

VERNON MUSEUM FIELD SCHOOL

Enhancing Knowledge through Intangible Heritage

The **Vernon Museum Field School** is an education driven project that is designed to celebrate the rich tangible and intangible cultural knowledge that exists in the North Okanagan. Field School does this by offering a series of workshops that partners with businesses or individuals that practice skills, or have knowledge of traditional skills, that are rarely used.

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The goal of Field School is to highlight the importance of our collective heritage and acknowledge that it exists everywhere in our region, be it in a business, on a farm, in workshops, or on beaches. Heritage is all around us, not just in designated historic sites or museums.

Field School is organized by Gabriel Newman, the Educator at the Greater Vernon Museum, but the workshops are led by members of local businesses, farms, individuals and organizations. By doing this, the project has positioned the Vernon Museum, not as knowledge holder, but as knowledge facilitator. Their intention, beyond hosting the work-

shops, is to begin the conversation about the region's historic places and knowledge and to let others continue it.

Field School has partnered with the Okanagan Indian Band, hosting a workshop at a traditional Syilx fishing camp. Another Field School took place in the midst of a grain field owned and operated by Fieldstone Granary in Armstrong. Other workshops included a straight shave demonstration at the Gentleman's Barber Shop in downtown Vernon and retiree and inventor Garry Garbutt, hosted individuals at his scientific workshop on the outskirts of town. All of these workshops worked to highlight that place-based historical knowledge and thinking is all around us.

Field School takes an innovative, holistic approach to community and community connections. It does not focus on single units of built heritage, but rather looks at the entire community as a place filled with both built and living heritage. By celebrating the entire greater community as a place of stories and knowledge, it creates a much stronger foundation of awareness, respect and reverence for what we have as community members and for where we live.

Field School is also a multigenerational community tool, as it focuses on topics of individual interest rather than being age specific. This engaged a much wider demographic audience than other typical museum projects. Seventy three people have participated in these workshops so far and their ages rang from children to seniors.

Field School has generated a lot of publicity and interest in the collective community. It has shown participants the value and variety of our cultural knowledge and has sparked a number of critical conversations that center not only on the history of the community but also on tangible and intangible heritage conservation.

Field School aims to engage citizens in the value of local knowledge as heritage. It has succeeded in that and has created interest from participants of all ages. By engaging and informing citizens, Field School has incubated sustainability which, we hope, will aid in meeting social and environmental goals.



Project Organizer:

Gabriel Newman is an actor, storyteller, writer and educator. He has an MFA in Interdisciplinary Performance from UBCO which has helped him bring his performance skills, love of stories and his interest in community to his work as the Education Coordinator at the Greater Vernon Museum and Archives.

Photo: Participants practicing their scythe skills at Fieldstone Grainery for the Scythe Demonstration at Field School. Photo credit: Gabriel Newman