



Ermatinger • Clergue  
National Historic Site

# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

ERMATINGER • CLERGUE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



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Ermatinger • Clergue  
National Historic Site

## Executive Summary

In 2024, the Ermatinger Clergue National Historic Site (ECNHS) welcomed a total of 28991 visitors. This year we curated a few new excursions for our Cruise Ship and Bus Tour companies. The Great Canadian Maple excursion connected the history of maple syrup in the fur trade, to the current manufacturing and processing. Passengers enjoyed a full day and our homemade blueberry pancakes and local maple syrup. When reviewing our key performance indicators, visitation from a general tourist – general admissions – still have not regained the levels we realized pre-pandemic. However, our continued evolution of community programming and events enables us to maintain our sustainability, and we thank the Sault Ste. Marie & Algoma community for their patronage.

With the approval of FedNor's Youth Intern, our social media and branding has taken on new looks, new consistency, and new social media strategies. We engaged our Regional Tourism partners to assist with marketing especially for the annual Fall Rendezvous, created virtual impressions and engagements which will create new exposure of our festivals and attract visitors for future events.

Sustaining and maintaining our 2 largest artifacts – the Ermatinger Old Stone House, and the Clergue Blockhouse are always part of our asset management and maintenance plan. 2024 afforded us the replacement of the cedar shake roof of the Ermatinger Old Stone House, Cedar split rail fencing, Palisade restoration, and a new shed.

The Friends of ECNHS, and our hosts of the annual Fall Rendezvous, provided a remarkable lineup of heritage interpreters / re-enactors. This event received multiple funding support from Canadian Heritage – Local Festivals, Experience Ontario 2023, and the City of Sault Ste. Marie's Arts & Culture Assistance Program. Indigenous Culinary features, and program content expansion, combined with the additional marketing and promotion, brought a very robust festival over the 4 days. Marketing was coordinated with our regional tourism partners. This festival also supported the grade 7 curriculum, where we hosted approximately 1500 students from both school boards in the Algoma district. Fall Rendezvous is one of the key large-scale festivals showcased with Ontario Culture Days and the Sault Ste. Marie hub.

I was extremely proud to be able to attend the grand opening of the Métis Nation of Ontario – Sault Ste. Marie new facility and museum, on John Street, this summer. Our connection with the MNO is integral to our stories. Ermatinger's children were Métis, and the land lots along the St. Marys River – where our current Site and Heritage Discovery Centre sits, are all on historic Métis and Indigenous plots.

As the City works and meets with Garden River First Nation, we look forward to the completion of the friendship accord, and the continuation of reconciliation. I believe that the future of our Site requires the involvement of our First Nation peoples and the true stories of our shared histories.

As the Ermatinger Clergue National Historic Site Curator, I continue to facilitate open dialogue in our community, it's partners and agencies, as we continue to uncover the enriched history and culture of our Site, the people, and their histories. In 2024 we revisited and updated the ECNHS Strategic Plan with the Historic Site Board, and we were mindful to continue developing a more diverse path moving forward. This includes collaboration, partnerships, and being cognizant that museums hold cultural patrimony and that the atmosphere in which we exhibit requires a creation that becomes more valuable than the artifacts themselves, after all, it is the Spirit that Sings.

The continued services offered at the Site through community programs, events, and general visitation, is a result of our dedicated community partners, supporting funders, and the remarkable dedication and support by the staff, volunteers, board members and patrons, and our Friends of ECNHS. We look forward to new opportunities in 2025!

**Kathy Fisher, Curator**  
**Ermatinger Clergue National Historic Site**

Bsc Recreation Management, Bsc Therapeutic Recreation,  
Humanities Associates Degree with concentration in Fine Arts  
OMA Certificate in Museum Studies  
AMCTO – MAP

## Mandate

The Ermatinger Clergue National Historic Site provides visitors to, and residents of Sault Ste. Marie with an opportunity to *experience* the history of our community through the preservation and historic interpretation of artifacts related to the Site; within the Ermatinger Old Stone House, the Clergue Blockhouse, the Heritage Discovery Centre, including the heritage gardens and grounds and through related festivals and events.

