



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020

CULTURE | HISTORY | COMMUNITY



**T**he Heritage Agricultural Society operates as the Multicultural Heritage Centre offering a dynamic range of programs and services to the communities in the region and beyond.

## YEAR FORTY-SIX

The Heritage Agricultural Society is an Alberta Agricultural Society and a charitable organization (registered with the Canada Revenue Agency). Every dollar raised or earned by the Multicultural Heritage Centre goes back to improving the year-round community facilities, and provide ongoing programs, events, and cultural opportunities serving all ages.

This report's purpose is to memorialize and celebrate our success over 12 months, from July 1, 2019, to June 30, 2020.

Year forty-six was met with extra challenges due to the global crisis, Covid-19. We closed to the public for three months and only opened by appointment once the Alberta Government announced Phase II of the plan to re-open Alberta.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



2019/2020 will be a year for humanity that is underscored by vast highs and profound lows. This was also true for the Multicultural Heritage Centre. At the onset of our fiscal year, there was energetic activity and interest. We entered into a contractual agreement with a local chef who reopened the restaurant, under the new name, Red Brick Eatery. The enthusiasm for the newly imagined restaurant was growing steadily in the community.

We also entered into a partnership with the Town of Stony Plain, which brought us to a point of fiscal stability, after several years of great financial concern. This gave us the opportunity to turn our focus to our mandated purpose “to encourage improvement in agriculture and enhanced quality of life for persons living in the community by developing educational programs, events, services, and facilities based on needs of the community.”

Thanks to a provincial sustainability grant, we able to accomplish various projects and improvements to our existing buildings and infrastructure. This was a wonderfully generous offering that contributed to some much-needed upgrades.

And then, just as momentum was materializing, COVID hit! By mid-March, we had to lay off staff and disband programs and activities. But even in the midst of all that disruption, our small remaining staff were able to reimagine gallery openings, online programming and take advantage of that interval to initiate some larger projects on the grounds and in the museum.

We are immensely grateful to the Federal Government's assistance on a variety of fronts that aided monetarily. All of our rental income disappeared, as well as any other revenue streams.

This pause, however devastating to our organization, hopefully, will produce a renewed focus and vision for the Centre. These are uncertain times, but also an occasion for innovation, improvement, and ingenuity.

I would like to thank our Board of Directors for their dedication to the Society. It is inspiring, and it is what's needed in order to realize our vision and attain our goals and objectives in 2020 and beyond.

Debi Mills, President



## THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President, Chair - Debi Mills  
Vice President - Len Switzer  
Treasurer - Candice Coughlan  
Secretary - Barb Scully  
Director - Linda Mills  
Director - Wendy Woolsey

Director - Feinan Long  
Director - Joanna Waldie  
Director - Harold Pawlechko  
Director - Beth Loates  
Director - Phyllis Kobasiuk

A volunteer board of directors is responsible for the governance of the Heritage Agricultural Society.

## CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY DURING COVID-19

This March 2020, like the rest of the world, we faced new challenges in connecting with our community. Classes and workshops stopped, events were canceled and buzz at the Centre was silenced.

In an effort to continue connecting with our community we added outdoor public art initiatives that could be viewed at any time of day. While our buildings remained locked, our grounds were kept up in full bloom for everyone to enjoy.

Art gallery exhibitions were moved to a virtual experience and like most of the local population, we reminded people we cared through social media.



## MANAGING DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

*Science may bring us out of this, but it is art that will bring us through this.*

The theme this year has certainly been one of agility, perseverance, and the importance of being able to transform through the use of technology in order to stay relevant, particularly during times of crisis.

Museums and art galleries are still dealing with the enormous trauma caused by the unprecedented layoffs and loss of income due to the pandemic, and we are no exception. No one can predict how long this new programming, operational, business, and revenue model will need to be in place. Still, our mission has not changed and the kinds of experiences that we provide the community have never been more important. Our primary goal remains to be of service to the Tri Region communities through our programming in our facilities.

