

Museums & Sustainability

Sustainable Economies

Making Modern
Blacksmiths at the
Western Development
Museum

Measuring Museum
Performance: A
Saskatchewan Snapshot

Interview with Museum
Sustainability Expert
Dr Robert R. Janes

And much more!



Museums Association of Saskatchewan





The Museums Association of Saskatchewan (MAS) is a non-profit, collective organization with more than 400 members, including 200 member museums and galleries. MAS is governed by an elected Board of Directors that develops policy and provides direction for programs and services to benefit all Saskatchewan museums.

Opinions are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of MAS. While efforts have been made to ensure accuracy, the Museums Association of Saskatchewan assumes no liability for any errors, omissions or inaccuracies. No part of this publication may be copied without prior consent of MAS © 2013.

ISBN: 978-0-919683-59-4

Board of Directors 2012-13

Rhonda Lamb (President)
Crystal Craig (Vice President)
Heather Englebert
Stephanie Kaduck
Carol Peterson
Robert Hubick
Joan Searle
Chad Debert

Staff

Executive Director: Wendy Fitch
Director of Finance: Brenda Herman
Professional Development Coordinator: Dan Holbrow
Communications Coordinator: Brittany Knudsen
Museums Advisor: May-Lin Polk
Administrative Assistant: Eleanor Radbourne

Museums and Sustainability Committee

Gailmarie Anderson, Melfort & District Museum/City of Melfort
Dan Holbrow, Museums Association of Saskatchewan
Heather Englebert, WDM Curatorial Centre, Saskatoon
Dr. Glenn Sutter, Royal Saskatchewan Museum

Writers

Jeff Gaye
M. E. Powell
Dale Worobec

Photographer

Taouba Khelifa



Message *from* MAS

When we think of economic challenges, many of us think of scarcity—of not having enough money. But, as we have discovered in Saskatchewan in the last few years, economic growth also brings challenges. Growth brings change, and change means that unless we work hard to maintain, and even enhance, the things we value, we risk losing track of who we are.

Like many public and community organizations, museums have learned to weather economic challenges. We've grown lean and efficient, delivering amazing results with what resources we have. Thanks to the hard work and donations of a huge number of people all over the province, we've kept an impressive group of public museums running through some tough times—and into some good ones.

Now, we have new opportunities and new challenges. As we move forward, we can't forget that our work begins and ends with service to our communities. The best way for museums to succeed is by taking an active role, engaging the public in what matters to them, and providing the meaning and context that only culture and heritage can deliver.

This kind of engagement means looking beyond the simple survival of a particular museum. It means working to strengthen and cultivate the community that will support and nurture its museum in turn. It means remembering, always, that museums are only as strong as their communities.

For the staff and volunteers of Saskatchewan's museums, this isn't news. We are committed to serving our communities through education, research, heritage conservation, and community development—including economic development. Nonetheless, this is a story we don't tell often enough. We don't always remind each other and our stakeholders of the many ways we contribute to our province's sustainability.

That's why this series of publications is so important, and why I'm so pleased to present *Museums and Sustainability: Economic Dimensions*. Here, we see not just what museums are doing to ensure their own viability, but also how we contribute to a more sustainable economy and a better quality of life for the whole province. These stories show that museums are not just a luxury or a pleasant amenity: they're a vital, integral part of our towns and cities, and an indispensable piece of Saskatchewan's bright future.

Wendy Fitch, MAS Executive Director



Published by the **Museums Association of Saskatchewan**
424 McDonald Street
Regina, Saskatchewan S4N 6E1
phone: (306) 780-9279 or toll free in SK (866) 568-7386
email: mas@saskmuseums.org
website: www.saskmuseums.org

MAS gratefully acknowledges the support of our sponsors



Museums & Sustainability

- 4** The Economic Dimensions of Sustainability
By Dr. Glenn Sutter, Royal Saskatchewan Museum
- 6** Making modern blacksmiths: An Old Trade Lives On
at the WDM
- 8** Doing Well by Doing Good: The Volunteer Symbiosis
- 10** Measuring Museum Performance: A Saskatchewan Snapshot
- 13** Join the Conversation: Museums & Sustainability Blog
- 14** Mission-Driven Performance Measurement:
Excerpt from an Interview with Robert R. Janes
- 16** Developing Skills, Sustaining the Museum: Everyone Wins
with Ancient Echoes Interpretive Centre's Summer Student
Program
- 17** Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve Welcomes The World
- 18** About MAS



The Economic Dimensions *of* Sustainability



by Dr. Glenn Sutter, Royal Saskatchewan Museum

What is an economy? What is it for? And how can we tell when it's healthy? These questions are a good place to start, if you're curious about the economic aspects of sustainability. Taken together, they shed light on pieces of the puzzle that are often overlooked or misunderstood.

Economies aren't just about money. They are dynamic, ever-changing systems, where countless interactions and feedback loops affect the production, movement, and use of goods and services. Wherever people are putting time, energy and money into providing, making, moving, consuming, or disposing of something, an economy is how and where it all happens.

In economic terms, economies are supposed to distribute limited resources among competing interests, and the resulting allocations are considered to be efficient when they provide the greatest value. Often, this value is associated with some aspect of well-being or human welfare, e.g., personal safety or health care, but this is not always the case. Economies can also be geared towards less desirable outcomes, including warfare.

Spending Natural Capital

Anyone who manages a bank account knows that as long as you only use the interest from a given lump of money, the lump will last indefinitely. But as soon as you start digging into the lump (your capital), the account will start to run down, unless new money is added.

