

## **President's Report**

### **Arnprior & McNab/Braeside Archives – AGM May 27, 2021**

What a difference since our last AGM in February 2020. On that afternoon, Laurie Dougherty gave a presentation to an overflowing crowd. Her talk was about Braeside and the Gillies Mill in preparation for her upcoming, much anticipated, White Pine College exhibit. We were seated tightly together as we added more chairs and people were standing against the walls. No one wore masks. Afterwards, we mingled as refreshments were served, stories were shared, and guests went downstairs to view exhibits and roam the vault in our open house. It was a very pleasant afternoon.

Then came March. A pandemic was announced March 11 and Canada went into a lockdown Friday March 13. Emma, our archivist was in England for a visit, arriving home on Saturday March 14 to a 2 week quarantine. Luckily, we had just purchased a new server at the Archives, as the current one was reaching capacity. By coincidence, this new server was cloned the week of the lockdown but had not yet been switched with the old server. So rather than Emma at the Archives, we brought the Archives to Emma – leaving her PC and the new server at her door.

Emma worked from her home until May 1<sup>st</sup> when she was allowed to return to the Archives. Diane, our administrator, came back to work shortly thereafter. By mid August, others were allowed back in, with a maximum of 3 people, including volunteers and researchers. Since then, the Archives has been closed a few times more and is currently still closed to all volunteers and researchers.

Despite all of this, the Archives accomplished much in 2020 – most amazing I think. I will cover some of the highlights here.

For projects

1. Daniel McLachlin's Legacy Project – This was funded by Library and Archives Canada's Documentary Heritage Communities Program and launched March 31, 2020 – about 3 weeks after the pandemic started. This has allowed us to:
  - a. Digitize many records – letters, ledgers, maps, plans, images
  - b. Purchase a new scanner, camera, and other equipment to allow us to digitize items ourselves in the future.
  - c. Provide an updated website with new facilities, such as zooming in on maps to see detail, a blog, and maps showing places of interest.

2. Exhibit “White Pine College: Gillies Mill and Braeside” – Launched in June 2020, this was funded by the Community Stories Investment Program of the Virtual Museum of Canada. It contains stories through the decades, with images, documents, and oral interviews of Braeside community members. Thank you to Laurie Dougherty for returning to the Archives to create this exhibit.
3. Digitizing the early newspapers on microfilm – This was funded by the Ottawa Branch of the OGS. It allowed us to fill in the gaps of the missing newspapers on our website. Prior to that we had only the original newspapers.
4. St. Celeste Cemetery Index – This index lists those that were moved from the pioneer cemetery to Malloch Road cemetery in 1974 to make way for the head pond of the Madawaska River just outside of Arnprior. Doug Collins took the initiative to compile a list using the St. Celeste Parish Records found in the Drouin Collection on Ancestry. This list is now searchable on our website. Thanks Doug!
5. Graveside Stories Blog – This series started in October 2020 by Laurie Dougherty, as a volunteer. She would choose a gravestone from one of the many cemeteries within the Town and Township and started exploring the family history and community. 5 stories have been completed to date. Thanks Laurie!

We also accomplished lots on the Operational Side of things:

1. Expanded Storage to Offsite – Space was rented at the Kenwood Centre starting February 1<sup>st</sup> to give us more storage space. Setting it up has taken the full year due to the pandemic – because of lockdowns and keeping our distance from each other. At the moment, almost everything is finished, with the shelves up and just a few more things to do. Help for the layout and shelving was provided by the Men’s Shed and our thanks to them. Many thanks to Ian, Diane, Art, and Brian L. for all their efforts.
2. McNab/Braeside Records - We acquired the Township of McNab/Braeside records to the year 2000. Emma took many trips from the old Township office to the new storage site, lugging a few boxes at a time. There Ella, our student for the year, went through all the files, removing staples, culling some items, and creating an inventory. Ella was rehired in the fall under another student program and worked until the end of March. Due to the distancing restrictions Ella worked primarily in the storage area – isolated from everyone. The processing of the maps has been started by volunteer, Brian G. Our thanks to Emma, Ella, and Brian.

3. Research Requests – Emma dealt with most of the research requests, as well as requests for images, as she and Diane were the only ones within the archives for much of the year. When the Archives opened, volunteers did come in to help out, as well as attend to in-person researchers. Thank you for that.
4. Many other projects - Despite most volunteers not being allowed into the Archives during most of 2020 and some choosing to stay fully at home, many volunteers were still working on some projects. For example, Sheila is still capturing all the recent deaths in the newspaper and from the funeral homes. John F. researched some items for Facebook postings, and Rod worked on newspaper and other acquisitions. I'm sure there was other work done as well and I apologize for those I didn't mention. Thanks to each and every one of you.

