

Biggar Museum & Gallery



2025
ANNUAL MEETING
2024 in Review

Bringing Biggar to the World

Mission Statement

The Biggar Museum & gallery seeks to preserve and present the history and culture of Biggar and District through the development and delivery of programs and exhibits which link the past and present in an educational and entertaining manner to people of all ages.

Board of Directors

Keith Meszaros (Chairperson)
Rita Sutherland
Jim Rickwood
Lorna Goring
Brenda Bindig
Donald Danskin
Cam Carruthers
Kathy Sarvas
Haley Mantyka (Student Representative)

Staff Members

Executive Director: Christy McCafferty

Public Relations Coordinator:

Delta Fay Cruickshank

Bookkeeper: Joanne Kral

Seasonal/Contract:

Caretaker:

Nataliia Panchenko

Youth Canada Works:

Claire Mantyka



The Biggar Museum & Gallery respectfully acknowledges that we are situated on Treaty 6 territory: traditional and current lands of First Nations and Metis people. We are open to learning and sharing the current and historical legacies of First Nations and Metis people.

Prepared by:		March 13, 2	025
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Our Sponsors





































Chairperson's Report

Museums, particularly smaller community museums, preserve more than just the items inside. They are essential in cultivating pride for those communities, passing on local culture and sharing heritage. These museums need to be moved into the future and not left behind.

From a devoted historian and an abiding interest in museums, I, in collaboration with the Museum Board and Staff, make provisions to facilitate the ongoing future that not only endures, but realizes our museum's highest aspirations.

For these reasons, we, the board and staff have the responsibility and privilege of supporting and enriching our local community and beyond, exposing and discovering (or rediscovering) past, present and future audiences to the dynamics of a richly curated museum and enabling a deeper understanding of our historical culture and ourselves.

I am immensely indebted, past and present, to fellow board members, staff, private and public contributors, volunteers, the ancestral lands and their people, who have given generous support to the museum, ensuring continual growth of the museum, ultimately understanding the past in wholesome consideration of the present while embracing and guiding along paths yet to be taken.

We are the lives of thousands of ancestors that came before us that remind us how precious and unique our existence is, a gift shaped by those generations of ancestors. We honour their legacy by living with purpose and gratitude.

Respectfully, Dr Keith Meszaros

Executive Director's Report

This last year found us continuing to evolve and change along with our community as we find new and improved ways of doing things. We also find ourselves returning to our previous mode of business as students and tourist numbers continue to slowly rise each year. As our Public Relations Coordinator, Delta Fay Cruickshank, always says, "There is always something happening at the Museum"

Thanks to the hard work of two of our board members, Jan Phillips and Lorna Goring, in conjunction with the amazing organization, ArtsVest, we have been able to find additional funding. They were able to canvass the larger corporations that are employers in our community for sponsorship or donations that were then matched by ArtsVest. We are also extremely thankful for our Town and Rural Municipality offices for increasing their monetary support for us. With costs increasing in ways we cannot control; it gives us a sense of security to know that our community supports us.

Our usual fundraisers continue to be as profitable and popular as they were in the past. We have a fundraiser or other event nearly every month. The hard work our board members and volunteers put into each event is greatly appreciated. Our bakers especially are proving to be priceless assets. We couldn't do any of this without them.

Recognition goes to SaskLotteries and SaskCulture for their funding through MAS, CMA, and the SCAA. With this funding we were able to keep operations afloat, hire our summer student employee and begin the Archival Digitization project.

One of our biggest successes this year was hosting a two-day exhibits design course presented by the Museums Association of Saskatchewan. There were over 12 attendees from all over the West Central district. We were also able to invite Henrietta Parenteau and Lauri-Ann Larochelle as representatives of the Metis community to participate at no cost to them. All of this was made possible with a grant from MAS. We have been able to start a wonderful relationship with the Metis community this year and will be starting the construction of a new Metis exhibit this coming year.

Progress has also been made with entering all the data from the collections inventory into the SaskCollections database through the Museum Association of Saskatchewan. We are one of the few museums leading the way in this process with more than half of our total inventory's complete information online. We hope to teach all new volunteers involved with accessioning to use SaskCollections as it streamlines the accessioning process a lot.

Here's to great lessons learned in the past year of 2024 and progress and growth going forward into 2025.

In Gratitude, Christy McCafferty

Historic Collections and Exhibits

The Biggar Museum & Gallery's Royden Donahue Exhibit Gallery tells the story of settlement in Biggar and District. The exhibits illustrate the development and progression of the Biggar area 75 to 100 million years ago through to current events. Our exhibits link past to present in an educational manner interesting to young people and the public. This year our summer student updated our website and created online versions of exhibit tours using QR codes to connect to them as one walks through the gallery.

Biggar Logo: We start with the story of our Town Slogan "New York is Big, but This is Biggar". It was created on October 31, 1914, by a survey crew after a town Hallowe'en party. By 1954, the Town of Biggar made it the official slogan. Today the town slogan is known worldwide.

Plesiosaur Mural: The next stop in our exhibit tour takes us back 75 to 100 million years. A large mural of an early ocean scene features the plesiosaur, as well as other prehistoric aquatic creatures. Introduced as Biggar's first inhabitant, this mural delights the young generations! Painted by Paul Geraghty of Avonlea.

The Schnedar Family Organ: Donated in the summer of 2022 by descendants of the Schnedar family, this organ sits right next to the Halfway House exhibit. In the winters of the early 1900's Jake Schnedar hauled this organ, which belonged to his father, Anton Schnedar, by sleigh to the Halfway House to provide music for dances held there. Music was and is an important part of the Schnedar family and the community of Biggar as well.

Sixty Mile Bush Outpost (also known as) The Halfway House: This display represents the outpost about 15 miles southwest of Biggar on the "Battleford – Swift Current Trail". It was the first non-aboriginal settlement in the area, run by Frenchie Bernier. Used mainly in the 1880's and 90's, this trail was the mail route and the outpost the stopping place between the two towns.

First Nations/Arrowhead and Tools Cabinets: Donated over the decades, these two exhibits are items that have been found, or donated by the family members who were given these items by the Metis and First Nations peoples.

Travel Back in Time: The Center Wall (East Side): consists of a four-season landscape with our collection of 13, 1/12th scale farm implement models hand constructed by Purcell McMaster. This scene remains unchanged as it depicts the heritage of our land and its progression.

Biggar's Volunteer Firefighters: Working hand in hand with the Fire Chief, Jerry Besse, the exhibits committee created an interactive permanent display depicting the history of the volunteer fire fighters in Biggar.

Biggar's Train Station: Here is a reconstruction of the Biggar operators' station, which was in use from 1909 until 1986. Inside the station are the "call boards", hung exactly as they were in 1986, when they were taken down and the calling system was computerized.

The Beanery: Most CN stations once had a café, operated by a local person, and open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Established by CN for the comfort of the workers, the locals were welcome too. Coffee and simple meals were the fare available. The employees used their "Pie Book" (coupons purchased from their pay cheques). Our exhibit has a selection of various crockery from CN and other

memorabilia.

Biggar Heritage Album: A collection of family histories added to by members of the community.

Biggar Theatre Replica: The Theatre Exhibit reconstructs the Biggar Majestic Theatre as it was before 1929. In this exhibit you may have a seat and listen to the original player piano that accompanied the silent movies from 1914 to 1930 and watch a movie with our new theatre system courtesy of Canadian Heritage Cultural Spaces, Biggar Credit Union, and the Biggar Leisure Centre.

Biggar's Landscape, Stoic and Ever-changing: Take a glimpse of the past when Biggar's horizon boasted four elevators from the period of 1911 to present. Painted by Penny McCallum. A small elevator replica shows the interior of an elevator and how grain is handled. This exhibit is complemented by a painting of the present day Viterra and a graphic depiction of grain handling from the past to the present.

Biggar's War Effort/Legion Memorial: This cabinet was donated by the Biggar Royal Canadian Legion in 1998. In 2010 a new mural was incorporated by artist Hilda Dielsen. This year the exhibit has been updated to showcase the role of women in the military.