Similar principles apply to stocks and flows of energy and other resources in the global ecosystem. Here, the “lump” includes coal, oil, natural gas, and peat – accumulations of fossil fuels that represent a “one-time gift” from the distant past. Some of the “interest” comes from the Sun, as daily blasts of solar energy are captured as wood, crops, and other types of biomass. Solar heating also warms up the land, air and water, creating winds, ocean currents, and other sources of renewable energy.

For thousands of years, people used only small amounts of fossil fuel energy, relying on domesticated animals, wood, wind and other renewables to drive their economies. A shift towards fossil fuels started only about 200 year ago, with the Industrial Revolution, and the global demand for energy is now being met mostly by non-renewable sources.

“Our appetite for energy is now so big that the annual demand for renewable resources is far beyond what the planet can provide.”

Our appetite for energy is now so big that the annual demand for renewable resources is far beyond what the planet can provide. Studies show that it takes just over 8 months for the current global economy to chew through a year's worth of natural resources and ecological services (e.g., water purification), and this point comes sooner each year because the global rate of energy use is still rising (www.footprintnetwork.org).

When our activities demand more resources and services than Earth can provide, the global economy goes into 'overshoot' – a technical way of saying we are living beyond our means. Periods of overshoot were rare or had little impact when world population was lower, cheap oil was abundant, and the atmosphere could absorb carbon without affecting the climate. Now, all of these conditions have changed and the effects of overshoot are showing up more frequently, including depleted resource stocks and signs of global climate change.

These facts about energy use highlight an important economic aspect of sustainability: natural capital – goods and services derived from the environment – should not be “spent” faster than it can be regenerated or replaced with something comparable.


Measuring Progress

Economic indicators are also important, since they affect how we organize our economy and our lives. Traditional measures like the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) provide an accurate way to keep track, when money changes hands. But they say nothing about why these transactions occur or the problems and disparities they might create. Oil spills, epidemics, crime waves – none of these things enhance our well-being, but since they move money, they add to the GDP!

Alternative measures like the Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI) are better for assessing sustainability because they capture the benefits of economic activity, but they also account for resource depletion and the value of unpaid work. The difference between GPI and GDP trends can be striking, with the former reaching a plateau while the latter continues to rise (see GPI accounts at www.pembina.org).

Now that we've looked at how we measure economies, we can ask a question that often comes up in sustainability work: do economies need to grow to be healthy? The

answer partly depends on what we mean by growth. Some economies may need to expand or to process things faster (increasing their throughput) to overcome poverty and other types of disparity, but this type of growth is not always warranted. At the global level, humanity's ecological footprint is already bigger than available supplies of productive land and freshwater, so further expansion or faster processing at this scale might cause more problems than it solves.

Herman Daly, once a senior economist with the World Bank, defines growth as a “quantitative increase in size or throughput” (e.g., building factories) and development as a “qualitative improvement in economic welfare from increased quality of goods and services, as defined by their ability to increase human well-being” (e.g., making products that last longer)¹. Much like the difference between GPI and GDP, Daly's distinction implies that development is a valuable goal while the tendency to pursue “growth at all costs” needs to be questioned. At the very least, we need to be clear about what we are trying to grow and what that growth will involve. Advances in technology and increases in efficiency can be helpful, but there may be limits on these fronts as well, since everything we do requires energy and materials. From a sustainability perspective, we need to make decisions about economic development based on how it is likely to affect our personal and collective well-being. 



Making modern blacksmiths

An Old Trade Lives On at the WDM

by Dale Worobec

You could walk into a hardware store and buy a link of chain.

Or you could hammer and pound, braced against fire and sparks, and build it yourself – a genuine, handmade trophy of your own sweat and determination.

Four times a year, in Saskatoon, 10 students walk out of the Western Development Museum with their own link of chain. It's one of the final lessons in the museum's Introduction to Blacksmithing Course.

By museum standards, the weekend course is a success – it has run every year since 1988 and often has a year-long waiting list. Nearly 900 people have attended the course and learned the basics of smithing, forging, metallurgy and what's meant by terms like upsetting and drawing. Hundreds more have attended advanced courses to learn from master blacksmiths brought in by the museum.

“All along, we kept thinking it's something we'd offer for a few years and then it would taper off. But the interest is still strong,” says Leslee Newman, WDM's Education and Extension Coordinator.

The idea, says Newman, is that the museum isn't just preserving artifacts and tools.

“We're actively working to keep skills and traditions alive,” she explains.

The course attracts a surprisingly diverse range of students. Newman says attendees come from urban and rural areas and have included husbands and wives, fathers (or grandfathers) with sons, farmers, ranchers, artists and sometimes just people with an interest sparked by the museum's summertime blacksmithing demonstrations.

“

When we started the blacksmith course, it was because we're a museum and this is what we're here to do.

”



Photo Courtesy of the Western Development Museum

Blacksmithing is the most popular of some other related WDM offerings: Wheelwrighting (making wooden wheels), steam traction engine operation and buggy seat upholstery.

Some of the people associated with such WDM courses have gone on to further hone their skills, even starting businesses or using the techniques in settings like farms, ranches or art studios.

One example is Rick Dixon, a now-retired WDM employee whose interest in blacksmithing helped start the museum's course. Dixon still teaches blacksmithing at the museum and, says Newman, does a booming business today in making steak flippers and commissioned metal objects at Dixon Forge (dixonforge.ca).

Another example is M. Craig Campbell, a blacksmith-sculptor who creates art and design pieces in his Saskatoon studio (m.craigcampbell.ca).

