



News & Musings



Canadian Museum Association Conference

Helmer and I really appreciated being able to attend the CMA Conference in St. John's, Newfoundland in May. As well as being a welcome break from our whirlwind weekly schedule, we gained knowledge of history at the beginning of European exploration and immigration.

Topics of lectures included intangible history, sustainability in an unstable economy, and various ways of reaching a community's ethnic mosaic.

The study tours of museums were unique as some had adjoining archaeological digs of the first European contact in 1600's.

We met a plethora of hard-working dedicated volunteers who were so impressed to welcome museum workers from across Canada. They were anxious to show us their innovative museums, gift shops and treat us to delicious fish meals. We found the people friendly with a more relaxed lifestyle than we are used to. It was not unusual to wait a long time for a restaurant meal to be served, though the banquets were excellent.

The information that was presented showed excellent tourism grants from their Provincial Government supporting the venues that had as many as 21,000 visitors a year.

The weather was as variable as it could possibly be: a warm sunny day, partial sun, rain, and a couple mini-hurricanes (my exaggeration!) However the welcome was very warm and helped supplement what the weather lacked.

Sylvia Larson



Helmer & Sylvia atop Signal Hill, blowing in the wind.

Growing Rural Tourism

The *Growing Rural Tourism Conference* was attended by Brianne Stone, Museum Administrator April 12-14th. Sponsored by Travel Alberta, it brought together groups looking at how they might bring new sources of revenue and employment to their communities. Rural tourism experts and participants shared successes, challenges and ideas for future growth.

Several renowned speakers presented key strategies for running the museum as a successful business. One important focal point is to sell the benefits of the museum experience not just the features of the museum. For example, a visit to the Children's legacy centre could be relaxing for the parents while providing a pioneer atmosphere for the children to play in.

Overall, Brianne found the conference was informative, emphasizing the need for on-going training of staff to keep up with today's innovations.

Volunteer Appreciation Week

National Volunteer Appreciation week took place April 18th to 24th. Volunteers from Wetaskiwin and surrounding area were recognized for the tremendous contribution they make to our community. Free coffee-break and supper tickets were distributed by district organizations prior to the Volunteer Appreciation supper which was held in the Millet Agri-Plex on Thursday April 22. Sylvia Larson is on the council that organizes and sets up the supper. Sharla Campbell of Family and Community Support Services presented a slide show of volunteer groups from each community.

The keynote speaker, Dan Ohler, shared dynamic strategies for creating positive results in all our relationships, including volunteer-work related.