## Mission

At the Ermatinger Clergue National Historic Site, our mission is to facilitate dialogue, engage, and create an atmosphere that tells our stories steeped in stone, where cultures meet.

## Governance

The Ermatinger Clergue National Historic Site is owned and operated by the City of Sault Ste. Marie, under the management of the Historic Sites Board, an appointed Board of Council. The 2024 Board comprised of six Council-appointed citizens and one Council member.

The Historic Sites Board By-law mandates the responsibilities of the Board in overseeing the operations of the Ermatinger Clergue National Historic Site, on behalf of Council.

In 2018 and 2019, the Historic Sites Board reviewed and revised their strategic plan and governance policy to reflect the direction of the Ontario Museum Association, Ontario Cultural Plan, City of Sault Ste. Marie's corporate strategic plan, and the SSM Downtown Association plan. The strategic plan was updated and revised in 2024 to reflect the operations and directions to 2029. Outcome based goals, timelines and resources assigned are the next steps within this governance document.

The Historic Sites Board along with the Curator, ensure that each year, the Ontario standards for Museums are met and submitted to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport.

ECNHS maintains the annual membership with the Ontario Museums Association, and the Canadian Museums Association. Membership with the Ontario Historical Society is maintained through the Friends of ECNHS.

The staff and management of the Ermatinger Clergue National Historic Site fall within the Corporation through the Community Services and Enterprise Services, Recreation and Culture Division.