The WDM courses have even generated the alumni and momentum to help sustain or contribute to related organizations. These are the Western Canadian Blacksmith's Guild (Saskatchewan chapter) and the Western Canadian Wheelwrighting Association.

Alumni also tend to become enthusiastic advocates of the museum itself. Newman says a notable number also become volunteers.

In other words, the courses contribute to the museum's sustainability by strengthening its relevance to the community and by bringing in new volunteers. They also contribute to community sustainability by teaching skills and techniques people are using to start businesses or supplement employment income.



Photo Courtesy of the Western Development Museum

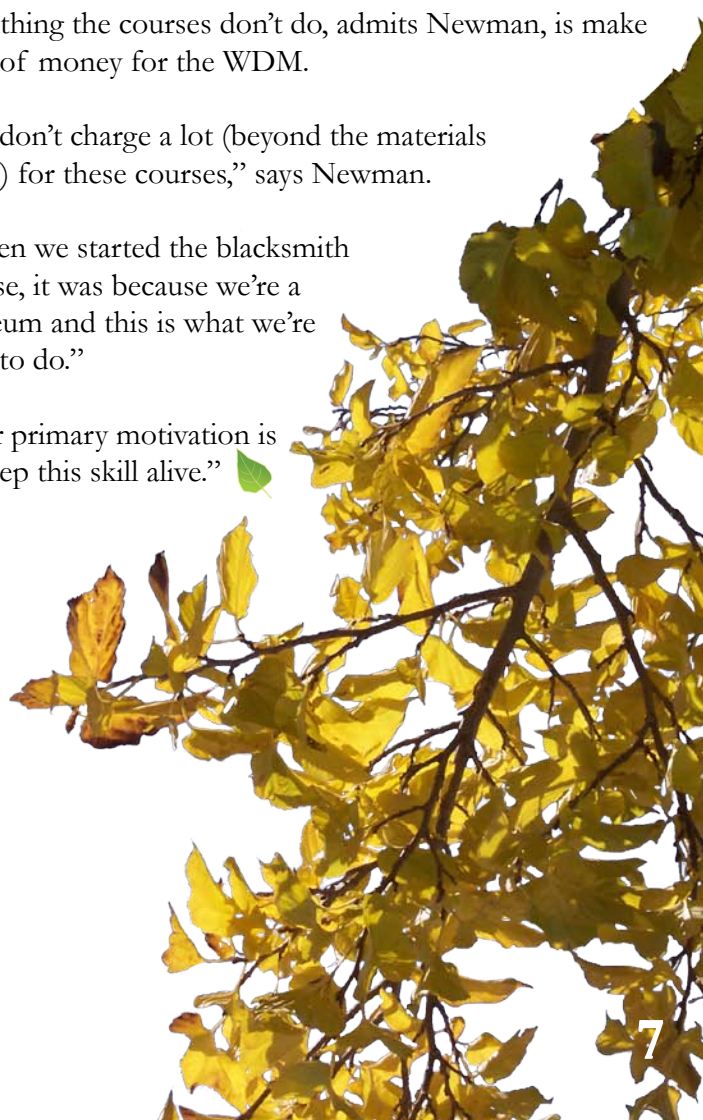
One thing the courses don't do, admits Newman, is make a lot of money for the WDM.

"We don't charge a lot (beyond the materials costs) for these courses," says Newman.

"When we started the blacksmith course, it was because we're a museum and this is what we're here to do."

"Our primary motivation is to keep this skill alive."

Photo Courtesy of the Western Development Museum



Kathleen East,
Wendy Thienes and
Joe Ann Ruetz.



Doing Well By Doing Good

The Volunteer Symbiosis

by Jeff Gaye

Anyone involved with museums, or any non-profit enterprise, knows that they depend heavily on a volunteer workforce to sustain them.

It's not just a matter of free labour. Volunteers bring passion and pride to their work, and carry that out into the world. They are spokespeople and ambassadors. They lead by their example and they connect the organization to its community roots.

Luckily for everyone, the benefits of volunteerism are a two-way street. There is considerable evidence to show that those who do good also do well – in terms of social and mental health, as well as in overall physical health.

In fact, “two-way street” doesn't do justice to the complex relationships among volunteers and their communities. The non-profit sector creates wealth and adds jobs. Ventures supported by volunteers take on roles from poverty relief to sports, arts, and culture, adding value to a local economy while enhancing the overall quality of life.

And while volunteers are sustaining the non-profit economy, that economy is investing in the spirit of volunteerism. Young people, working people, and retired people renew the spirit through the generations. Volunteers are a treasured renewable resource.

Wendy Thienes is Director of Grand Coteau Heritage and Cultural Centre in Shaunavon. She speaks in glowing terms of the Centre's volunteers, and fully appreciates their contributions. “Museums are still in a position where funding can be uncertain and you never feel totally secure,” she says, “and having volunteers makes that easier.” She credits two volunteers in particular with providing not just unpaid work, but irreplaceable contributions to the Centre's programming.

Kathleen East and Joe Ann Ruetz work at GCHCC more or less daily, each putting in 15 to 20 hours per week. “Their key role is in our research department,” Thienes explains. Both of them grew up in Shaunavon, and moved away to pursue their careers – Kathleen as a teacher and Joe Ann as a laboratory technician – and ultimately returned.

Thienes says that Kathleen and Joe Ann's Shaunavon roots make them "walking history books." They have compiled extensive files while fielding the Centre's frequent research requests.

They are part of a larger body of volunteers who sustain the Centre, and do even more. Thienes says most of her volunteers are also active in other community endeavours.

