

2025

exploredryden.ca

Annual Report

Dryden & District Museum



Contributing to a vibrant community
by preserving, promoting, and sharing
history, arts, and culture.

Vision in focus, Community in action

Dear reader,

As we reflect on this past year, we are filled with gratitude and optimism. We have seen a steady and meaningful increase in attendance at our special programs and events. Families are once again gathering in our gallery spaces, children are engaging in hands-on learning, and community members are reconnecting with local history in meaningful ways. This renewed participation speaks to the importance of accessible cultural experiences and the value our community places on gathering, learning, and celebrating together.

In response, we have remained committed to expanding opportunities that invite engagement. Whether through new programs, refreshed exhibits, or collaborative initiatives, our focus has been on creating welcoming experiences that encourage repeat visits and foster a sense of belonging. It is especially heartening to see familiar local faces returning year after year, alongside tourists who stop in while visiting the area or passing through. Each visit strengthens the connection between our organization and the wider community we serve.

We are deeply grateful to our volunteers, both long-standing and new, whose dedication sustains and strengthens our

work. Over the past year, volunteers have played a vital role in advancing the standardization of our collections care practices, ensuring the responsible stewardship of the artifacts entrusted to us. They have readily pivoted roles when needed, embraced new challenges, and generously shared their time and skills. Their commitment reflects the collaborative spirit at the heart of our museum.

We also extend our appreciation to the City and members of City Council for their continued support and shared belief in the importance of preserving and promoting cultural heritage within our community.

To our volunteers, partners, donors, and families: thank you! Your continued support fuels our progress and inspires our future. Together, we are building a stronger foundation for the preservation and celebration of our community's heritage.



Michelle Walter
Museum & Heritage Coordinator

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2025 Overview

1769

total visitors

40

Special Events

29

researchers

1021

special event attendees

160+

volunteer sessions

500K+

virtual connections

Vision

The Dryden & District Museum will contribute to a vibrant community by preserving, promoting, and sharing history, arts, and culture.

Mission

The Dryden & District Museum will preserve our ongoing history and engage the community by sharing knowledge and experiences.

Staff

Director of Community Services
Jason Boyer

Museum & Heritage Coordinator
Michelle Walter

Cultural Heritage Intern (NOHFC)
Afreen Shabbir

Volunteers

The museum's work is made possible through the commitment of volunteers.

The Dryden & District Museum had eleven volunteers throughout 2025 who completed a total of 381.75 hours of service.

Volunteers played critical roles including aiding with exhibit set up, completing collections and archives management (record reconciliation, standardization, digitization), and program preparation.

Museum Advisory Board

The Museum Advisory Board is a Council-appointed body made up of Dryden and area residents, including one member of Council, and supported by the Director of Community Services.

Serving in an advisory capacity to Council through senior management, the Board reviews and provides recommendations on museum standards, policies, long-term planning, and future development, while daily operations remain the responsibility of the City's CAO, Senior Management, and museum staff.

Acting as an agent of The Corporation of The City of Dryden and operating within applicable legislation, the Board also supports the museum's Vision and Mission by offering strategic guidance, strengthening community connections, and encouraging advocacy and fundraising initiatives.

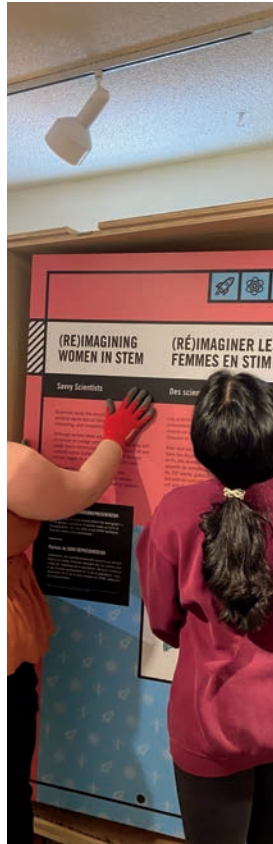
Museum Advisory Board Member

Pat Rigey, Chair
Bill Latham, Council Representative
Mandy Oberg
Oliver Atkins
Kiirstyn Wessel
William Tennyson
Will Vermeer

Sharing Stories, Inspiring discovery

Exhibitions

Exhibits are at the heart of the museum's role in the community. They provide meaningful opportunities for residents and visitors to connect with local stories, reflect on shared experiences, and explore new perspectives. Through thoughtfully researched and engaging displays, exhibits nurture learning across generations, strengthen community identity, and create spaces for dialogue and discovery. By presenting both permanent and changing content, the museum ensures that our history remains relevant, accessible, and responsive to the evolving interests of the community.



2025 Highlights

Jan 24 - June 9

Iron Willed: Women in STEM

Highlighting the achievements of women in science, technology, engineering. Travelling exhibit designed by Ingenium

June 26 - July 4

Treaty # 3 Halfbreed Adhesion

Recognizing the 150th anniversary of the Métis adhesion to Treaty #3. Developed by the Northwestern Ontario Métis Community

July 11 - Sept 12

Hearth to Heart: Exploring Métis Storytelling

Recognizing the 150th anniversary of the Métis adhesion to Treaty #3. Developed by the Northwestern Ontario Métis Community

Oct 1 - Nov 27

Century of Stories: 100 Years of the Dryden Public Library

Celebrating 100 years of the Dryden Public Library and those who made it possible

Dec 1 - Dec 12

Tiny Tidings

Holiday villages built over time by local residents on display to bring seasonal joy

A green-tinted photograph of a desk with architectural drawings, a ruler, and pens. The text "Learning together, Inspiring curiosity" is overlaid in white.

Learning together, Inspiring curiosity

Education & Interpretation

Education and interpretation are central to how we connect people with history. Through general programs, exhibit-specific activities, and interactive components embedded within our exhibits, we strive to make learning engaging, relevant, and accessible for all ages. These experiences encourage curiosity, invite participation, and help visitors build personal connections to the stories we share. By offering multiple ways to explore and understand our collections and exhibits, we support lifelong learning and ensure that history is not only preserved, but actively experienced within our community.

Programs Offered

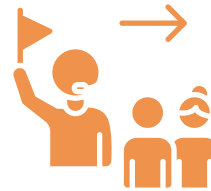
This year's programming included March Break STEM activities, exhibit-specific workshops connected to science and storytelling themes, and a range of creative hands-on sessions for children, youth, and adults.

Museum Month featured a community open house, a newly developed history-based Escape Room experience, and a digital collections webinar.

Cultural programming included a Métis storytelling series and artist-led workshops, while ongoing general programming offered historic downtown walking tours, art workshops, and craft-based sessions. Signature fall events, including the Spirit Walk, Ghost Tour, and Haunted House, continued to draw strong participation and community interest.



1769 total visitors



1021 of these visitors came for a workshop, program, or special event



40 programs, workshops and special events hosted

Impact and Outcomes

Attendance trends showed strong interest in immersive, group-based experiences. The newly introduced Escape Room successfully engaged audiences who may not typically visit the museum, presenting local history in an interactive format. Fall programming, particularly the Haunted House, remains the most well-attended and continues to grow each year. Overall, programs encouraged repeat visitation and reinforced the museum's role as an active and welcoming cultural space within the community.

Connecting communities, Creating belonging

Community Engagement

In 2025, the museum continued to strengthen its role as both a welcoming gathering space and an active community partner. By hosting external organizations, participating in local events, and collaborating on meaningful initiatives, the museum extended its impact beyond its walls. These partnerships reflect a shared commitment to cultural connection, learning, and community well-being.



Community Snapshot

- Hosted community events with Northwestern Health Unit (BBQ & Scavenger Hunt)
- Coordinated community meeting for Indigenous Veterans of Treaty #3 Exhibit on behalf of the Thunder Bay Museum
- Participated in Dryden Public Library Summer Reading BBQ
- Supported Truth & Reconciliation Day Pow Wow in partnership with the Dryden Native Friendship Centre & Grand Council Treaty #3
- Partnered with Dryden Fall Fest on fall programming



Protecting the past, Preserving for tomorrow

Collections & Stewardship

The museum made steady progress in strengthening collections care and documentation practices throughout 2025. Updates were made to accessioning process documentation to improve clarity and consistency, and work began on an Indigenous collection review, supported through an internship initiative. Record reconciliation and the standardization of digital records were also advanced, alongside the digitization of a collection of slides.