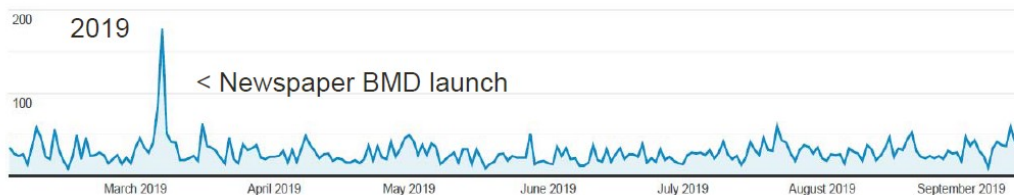
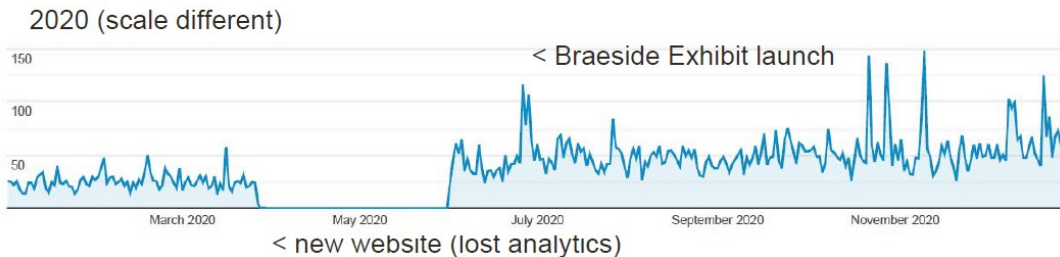
Some statistics for the year:

	2019	2020	Comments for 2020
Outreach Exhibits	11	1	Braeside Carnival
Volunteers - number	31	32	
- hours	2960	1973	1/3 reduction
- walk-in visitors	164	26	very few walk-ins
- by email, phone, letters	17	57	
Total Information Requests	181	83	

## Online Outreach - Website

Increase since summer

Mainly – Searches, Newspapers & BMD, White Pine College, Land Records



And where are we now?

1. AAO 2021 Institutional Award – As most of you are aware, our Archives received the Archives Association of Ontario’s 2021 Institutional Award a few weeks ago. We are very proud and honoured to have received this recognition.
2. Grants – We received funding from the New Horizons for Seniors program to digitize our newspapers further – from 1938 to the mid 1970s, hopefully. They are now at the digitizing company.
3. Open fully – Hopefully the lockdown will be over in the next month or so and volunteers can start returning to the Archives – and I hope we will be fully open to visitors before the end of the year.
4. Strategic Plan – Due to the pandemic we did not update the strategic plan last year. Hopefully it will be updated this year, as the current one ended in 2020 and we have achieved most of its goals.
5. Archivist – As you all know, Emma left us near the end of March this year to head to Nova Scotia. We were very sorry to see her go – she did an amazing job in the last three years and the Archives thanks her for her dedication. We are eager to welcome our new archivist, Kristen the week of June 7<sup>th</sup>. And, in between, we are thankful that Laurie stepped in as our interim archivist.
6. Archivist Time – Somehow funding needs to be found to increase our archivist time to 4 days/week; even 5, if possible. At 3 days/week, it is a struggle for the archivist to keep up with the day-to-day workload and there is now a backlog of processing incoming collections.

I am sure we will be able to face these challenges and those we do not yet know.

Volunteers: As we move forward, though, I do know our volunteer base is strong and they are our most valuable asset. More than just the backbone of this organization, they are the full body. We could not exist without them.

All are vital. Some of the roles include assisting people with research, sorting collections, data entry, working on special projects, scanning images, providing technical support, setting up displays at events, and attending board meetings.

To our Volunteers: Thank you. - I’m sorry we could not have our yearly volunteer dinner and get-together nor the scrumptious Christmas luncheon provided by Diane and Emma. But I do want to thank you for your dedication and hope you are able to return to the Archives sometime before the end of 2021.

I also want to thank the two municipalities, Arnprior and McNab/Braeside, as they continue to provide strong support. We could not survive without them.

As I step down as your President, I would like to thank everyone for their support over the last 4 or so years. It made my job much easier. Special thanks to Diane and Emma for their help, regardless of what I threw at them.

Thank you.

Irene Robillard  
President

May 27, 2021