Region and beyond. Our programs support BC Curricular competencies in fun and engaging activities: making butter, bannock, visiting Aunt Tilly in Moss Cottage (in 1902), Triangle Island Lighthouse, seasonal craft, museum exhibits and more.

In 2023-2024, we saw 702 students from Kindergarten to Grade 6.

Participating schools:  
John Muir, John Stubbs,  
Poirier, Wishart, David  
Cameron, Journey, Sooke  
Elementary, Ruth King.



## Author Talks

16 March  
*Fleece & Fibre* by Francine McCabe

6 April  
*You Have Been Referred - My Life in Applied Anthropology* by Michael Robinson

## Workshops

December 2023  
Lantern Making workshop

10 & 24 February 2024  
Beading with Shelby Crowchild

## Speaker Series

Natural Heritage Speaker Series 2024

13 April - Cougars

11 May - Bears

8 June - Whales

presented by Mollie Cameron, President of Wild Wise and Peter Pauwels, retired BC Conservation Officer

## StoryWalk

In collaboration with the Sooke Branch of the Vancouver Island Regional Library, we present several StoryWalks each year, inviting children to enjoy a book while strolling through the Museum grounds.



**Books featured in 2023-24:**

*Otter Doesn't Know* by Andrea Fitz

*Birdsong* by Julie Flett

*Peace Dancer* by Roy Henry Vickers

*Diggersaurus Mission to Mars* by Michael Whaite

# Events

Throughout the year we present events in collaboration with many community groups, inviting visitors to experience local culture and heritage.



## Winter Market & Moss Cottage Christmas

2 December 2023

36 vendors | Sooke Community Choir  
South Island Singers | Moss Cottage  
Triangle Island Lighthouse



## Open House

23 June 2024

traditional grilled salmon  
collections tours  
Moss Cottage  
Triangle Island Lighthouse



## Family Day

17 February 2024

## Cougar Annie Tales

21 August

Musical storytelling by Kat Kadoski

## Sooke Spook

26 October

Partnership with Sooke Harbour Players







# Night Market

6 June to 5 September 2024

The Sooke Night Market is the place to be on Thursday night for food, music, art, history - a true social and cultural experience. Launched in 2013, this weekly summer market presents the produce and creations of over 30 vendors each week and local musicians performing live on two stages.

In 2024 volunteers invited visitors to visit Moss Cottage and the Triangle Island Lighthouse, bringing the museum to the market.

**In 2024, 80 different vendors participated in the 14 market nights, with 16 different musicians!**

The Sooke Night Market offers a Hatch & Hype tent to showcase and support new farms and food producers.

Performances by local musicians create an ideal market atmosphere on two stages each week.

Both stages feature live music for three hours during each market. Talented local musicians bring their unique styles including Latin, jazz, country, folk and many more.

## 2024 performers:

- Aruna Kalutanthri
- Ben Goerner
- Charlie K
- Dos Cabezas
- Gord Phillips
- John Rewers
- Karaoke
- Katrina Kadoski
- Nice Verdes
- Revolution Dance Collective
- Willis Taylor
- The Haven
- Murray Fitch
- Arbutus Holiday
- Oliver Mitchel
- 3 bits





# In the Community



## All Sooke Day

17 August 2024

Bringing the past into the present, visitors posed in the photo panels from All Sooke Day. Photos are from our archival collection.



pictured clockwise starting top: Executive Director Michelle Richard and Board Member Nadine Smith in tug of war, Board Members Nadine Smith and Doni Eve as best babies, Susan Hansen birling (2024) against herself (1982)



## BC Aviation Museum Open House

18 August 2024

Museum staff brought the Sooke Region to Saanich to share the word of what the Museum offers to visitors.



## Sooke Fall Fair Water Is Life

7-8 September 2024

*Untapped*, an exhibit about water technology created by summer positions Arwen and Amelia.



# Gift Shop

The Museum Gift Shop allows visitors to take a piece of their visit with them, provides an opportunity for locals to support the museum, and enables authors, artists, and creators to sell their work.

## 677 different book titles

Specializing in local, natural and cultural history, and heritage.



