



ST. MARK'S COPTIC MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

FALL 2017
Vol 11 • No.3

MUSEUM LAUNCHES NEW CHAPTER IN ITS HISTORY

November 4, 2017 marked a new chapter in the Museum's history. A Board of Directors was elected by the Museum's membership at the Inaugural Annual General Meeting.

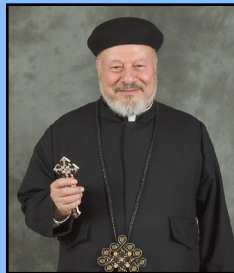
How did this come about when the Museum was managed by a board of directors since 2001?

In 2014, the sitting board of directors sought the advice of three separate consultants on options to raise funds for an independent building for the Museum on the Coptic Canadian Village Land. All came with the same general observation: before any fundraising strategy can be developed, the Museum's organizational structure & governance practices had to be reviewed to be recognized as a public institution.



Elected Board Members:

Mourad Messiha (Treasurer), Amanda Girgis (Director, Marketing, Volunteers, Members), Labib Moussa (Vice-President), Ihab Khalil (Vice President, Finance), Christine Bibby (Secretary), Helene Moussa (Volunteer Curator), Mona Bechai (Director, Governance), Heather Pigat (Director, Collections, Research & Exhibitions)



Fr. Marcos Marcos, (President)



Mrs Hanaa Mekhael (Member-at-large), Chair, Inaugural Annual General Meeting welcomes members

Review/Evaluation Process

The board hired one of the consultants who organized a very original and experiential review/evaluation process by having board members visit ten museums. The goal was to learn/understand what is required to build, maintain and govern a museum. Museums were small to medium sized and were selected because of the different ways they were governed. Significantly not all were in independent buildings. Rather than visit the exhibitions at these museums, board members set out with a series of questions to explore with staff and/or board members the challenges to operate a museum, such as the composition and functions of the board directors, staffing (paid & volunteer), display, conservation and storage spaces, financial, human and physical resources required. One sobering insight learned was that museums are second to hospitals in complexity and cost to build and manage. The evaluation process acquired the name "THINK MUSEUM" — it was an exercise of reality testing. All this information was pooled together to take the next step at a board retreat on September 19, 2015. With the guidance of the consultant a two year strategic plan was developed.

Priorities and Outcomes

Next the board worked on consolidation of ideas/recommendations and came up with to three priorities for the next two years:

1. Explore partnerships and alternate exhibition spaces (vs focus on a building)

The main thrust here was to make the Museum's collection accessible in different locations and to partner with culture institutions to reach a wide and diverse population.

Two examples of actions already taken in this direction are:

- a) The icon exhibition the month of October 2016: "Twentieth-Century Revival of Coptic Iconography" at St. Vladimir Institute in the University of Toronto area. (See Museum Newsletter Fall 2016 Vol. 1 No2 www.copticmuseum-canada.org). The number of visitors in one month in this prime University of Toronto location was higher than the total number of visitors in one year in our current location.
 - b) Participation in the Museum Toronto Intersections Festival (See Museum Newsletter Winter-Spring 2017 Vol 11, No1) offered multiple exposures to the wider Toronto public through social media, printed press, the Culture sector and more.
- One of the challenges ahead is to create a virtual access to the collection.

2. Recommend alternate revenue & income generation sources.

After studying several options, on January 23, 2017 the Museum's board of directors passed a motion to apply for membership in the Ontario Historical Society (OHS). By Act of Parliament, in 1889 the OHS was empowered incorporate not-for-profit historical (heritage) organizations for the public benefit. On February 28, 2017 the OHS Board of Directors unanimously voted to incorporate St. Mark's Coptic Museum as a not-for-profit heritage museum. Similar to municipal museum's relationship and their municipality, the membership with the OHS allows our museum to continue to be a part of St. Mark's Church.



Dr. Helene Moussa (Volunteer Curator) reporting on the evaluation process (2015-2017)

3. Governance: develop renewed board structure.

With the status of a public institution comes obligations:

- board members' experience should reflect their participation the wider Canadian society and meet requirements of a museum board.
- board members must be elected by the membership at an Annual General Meeting within one year of the incorporation date.



Ms. Iman Nashed (Secretary-Treasurer) Nominations Committee Report

Actions taken:

1. Board functions:

- The following board positions were deemed as functions that would best serve the Museum: President, Vice-President, Vice President Finance, Treasurer, Secretary, Directors: Governance, Collections Management, Research & Exhibitions, Education & Communication, Marketing, Membership & Volunteer Management, Fundraising, Grant Application & Sales, Director/Curator (ex officio).
- Job descriptions for each position and terms of reference for standing committees were drafted.
- A Nominations Committee was set up to search for candidates in various venues followed by a vetting process.
- Presentation of nominations slate and election at inaugural AGM.

2. Establish a membership program:

- A list of "friends" of the museum was drawn from its early history/ "founders", donors, the many friends who have promoted the museum, and individuals who have served and/or offered their knowledge, leadership and/or skills as scholars, museum professionals, and in various administrative and programme activities.
- Emails to "friends" of the Museum were sent inviting them to become "Individual" members and attend the Inaugural Annual General Meeting.
- 74 individuals in Canada, the USA and France and two organizations accepted the invitation.

Election and Celebration

After presentation of the nominations slate, each nominee introduced themselves and shared how they hoped to serve the museum. Members attending the AGM unanimously voted for the new board.