Support from the Museum Assistance Program (MAP) grant enabled important updates to collections management and digitization tools, as well as improvements to associated processing documentation. These enhancements strengthen both accountability and long-term preservation capacity.

Digital Databases

The Dryden & District Museum has two digital databases which can be accessed by the public. PastPerfect Online hosts the museum’s digitized photograph collection while VitaCollections hosts the shared museum/library collection of Dryden Observer newspapers.

Accessioning

70 items catalogued in 2025

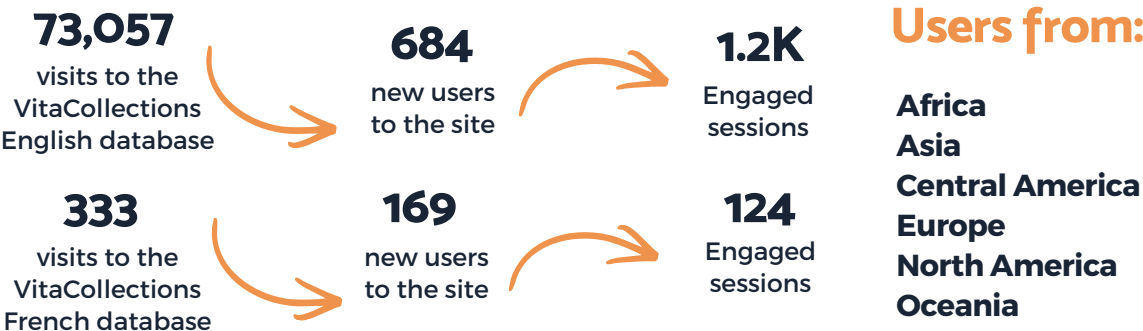
But what does this mean?

When we report that a certain number of items were catalogued this year, that number represents:

- Legal documentation
- Individual numbering
- Detailed research and description
- Standardized condition assessment
- Professional photography
- Archival labeling
- Organized storage
- Physical and digital filing

Accessioning is not simply “entering an item into a database.” It is the process by which a donation becomes a permanent, documented, preserved part of the Dryden & District Museum’s collection.

Every object number tells a story—not just about the artifact itself, but about the care taken to ensure it will remain accessible and protected for generations to come.



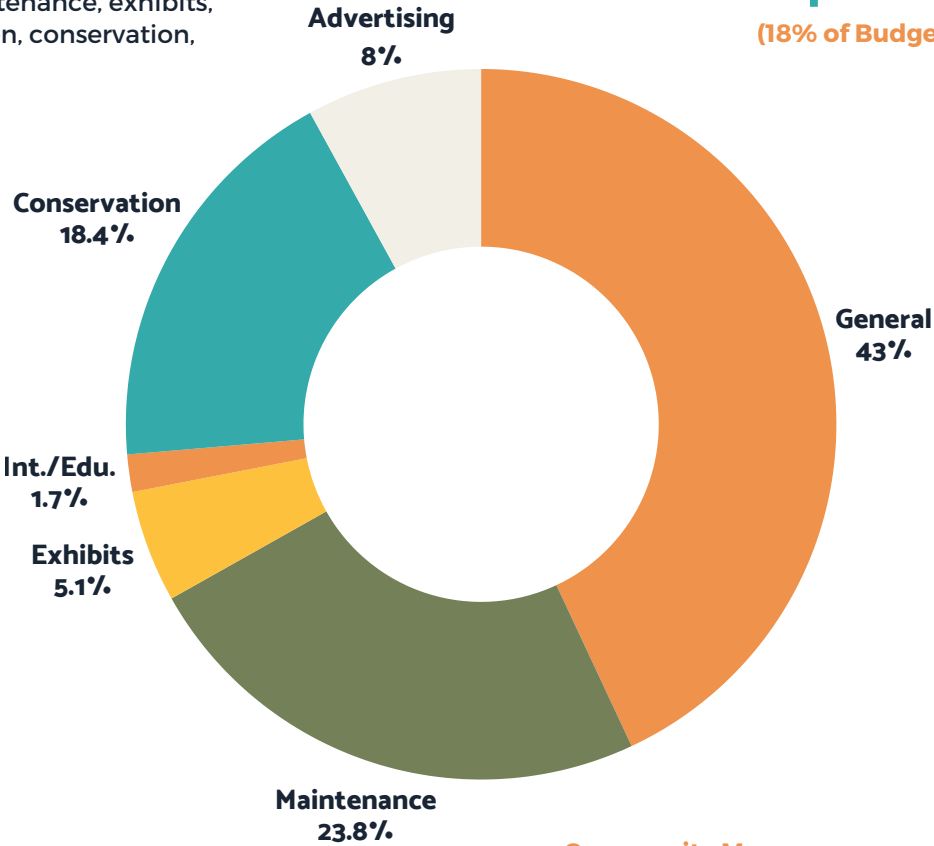
A group of people are seated in a museum gallery, viewed through a yellow-tinted overlay. The people are seen from the back and side, looking towards the front of the room. The room has a high ceiling with track lighting. The text "Managing responsibly, Planning with care" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Managing responsibly, Planning with care