It may be due to their backgrounds in helping professions, Thienes muses, but she feels Kathleen and Joe Ann's reward is in the satisfaction of lending a hand.


But there may be more to it. Many studies show that volunteering contributes to one's overall health. Benefits can include lower frequency of stress-related illness, lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol, reduced risk of heart disease and diabetes, and a more robust immune system.

Mental functioning gets a boost from volunteering, too. The brain needs exercise as much as the body, and performing acts of kindness and making new social connections help keep the mind stimulated. And, there's what is called a "helper's high:" a release of endorphins in the body causing mild euphoria and reduction of pain.

Volunteering isn't just for retired people. Youth groups such as Cadets, Guides, Scouts, 4-H, and others insist on community service. The Wellness 10 course in Saskatchewan's new Phys Ed curriculum has a volunteerism requirement. This course is taken by Grade 10 students across the province.

It's a gift that keeps on giving: a study done by McKinsey Consulting for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award shows that a staggering 91% of Award participants intend to continue their community service even after finishing their programs. Numbers for other youth groups are likely comparable.

Volunteer work can help young people build confidence, according to Thienes. "Volunteering gives them a chance to deal with the general public and other people they wouldn't otherwise interact with," she says.

Ideally, sustainability is a symbiosis, especially when dealing with human resources. If we can sustain those who sustain us, we can all continue, and contribute, indefinitely. 



Grand Coteau Heritage and Cultural Centre

Measuring Museum Performance: *A Saskatchewan Snapshot*

by Marie E. Powell

Museums monitor and report on their budgets regularly, but a museum's real value isn't measured in dollars and cents. We asked a number of Saskatchewan museums how they measure their impact on the community, and found that they look at three key areas: community support, attendance, and partnerships.

Community Support Counts

Community support is a major performance measure for museums, shown through volunteers and memberships.

For example, Regina's MacKenzie Art Gallery counts on about 130 people in its volunteer group, says executive director Jeremy Morgan. Its 1,400 members include 800 individual memberships plus families and other classes, and the majority come from Regina.

"Volunteerism is a really good measure of the commitment from a community and how much they value what you do for the community," agrees Humboldt and District Museum curator Jennifer Hoesgen.

Humboldt has about 125 volunteers giving 2,500 volunteer hours each year. The number of new volunteers and the ability of the museum to attract volunteers are strong indicators of the museum's performance, she says.

As well, when Humboldt City Council allowed the museum to expand to a second building, the Museum Foundation proved its support by raising funds within the community for it.

For most museums, community donations show support. The Humboldt & District Museum & Gallery, for instance, houses about 16,000 pieces. This year the Sisters of St. Elizabeth Convent, celebrating its 100th anniversary, donated pieces "that really told their story," Hoesgen adds. "These donations show the level of public trust."

Duck Lake Regional Interpretive Centre serves the area 27 km west and 10 km east and south of Duck Lake. Celine Perillat relies on a group of about 40 volunteers. For Duck Lake, another indicator of the town's support comes from in-kind assistance such as snow cleaning or grass cutting.

"I understand the need for community, because the community at the end of the day is what will keep facilities open," she says.

Attendance: Quantity and Quality

Museums provide quality programming to engage communities, and no matter the size or budget, museum directors look to attendance as the first indicator of impact.

For example, with a \$2.1 million annual budget, the MacKenzie anticipates 80,000 people attending including 61,000 at gallery exhibits and 20,000 at school or outreach activities. Morgan calls these sustainability indicators "the canary in the mine."

The Humboldt and District Museum receives most of its \$250,000 from the city of Humboldt (pop 6,500), and counts on attendance of 7,000 annually. With a \$500,000 annual budget, Joan Maier of the

Humboldt and
District Museum's
Jennifer Hoesgen



“*People stepped forward and helped us out... It makes you realize that the community is supporting you.*”



Moose Jaw Museum and Art Gallery counts on 30,000 a year in attendance.

Duck Lake has a \$113,000-120,000 annual budget, attracting about 5,000 people annually from across Saskatchewan and elsewhere for a view from its 90-ft observation tower. Unlike the other museums, the Interpretive Centre charges an admission, and is about 75 percent self-sufficient through fundraising.

It's important to know how many people attended, but museums also want to know what they loved – and didn't love – about the experience, using written survey forms and oral responses. For instance, the MacKenzie has staff administer feedback surveys in person at some exhibitions, to help evaluate the success of its programming.

At Duck Lake, Perillat keeps written survey forms available, but she also approaches people to ask them for one-on-one feedback.

“You want to make sure that whatever you're putting together is going to be on-track and appreciated,” Perillat adds. “Especially in small town Saskatchewan, you can have all the forms and formulas you want, but really it boils down to whether or not people appreciate the event or the topic or whatever function that you're holding.”

Programs and Partnerships

A museum's impact can also be measured by the willingness of community groups and others to partner on new or ongoing programs. For example, the Moose Jaw Museum & Art Gallery partners with the Hunger in Moose Jaw group to develop the Chair-ity auction and fundraiser, with chairs designed by local artists. Similarly, Humboldt partnered with the Newcomers Centre for an Arts and Culture Days event.

With eight gallery spaces and other areas for programming, the MacKenzie brings in larger, expensive exhibitions such as Daphne Odjig or

Andy Warhol from major centres. These require a state-of-the-art gallery with temperature and humidity control, installation and take-down expertise, and extra security and marketing. As well, the MacKenzie seeks sponsorships with corporate or individual partners as much as two years before the show season.

