

Passing the Torch with a Digital Recorder:

VALUES-BASED SUCCESSION PLANNING AT THE MILLET AND DISTRICT MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES

ABSTRACT

The Millet and District Historical Society, which sponsors the local Museum, Archives and Tourism Information Centre, wanted to write its history to celebrate the 30th anniversary of its formation. The historical review was spurred on by the understanding that many of the people who are central to its formation, growth and success are aging and beginning to pull back from their involvement. Along with the loss of their volunteer time and skills, the Society is also aware that it is beginning to lose its corporate memory and operational experience. Using the excellent memory of one charter member, Jean Scott, backed up with other community and society members' recollections, the Society sought to identify both those qualities that make a great volunteer, and the way in which they can be recruited, trained and maintained, in order to provide information to help the society plan for continuity and successors. This paper describes the process for undertaking the evaluation, and the learning outcomes discovered. It is hoped that the publication of the Millet and District Historical Society's history will encourage similar rural museums to recognize and value the accumulated experience and skills of their staff and volunteers and provide them with a template for undertaking their own "knowledge capture" exercises.

By Kathryn A. Ivany

Thirty years ago a group of senior citizens from in and around Millet, Alberta, decided it would be a good idea to collect and publish the stories of their community. They set themselves a goal, committed a reasonable amount of time to it (they were busy people after all) and set off. They organized themselves into the Millet and District Historical Society, delegated tasks to over twenty individuals, and within two years produced *The Tales and Trails of Millet*, which eventually paid for itself and then turned a profit. They might have dissolved their organization at that point and returned to their regular lives. Instead, the Millet and District Historical Society looked at the needs within their community, found another project, reshaped their objects, and started on a new path that would make the Society arguably the most dynamic and central volunteer organization in their town.