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Photo panels latest progress in Osoyoos Museum project

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The three large photo panels were chosen taking into account both the three themes of the museum - land, people and industry - as well as the existing panels on the side of the Home Hardware building. Don Urquhart photo

By Don Urquhart, Times Chronicle

The Osoyoos Museum adds another chapter to its incremental completion story with the installation of three large photo panels on the eastern side of the building.

The panels went up in early October and will soon be framed out with information signage being added “probably not until the spring” says Kara Burton, executive director of the Osoyoos Museum and Archives.

Burton is understandably coy when it comes to providing estimates of completion dates. “We’ve set dates and we’ve been hit with so many different delays from COVID and now supply chain issues, so next summer is sort of our best-guess because we don’t know what might come up this winter – I’m hesitant to put out any sort of dates,” she says when asked when the museum project might be finished.

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With thousands of photos to choose from Burton laughs that everyone had their favourites but in the end it was three key themes of land, people and industry.

The first, closest to Main St. features a wooden irrigation flume at the north end of the lake circa 1940. The middle photo panel features workers in 1934 from the Osoyoos Co-op Packing House where the Watermark Beach Resort now sits. The third panel features a view of Osoyoos from the lower slope of Anarchist Mountain looking west.

Burton highlights that care was taken to avoid thematically overlap with the panels that the Museum worked with Home Hardware to put up on the side of their building.

“We wanted to tie in with that so when you’re coming up Main St. you have the ones on the side of Home Hardware and then as you come further up the street you would be able to see the ones on the side of our building.”

One more panel is currently in production, this one destined for the western side of the Museum overlooking the Urban Heritage Park that will be largely used for outdoor exhibits like agriculture exhibits for instance.

“We are hoping to have that finished by next summer, but it’s all funding dependent,” she adds. “We are ever-hopeful, we do what we can as funds come in, a little bit more and a little bit more,” she chuckles, adding that as funds become available “we put in the next layer”.

Indeed this will surely be an ever-lasting legacy of this ongoing museum project that began prior to the pandemic and even under normal circumstances would have been a gradual process dependent on donations and funding, never mind during a pandemic and its ongoing aftermath.

Currently in progress is some electrical work for the general storage room in the lower level, which will be followed by the completion of ductwork relating to the museum’s HVAC system for the climate control which is crucial for the archive room.

Lower level is supposed to be done we’re just waiting for the finishing ductwork to be put in because that’s our dedicated HVAC system for the climate control for the archive and storage room right now what we’re completing in the lower level is just general storage not archive but tables and chairs and boxes.

Work is also ongoing for the work and multipurpose rooms and washrooms all in the lower level. “We’re getting the electrical done over the next week and then there’ll be more plumbing work and when that is done there will be more drywall work, and then...”, she pauses midstream to laugh.

As Burton highlights the museum project has been blessed by a contingent of capable volunteers.

And despite the notorious issue of seemingly never being able to get trades people for home building work, Burton says they haven’t had any issue around lack of manpower.

“A lot of the work here has been done by volunteers. We’ve got an excellent, very competent crew of volunteers that have done a lot of the work here.” And she hastens to add that the museum has been able to work very well with local contractors and subcontractors.

“It’s really served well and we’ve got a really good relationship with them and they know what our schedule is to get stuff done and they’ve been really good with us as far as waiting for funding to come in and sort of fitting us in as fill-in work between their other jobs.

“It’s worked out really well and we haven’t had an issue with getting people here to do the work it’s just a lot of the grants and things that have been pulled because everything was going to healthcare for so long but all those grants are coming back so now we just have to wait for that to catch up.”

Supply chain issues on the other hand are a reality. “It took a lot of weeks just to get doors and things like that, so now we know there is quite a delay to get things,” she says pointing to an

“We’ve already put the order in but we don’t expect it to be here for a couple of months. So there’s things like that that are definitely a lot slower than they were before Covid but you know we just roll with it. It’s a learning curve.”

As for the upstairs, that space has been completed since the beginning of the year with a new exhibit opened just this week to coincide with the Osoyoos Lake Water Science Forum (OLWSF) being held in Osoyoos this week. “Waterways”, on loan from the Kelowna Museum, will be running through the winter and will be a highlight of the OLWSF reception this week.

And coming up next month the museum is holding a fundraising event in which donated, previously-loved artwork will be auctioned off. Wine by Moon Curser and nibbles by Sugar Quail Bakery will round out the evening. The event will be held at the museum on Nov. 18 at 7 p.m. with tickets at \$25 for museum society members and \$35 for non-members.

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