“The ability to bring shows in means that we have the capacity, and we're trusted by these larger partners,” Morgan says.

Joan Maier of the Moose Jaw Museum and Art Gallery says some community partnerships are more direct, as she discovered when a regular funding source fell through for art classes for a group of intellectually challenged students.

“When the community found out, people stepped forward and helped us out.” For instance, the South Hill Community Centre gave \$500, and a taxi driver from Bobcat's Taxi drove students to the class without charging. “It makes you realize that the community is supporting you,” Maier adds.



Duck Lake Regional Interpretive Centre

Sustainability Means Engagement

Many museums serve many roles in their community. Perillat says sustainability is her goal, because Duck Lake is a tourist attraction.

“Our goal here is to boost attendance, because the more attendance we have, the more we can make, and help pay our expenses,” she adds.

The cost of running a gallery now without some kind of public support is prohibitive, Morgan agrees. Sustainability means a blend of public and private support, including grants, donors, sponsors, gallery shop funds (\$27,000 this year), memberships, fundraising, workshops, and rentals. “It’s a challenge,” he adds.

Most museums rely on private and public funding as well as a battery of volunteers. Ongoing operating costs and wages require municipal, Saskatchewan Lotteries, Canada Council, or Saskatchewan Arts Board funding, adds Maier.

“There are some things that we are never going to be able to measure completely,” Hoesgen says. “I think it comes down to public service.”



MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina

Annual Budget – About \$2.1 million

Employees – 22 permanent employees (one half-time) plus 15-20 regular casual employees

Attendance - About 80,000 visitors annually; 61,000 in gallery, and 20,000 school and outreach programs off-site

Volunteers – About 130 volunteers giving about 3400 volunteer hours

Memberships – 1400 including 800 individual memberships plus families etc.

Moose Jaw Museum and Art Gallery

Annual Budget – \$0.5- million annually

Employees – Eight people and additional summer students

Attendance – 30,000 annually

Volunteers – About 120 volunteers giving about 2360 volunteer hours

Memberships – About 120

Humboldt and District Museum

Annual budget - About \$250,000

Employees – Four – three full time, one part time, plus summer students

Attendance – About 7000 annually

Area/district – City of Humboldt (pop 6500) and Humboldt historic district

Volunteers– About 125 volunteers giving 2500 volunteer hours

Duck Lake Regional Interpretive Centre

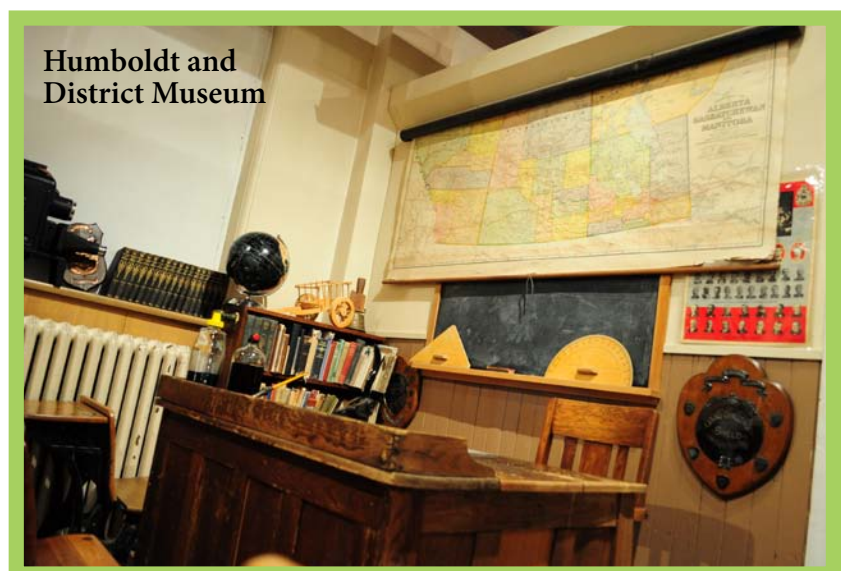
Annual budget - \$113,000-120,000

Employees – One full time, one part time, and summer students

Attendance – About 5000 annually

Area/district – About 27 km West and 10 km east and south

Volunteers– About 40 volunteers





Join the Conversation

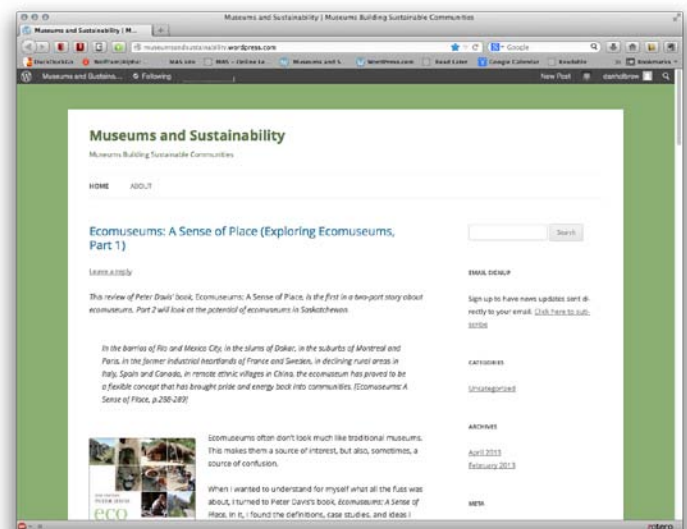
Museums & Sustainability Blog

Museums and Sustainability is more than a publication. It includes all kinds of activities that promote and nurture environmental, social, economic and cultural sustainability in the Saskatchewan museums community.