## HISTORIC SITES BOARD

2024

Kelly Marshall  
Chair

Sylvana Casola  
Vice-Chair

Councillor  
Sandra Hollingsworth

David Conyers

Charlotte Wiseman

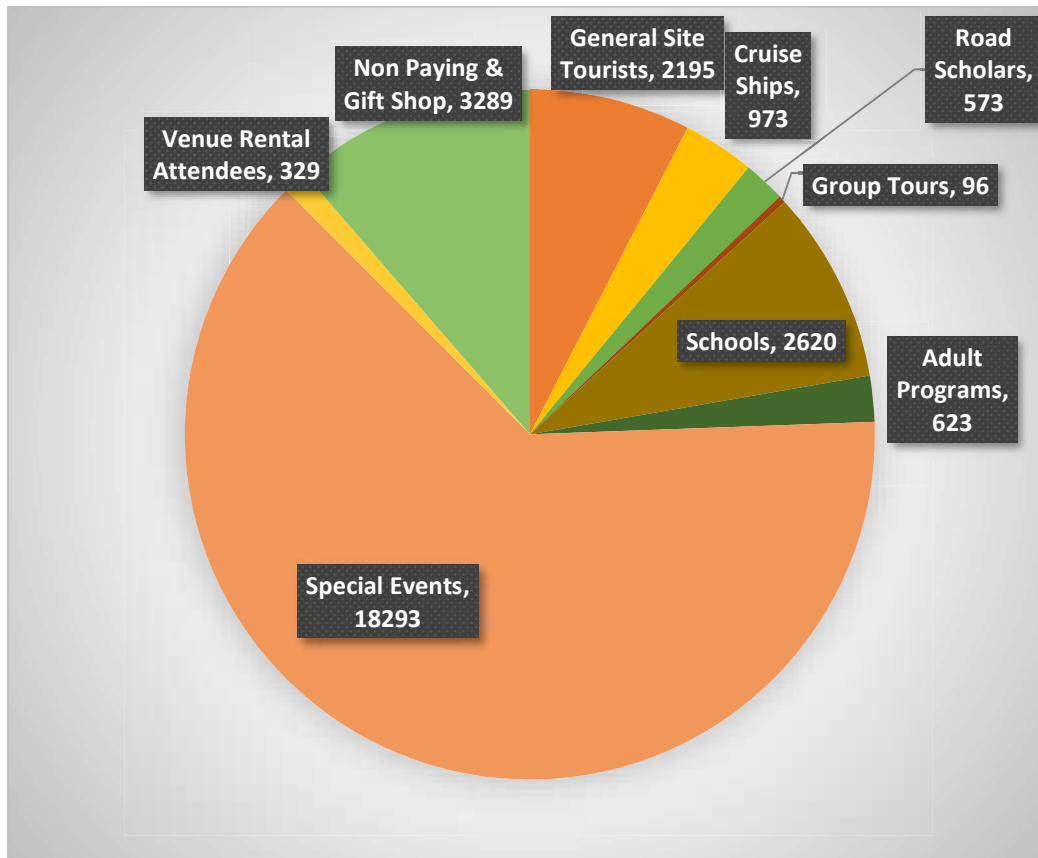
Heather Bot

Brittany Paat

## Key Performance Indicators

### Overall Visitation

KPI	2019	2022	2023	2024
Total Visitation	<b>31065</b>	<b>26708</b>	<b>30823</b>	<b>28991</b>
General Tourists	4983	1558	1711	2195
Cruise Ship Visitors	1813	895	1213	973
Bus Tour Visitors	459	327	343	573
Group Tour Visitors	611	45	195	96
Students	2033	2073	2285	2620
Adult Programming	567	96	583	623
Special Events	17667	18620	21776	18293
Venue users	394	134	22	329
Non paying & Gift Shop visitors	2198	2849	2477	3289



### User Fees:

The KPI's listed above are attached to council approved user fees: admission fees and programming fees.

Passes: We do offer free family passes at the **Sault Ste. Marie Public Library locations**. In 2024 these were signed out 41 times. Other free passes are offered by request.

## Educational Programming

2024 students visited for curriculum-based tours with **2,620** students served.

Curriculum programs focus:

- K to 2 Long Ago
- 1 to 3 **Yuletide**
- 3 **Pioneer Living** – 2-hour program & 3-hour program
- 4 to 6 Early Explorers
- 7(6 to 8) **1812, Fur Trade**, Confederation
- 10 Canadian History
- 10 Civics – in combination with Civic Centre
- 11/12 Culinary Tourism
- K to 8 Summer Pioneers – end of year field trips

The three **italicized** programs are our most popular for curriculum field trips, however, we do receive classes for all the programs listed.

Pricing for curriculum programs are usually \$6 per student, with the only exception being the 3-hour program which is \$10 per student. This program offers more hands-on experiences and lunch is provided.

We have one full time Programmer, and one part time programmer who are the main curriculum instructors for these. Cost recovery from educational tours offsets the programmer's part time wages.

## Special Events

Special Events comprised 66% of our visitation in 2024.

Events for 2024:

- March Break program in Partnership with the other Cultural Centres – Cultural Corridor Family Pass
- Egg Hunt – Easter Saturday
- Lilac & Lavender – June, Strawberry – July, Blueberry – August
- Canada Day at Roberta Bondar Pavilion
- Ukrainian Festival – September
- **FALL RENDEZVOUS – September**
- Halloween House – October
- Moonlight Magic – November
- Christmas Tea's – December

Fall Rendezvous is sponsored and brought to us by our hosts: "Friends of ECNHS". The Friends is a non-profit, charitable organization. This group of volunteers secure the resources for the festival through Federal, Provincial, and Municipal funding levels, plus local business sponsors, and donations in kind.

Fall Rendezvous is also registered as one of the signature events for **Ontario Culture Days**. Sault Ste. Marie ranked #4 for the top Participating Small Municipalities in Canada!

Special Events net revenue's assist us in maintaining our part time employees required to assist in this area, as well as our heritage restoration projects for the Site.

## **Gift Shop – The Post**

The gift shop takes a team to ensure that we have product, pricing, and accurate book-keeping.

This year we branched out and partnered with Destination Ontario – at the Ontario Travel Information Centre, and with Station Mall New York News. Each of these offsite venue’s sold our merchandise on consignment for us.

We attended the Canada Day activities at the Roberta Bondar Pavilion and brought as much “Canada” inventory as we could. It was a sell out!

