



Muskoka Heritage Place is home to Muskoka Museum, Muskoka Pioneer Village, Rotary Village Station and the Portage Flyer Train.

# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Muskoka Heritage Place (MHP) would like to respectfully acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, specifically the Chippewa, Ojibwa and Potawatomi peoples, under the terms of the Robinson-Huron Treaty #61 of 1850, and the Williams Treaties of 1923.

MHP is grateful to be here. I hope you are too.

Together, we honour all Indigenous peoples – First Nations, Métis and Inuit – for their cultures, their languages, their wise teachings and ways of being, their stewardship and protection of the lands and waters – and life – that have shaped this country since time began.

Together, we commit to acknowledge, to learn, to educate, to create opportunity and to honour sacred places, and to take actions toward real Truth and Reconciliation in support of our commitment to wellness for all, and to walking the path together in respect, peace and harmony for future generations.

G'chi miigwech. Thank you very much.

## ABOUT THE MUSEUM

### Muskoka Heritage Place

Set in a uniquely Muskoka landscape, MHP shares stories of First Nations and early settlers to the area through programming, events and exhibits.

Muskoka Heritage Place encompasses the Muskoka Museum and gift shop; the Pioneer Village, a collection of 19 historically significant buildings; and the Rotary Village Station, which is home to the Steam Museum, and the Portage Flyer Train, a local historical icon. Over 65,000 artifacts are safeguarded at MHP.

### MANDATE

To collect, care for, interpret and preserve a viable collection of historical artifacts, documents, photographs, archives and other materials particular to Muskoka; and to provide an uniquely historic attraction which imparts accurate, educational, historical information in a spirited and entertaining manner pertinent to the Muskoka experience.

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## 2025 AT A GLANCE

### Visitors

Total Visitors: 22,101  
General Admission: 20,173  
Special Events, Promotional: 1,928

### Digital Reach

Facebook: 3,608  
Instagram: 967  
X: 241  
Website Views: 166,000  
(49,000 first time visitors to website)

### Collections

Items Donated in 2025: 417  
Items Digitized: 49,626  
(roughly 37% of the full collection is digitized)  
Research and Photo Requests: 35

### Educational Programs

School Students: 552  
Camp Participants: 114

### Financials

Museum Admission Revenue: \$178,252  
Donations Received: \$38,909  
(\$34,100 of which directed to Hartley Capital Reserve)  
Operating Grants: \$24,232



## 2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

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As we close out 2025, we reflect on a year of achievements, pilot projects, and community building. This year marked 25 years of our historic steam train operations – the Portage Flyer – a significant and proud milestone for Muskoka Heritage Place.

A seasonal Culture and Heritage Program Coordinator position was budgeted at MHP – a first for the museum. This year’s youth programming offerings grew to include March Break and Summer Camps; and piloted dementia-friendly programming in partnership with North Simcoe Muskoka Specialized Geriatric Services, and family music programming in the village. It continued building and fostering relationships with Autism Ontario to offer sensory-friendly experiences again at both the Great Pumpkin Trail and Portage Flyer Christmas Train events. MHP continued to offer programs including Heritage Workshop Series, Thanksgiving Train and Heritage Fall Fair and special events including National Indigenous Peoples Day, Canada Day and the Great Pumpkin Trail.

In consultation with municipal staff, MHP developed a [Digital Strategy](#) identifying MHP’s overall digital capacity and future plans to provide and increase digital offerings with collection documentation and digitization, programs, and online marketing.

2025 was another strong year for visitors with 22,101 participating in programs, events, and village, train and museum attendance.

In July, MHP was honoured and privileged to host Honourable Edith Dumont, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, as part of their visit to the town of Huntsville. Ms. Dumont thoroughly enjoyed her experience on the steam locomotive Portage Flyer Train and in the pioneer village, even taking with her a homemade scone.

As we look to 2026, we will continue to foster new and existing relationships with our partners, visitors and community members. We look to celebrate two big milestones – the 125<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Town of Huntsville and the development and execution of MHP’s Strategic Plan 2026-30. The development of a strategic plan is an ask of one of the museum’s funding agencies and identified as a project in the Community Services & Waterfront Strategy Implementation Plan. It will solidify our direction and advance key priorities to be able to better serve the community.

We have an exciting year of programming, events and exhibitions planned for 2026. Thank you to our staff, volunteers, visitors, members, donors, and partners for making 2025 another great year.



**Jillian Jordan**  
Manager

## EXHIBITIONS



### Muskoka Museum

#### **Making HERstory: Women of Huntsville**

Muskoka Museum Temporary Gallery, in person  
May 2024 to April 2026

Making HERstory: Women of Huntsville sheds light on contribution and accomplishments of women in Huntsville from mid 1800s to mid 1900s. The exhibit was in its second and final year of display and received many positive reviews, having shared more diverse stories of the collection and community. This exhibit supports pillar #3 of the Town of Huntsville's Strategic Plan, Lively, Healthy and Safe Communities – 2.2: Support programming that advances diversity, equity and inclusion.



