

Museum receives Mayor's Award of Excellence

by Doug Holmes

The Summerland Museum and Archives Society is the recipient of the 2024 Mayor's Award of Excellence, an annual recognition given by the Summerland mayor of the day to a local group that makes an outstanding contribution to the community.

Over the last 60 years, the non-profit organization has collected, preserved, researched, interpreted and displayed items of a historical significance to Summerland and surrounding area.

Its archival records include documents, photos, maps, and newspapers while its artifacts range from tools of various trades to clothing, household goods, and furniture.

The Museum also has an art collection of works from local artists such as Irvine Adams, Marjorie Croil, Ken Ballantyne, and Bruce Crawford. In 2006, the collection was augmented by a gift of more than 100 pieces collected by resident and former museum director, Doreen Tait. The Tait Collection, which began in the 1950s, includes photographs, watercolours, oils, pen and inks, and pastels.

When the current museum building opened in 1984, the Society had less than 5,000 items. Now it has more than 25,000 and there is a lack of space for exhibits, storage and administration. Architectural designs are in place to expand and renovate the building and the Society's volunteer board of directors is focused on fundraising for the project.

At present, the Museum features several permanent exhibits including the "Summerland Serves" display of photos, uniforms, art, personal items, and letters of Summerland residents who lived and served through the years of the First and Second World Wars. This exhibit is complemented by a recently donated and restored 1914 Hobart motorcycle.

There is also an exhibit of artifacts, photos, and information relating to the old MacDonald School, and one of old bottles retrieved from Okanagan Lake where the Felix Hotel once stood. The display case for the bottles is made out of wood from the former pier that was dismantled in 2023.

The model railway is one of the Museum's most popular exhibits, beloved children and adults alike. The Giant's Head Model Railway Club began construction of the exhibit in 1997 and continues to preserve and add to the railway today.

There are also temporary exhibits, including the changing works of arts adorning the walls of Council Chambers at Municipal Hall.

Beyond exhibits, the Society's archives provide historians and researchers access to primary source materials, which is crucial for understanding and interpreting our past.

The Museum is a special place. It is constantly engaging the community and providing educational opportunities with programs like geology field trips, lunchtime lectures, various workshops and children's activities, and even a cribbage club. It's where residents and visitors alike come to learn the story of Summerland, and that helps to create a sense of belonging and pride in the community.

For the invaluable service it provides the community, the Summerland Museum and Archives Society is this year's recipient of the Mayor's Award of Excellence.

Mayor's Award of Excellence recipients:

2024 – Museum and Archives

2023 – Arts Council

2022 – Auxiliary Firefighters

2020 and 2021 – No award presented

2019 – Blossom Youth Ambassador Program

2018 – Emergency Support Services

2017 – Legion Branch 22

2016 – Kettle Valley Steam Railway

2015 – Food Bank

2014 – Sister City Committee

2013 – Critter Aid

2012 – Lions Club

2011 – Rotary Club

2010 – Healthcare Auxiliary