Top 10 sellers in order of total quantities sold in 2024 (which do not reflect top items in \$\$).

- Seed packages
- Postcards
- Hoodies & Sweatshirts
- Magnets
- Napkins
- T-shirts
- Maple products
- Preserves
- Ball Caps
- Candles

Consignment sales (local artists) were next in line for top sales. Followed by mugs, toys, and décor.

Net Revenue 2024	\$14,120.00
Net Revenue 2023 (fully reopened)	\$10,268.78
Net Revenue 2022 (begin re-opening)	\$ 4761.00
Net Revenue 2021 (COVID capacity limits & curbside):	\$ 8050.00
Net Revenue 2020 (COVID lockdowns & curbside):	\$ 5802.57
Net Revenue 2019:	\$13,352.31

Net revenues assist and offset the part time administrative assistants who take care of the merchandising and book-keeping.

## **Personalized Paving Bricks**

The ongoing sales of the personalized paving bricks allows people the opportunity to either use this gift as a celebration of life, condolence, wedding gift, and more. Installation occurs once a year in the spring. Proceeds from the sales of the bricks offers the Historic Sites Board with funds strategically earmarked for Site projects and restoration. Annual sales are approximately \$1000 per year and are kept in trust until required. Individuals purchasing a brick receives a letter for income tax purposes.

## **Donations**

In 2024 we received \$4800 in donations. These are kept in trust and are utilized for restoration projects. Donations to the HSB trust are provided letters for income tax purposes.



## AGCO – Liquor Licence

In February 2020 we were granted a liquor licence, that allows us to sell alcohol within the grounds of the Site. Fencing to fencing and inside the areas of the Heritage Discovery Centre and the Summer Kitchen. The licence expires in May 2025 and will require an application for renewal.

The original licence costs were \$1355.

Net revenue of costs (of wine & beer, and bartender services) over revenue for the total 5 years, is approximately \$4500. This also reflects and includes the pandemic years where cash bar was not offered.

Renewal in 2025 is: \$300 for 2 years or \$600 for 4 years.

The AGCO liquor licence allow us to offer a cash bar to the bus tour groups, for their dinner / lunch bookings, and for any of our special events &/or our evening in the summer kitchen program. Cash bar is also available for venue rentals, and private party bookings.

## Museum Standards

### **DAYS OPEN: - 180 minimum required for Museums Standards**

<b>Months</b>	<b>2019 # of days open</b>	<b>2020 # of days open</b>	<b>2021 # of days open</b>	<b>2022 # days open</b>	<b>2023 # of days open</b>	<b>2024 # of days open</b>
January	21	21	0	0	21	20
February	19	21	0	15 gift shop / curbside	19	19
March	21	10 – begin shut down	12 gift shop only	25 gift shop / curbside	21	21
April	20	0	10 gift shop only	16 gift shop / 5 open	20	21
May	26	0	19 gift shop only	21	26	25
June	30	6 gift shop & curb	24 gift shop only	30	30	30
July	31	23 gift shop & yard	22	31	31	31
August	31	20 gift shop & yard	22	31	31	31
September	30	22 gift shop & yard	25	30	30	30
October	27	23 with restrictions	22	24	27	28
November	20	20 with restrictions	22	21	20	22
December	16	17 with restrictions	22 with restrictions	14	16	15
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>293</b>



## **HOURS OPEN: – 1060 minimum required for Museum Standards**

2019 REGULAR OPERATIONS we were open 2728 Hours

2020 PANDEMIC YEAR we were open 1090 Hours

2021 PANDEMIC YEAR we were open 1200 hours

2022 Partial PANDEMIC YEAR & we were open = 1806 hours

2023 REGULAR OPERATIONS we were open 2728 hours

2024 REGULAR OPERATIONS we were open 2735 hours

## **Volunteers**

Volunteers who assist in activities, events, and programming are a mix of individuals from the following areas:

- Members of the Historic Sites Board
- Members of the Friends of Ermatinger • Clergue National Historic Site
- Adult and Youth Re-Enactors
- Adults & Seniors (55+) who individually want to assist in many capacities
- Youth for events & co-op placements

2024 volunteers were trained in the AODA and OHRC, health & safety, and some volunteers received their police checks.