To keep on top of news, stories, and ideas related to sustainability in museums, visit our *Museums and Sustainability* blog at <http://museumsandsustainability.wordpress.com>.

You can:

- Find out about exciting new developments linking sustainability and museums
- Respond and discuss the blog posts
- Suggest topics or activities, or even submit your own posts and stories (contact Dan at pdcoordinator@saskmuseums.org or call 306-780-9241)



Be part of a community of museums working to build sustainable communities. Join the conversation today!



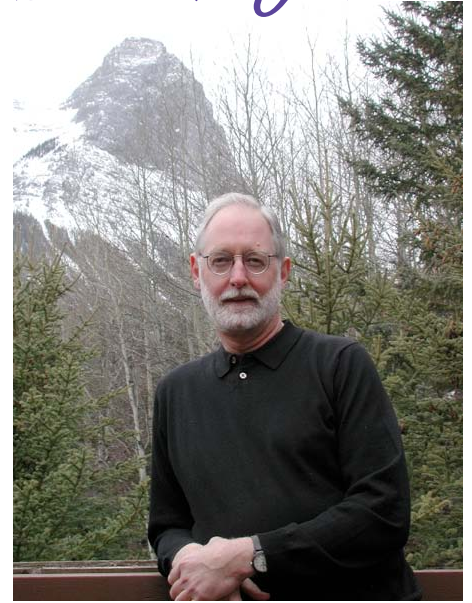
Mission-Driven Performance Measurement:

by Dan Holbrow

Excerpt from an Interview with Robert R. Janes

Robert R. Janes is the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship*, a Visiting Research Fellow at the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester (UK), an Adjunct Professor of Archaeology at the University of Calgary, Canada, and the former President and CEO of the Glenbow Museum (1989-2000) (www.glenbow.org). He is also the Chair of the Board of Directors of the Biosphere Institute of the Bow Valley (www.biosphereinstitute.org) - an NGO committed to the ecological integrity of the mountain region where he lives.

Prior to his Glenbow appointment, Janes was the founding Director of the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre (1976-1986) and the founding Executive Director of the Science Institute of the Northwest Territories (1986-1989), both in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. His museum books include *Museums and the Paradox of Change* (1995; 1997; 2013), *Looking Reality in the Eye: Museums and Social Responsibility* (with Gerald T. Conaty - 2005), *Museum Management and Marketing* (with Richard Sandell - 2007), and *Museums in a Troubled World* (2009). Janes has worked in and around museums for 37 years as a director, consultant, author, editor, archaeologist, board member, teacher and volunteer. He has devoted his career to championing museums as important social institutions - capable of making a difference in the lives of individuals and their communities.



MAS - What should museums be using to measure performance? Glenn Sutter of the Royal Saskatchewan Museum has written an essay that talks about the difference between growing GDP and creating a sustainable economy—how measuring GDP makes any money changing hands look like a good thing, regardless of the social effects. I wonder if you could help us connect this to museums.

RRJ - For a long time the museum community more or less ignored performance measures, and now they've been imposed, and they're largely quantitative performance measures—how many people came through your door, how much stuff did you sell in your shop, how well did your dining room do, and so on. All of these measures are about measuring consumption in one form or another. They're part of the GDP problem that Glenn has pointed out, as the Gross Domestic Product assumes continuous economic growth and consumption. We really need a concerted effort in the museum community, both nationally and internationally, to determine what sort of qualitative performance measures are necessary and appropriate. These may vary, depending upon the type of museum, but there needs to be a consensus on what is appropriate and useful. So far that hasn't been done.

Nonetheless, there's been some interesting work by Douglas Worts, the Canadian museum educator and sustainability advocate. Worts was a founding member of the Canadian Working Group on Museums and

Sustainable Communities. This group developed something called a Critical Assessment Framework (CAF), which essentially measures the value and meaning of museums. The CAF focuses on the creation of public benefit, and it requires that museum staff ask themselves how well their programs do various things, such as addressing vital and relevant needs and issues in the community, or engaging a diverse public, or stimulating intergenerational interaction, or linking existing community groups to one another, or creating partnerships that empower community groups. This is an invaluable starting point for developing a meaningful set of performance measures for museums.

“The world is going to be a very different place 30 years from now... It is time that museums and museum workers realize this and become actively engaged in the collective interests of individuals and their communities.”

MAS - That sounds like a pretty significant rethinking of the way museums assess themselves.

RRJ - Definitely. It makes you go right back to your mission, and ask: What is this museum here for and why does it do what it does? The difficulty with so many museum mission statements in my experience is that they unduly concentrate on the how. The typical museum mission statement states that it will collect, preserve, interpret and educate. Those activities are all just processes—they are means to the end, but what is the end? To me, the essential and mostly overlooked questions are why are you doing what you're doing, and who are you doing it for?

Most museum mission statements define the what, and the how is commonplace as I mentioned. You sometimes see the “for whom”, but the why is rarely, if ever, addressed. Museum staff and boards need to take some time out to seriously reflect upon the question of “why” they do what they do, as the answers to this question will help form the foundation for addressing what Worts and the Working Group are concerned with: the social and cultural impact of museums. What difference are you making in the community? How are you adding value to community needs, interests and aspirations?

There are many reasons why this has not happened, including a focus on the collections, or a belief that social responsibility is not in the museum's purview. Perhaps the most common refrain is that “we are just too busy keeping our heads above water in these difficult times.” With the increasing irrelevance of museums as a matter of record, this reflection and rethinking have to be done. They will be key to the long-term sustainability of museums in their communities.