### Community Displays

#### **Colours and Craftmanship: The Art of Interior Décor**

Bray House Temporary Gallery, in person  
July 2025 to October 2026

The Bray House, a seasonal (July to October) exhibit space located in the Muskoka Pioneer Village, displayed “Colours and Craftmanship: The Art of Interior Décor” a traveling exhibit initially created at the Macdonell-Williamson House Museum in eastern Ontario. This exhibit dives into the craftsmanship of interior design and décor in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, how working class served upper class populations during the arts and crafts movement and weaving into the story Huntsville's own interior design, décor and craftsman history.



### Community Organizations

Huntsville Public Library, in person  
Ongoing

Staff continued to organize a monthly rotating display at the Huntsville Public Library of various local topics, from Sports and Clubs to families.

## COLLECTIONS

### Acquisitions

As outlined in detail in the Town of Huntsville All Collections 2025 Report, items of note donated in 2025 include Skokie stuffy, local family photos, C.O. Shaw letter book and blueprints related to the Huntsville Lake of Bays Navigation Co and Railway, and a wardrobe from Hart House, purchased at White Bros Store.

The Collections Working Group reviewed items offered for donation 6 times (bi-monthly):

- Total Donations (items) accepted: 270 + 3 archival fonds (2 linear feet)
- Total items declined: 60 – either outside of MHP’s mandate, or don’t have the capacity to store/display
- Research on all incoming potential donations: provenance, number and condition in the collection
- Public Research and photo inquiries completed: 35

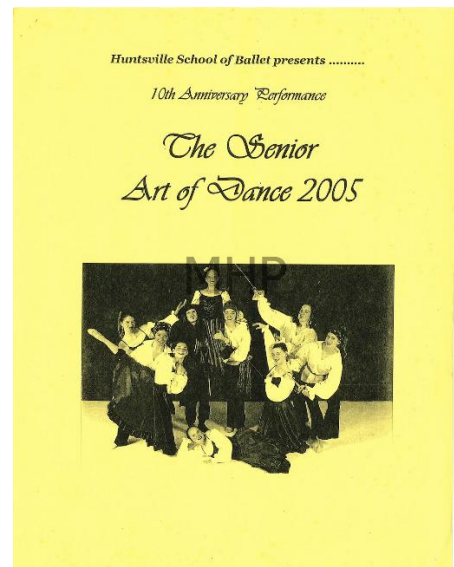
### Database Management



**96 Object** Entries; 16,737  
Total Entries; 486 Digital  
Images; **18,938 Total  
Digital Images of Objects**



**134 Photo** Entries; 21,692  
Total Entries; 270 Digital  
Images; **19,991 Total Digital  
Images of Photos**



**187 Archival** Entries; 26,981 Total  
Entries; 559 Digital Images;  
**10,485 Total Digital Images of  
Archives**

**0 Library** Entries; 406 Total Entries; 0 Digital Images; **215 Total Digital Images of Library.**  
**1315** Total Entries in 2025 of **65,815** in the Collection and **75.4% of collection digitized.**

MHP has migrated to the Past Perfect Web Edition of Past Perfect and will have a public interface on its website in 2026.

Past Perfect Collections Assessment 2025 (year)

Accessions: 48

Source Files: 40

### Digitization

The team developed a Digital Strategy for evaluation by the Community Museum Operating Grant (CMOG), of which MHP is a recipient, to set out digitization goals of artifacts, programs, marketing and more, over the next five years. The goals set forth are: increasing capacity, engaging audiences, creating online education, improving access and evaluating and sustaining the plan.

## PROGRAMS & EVENTS

### Education and Public Programming

Our educational programming activities are vast and includes candle dipping, First Nations nature's treasure hunt, a school teacher lesson, train/railway communication, blacksmithing demonstration, and much more. In 2025, 552 students of 23 classes participated in both MHP's educational programming and National Indigenous Peoples' Day event held on June 20.

Family Crafts and Snowshoeing at the Village continued into 2025.

MHP Library Pass – a first in 2025. It was implemented toward the end of the season, from August 12 to October 9. The pass, which was free to checkout for library cardholders once a year, was borrowed by 7 families.

### Adult Programming

Engineer for a Day in July and August continues to be our most successful program, with 21 participants. Our Heritage Workshop series also ran in 2025, delivered by skilled artisans in printmaking and blacksmithing.



## Community Events

Event	Date	Attendance
Easter Egg Hunt	April 20	750
National Indigenous Peoples Day	June 20	288
Canada Day	July 1	1333
Great Pumpkin Trail	Oct 31	369
A Portage Flyer Christmas	Dec 20	766

## VISITATION

### Demographic Breakout

- Under 3: 799 3.6%
- Children (3 – 17): 4086 18.9%
- Adult (19-54): 8766 39.6%
- Senior (55+): 3182 14.4%
- Student: 150 .7%
- Other (member, promo, special events, private events): 4474 20.2%
- Educational programs (including summer camp visits): 644 2.9%
- Group tours: 11 tours, 430 participants

### Private Events

- Weddings – 2
- Train Rental – 1 (annual TriMuskoka triathlon)