The area in which we need to invest more time in recruitment and retention, is in the area of Youth volunteers.

The Site is managed by a volunteer Board (Historic Sites Board) which is comprised of **6 members** contributing a total of 125 hours for Board Meetings. Members for the Sault Ste. Marie Historic Sites Board are appointed by City Council every 2 years.

The Ermatinger Clergue National Historic Site has **32 volunteers** who contribute 1730 hours, including the Board members.

We are graced with some volunteers that have achieved over 30 years of service, bringing “History to Life”! Volunteers with milestone years of service are acknowledged at the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards held annually.

## Staffing Levels

The Ermatinger Clergue National Historic Site consists of 3 buildings and heritage gardens, operated year-round, since the 2015 opening of the Heritage Discovery Centre.

Due to the funding programs and projects for: Digital Strategy and Collections Management, some of the part time staff were provided more hours to assist the Curator in completing the projects, and in 2024 we received FedNor funding for a Digital Intern.

2024 Staff levels at the Ermatinger Clergue National Historic Site were as follows:

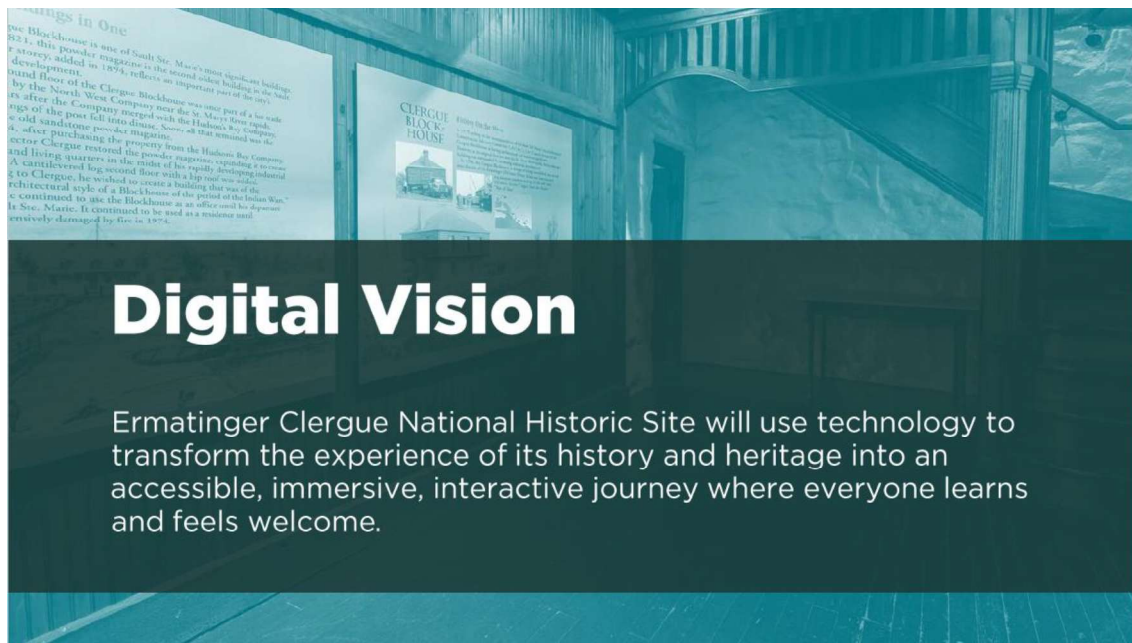
Regular year-round staff:

- 1 Full Time Permanent Curator
- 1 Full Time Permanent (Heritage) Programmer Assistant
- 1 Part Time Gardener / Grounds / Housekeeper - seasonal
- 1 Part Time Cook
- 1 Part Time Administrative Assistant & Gift Shop Administrator
- 1 Part Time Interpreter (often comprised of a few people)

Students:

- 1 summer student for ECNHS – 14 weeks
- 1 Young Canada Works Summer Student (Federally Funded) – 14 weeks
- 1 summer student for Municipal Heritage & ECNHS – 14 weeks
- 2 Métis Nation – Summer Career Placement – 8 weeks each

## Digital Strategy



## Digital Strategy

In 2023, we were fortunate to receive funding through Canadian Heritage, Museums Assistance Program, for the completion of a Digital Strategy. LORD Cultural Resources were contracted to lead us through the process.