MAS - So how do we start to shift our thinking? Does it have to be an introspective project first?


RRJ - Yes, I think it does, as mentioned above. There are two steps, and it goes back to what I said about mission. First, museum staff and their governing authorities must sit down and discuss, what is the purpose of the museum? Why are we doing what we're doing? If this is done in a thorough and thoughtful manner, it's going to naturally lead to the need to reach out to your community. The next step is to sit down with like-minded and relevant agencies and organizations in the community and determine how you can work together to address community issues and aspirations of mutual interest - ultimately improving the quality of life.

I believe that there are three legitimate expectations of museums as public institutions. They need to be open to influence and impact from outside interests, not just the museum's internal agenda. They must also be willing and able to respond to these outside interests. And then museum must be fully transparent in doing these two things. If museums would start to think about themselves in these terms, then there would be some real change.

MAS - How has the global recession affected all this? We're facing a situation where there's not a lot of interest in the kinds of value beyond the economic bottom line—where the kinds of value bound up in culture and heritage seem less important to some people. In government, but also in public discourse, people are very focused on the economy.

RRJ - I don't think that what we're talking about is antithetical to the economic health of museums. Long-term sustainability lies in making those meaningful links with your community, grounded in more enduring values, responsibilities and stewardship. These commitments transcend economic interests, but if the museum has meaningful and enduring relationships with its community, economic well-being will follow.

I believe that government is increasingly irrelevant, as they continue to adopt a corporatist agenda. In places like the UK, various innovative foundations are recognizing the value of museums. The Happy Museum Project, for example, is underwritten by a private foundation that's investing significant funding in about a dozen museums to address the role of the museum in the community. Here you have a wonderful example of a proactive sponsor who is indicating they don't want to waste any more time with the status quo – they have moved beyond the traditional definitions of museum practice. This particular foundation, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, intends to empower museums to transform themselves and help their communities. I am not aware of similar initiatives in Canada, so the opportunities are wide open. All of the provincial museum associations in Canada, as well as the Canadian Museums Association should be exploring these new and innovative possibilities.

I'm not an apocalyptic or doomsday thinker but there are many serious and life-threatening issues confronting the biosphere, our society, our communities, and museums. The world is going to be a very different place 30 years from now for various reasons – ranging from climate change to global poverty. It is time that museums and museum workers realize this and become actively engaged in the collective interests of individuals and their communities. In the absence of this awareness and meaningful action, the future of museums as public institutions cannot be assumed. 

Developing Skills, Sustaining the Museum:

Everyone Wins with Ancient Echoes Interpretive Centre's Summer Student Program

by Marie E. Powell

The Ancient Echoes Interpretive Centre at Herschel, some 155 km southwest of Saskatoon, provides a unique opportunity to experience aboriginal archeological sites, ancient marine fossils, and natural uncultivated prairie ecology.

In a two hour hike, visitors on guided tours will experience a birthing stone, vision quest site, turtle effigy, three ancient petroglyphs, and food-processing and tool-making areas. They hike through virgin prairie to view plesiosaur and mosasaurs fossils, then move inside the building for interpretive displays, aboriginal artifacts, and a permanent art collection on the plains bison.

Each summer, the Centre hires two post-secondary students under the Young Canada Works program, says David Neufeld, chairman of the board. He calls these students “a tremendous asset” in helping volunteers guide the tours, and helping the summer coordinator run the centre and develop displays and programming.

Students may have backgrounds in archeology, geology, aboriginal studies, and sociology. Once they've gone through training, many return for more than one summer, and return as volunteers, he adds.

“Here we have, in a controlled area, a tremendous experience of ancient history, aboriginal history, and ecological history,” says Neufeld. He's volunteered since the centre opened in 1994, when the former elementary school buildings were transferred to the town for \$1. “If you take a square meter of the earth you'll find at least 50 different types of plant life.”



For students, it's a fun and rewarding experience, says Mark Anderson, Western Development Museum conservator, who worked as a summer student about eight years ago. It also offers insight into museum career opportunities, he adds.

Anne Long, Master's student in Art History this spring, agrees she gained valuable career-related experience such as art gallery installation, workshop organizing, and hosting visiting artists.

She says the “give-and-take” of interacting with knowledgeable visitors and guests is a major perk. Students have exposure to experts who have experienced “ancient secret sites” around the world, Neufeld says.

“There's often an intensive dialogue,” Neufeld adds. “I've been doing this for many years now, and I'm still inspired by many tours because of the type of people that are coming and what they share, the exploring that they're doing in terms of their own spirituality within the context of those sites, and the experience or exposure they've had to other places.”



Susanne Abe,
Thomas Abe
and Executive
Director, John
Kindrachuk



Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve Welcomes The World

by Jeff Gaye

Susanne Abe came to Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve from her native Germany for a two-week visit in 2011. She and her husband Thomas have been there ever since.

Susanne is now Communications Coordinator for the Biosphere Reserve. Thomas is completing a Masters degree in Governance from a German distance-learning university, and volunteers considerable time working on the organization's website, doing some bookkeeping, and "generally supporting the staff where I can."

Located west of Saskatoon, Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve covers an area of over 112,000 hectares surrounding Redberry Lake. More than 5,000 people live there including over 500 in the town of Hafford. Farming is the main economic activity in the region, and the Biosphere Reserve aims to show that nature and agriculture can coexist to the benefit of both. This includes a strong emphasis on healthy human communities, locally and globally.

