

Executive Director's Annual Report for the year 2022
Annual General Meeting, March 21, 2023

2022 was a year of rebuilding; core programs, special events, and the fundraising which makes it all happen. For the Cole Harbour Heritage Farm, rebuilding visitation numbers began with a return to a full operating season, from May 15 to October 15. All buildings and interior exhibit spaces were re-opened and the Rose and Kettle Tearoom re-opened for indoor dining, following two seasons of operating under a farmyard takeout model. Some adaptations have been retained, the most notable being a five day operating week. In 2022 (and going forward), the operating week was Wednesday through Sunday. This permits us to be open five consecutive days and includes the weekend, peak visitation days. Adjusted during the early phase of reopening in summer 2020, the five day week had proven to have many benefits, namely better management of any given week's demands. A five day week aided scheduling and increased the number of staff on duty during open days. A quiet Monday and Tuesday allows time to work behind the scenes, staying on top of restocking, cleaning, repairs, grounds work and special projects. A small staff complement remains on site seven days a week and the community may continue to enjoy the grounds and gardens, visit the animals at pasture, or make an appointment to visit the archives during this time. A five day week for the Tearoom relieved potential over time pressure and enabled the team of three to become a cohesive and consistent unit. A reduction in burn out was evident.

A more robust farm animal program returned with the borrowing of a ewe and lambs from the Zillig Farm. Along with matriarch ewes Miriam and Licorice this re-established a small flock for the season. Two Holstein/Angus calves were borrowed once again from Winding River Farm. We also added new ducklings, which came to us from a neighbouring school. Unfortunately we were not able to borrow piglets as this did not work out for our partner farm, Rocky Creek, but we hope this will be back on track for 2023. Two years of a somewhat reduced animal program really underscored how beloved this feature of the farm museum is, not just to draw visitors but to continue this incredibly rare (in an urban area) learning experience. A retiring museum colleague recently commended the Farm for its dedication to keeping the animal program going and as we move further away from a time when farm animals were still fairly common in the vicinity, we really must congratulate ourselves for this accomplishment. Of course this would not be possible without the trust and mentorship of our partner farms; Winding River of Stewiacke, the Zillig Farm of Scotch Village and Rocky Creek of New Ross.

Special events returned such as Fibre Frolic, Rhubarb Rhapsody, Movie Night in the Farmyard and our hugely popular Strawberry Social. Fibre Frolic continues to gain momentum as the fibre arts community grows and the Farm is a perfect host for such events in the urban centre. As a reminder, our Fibre Studio, on the upper floor of the Market Barn, opened quietly amidst the pandemic and remains a development opportunity for fibre enthusiasts in the community. In 2022 the studio hosted a few workshops and demonstrations but much more could be done with the space. New in fall of 2022, a series of workshops, organized by Sue Corser, got

underway in the tearoom, highlighting traditional skills and natural materials such as wool craft, floral design, and soap making. The year was rounded out by a new, gentle, end of season event celebrating the Winter Solstice.

Of special note, with regard to events, is the beginning of renewed activities with the Federation of Nova Scotia Agriculture who hosted a picnic in the farmyard in late June, supported and participated directly in Farm Camp, and held a staff retreat on site just after season end. The Federation now delivers agricultural awareness activities on behalf of the Department of Agriculture, following a restructuring which brought a close to our almost 10 year shared initiative, "Farmer for a Day". The Farm and Rose and Kettle Tearoom was also thrilled to host delegates of the Interpretation Canada National Conference in October. Full details of this exciting event are shared in the Environment and Programming Report.

Building conservation work was relatively minimal in 2022. Much work had been completed in 2020 and 2021 and so we took the opportunity for a bit of a pause to capital projects against revenue uncertainties and to focus on other areas. In January of 2022 we applied, based on our successful 2021 Museum Evaluation results, for museum accreditation through the Association of Nova Scotia Museums. "Accreditation is the public acknowledgement of excellence in our museums. It demonstrates a museum's commitment to public accountability and professional standards." This is a very meaningful accomplishment for the CHRHS, the Farm Museum and for the community. 2022 saw huge strides in collection management, in the form of artifact digitization and archival description. In-depth details of these projects are shared in the Collections Report. In late 2022 an Accessibility Audit of the site and operations was begun. This project was funded through an HRM Community Museum Project Grant and looks at all aspects of accessibility, interpretation and programming, as well as physical. The final report and recommendations were recently completed and will guide the organization in both the short and long term. A universal washroom and adaptations to parking and Harris House entry will be the first to be implemented in 2023/24. A series of promotional photographs and videos were developed for the Farm in the autumn by Adam Arkens Films and Rascal Media, in partnership with Tourism Nova Scotia. It is wonderful to have these professional marketing resources at our fingertips.