We found ways to leverage the online environment to serve our community in ways that benefit them on an ongoing basis once we return to a new and, undoubtedly, more complex normal. We found new ways to bring art and culture safely into people's homes. We used technology to do virtual tours of our spaces. We created short videos showcasing "how to" various interesting things we do, and have launched a YouTube channel to be accessible virtually. We pitched several newspaper articles and appeared in the local paper several times, many of which have been picked up as far away as Ontario.

All of this has been great, but frankly, our primary accomplishment has been agility in the financial sense. I can say for the first time since I began our financial picture is stable and promising. Through a combination of staff cutting, government programs and searching hard for rental partners and grants, we are debt-free, thriving and not scrambling for payroll. Any excess in our cash position will be put in our capital account and go toward capital expenditures, preserving our physical spaces for future generations. We no longer have any fears about longevity.

Our continued themes of culture, history, and community will drive us through 2020 and into 2021. The possibilities are endless. The future is bright.

I would like to acknowledge our staff, volunteers and students for their hard work. I would also like to thank the Board for their service. I trust you are as energized as I as you envision the future for the Centre in 2020-21. For those of you who have tirelessly committed time and energy to the success of this organization, I thank you. For those of you who are relatively new, I welcome you and I look forward to working with you.

Melissa Hartley, Managing Director



## MISSION

The Heritage Agricultural Society will engage local residents, businesses, governments, community organizations and visitors as we record, promote and celebrate the agricultural heritage, cultural roots and historic values of the region. We will develop and deliver creative and innovative programs and services. These programs and services will provide quality experiences focused on our areas of excellence for our residents and visitors and will provide private, public and philanthropic partnership opportunities.

## VISION

The region we serve celebrates our agricultural heritage and our rural values. The arts, culture, sound agricultural practices and strong economic opportunities play pivotal roles in building our future.

The Heritage Agricultural Society is the recognized leader in the region in recording, preserving and celebrating the agricultural heritage and rural values of our region. We engage our residents and visitors in the arts, culture and sound agricultural practices. We are recognized for the excellence of our programs and services.

## MANDATE

As an Agricultural Society, our mandate is driven as per Bill 14 Agricultural Societies Amendment Act, 2015.

“The object of a society is to encourage improvement in agriculture and enhanced quality of life for persons living in the community by developing educational programs, events, services and facilities.”



# COMMITMENT TO CULTURE

## Public Art Gallery

The public art gallery provides visitors with a chance to explore art and culture through the eyes of local and internationally recognized artists. Each show extracts unique reactions, perspectives and is integral to drawing traffic to the Multicultural Heritage Centre.

In 2020, unique art exhibitions were held in the Multicultural Heritage Centre Public Art Gallery as well as online during the public health crisis. Curated exhibits included the works of the following artists and groups:

- TREX: Plate Tectonics
- Cynthia Furher: Splendid String
- Artist in Me Student Exhibition
- TREX: Bystanders
- In-Between Mental Health Show
- Outside the Frame (Virtual)
- Powerful Profiles (Virtual)



## Cultural Programming in the Community

Our commitment to culture also includes the facilitation of non-profit art classes for both children and adults.

We partnered with Stony Plain FCSS to help engage with community members who are at high risk for social isolation, by host a \$2 Drop-In Art Program. Each Thursday the instructor introduced the group to a famous artist and art style and then lead a class on how to apply different techniques and mediums to create their own work of art.



# HISTORY IN ACTION

## Oppertshouser House Museum

The Oppertshouser House was built in 1910 by Henry Oppertshouser Sr. a local Stony Plain businessman and civic leader. This prominent family-owned three local businesses that helped root a community here. The Oppertshouser House is a municipal historic resource, which interprets and focuses on the urban aspect of our local heritage in the setting of a well-established pioneer Stony Plain family.

While there were not a lot of public visitors due to Covid-19, the Opp House was a blur of activity as staff worked on the displays and appearance of the building.



# COMMUNITY PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

## Organic Master Gardener

In 2020, the Organic Master Gardening program is in its 13th year of certifying students in organic plant growing. The Multicultural Heritage Centre welcomed 21 students into this year of programming. The Organic Master Gardener Course requires participation in 75 instructional hours. These instructional hours are made up of 26 classes between February and October of each year. Students must complete all hours of educational course works well as 50 volunteer hours, for certification.

The Heritage Agricultural Society designed and offers the Organic Master Gardener program in partnership with Gaia College.



## Community Garden

Promoting local, organically grown food; healthy and active lifestyles; and safer, more vibrant, and connected communities. Community gardens provide many benefits to residents including recreation for all ages, beautification of neighbourhoods, healthy food production, community building, and as a place to share gardening knowledge and experience. Our 64 organic community beds included several beds used to grow food for our local food bank.

## Red Brick Farms

The Garden Team took on an added challenge in the summer of 2019, with the goal of developing a sustainable Community Supported Agricultural Program to provide access to locally grown, organic food.

This pilot program was utilized by 30 shareholders and their families, who received products like carrots, onions, herbs, tomatoes, salad greens, squash, potatoes, pickled products, jam, recipes, and more.





## Camps

Upon discovering a community need for non-profit out of school activities, the Multicultural Heritage Centre started programming camps for days when schools are closed. We started this effort for Spring Break 2017 and since then it has flourished into PD Day camps, fall break, and spring break as well as summer camps. Camps provide a fun day with hands-on activities like cooking and crafts.

## School Programs

Providing curriculum-based education programs to our local schools, we offer a variety of dynamic programming for elementary levels that encourage students to pursue a deeper understanding of the people, places, and events that have shaped pioneer life in Alberta.

Through traditions, costumes, activities, agriculture, food, exhibits, artifacts, and art, students get an immersive experience of what it was like living like a pioneer.

## Zap! Electrical Safety

Fortis Alberta has teamed with the Multicultural Heritage Centre School Programs to teach grades 4, 5, and 6 Farm and electrical safety programs. These programs are special because the teachers come to you!

Zap! The program begins with lessons about the dangers and wonders of electricity. We look at the science of electricity, how it gets to our houses, and the impact of electricity on our bodies. Then we go through a series of dangerous “everyday” situations with our state of the art Hazard Board.

## PERC Rental Program

From September to March PERC Rentals were regular, however, with COVID-19 and Alberta Health recommending the reduction in group activities, the program paused.

Typically the gym hosts long-term team rentals for community groups like Kyokushin Karate, Meridian Model Flyers, Active Start, UPCS, and annually serves as a dry-land practice space for various hockey and ringette teams. In addition to its consistent community partners, the remaining gym times provide affordable rental space to the community for birthday parties, staff Christmas parties, bridal showers, conferences, craft sales, and local community events like Seedy Saturday and Valentine’s Tea.

Elections Canada used the PERC as a polling station for the September 2019 Federal Election. We were happy to stand up for this important role for our community members.

# CREATIVE COMMUNITY

## Red Brick Arts Connection

In an effort to provide more opportunities to the artists in the area, the Multicultural Heritage Centre launched the Red Brick Arts Connection. This program is a connection point for visual artists, poets, musicians, writers, sculptors, photographers, and performers.

This program provides programming support and collaboration opportunities to help keep this creative culture strong in the area.

The Red Brick Performing Arts put on a full-scale Christmas Cabaret production to engage with local talent and entertain the community. The team of actors, singers, and musicians were just about to put on their second production, A Night in Hollywood, when COVID-19 interrupted.



RBPA Women's Ensemble



RBPA honing their skills



RBPA Christmas Cabaret



The A Powell Band performing at Alberta Culture Days



## RED BRICK EATERY | RESTAURANT PARTNER

The history of the Homesteader’s Kitchen restaurant here at the Multicultural Heritage Centre is almost as long as the Centre itself. In 2018 we entered a profit-sharing partnership with the then Chef of the Centre. Near the end of our 2018 - 2019 fiscal year, it was clear that a new relationship was needed.

Lynne Sheideman had a long history of coming to the Centre and enjoying the Homesteaders Kitchen. She joined us in a partnership to return the kitchen to it’s glory days. She developed a home-cooked menu and beautified the space. We started seeing many more visitors to the grounds thanks to Lynne’s hard work.

In March of 2020, Lynne had to re-envision her operation due to the public health crisis. She adapted to curb-side pick-ups of meals and re-arranged seating to accommodate physical distancing.



### Gift Shop

The Gift Shop is a combination of MHC inventory and local artisan products. We developed a risk free opportunity for artisans and makers to sell their quality products in our gift shop to help them connect with their customers.

# EVENTS AND COMMUNITY

In year forty-six, Covid-19 interrupted some of our favourite events, including our annual Easter Egg Hunt. The events that fell before March 2020 included:

- Cultural Campfires
- Open Farm Days
- Alberta Culture Days
- Old Fashioned Christmas
- Valentine's Tea

There were also art exhibitions, children's camps, classes and workshops, to encourage connections within the community. We also went out into the community and partnered with FCSS in engaging with community members.



Old Fashioned Christmas



25th Annual Valentine's Tea



Cultural Campfires



Open Farm Days

# PARTNERS

The Heritage Agricultural Society is grateful for its partners who help the Multicultural Centre maintain its operations and service levels for the community. In 2019, the Centre partnered with many organizations and individuals and we look forward to continuing these relationships in 2021 as we are committed to building, improving, and offering year-round access to facilities, programs, and opportunities to the communities we all serve.



# 2020 ACCOUNT OF ACTIVITY & PARTICIPATION

<b>July 2019</b>	Participants	<b>April 2020</b>	Participants
Children's Camp (3)	20	Events Cancelled Due to Covid-19	
<b>August 2019</b>		<b>May 2020</b>	
Art Gallery Opening: Plate Tectonics	38	Events Cancelled Due to Covid-19	
Garden Workshop (2)	20		
Spooky Sleepover	18	<b>June 2020</b>	
Open Farm Days	180	Events Cancelled Due to Covid-19	
<b>September 2019</b>		<b>Through the Year</b>	
Art Gallery Opening: Splendid String	33	Organic Master Gardener Program	567
Art Workshop	28	Organic Master Gardener Work Bees	156
<b>October 2019</b>		School Programs	134
Ghost Tours (5)	75	Zap! Electrical Safety	2,847
Children's Camp: PD Day	6	Community Gardeners	98
Artist in Me Student Exhibition	45	Board Meetings	60
Garden Workshop	8	Bingos	800+
Spooky Sleepover	18	Operational Meetings	35
<b>November 2019</b>		Archives: Community Inquiries	12
Ghost Tours (2)	18	Museum Inquiries	9
Children's Camp: PD Day	6	Volunteer Committee Meetings	40
Art Workshop	5	PERC Facility Users	25,000+
<b>December 2019</b>		Multicultural Centre Guests	6,645
Old Fashioned Christmas	220		
Children's Camp	10		
Christmas Cabaret	125		
<b>January 2020</b>			
OMG Information Night (2)	34		
Art Gallery Opening: Bystanders	26		
<b>February 2020</b>			
Children's Camp: PD Day (2)	20		
Art Workshop: (4)	36		
Art Gallery Opening: In-Between	25		
<b>March 2020</b>		<b>Volunteer Activity for 2020</b>	
Events Cancelled Due to Covid-19		Through various roles and departments we can report that volunteers for the Multicultural Heritage Centre have contributed over 1000+ hours.	



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