Conservation, sustainable development, and capacity-building form the Biosphere Reserve's bedrock. From Redberry Lake's designation as a Migratory Bird Sanctuary in 1915 to the entire watershed being declared a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 2000, local residents have viewed their surroundings as a key to their own sustainability.

Besides being part of a worldwide network of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, Susanne explains, the Redberry

Lake region has a formal agreement with similar sites in Georgian Bay, Ontario; Charlevoix, Quebec; and Rhoen, Germany. "We work together on best practices and exchange expertise," she says. The partnership produced a joint brochure that was launched in Saskatchewan last September.


Redberry Lake Biosphere Reserve also has a partnership with Université Pierre Mendes-France, based in Grenoble, that brings interns to Saskatchewan for up to four months at a time. Another partnership, with the School of Environment and Sustainability at University of Saskatchewan, regularly brings students for research and field trips.

Casual visitors are always welcome.

"Last year we had visitors from Japan and China," Susanne says, and she adds there is plenty of room for more.

"We appreciate every visitor. What do you want to do, where can we take you? We are always looking for people who want to do research, or who want to work on projects. We have no shortage of ideas."

And what about a couple of Europeans who visited two years ago?

"We're still here, still happy," she says. 

MUSEUMS

ASSOCIATION OF SASKATCHEWAN

About Us

Museums Association of Saskatchewan

The Museums Association of Saskatchewan is a non-profit member organization for Saskatchewan's public museums and museum professionals. Our purpose is to serve our members in Saskatchewan and work for their advancement.

Membership in MAS is open to everyone. MAS provides learning opportunities for museums, personnel and their governing bodies. MAS is responsible for establishing the first Standards for Museums that now guides museum development throughout Saskatchewan.

The Association raises public awareness of museums and fosters communication among members of the museum sector. MAS represents the interests and concerns of the museum sector to all levels of government and with other relevant agencies.

Heritage is our social and natural inheritance: the objects, ideas, places, and traditions of intrinsic value which have shaped our present and will guide our future.

We believe our collective inheritance is an asset that must be preserved, understood, and built upon by each generation.



MAS Staff: Dan Holbrow, Brittany Knudsen, May-Lin Polk, Ele Radbourne, Brenda Herman and Wendy Fitch

We believe that museums, in service to society, provide stewardship for the material evidence of our human and natural inheritance and contribute to the understanding of the world and our place in it - our past, our present, and our future.

Museums and Sustainability

The Museums and Sustainability Committee advises MAS about how best to promote and nurture environmental, social, economic and cultural sustainability in the Saskatchewan museums community, and provides sustainability-related leadership and expertise to MAS members and partners.

The committee is an advisory body, providing sustainability-related guidance, suggestions, and feedback to MAS in support of MAS's mission, "to serve its members in Saskatchewan and work for their advancement."

The committee is also charged with providing leadership and expertise on sustainability among Saskatchewan museums and their stakeholders. This includes, but need not be limited to, raising awareness of sustainability-related issues and activities that affect Saskatchewan's museums and the communities of which they form a part.

Committee members are individuals (MAS members or non-members) with expertise related to sustainability issues and an interest in building a culture of sustainability among Saskatchewan's museums. Members commit to attending and contributing to 3-4 meetings per year, and may be called upon to offer suggestions and feedback on MAS's sustainability initiatives, such as symposia, workshops, and publications. Members may volunteer to take on additional efforts in helping to plan, organize, and facilitate activities and partnerships related to the committee's mandate. 🌱



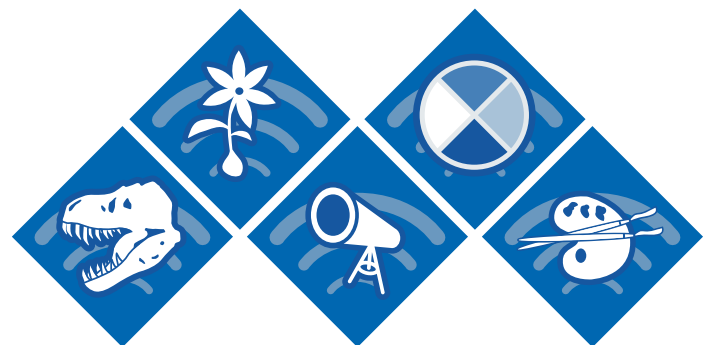
Museums and Sustainability Committee 2012/2013

Gailmarie Anderson,
Melfort & District Museum/
City of Melfort

Dan Holbrow,
Museums Association of Saskatchewan

Heather Englebert,
WDM Curatorial Centre, Saskatoon

Dr. Glenn Sutter,
Royal Saskatchewan Museum



Museums and Sustainability is an annual look at sustainability issues in and for Saskatchewan's museums.

Sustainable Economies, the third publication in the series, looks at what museums can do toward economic sustainability—not just paying their own bills, but also supporting sustainable economies in their communities.



Inside, you'll find thought-provoking essays and interviews, as well as stories and photos showcasing sustainability work in Saskatchewan museums.

The Sustainability Committee of the Museums Association of Saskatchewan produces this publication as part of its sustainability initiative. The Museums Association of Saskatchewan is a non-profit member group for Saskatchewan's museums and museum workers.



Published by the Museums Association of Saskatchewan
424 McDonald Street
Regina, Saskatchewan S4N 6E1
(306) 780-9279 or toll free in SK 1-866-568-7386
email: mas@saskmuseums.org
website: www.saskmuseums.org

Inside printed on 100% recycled paper.

MAS gratefully acknowledges the support of our funders:

