

Good morning, members of Council.

My name is Emma and I'm here with Emily, and we are the summer staff at the Treasure Chest Museum. For July and August, we have opened the museum seven days a week, welcoming both locals and visitors to explore our collection and learn about the history of Arran-Elderslie. Our day-to-day responsibilities include giving tours to guests, helping with research requests in person and over email, and helping catalogue new donations to the museum. Emily has also been helping to label and catalog artifacts, ensuring items are properly documented and stored for future reference.

So far this summer, we've welcomed 272 visitors, an increase from 226 at this point last year, plus 40 attendees at special events, which included the 40th Anniversary celebration. We have been featured on Guess Where Trips, an independent company which offers pre-planned, surprise one-day road trips. It has had a positive impact on our foot traffic as the museum is featured as one of the destinations in their envelopes. Many participants have been stopping in at the museum and the Hose Tower, which has helped increase both our overall attendance and community awareness.

We have also started opening the Hose Tower every Friday from 4–6 p.m. to welcome people into the building, which has been a great way to engage with the community and increase local interest.

Our new kids' program has been a success as well. It runs every Wednesday from 1–3 p.m. for children ages 6–11. We've had 36 total sign-ups so far, and parents are still registering their children for upcoming weeks. Activities focus on hands-on history, including weaving, mini log cabin building, and barn plaque painting.

On the cataloguing side, Emily and I have been working to preserve the museum's collection records. We've been scanning the catalogue books to create a secure digital backup, and we're now almost halfway finished. We expect to complete this project by the end of the summer, ensuring our records are preserved in case of fire or other damage.

We've also been active in tourism promotion. Emily and I each wrote an article for the Paisley Advocate highlighting local hamlets, mine on Williscroft and hers on Dobbinton. Emily has also designed three new brochures for Chesley, Paisley, and Tara, to share more about our communities with visitors.

We also attended the Keady Market, which has been a great success for promoting the museum and Arran-Elderslie. Over the course of the market, we spoke with 330 people. We engaged visitors using a spinning wheel activity: they would spin the wheel, give us a number, and we'd ask them a question about Arran-Elderslie corresponding to that number. This fun interaction sparked conversations about the area, allowed us to share local history, and helped promote the museum and community.

Our social media presence also continues to grow:

- On Facebook, our reach has grown from 6,000 accounts at this point last year to 6,505 accounts since our first post on May 15th, an 8% increase, and we've gained 20 new followers, and have plans to drastically increase this by the end of the summer.

- On Instagram, we've reached 186 accounts, and our follower count has grown from 52 to 120, an increase of 131%.
- We've posted 25 times on Facebook and 22 times on Instagram, meeting our goal of 2–4 posts each week so far.

Financially, we've brought in \$779.75 through regular admissions, kids' program admission, and donations. This is an increase from \$615 at this point last year for admissions alone, which represents a 27% increase. Our 40th Celebration and Writers Group events raised \$89, and the gift shop has earned \$66.50.

Emily: One of my favourite parts of my summer at the museum was creating the Story Time Sunday posts. This project gave me the opportunity to explore and share lesser-known but fascinating stories from our community. I enjoyed the research process and discovering interesting details that aren't always part of the main narrative. It was rewarding to present this information in a way that was engaging and accessible to the public. Through this work, I was able to learn more about the community and our local history.

Emma: One thing I have really enjoyed this summer is hearing the stories from local people who come into the museum. Some have not been to Paisley in years and visit to revisit old memories. For example, one of our Facebook posts on the old creamery, now the grocery store in Paisley, gained a lot of traction, with many people sharing their memories of the creamery growing up. It was so interesting to read their stories and it's clear that visitors are enjoying their time at the museum and connecting with the exhibits.

Two memorable visitor comments include:

1. From our exit survey of what they enjoyed most: "The personal touch with well-informed staff. The hands-on approach and the interesting artifacts available for examining."
2. A 97-year-old man came into the museum and pointed out his father on the wall among the Paisley reeves. His father served in 1936–1937, and it was very special to hear his story.

Overall, it's been a busy and successful summer. We look forward to continuing to welcome guests, finishing the scanning of our catalogues, and keeping the museum active in the community while promoting Arran-Elderslie through tourism projects.