Prints, notebooks, colouring book, bookmarks with designs by Shelley Davies, T'Sou-ke Nation.



Tea towel with design from wallpaper found in Moss Cottage

Silver jewellery, hand-carved copper and silver rings, pendants, earrings, and bracelets by Indigenous artists.

T-shirts, hoodies, socks, shawls, scarves, hats - we've got clothing for children and adults, with designs inspired by this place.

Postcards, notecards, artcards, notebooks - featuring local photography and art by local artists.

Puzzles, games, toys for all ages!

**over \$165,000 in sales  
support the museum  
and local authors,  
artists & makers**

### new items

In 2024 we were proud to present new items with designs by Shelley Davies from the Canadian Art Prints Indigenous Collection.

We also created an exclusive tea towel of a wallpaper design from Moss Cottage (built circa 1870).





# Visitor Centre

Since the 1980s, the Sooke Region Museum has hosted the designated Visitor Centre for the Sooke Region, working with Destination BC as part of the Visitor Services Network.

## visitor experience update



Visitors who enter the building can talk to a Visitor Information Counsellor in person, flip through 28 panels of regional information and images, or watch the new monitor that loops through local events, weather and helpful hints to explore the region responsibly.

## familiarisation tours



To start the season, we accompany summer staff on familiarisation tours throughout the region.

These first-hand experiences enable staff to provide accurate information to visitors.

## where do our visitors come from?

British Columbia (722), Canada (beyond BC, AB) (370), Alberta (204),  
Vancouver Island (152)

*top 10 places of origin for visitors from outside Canada May to October 2024:*

from the USA: Washington, California, Oregon, Colorado, Texas, Arizona, Florida,  
Michigan, Illinois, Utah, Minnesota, North Carolina, Pennsylvania

beyond Canada and the USA: Germany, England, Netherlands, France, Switzerland,  
Australia, Spain, New Zealand, Belgium, Denmark