The approach was a process of 2 key steps:

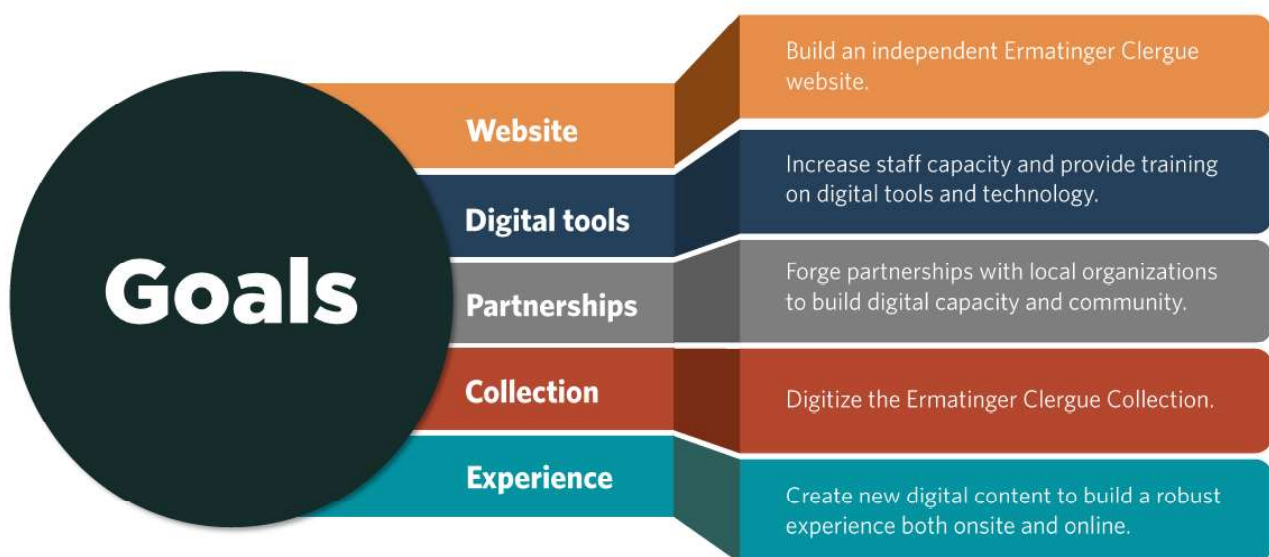
Step 1: Digital needs assessment, consultation, and research

- a. Start-up meeting
- b. Digital needs assessment
- c. Internal and external consultation and SWOT analysis
- d. Site visit
- e. Trends and leading practice research
- f. Key findings report

Step 2: Strategy development

- a. Strategy development workshop
- b. Draft digital strategy and presentation for approval
- c. Final strategy

The basics of the Strategy Recommendations / Goals are:



From the Digital Strategy, we applied for the following in 2024:

- 1) FedNor Youth Internship funding – approved for 12 months, with possible extension up to 18 months
- 2) FedNor Tourism Growth Program – Phase 1 approved in 2024, Phase 2 awaiting approval.
  - a. Website
  - b. Digital content & Augmented exhibit components
  - c. Marketing
  - d. Blockhouse heat & air
- 3) Application to Tourism SSM for financial assistance / contribution to the FedNor Tourism Growth projects - approved

## Virtual Engagement

The total <b>"FOLLOWERS"</b> on our Facebook:		2451
The total <b>"FOLLOWERS"</b> on our Instagram:	1078	
Facebook Views:		343,534
Instagram Views:		40,481
Facebook Reach – increased 29.1 % from 2023:		248,710
Instagram Reach:		8614
Facebook Visits – increased by 40.6% from 2023:		18,792
Instagram Visits:		1085