All of this work requires a robust fundraising foundation. Fundraising was, and is, of huge concern as we see the end of pandemic supports but without the return of essential revenue fundraising activities lost during the pandemic. The return of a full operating season was the opportunity to restore and rejuvenate a pillar of that fundraising; on-site revenues. At the heart of that rebuilding is the Rose and Kettle Tearoom and Giftshop and we saw a strong return in interest in these operations. The tearoom has retained a more simplified menu, but with a greater emphasis on local and raw ingredients, including the use of our own garden produce, and items made fresh each day. In season, you will now find most everything from the broth in your soups to the bread in your sandwich, made in-house. Desserts favour fresh fruit and berries, in seasonally inspired recipes. Even the jam for our popular English cream tea was

made from Nova Scotia berries all season long, thanks to a few visits to the U-pick. A simplified menu has meant the ability to keep up with both indoor and outdoor orders, for those who enjoyed the farmyard takeout model and desire to dine in the farmyard, and to offer higher quality coffee and tea, including espresso based beverages. If you are looking for a quality, locally roasted espresso beverage this summer, please consider the Rose and Kettle. Even our coffee flavourings are made in house. This work and quality, led by Foodservice Manager Paige Antonick, along with team members Magali Kirkbright and Autumn Hebb, has seen the tearoom and giftshop revenues rebound beyond pre-pandemic levels, even with the reduced week. The simplified model has also led to cost efficiencies with the Tearoom and Giftshop generating over \$25,000 to invest back into the operation all the while directly supporting programming and promoting the organization's food literacy and awareness goals.

A second major contributor to rebuilding on-site fundraising was the work of the Blacksmith Shop, through volunteer Kevin Thomas. Kevin's reputation with the Nova Scotia Film industry is now firmly established and in 2022, his custom work appeared in the movie "Washington Black" and year two of the series "From". In what began as a worrisome year financially this work provided a lifeline for the organization. We are incredibly grateful to Kevin for his willingness to always take on this work, sometimes with very tight timelines, and his dedication to the organization.

Farm Camp, our week-long day camp program for ages 6 to 10, expanded to a third week in 2022. This very popular summer camp has also become a major contributor to on-site revenues. The camps are spread throughout the summer, to coordinate with other Farm programs, and have gone a long way to making strong connections with families in the community. Farm Camp continues under the exceptional leadership of Collections Manager Heather Adams and is an incredible opportunity for children to get outdoors, meet the farm animals, explore the natural world, and hopefully set course for a lifetime of farming and gardening.

Further activities which helped us to rebuild included a third online 50/50, a garden sculpture raffle (featuring a one-of-a-kind creation by Kevin Thomas), and the Feed the Farm Concert, an entirely community-driven initiative led by community member and Farm friend, Colin MacEachern.

With the incredible contributions of the tearoom, the Blacksmith Shop, Farm Camp and others, 2022 was a successful financial year for the CHRHS and the organization was even able to add a small amount (\$5000) to our Capital Conservation Fund, a fund begun in 2020 to help us to meet building conservation goals and provide contributions/matching amounts in the future.

As 2022 wound down, we welcomed back Environment and Programs Manager Emma Agombar from leave. We were delighted to have Emma return and are already seeing wonderful developments for programming in 2023. In Emma's absence, Makayla Cole, former summer

student turned intern, led the organization's outdoor activities, keeping these programs growing and thriving as well as evolving our marketing and social media presence.

The site continues to thrive and inspire in so many ways and I feel very fortunate to be a part of its continued conservation and future. New ideas are never in short supply, rather the challenge remains focussing on just a few, and we are constantly growing. This only happens with the support of a dedicated team of staff and volunteers and 2022 was no exception to our recent years of incredible progress.

The CHRHS celebrates 50 years in 2023 and we are ready for a busy and exciting year! You may already be enjoying "Fifty Friday Finds", a series of social media posts sharing memories, photographs, audio clips and documents from the Society's past. In early May we will be launching a spring campaign, seeking to build awareness, membership, and community support, in partnership with Sargasso Philanthropic CIC. Our 50th anniversary built heritage conservation plan will reinvest in the Society's first heritage property, the Cole Harbour Meeting House, and finally, an exciting anniversary celebration event, in partnership with the Dartmouth Heritage Museum, is in development for the fall.

In closing, I wish to thank the numerous individuals and organizations who have supported and continue to support our works, in a multitude of ways. I would like to thank the Board of Directors, for their guidance, dedication, and determination against the challenges of recent years. And finally, a huge thank you to my team; Heather, Emma, Makayla, Paige, and Magali who make my work, and this wonderful place, such a joy to go to each day.

Respectfully submitted,
Janice Kirkbright