## MAINTENANCE

Maintenance of the Pioneer Village alone is a huge task, and with no dedicated Museum Facility Operator, projects are completed by the Rail Operator and master narrator, where their job description allows, and contractors as necessary. There are numerous facility projects within Muskoka Heritage Place, including 16 historically significant buildings in the Pioneer Village, the Rotary Village Station, the rail shed and the heritage designated Purser's Cabin. Regular annual maintenance includes painting, landscaping and lawn maintenance, fence and stair repairs and rebuilds, gutter cleaning, wood cutting and piling and other general site maintenance. In 2025, the Rail Operator and narrator undertook repair and maintenance

projects, prioritizing health and safety concerns:

- Repaired fallen eavestroughs
- Repaired safety fence along Spence Inn basement
- Painted Spence Inn exterior
- Restored mid-century motor car as display piece
- Continuous railway tie replacement
- Early 1900s pump car completed restored to operational use
- Faded gable and sign at RVS repainted
- RVS platform benches restored
- Eavestrough work
- Severely deteriorated baggage wagon removed, metal salvaged for future projects
- Rebuilt privacy fence by outhouses



## CAPITAL PROJECTS

Muskoka Heritage Place is a beneficiary of the Katherine Ann Hartley Estate and has received an additional \$34,100 in 2025 toward capital projects. Numerous capital projects were successfully completed in 2025:

- Replaced Maw House roof
- Replaced Purser's Cabin windows
- Started work on tender documents for Purser's Cabin platform, railings and footings replacement. Project is forecasted to be completed in 2026
- Replaced cabinets and countertop in the barn kitchenette
- Staff initiated the procurement process on the replication of the Steam Locomotive #1 boiler. No bids met the Town's minimum requirements; staff will reassess in 2026 and will update Council at Q1.
- Replaced the chimney stack for the operational cookstove in preparation for the cookstove replacement. Project to be completed in 2026.



## MARKETING AND PROMOTIONS

In 2025, Marketing and Communications had the MHP logo refreshed and developed a branding guide. Marketing plans prioritized digital engagement through websites, social media, online newspapers.

We maintained our social media content and prioritized marketing through larger mediums such as, Attractions Ontario, Explorer's Edge, Muskoka Tourism and the Chamber of Commerce and distributed 12,000 MHP brochures.

Using social media (Facebook, X, Instagram), we promoted programs and events, and artifacts within the MHP collection.



## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Autism Ontario
- Downtown Huntsville BIA
- Explorers' Edge
- Hope Arises Project Inc.
- Huntsville Art Society
- Huntsville High School
- Huntsville and Area Historical Society
- Huntsville and Lake of Bays Railway Society
- Huntsville Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce
- Huntsville Public Library
- Museums of Muskoka
- Muskoka Arts and Crafts
- Muskoka Tourism
- Neil Foster
- North Simcoe Muskoka Specialized Geriatric Services
- Nutty Chocolatier
- Pine Tree Quilters' Guild of Muskoka
- Rotary Club of Huntsville



## STAFF

**Jillian Jordan**, Manager

**Sara White**, Collections Coordinator

**Jacqueline Surette**, Manager of  
Recreation, Culture and Heritage

**Kenny Craine**, Rail Operator

**Greg Smith**, Chief Engineer (Contract)

**Sydney McArthur**, Culture & Heritage  
Program Coordinator (seasonal)

## Seasonal Historical Narrators

- Anna Mary Broadbent
- Annaliisa Luik
- Beau Dickinson
- Bernie Vandermeer
- Dave Godfrey
- Grace Murray
- Jacob Odrowski
- Janice Berkenmeier
- Linda Nault
- Lynn McIntosh
- M-R Newell
- Pamela Terreberry
- Rhys Hames

## Interns and Co-Op Students

- Cara Livingston
- Mya Hetherington
- Alex Taylor
- Willa Mclelwin
- Nick Robinson

## Volunteers

In 2025, a compliment of 45 volunteers contributed 1,637 hours, equivalent to \$29,955 of in-kind support, toward special events and projects.

Susan Brown, Carla Chapman, Sebastian Clarke, Danielle Clarke, Barb Dorey, Jan Fisher, Elspeth Hogg, Kelly Kichiy, Liva Livingston, Graham Lonsdale, Hope MacKinnon, Allen Markle, Tricia Markle, Dianne McGary, Willa Mclelwin, Kurt Morgan, Hannah Rogers, Clarice Sellars, Jayda-Anne Sellars, Dione Schumacher, Geoff White, Jacqueline White, Malinda Zuber, Doug Austin, Phil Laundry, David Topps, Mark Harris, Ron Wilkinson, Jeff Hames, Adrian Musters, Laura Kennedy, Todd Gordon, Ed Helmich, Eric Motton, Don Mason, Wayne Shaw, Greg Smith, Samuel Topps, Nathan Torezano

The operation of our Portage Flyer Train is dependent on volunteer conductors. We thank our partner, the Huntsville and Lake of Bays Railway Society for contributing hundreds of volunteer hours annually to ensure the successful operation of our heritage train.



## GET INVOLVED

Become a Member!

Become a Volunteer!

Become a Season Pass holder!

[www.muskokaheritageplace.ca](http://www.muskokaheritageplace.ca)