

Besser Museum for Northeast Michigan
Executive Director Report for Board of Trustees Meeting
January/February 2025

NEW HISTORY EXHIBIT:

1. Since opening to the public late January, we have had seen an increase in visitation on Saturdays. We have had several new memberships and renewals of past due memberships. 11 new memberships in January and 6 new memberships in February.

February Attendance Comparison on Saturdays 2024 - 2025						
	First Saturday		Second Saturday		Third Saturday	
	2025	2024	2025	2024	2025*	2024
Adult	112	28	67	12	22	30
Senior	27	11	6	2	0	13
Child	52	9	27	8	2	4

**This was the weekend of Ice Fest, and many people attended the free activities downtown.*

2. Omega is working on the donor wall. There are three vinyl panels that cover this wall attached to the block wall. There were some concerned voiced beforehand, and now a few comments afterwards, about how that would look on the block wall. Omega is looking into what substrate they could use to attach the mural too, so it looks more finished. Plus, because we had to have one of the panels reprinted there is a slight variation in the color that can be noticeable to those with keen eyes.
 - a. We have not received an estimate for this project.
3. We are currently working with Split Rock Studios to create the Alpena Flyer exhibit reader rails. We received an estimate of \$16,000, however, that is subject to change as we work out the features, we want on the reader rail. For instance, we asked for a flipbook that will have the pages from the original Alpena Flyer owner manual.
4. Allegra has been working on finding some alternative solutions for the artifact labels in the Paleo, Archaic and Woodland display cases. Unfortunately, the vinyl stickers we used when installing the artifacts is not sticking. Many of the labels are starting to roll up.
 - a. The drawers were all redone with a different material before the grand opening.
 - b. Allegra dropped off a sample of one of the options for replacement. The cost would be a little over \$5,000. However, the labels printed on this chrome-looking metallic background are hard to read. We need to keep looking at options.
5. Currently we have approximately \$164,301 in the DNEMH Fund:
 - a. \$53,695 at Nicolet savings account
 - b. \$66,459 at Old Mission in the investment account
 - c. \$44,147 at CFNEM exhibit fund account
 - i. \$12,947 available
 - ii. \$31,200 in outstanding pledges yet to be received.
6. Roger Cook confirmed in an email on October 25, 2024, that he will be contributing up to \$100,000 to the history exhibit(s) project in increment donations and as instructed in his will upon his death.

7. Mike Beaulac and I assisted Gary Goren in drafting a million-dollar grant proposal for the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity Community Museum Grant Program – 2025.
 - a. To meet the January 30th deadline, Gary did most of the work drafting the grant proposal into the digital application on the LEO website.
 - b. Mike helped review and edit the narrative.
 - c. I provided edits and additional information, the vision for reimagining this space supporting documents, and contractor quotes. Also included was Tim Kent's outline for the area he will be providing artifacts for.
 - d. We are not sure when these grants will be announced or awarded.

STAFF:

- A full-time Museum Assistant has been hired and will start on March 2nd. Isabel Rudy is a graduate from CMU with a Major in Anthropology and a Minor in Museum Studies. She interned at Castle Museum of Saginaw County History. Isabel will be cross-trained to work in every department, collections, front desk, education, and special events.
- Matt Wieschowski has been working part-time, mostly in the collections department since March of 2022. Matt has an associated degree from ACC. I am offering Matt a full-time museum assistant position. Matt will replace Nate (Matt's facility assistant) with 50% of his time and continue assisting Sarah in Collections with a portion of his time. Matt will also be trained to work the front desk. If Matt decides not to take this offer, he will continue working part-time and I will continue to seek someone to replace Nate.

GREAT LAKES FISHERIES HERITAGE EXHIBIT:

- **Chinook:**
 - Good Design Group is currently working on the schematic design for the new exhibit.
 - Jim Johnson is having people at the DNR vet his interpretative text for the new exhibit.
 - The Michigan Great Lakes Fisheries Heritage Consortium Conference will be held in South Haven this spring. May 21/22 are the tentative dates.

Planetarium:

- The planetarium is still operating with one projector. John Heath presents shows on Friday and Saturdays.
 - John has asked if we can look into adding some new videos to our library.
- **Planet/History Walk:**
 - We have approximately \$7,000 for this project from Giving Tuesday.
 - Gary Goren would like to apply for a Youth and Rec grant.
 - Gary has also been in contact with Fossil Inc. This company designs and fabricated durable outside signage for exhibit like this.

Misc.

- We have had many inquiries about purchasing prints of the Native American artwork on display. I have been working on getting permission to get prints made of the Native American artwork in our collection currently on display. One of the artists has already

agreed to work with us and gave me the phone numbers for the other two. I have yet to make contact.

- We need to see if this is a profitable venture.
- Besser Museum will need to get a price on what it would cost to have prints produced.
- Then draft a contact with the artists concerning commission. Besser Museum would need to be reimbursed for the original investment in having prints made, or we would need to find a company that could do quality printing on demand. Allegra might be able to offer this type of service.
- Friday, February 14th, we hosted approximately 100 people to a History Lovers presentation. Tim Kent was the guest speaker. We charged regular admission, museum members free.
 - I have been talking with other presenters who are willing to schedule a presentation at the museum in the near future.
- Janet Young has been working on her book Anishinaabe of Northeast Michigan. Janet is donating the copyright and all proceeds to the Besser Museum. As the book nears publication, funding the printing needs to be determined.
 - Besser Museum applied to the Great Michigan Stories grant opportunity through the Michigan Humanities in the spring of 2023. And although they loved the book, it was very competitive, and they had entries of similar genre written by tribal members who received grant funding.
 - The quote for printing in 2023 is as follows:

Quantity	1,000	1,500	2,000	2,500	3,000
Price	13,459.15	15,850.16	18,241.78	20,619.21	23,019.60

- Besser Museum could use funds held at CFNEM, or funds from the DNEMH fund, funds in our saving account at Old Mission (current balance \$166,627).
- Currently working on developing field trip experience in the new history gallery. I am developing either a scavenger hunt, or word find / fact find for this activity. Kids are going to want to explore and experience the entire exhibit. I did have one teacher who I invited to visit state that APS students scored low in vocabulary and focusing on vocabulary words would be good. She also suggested creating something the kids could take home to invite their parents to bring them back because there is so much to see and do in the new gallery. I have done something similar to that in the past with the Fishing Book and Avenue of Shops History book.
- Ashley Peterson has connected me with Shellie Gohl from AMA ESD. The teacher group will hold a planning meeting at the museum on March 7th at 8:30a.m. to tour the exhibit and brainstorm ideas.
- I have also contacted Leslie Symanski a “teacher-coach” at Besser Elementary who will also come over and see what lesson plans she would recommend.
- Besser Museum needs to reestablish an Education Committee with qualified members from the community. There are a lot of recently retired teachers that would be beneficial to our efforts.