# People

## staff

Lee Boyko

*Executive Director to March 2024*

Michelle Richard

*Executive Director from March 2024*

Patricia Handy

*Office/Visitor Centre Manager*

Beverley Myers

*Gift Shop Manager/Visitor Centre Councillor*

Angela Petrie

*Programs Assistant*

Emma Wilton

*Collections & Exhibits Manager*

Jason Arthurs

*Exhibits Technician*

Elizabeth Shaw

*Programs Manager to June 2024*

Sarah Wilford

*Programs Manager from June 2024*

Willy Webb

*Groundskeeper/Maintenance*

## summer positions



pictured left to right: Jayme, Arwen, Amelia, Jenna, Lawrence

*Collections & Exhibitions Assistants*

Amelia Gentilli-Hittos

Arwen Koops

*Visitor Centre Councillors*

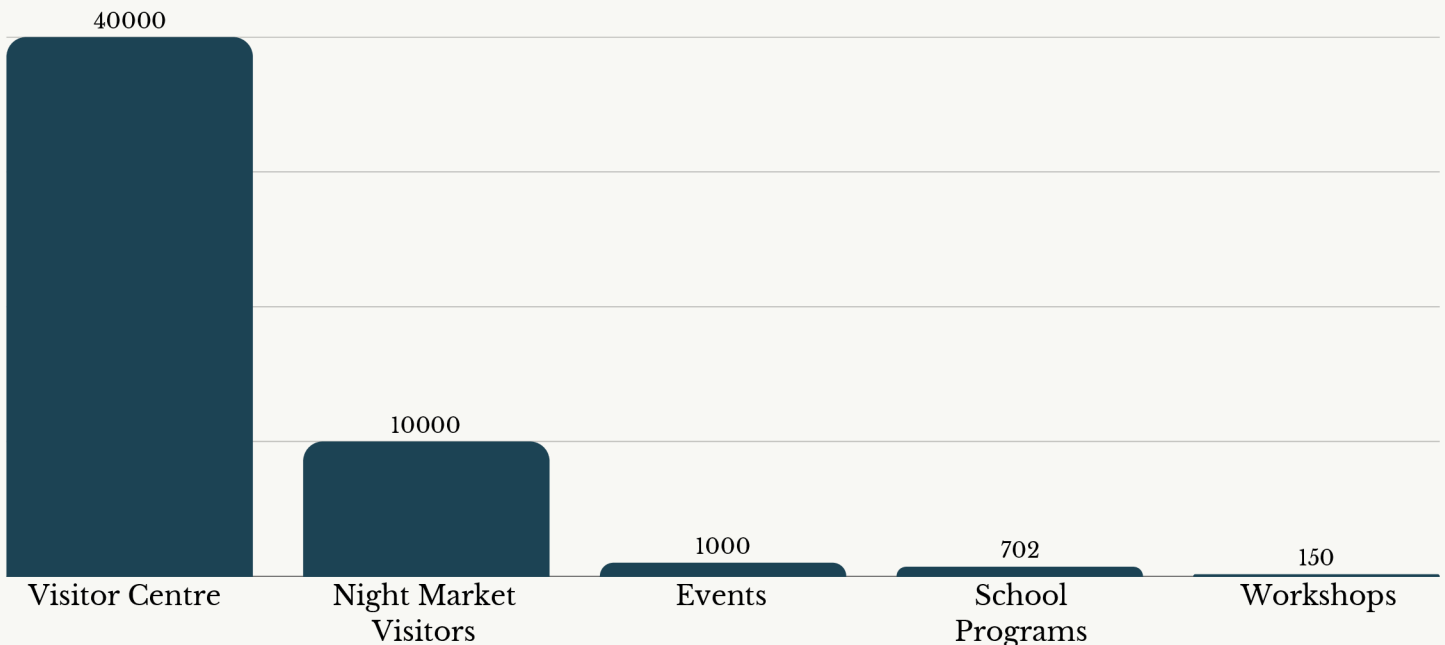
Jayme Vivian

Lawrence Barss

*T'Sou-ke Nation placement:*

Jenna Welch

## visitors





# Volunteers

## Board of Directors

Doni Eve, *President*  
 Laurie Szadowski, *Vice President*  
 Georgia Medwedrich, *Treasurer*  
 Sheila Dobie, *Secretary*  
 Rob Hill  
 Neil Poirier  
 Sheila Needs  
 Trevor Price  
 Nadine Smith  
 Ray Vowles, *Past President*  
 Rose Dumont, *T'Sou-ke Nation Liaison*  
 Councillor Dana Lajeunesse, *District of Sooke*  
 Al Wickheim, *Juan de Fuca Electoral Area Representative*  
 Elida Peers, *Historian*