## Virtual Social Media Campaigns

- As part of the provincial festival funding for Fall Rendezvous, through the "Friends ECNHS", marketing strategies focused on digital and social media campaigns. Our regional tourism partners were contracted to assist in target marketing campaigns.
  - **Tourism Sault Ste. Marie, and**
  - **Algoma Country**

## Collections Management & Digitization

During the pandemic years, we took inventory of the state of our collection. The responsibilities of the Curator (and staff) are to manage the collection, and to be a steward in preservation of the items within the collection.

For 2023 to 2024 a collections management and storage project was undertaken by staff. With funding from Canadian Heritage, Museums Assistance Program, we were able to purchase a lot of shelving, archival supplies, collection storage supplies, humidifiers, de-humidifiers, hydrothermographs, laptop for the collection, and more. The project and funding were completed by the deadline of March 31, 2024.

2024 to 2029 we will continue the process of digitizing the collection and maintaining the storage & collection management process.

Due to the restoration / replacement of the Cedar Shake roof of the Ermatinger Old Stone House, the collection management and the storage of artifacts became a priority this summer. Many of the artifacts were stored in the attic of the House, and thus we have managed to properly wrap, store, and move to the archival room in the Heritage Discovery Centre where we have environmental controls. Items not requiring the environmental regulations, were addressed with wrapping, and either moved in the attic to other areas, or taken to shelving in the house for temporary storage, until the roof project is complete.

As part of the 2024 museum standards for the Province, we successfully completed our Emergency and Evacuation Policy and Procedures, which included also the Fire Safety Plan, Who to Call, and an Action Plan. Next steps with this binder of information is to review and revise every year in May, when students are starting employment, and to also provide the information to our partner institutions, should they be required to assist in artifact salvage.

The 2025 standards for the Province – Museum Standards is requiring the submission of our Digital Plan. This document will be drafted and will begin with the Digital Strategy.

## **Exhibits**

Due to the restoration of the Cedar Shake Hip roof of the Ermatinger Old Stone House, and the re-organization of the Attic Storage for this project, we curated an exhibit of all the CHAIRS in storage and placed them on exhibit in the foyer of the Heritage Discovery Centre and also throughout the Old Stone House. The exhibit was called ***"Sit-U-ational"*** with a booklet on the details of each chair.

At the end of 2024, we received a few items relating to the "fur trade" donated from the Voyageur Lodge in Batchewana. These items have been placed on display in the Fur Trade Office of the Ermatinger House.

Routine changes in the period rooms of artifacts, seasonal décor, and rearrangements occur on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. As each of these changes occur, collection management practices are carried out as well as housekeeping and cleaning.

## **Maintenance, Restoration, and Asset Management**

Council approved through Asset Management capital, the following 2024 projects:

- the restoration and replacement of the cedar shake Hipped Roof, of the Ermatinger Old Stone House
- Split rail cedar fencing
- Palisade repairs & service gates
- New shed

All projects were completed.

The future priorities for the Site are:

- Sheds: East shed (kindling) is in extremely bad shape and could crumble any day. West shed (garbage & wood) is also in bad shape – floors, doors, and cedar.
- Blockhouse roof – same desperate condition as the Old Stone House cedar shake.
- Blockhouse windows – south side rotting & paint peeling, others in need of restoration
- Blockhouse logs – chinking & testing for rot – repainting.
- Boardwalk – some solution required for the slipperiness and constant repair.
- Summer Kitchen logs – rotten area, chinking.
- Summer Kitchen windows – restoration and painting

## **Summary**

As per the Historic Sites Board (a committee of Council) management by-law, this report shall be submitted annually to City Council.

The annual report accompanies many funding applications, and we gratefully acknowledge the support and contributions of these agencies:

- ✓ Community Museums Operating Grant – Grants Ontario
- ✓ Canadian Heritage – Museum Assistance Programs
- ✓ FedNor – Tourism Growth Program