Financial Overview

The museum's 2025 operating budget was \$100,704. 82% of the operating expenses accounted for operating staff. The remainder of the operating expenses included general, maintenance, exhibits, interpretation/education, conservation, and advertising.

Remainder of Operating Expenses (18% of Budget)



Grants

The Dryden & District Museum was the grateful recipient of three grants during the 2025 year, and completed the expenditure of the 2024 NOHFC People and Talent Program grant.

Community Museum Operating Grant

For general operations of the museum.

Museum Assistance Program: Collections

For updates to tools for collections management allowing standardization of documentation and digitization processes.

Moffat Family Fund

To provide accessible programming both general and exhibit-specific through the summer and fall.

NOHFC

2024 grant received to support the employment of a Cultural Heritage Intern.

Extending our reach, Growing our audience

Communications

Staying connected with our community requires both consistency and adaptability. In 2025, the museum shared updates, programs, and exhibit highlights through Facebook and ongoing website enhancements, ensuring information remained accessible and current for local residents and visitors alike. Continued use of two digital databases supported public access to collections and archival materials, expanding opportunities for research and exploration. Together, these communication tools strengthened awareness, accessibility, and engagement across our audiences.

Website Updates

In 2025, the City of Dryden transitioned to a new website. The Dryden & District Museum made this change as well with the pages officially going live in October. The museum pages had quite a large redesign leaning to a more simple and accessible look. The webpages still have updates to come including the addition of forms to allow for membership purchases online, a new education page and the future inclusion of virtual exhibits!

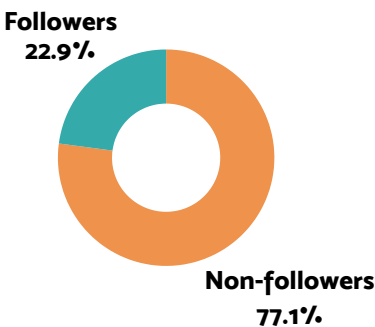


321 webpage views between October 1 2025, when the page launched, and December 31 2025.

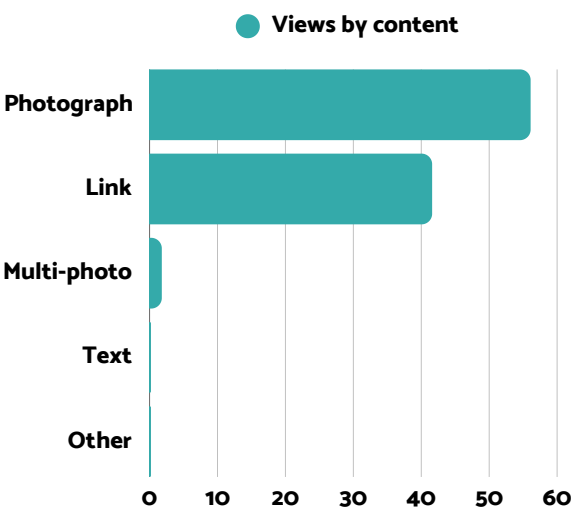
Facebook Stats

427,092 Facebook page views

Views by:



Views by content:





Looking at 2026

New exhibits

Website updates

New outreach events

Bringing back beloved experiences

Looking at the future of the facility