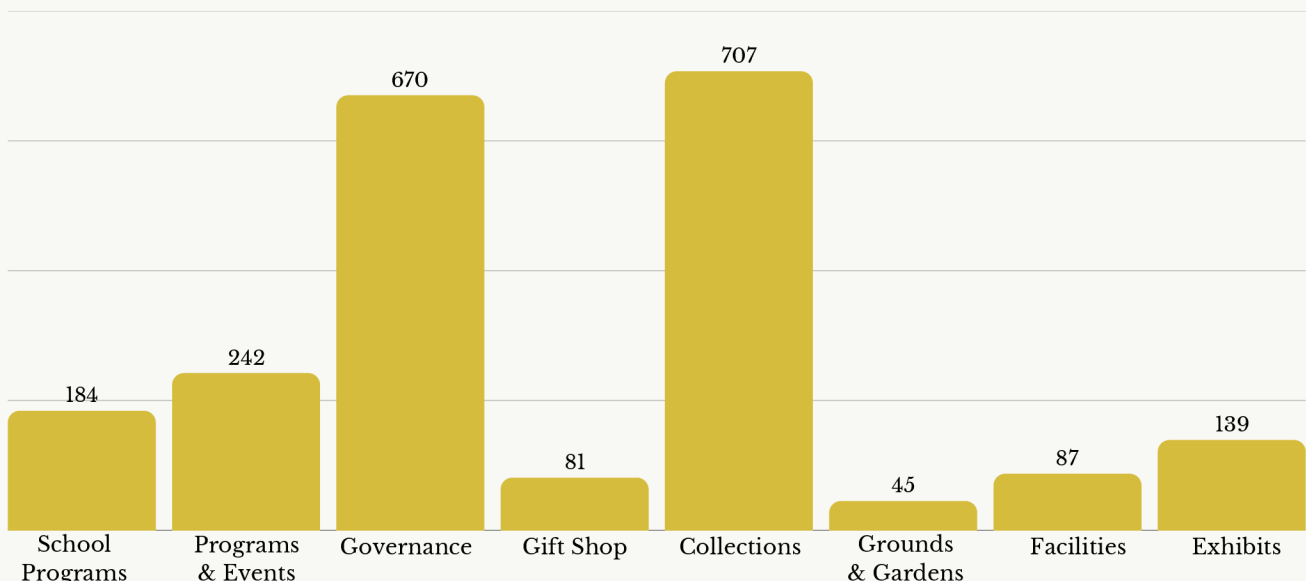


pictured are staff and Board, May 2024

**These volunteers gave generously their expertise, passion, energy and time in the past year:**

Amelia Gentili-Hittos, Anna Ring, Anne Welch, Aramis Richard, Brad (forge), Brian Wallace, Brielle, Cathy Brooks, Cherie Webb, Cheryl Ring, Colleen Blatchford, Colleen Cailles, Coral Poser, Dal Little, Dean Haldane, Debra, Dana Lajeunesse, Doni Eve, Doreen Carscadden, Doug Titchkowsky, Doug Gouk, Elaine McMath, Ella Thomas, Emma McGugan, Francis Barr, Georgia Medwedrich, Glen Wilson, Hannah Little, Jami Gisel, Jason Wallace, Jeff Haisell, John Makkinga, Justin, Justine Belanger, Kevin Pearson, Kimberley Hadford, Lanny Seaton, Laurie Gitzel, Laurie Szadkowski, Laurie Wallace, Linda Gabriel, Lindsay Haldane, Michelle Guiney, Nadine Smith, Neil Poirier, Paula Wilson, Paul, Pete Wilford, Rachel Winchester, Randy Szadkowski, Rick Kasper, Rob Hill, Robyn, Rose Dumont, Russ, Sheila Dobie, Sheila Needs, Stephanie Hedley-Smith, Sue White, Trevor Price