Family Research Library: Formerly "the Reading Room", this area was expanded and remodelled in 2011 to allow access to cultural research materials, documentation, and the display of information on Biggar and District from its beginning. With a grant from SaskLotteries Rec grant through the Town of Biggar, funding has been allocated to make the Family Research Library even more user friendly. The new system in the Family Research Library was finished by June 2019. Thank you to Margy Sapsford and young students from BCS; Haley Pritchard, Kirsten Pfieffer and Jayla Boobyer.

Historical Photo Cabinet: The display was changed this year to exhibit memorial cards, and the drawers

Biggar Museum & Gallery Bringing Biggar to the World now display swimsuits and things one might take to the beach. This is now found in our lobby.

Secrets of a Social Club: The Ku Klux Klan in Rural Saskatchewan: This exhibit is a little more controversial as it investigates the history of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in Biggar. This exhibit is complete with stories about how the KKK who came to Biggar and their activities in the communities and teaches about the KKK in Saskatchewan as well. The exhibit is complemented by a painting by artist Michaela Hoppe (Nee McBee).

The Hanson Buck: Many a visitor has entered the doors of the BMG just to catch a glimpse of this fine trophy that has made world history.

Fashions of Biggar: Biggar being settled largely during the Edwardian era led to it welcoming many people with an eye for fashion. This exhibit showcases many of the fashion choices made by residents of Biggar over the decades.

Biggar's Cultural Mosaic 1911: Designed to represent 16 ethnic groups that had settled in the area when Biggar became a town in 1911. This year, Ernie Itterman built a new cabinet so we can extend our Cultural Mosaic to include the many other countries people have come from and call Biggar their home.

Biggar's Chinese Laundry: Exhibiting the small, barren existence of the Chinese lifestyle in Canada, artifacts from an existing Chinese Laundry located on 2nd Ave in Biggar in the early 1900's include letters from China, actual clothing, baskets, laundry equipment etc.

China Cabinet: Hilda Dielsen, a treasured volunteer at the Biggar Museum & Gallery donated an oak china cabinet to the museum in 2020. It currently houses a display of the collection of Uranium Glass that the museum had acquired over the years.

Sandra Schmirler Exhibit: We are proud to protect and display Sandra's many personal trophies, pins,

memorabilia, and clothing as well as detailed documentation on her Provincial, Olympic and World accomplishments.

Money Mill: Provided by Prairie Malt Ltd., now owned by Boortmalt, this model shows how barley travels through the local malt plant. It also serves as a museum fundraiser. It has been moved to the lobby where it will the center of attention.

Biggar's Mayors, School Trustees and Reeves: A photographic display from 1909 to present. That wall needs to be updated as we now have a new mayor.

Historical Mural by Gus Froese: Painted and designed in 1997 and set up on the south side of the building, this mural was then restored and moved in 2014. The funds were found and presented by private donations from the public (2 donations of

\$3,000 each). Michaela Hoppe refurbished the mural as it was fading terribly. The decision was made to place it on the east side of the building, so it can be seen from Main Street and out of the glare of the southern sun. We had to replace our mural with a photograph on metal in 2019 as it was deteriorating so badly, because of years of neglect whilst it hung on the south wall. This mural is an important teaching tour for the students who visit in the summer.

Pioneer Stories: Four pioneer stories on the wall for our visitors to read, and an invitation to explore more stories in the library.

Beginning of new display: Biggar's Mosaic Culture continues: We have the cabinet, but do not have many national dolls to fill it with, but we will. We do have dolls from the Philippines

Special Events

The Biggar Credit Union Gallery, located in the Biggar Museum and Gallery, remains an active hub for events, socials, meetings, fundraisers and most importantly the special events that are hosted by the BMG. These special events create a continuous and harmonious partnership with the community thus supporting the mandate of our museum.

Student Art Show: BMG enjoys the partnership with the art teachers of St Gabriel's and BCS2000 creating a Student Art. Show called "Students Art Show" yearly. Students from grades K-12 contribute their art pieces to be hung in the Credit Union Gallery. The show is held annually every February.

Art Shows: In collaboration and partnership with the Biggar Arts Council. With financial help from OSAC we host art shows showcasing Saskatchewan Artists, shown in the Credit Union Gallery within the Biggar Museum, usually three or four times a year.

Biggar Art Club: Five artists now attend the Art Club every Wednesday afternoon. The art club has contributed to financial revenue through club fees paid to the museum.

Volunteers Brunch: This event was enjoyed by all volunteers with great enthusiasm. Directors gave a very well attended brunch for all the volunteers for the museum. Quiches, fruit, tea, and coffee were served to a very appreciative group. With thanks from SaskLotteries and the Town of Biggar, coffee mugs and gift certificates from local businesses were given to all who attended as a thank you for all their hard work.

Museum Day: Claire, our summer student, conducted a well organized and fun Museum Day attended by approximately 40 children from the Summer Day Camp. They made clothespin dragonflies and were treated to a presentation by a local author. Delta Fay also gave the children tours of the exhibit gallery.

Fundraising

Our museum is blessed with many volunteers who continue to donate. their time to fundraising activities. BMG wishes to thank all these volunteers and a special thank you to the community who supports these fundraisers.

Valentine Pie Tea: In the morning of Valentine's Day, our volunteers deliver and serve pies baked by the town's volunteers to the businesses of the community. In the afternoon, tea and pie by the slice is served.

Summer Used Book Sale: All used books are donated by members of the community and sold by donation.

Hayride, Hot Dog Sale: Donald Danskin headed the organization of the hotdog sale with great success yet again! Having everything outside has made the entire event less stressful and a wonderful evening all round. The weather was mild and beautiful this year, drawing a very large crowd.

Christmas Magic: A fundraiser during the month of November to mid-December, items are generously donated by the community and are bid on daily by online auction. This event is organized and monitored by Christy McCafferty.

Christmas Cookie Sale: This fundraiser occurred during the last week of November. Over 100 trays of

cookies were made by community volunteers, assembled, and sold in the lobby of the museum.

Burger Barbecue: Designed to introduce the sponsors of the museum. Burgers, chips, and pop were served to all who attended.

Town & Country Days Pancake Breakfast: Early morning pancakes served up outside just before the parade on the second weekend of June. Always well attended and a well-orchestrated performance by volunteers.

Home Harvest Soup Fundraiser: Originally started as part of our 50th Anniversary celebration, this fundraiser also was started to raise awareness of the struggle of the Ukrainian people during this time. Originally only serving borscht, things were changed up and several different soups were served to over 50 attendees.

Rehome Your Art: Fashioned after the Used Book Sale, unwanted art donated by Biggar community members is hung in the gallery and sold.

Biggar Museum & Gallery would like to thank the members of the community for many "Inkind" donations. It is the community dedication that makes our museum thrive.

The Credit Union Gallery

We are very privileged to have our art gallery sponsored by the Biggar Credit Union.

There were three scheduled provincial touring exhibits and three community-based exhibits including the *Student Art Show*, A Quilt show presented by the Sunday Artisans, and the Rehome Your Art show. Christmas Magic was set up in the gallery, but all bidding was done on Facebook.

The provincial touring exhibits are part of the visual arts program with an aim to assist arts councils in developing awareness and appreciation for

Saskatchewan visual and media arts and artists. Our partnership with the Biggar Arts Council and OSAC has allowed our museum to present these art exhibits and workshops within our community. In 2024 we exhibited *Madeleine Greenway, Specimens, and ATIM Mashikhiy.*

Each exhibit was popular, and each brought in visitors from the community and throughout the province.

Programming and Education

The Biggar Museum & Gallery seeks to preserve the history of Biggar and District through the development and delivery of programs, displays, and exhibits which link past and present in an educational manner interesting to young people and the public.

Education Programming for Children: It is our responsibility as the Biggar Museum & Gallery to keep Biggar's heritage alive. Museum Day in the summer saw a grand return of children having guided tours by Delta Fay. Several classes also returned to tours of the art exhibits, increasing our visitor numbers closer to normal.

Museum Day: Claire, our summer student, conducted a well organized and fun Museum Day attended by approximately 40 children from the Summer Day Camp. They made clothespin dragonflies and were treated to a presentation by a local author. Delta Fay also gave the children tours of the exhibit gallery.

Art Group: Our art gallery is the prime location for classes. A local group of enthusiastic artists meet each week for a time to express their creativity.

Development and Financial Donor Report

Personal donations continue to be one of our valued sources of financial assistance for the day-to-day activities and operations of the Biggar Museum & Gallery. Grants also contribute to the vitality of the BMG assisting with exhibits, research, programming, education, maintenance, and the addition of summer students to assist in the development of these activities. BMG values each donation!

Money Mill: Provided by Prairie Malt Ltd., now owned by Boortmalt, this model shows how barley travels through the local malt plant. It also serves as a museum fundraiser. It has been moved to the lobby where it will the center of attention.

Donation Box: In keeping with the BMG original mandate, admission is not charged for entry to the exhibit and art galleries. Admission is by donation and most visitors contribute to the donation box creating significant funds yearly.

Museum Gift Shop: Souvenir T-Shirts, pins, mugs, and hats are available in the gift shop. The gift shop was moved to the inside of the exhibit's gallery due to security concerns with increased rental bookings. Sales have increased since the move.

Rental Revenue: We are fortunate to have our art gallery sponsored yearly by the Biggar Credit Union. In addition to the use of the gallery for art exhibits, the *Credit Union Gallery* continues to be a source of rental revenue for meetings, family, and social gatherings.

Memorial and Commemorative Donations: The memorial gift to the BMG is a legacy as donations support the continuing work of the BMG to preserve the history of Biggar. The BMG acknowledges memorial donations by sending an appropriate card to those names. Donations over \$10.00 are issued as gift receipts.

The Giving Tree: The *Giving Tree* was created to acknowledge gifts over \$500.00 given to the BMG in

memory of loved ones. There are four different sizes of leaves representing a donation of a different size.

Friends of the Museum "Leave a Legacy": pamphlets are left with the banks and the funeral home in Biggar.

Grants: The Young Canada Works program allowed the BMG to hire a summer student to assist in all general operations of the museum. In 2024 Claire joined us for the summer as our student employee. special acknowledgement extend SaskCulture, SaskLotteries, The Town of Biggar, Donors Choice, and the Biggar Credit Union, and ArtsVest. All made financial contributions to The Biggar Museum & Gallery in 2024 with proceeds to go to specific projects and for the ongoing operations of BGM. CNR Railroaders in the Community: Funds for Rae Chamberlain, were also added to general revenue for operations. We extend a thank you to the Biggar Independent for public support of all BMG events. We extend a thank you to the SCAA for all their support and funding through the Institutional Grants Program

ArtsVest: Joining with the organization again after many years we have significantly increased funding. We formed a new canvassing committee with the goal of approaching the larger corporations that create employment in our community. ArtsVest matches any funds raised from business donations or sponsorships. We were able to raise over \$4000 in sponsorships this year.

Collections / New Acquisitions

It is the responsibility of The Biggar Museum & Gallery to care for its collection on behalf of the public. Artifacts assist in telling the story of Biggar and District and the people who lived, worked, and played with in the community.

Accessioning and record keeping of accumulated artifacts is ongoing and catalogued according to Museums Standards of Saskatchewan. Christy has continued to enter accessioning information onto the MAS online database. This project is more than halfway done. Christy also took on a new project of Digitizing the Archival inventory and uploading it on MemorySask on the SCAA website. This makes it

accessible to the public like the photograph inventory currently is.

The Accessioning committee continues to take in many new artifacts and began plans to clear out old and unwanted artifacts to create more space and organization and to also create an inventory that more cohesively meets our mission statement.

<u>Research</u>

The Biggar Museum and Gallery makes available to the public, information it possesses for the purpose of research.

Historic Walk Brochures: A threefold brochure was updated and redesigned by Delta Fay Cruickshank in 2014. This new brochure and program were printed and launched in 2016 and continues to be updated as needed.

There is always something happening in the museum: Written by Delta Fay Cruickshank, this newspaper column relates not only research activities of the BMG, but also the happenings of the museum. Featured in the Independent weekly newspaper, the BMG is grateful for their support.

Delta Fay also creates a pictorial story of Biggar's past, and the Independent publishes it as well.

Family Research Library: With a SaskLotteries Grant from the Town of Biggar, and in partnership with the Biggar Wheatland Library, a project was started in 2018. The project has made the research materials in our Library easier to find; categories and labelling, and notices in the local paper will hopefully bring more people to the museum to do their family history. It has already been used several times when visitors have come in with inquiries.

Volunteers

Volunteers are an integral part of the Biggar Museum & Gallery. Without their hard work and dedication, the museum would not be the success it is today.

BMG volunteers do everything from greeting visitors, create exhibits, permanent and temporary, flip burgers, bake and sell pies, change exhibits, hang art shows, accession artifacts, conduct research, enter data and much, much more. Every April, during the Canadian Volunteer Week, the Board members (volunteers themselves) of the

BMG create a brunch for all the others who have volunteered their time baking pies, cookies and anything else they do to volunteer. Our Volunteers contribute well over 1300 hours combined of their time to Museum events, fundraisers, and tasks. For this we are always grateful.

Staff and Volunteer Education

Professional development and training of Board, Staff, and Volunteers has always been a high priority for the Biggar Museum & Gallery.

The following is a list of training and development for 2023:

- Christy and Delta Fay continued to take online free webinars when available. Jan and Lorna joined them in some educational webinars provided by ArtsVest
- Volunteers and staff attend local workshops when time, and cost allow. This year Jan, Brenda, and Christy attended an all-day workshop about Indigenous medicine and teachings where a lot of knowledge was

- gathered.
- The Museum hosted a two-day exhibits design course which had about 12 attendees from all over the West Central Region. With a grant from MAS, we were able to invite two people representing the Metis community who will also participate in building a brand new exhibit in our museum about the history of the Metis in the Biggar area.

Artifact Donors

Biggar Museum & Gallery would like to thank all the artifact donors.

These articles are the foundation of telling the stories of the past and interpreting our fine heritage.

Museums across Canada are changing their policies on how we determine what is accepted as a suitable artifact donation. In the past museums were viewed as a depository to store "old stuff". Many museums now have warehouses of inventory that will never be used in exhibits to be seen by the public. Now we have learned that the most important part of any artifact is not the physical artifact itself, but the story that it represents. Who did the artifact belong to? What did they use it for? What did it mean to

them? And other such questions are what we look for when we assess if we want to add an artifact to our inventory. The Biggar Museum & Gallery already has such policies in place. All our artifacts must tell the story of the people who lived in the Biggar & District area. This said, all the information we have, which family history researchers rely on, is donated by people from the community. To have one's family remembered one must bring their story to the museum.

Attendance

Summer Hours:

Occurring between the Victoria Day weekend and the Labour Day Weekend, our summer hours for 2024 were Monday - Friday, 9am – 5 pm, closed from noon – 1:00.

Winter Hours - Monday - Friday - 1pm - 5pm

Closed Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays

Guided Groups:

School Groups/Day Care: 20

Tourist Groups: 1

Approximate Number of visitors:

Residents: 1407 Tourists: 495

School Children: 662 Museum Days: 45

Approximate Number of Total Visitors: 1908

Museum Days: 45

All tourists and locals receive guided tours in the Royden Donahue Exhibit Gallery

Committees

Finance

- Keith Meszaros
- Don Danskin
- Joanne Kral
- Brenda Bindig

Nominations

Open to all board members

Gift Shop

- Christy McCafferty
- Delta Fay Cruickshank
- Don Danskin
- Brenda Bindig

Special Events

• Open to all board members

Personnel Committee

- Jan Phillips
- Don Danskin
- Cam Carruthers

Exhibits

- Rita Sutherland
- Brenda Bindig
- Lorna Goring
- Hilda Dielsen

Accessioning Committee

- Rae Chamberlain (Resources)
- Brenda Bindig
- Rita Sutherland
- Hilda Dielsen

Building & Maintenance

- Keith Meszaros
- Jim Rickwood
- Don Danskin
- Cam Carruthers

Volunteer Co-Coordinator

<u>Committee</u>

- Christy McCafferty
- Don Danskin
- Jan Phillips

Canvassing Committee

- Christy McCafferty
- Delta Fay Cruickshank
- Lorna Goring
- Jan Phillips