**volunteers contributed 2,155 hours to the Sooke Region Museum in 2023-24!**

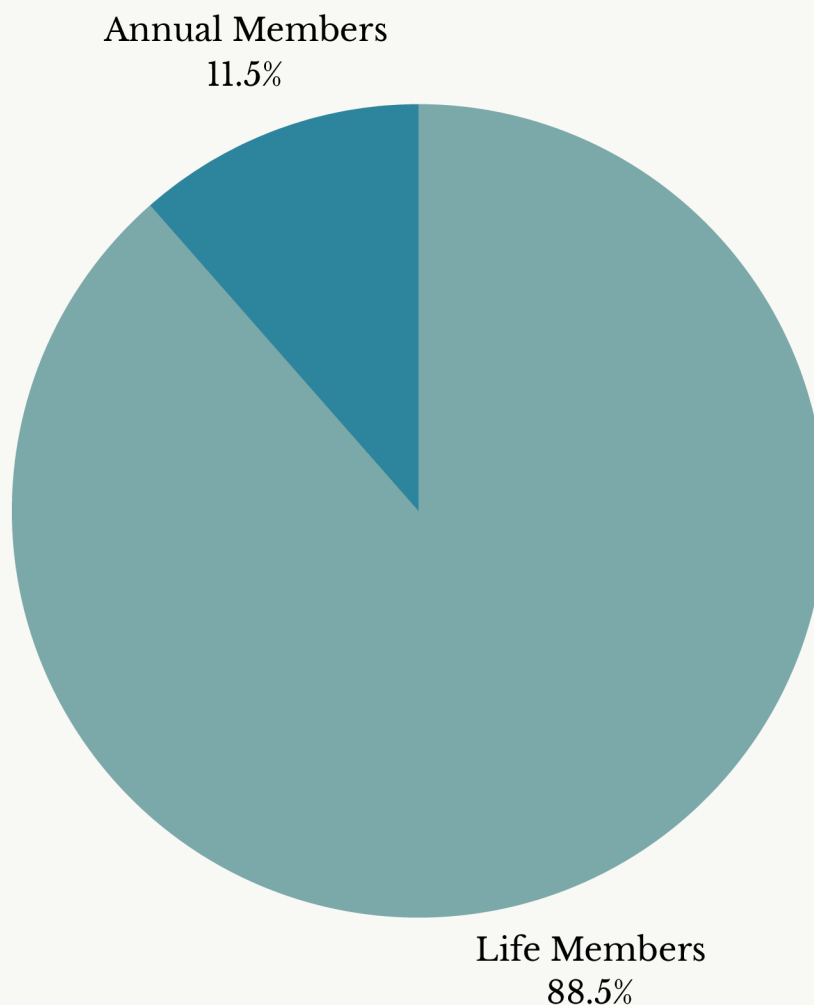


# Members

Members are an important part of the Sooke Region Historical Society, demonstrating community support for the organization and providing vital connections within the geographic area, across demographics, and within various interest groups.

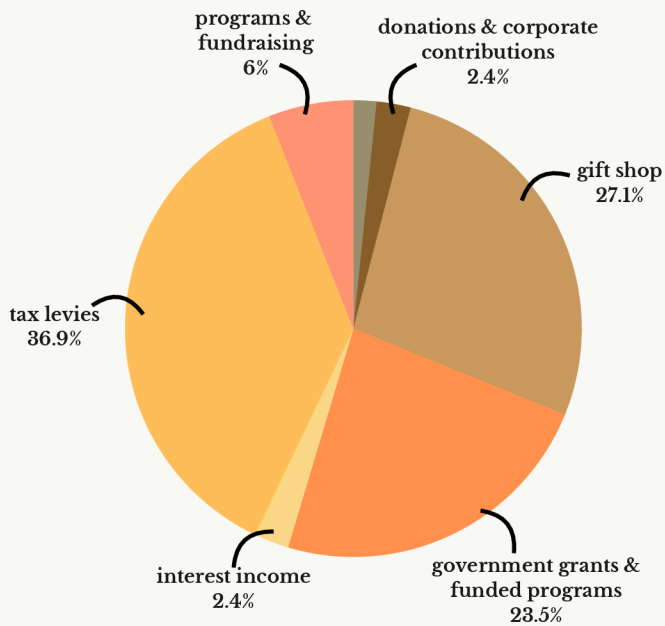
benefits of membership:

10% discount in the Gift Shop and Archival Services year round  
20% discount coupon on one purchase in December in our Gift Shop  
invitations to events  
voting privileges at the Annual General Meeting

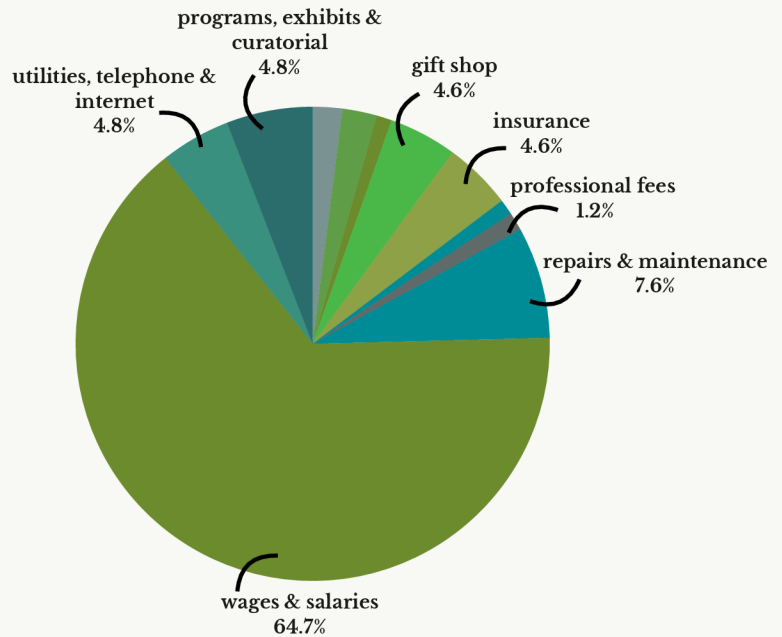


# Financial Report

## revenue



## expenses



## funders



BRITISH COLUMBIA  
ARTS COUNCIL



BRITISH COLUMBIA

Supported by the Province of British Columbia

## sponsors



WEST COAST TRAIL EXPRESS





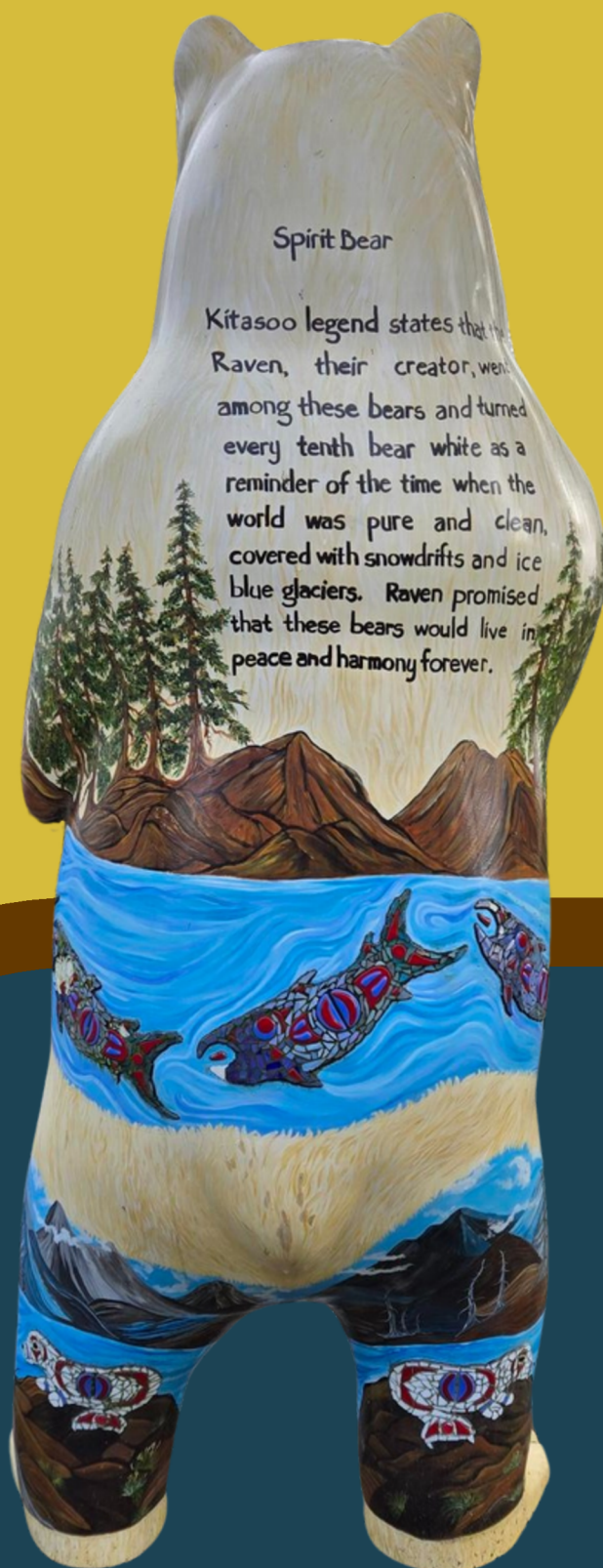
# Memberships

The Sooke Region Museum & Visitor Centre maintains memberships in the following organizations to build a network for ongoing learning and best practices.



Sooke Region Tourism Association





2070 Phillips Road  
Sooke, BC V9Z 0Y3  
250-642-6351

[sookeregionmuseum.ca](http://sookeregionmuseum.ca)  
[info@sookeregionmuseum.ca](mailto:info@sookeregionmuseum.ca)

Sooke Region Historical Society is  
a registered Canadian Charity  
#124476466 RR 0001

Sooke Region Museum & Visitor Centre  
operated by the  
Sooke Region Historical Society