



Quarterly Newsletter

December 2020

Acclaimed Hamilton Production Celebrates Nevis' Native Son



On 29 October the US Embassy Bridgetown (Barbados) hosted an exclusive screening of the film *Hamilton* inside Hamilton House Museum. Streamed by Disney, the stunning film of a live performance of Lin Manuel Miranda's hit Broadway musical tells the life story of Nevis-born Alexander Hamilton – the first Secretary of the Treasury and the architect of the American banking system – through hip hop, show tunes, pop, and even a nod to reggae.

A generous grant from the Embassy made it possible for the Society to welcome 30 friends of the Society to experience what critics have deemed "a supreme artistic expression of an.. ideal of progressive, multicultural patriotism". For many attendees who have not had the opportunity to attend the live theatre version, the film brought to life the story of Hamilton, who has attracted thousands of visitors to this island, keen to get an up close and personal look at where he was born and grew up as a small child.

While the musical *Hamilton* played to sold out audiences on Broadway and in theatres in many major cities around the world for years, none of those venues could claim the authenticity of Hamilton House for a production, live or otherwise.

Framed prints recently donated by the Alexander Hamilton Awareness (AHA) Society added a new element of interest to the existing Hamilton House exhibition. On your next visit to the Museum Gift Shop, you can buy a copy of *Alexander Hamilton* by Ron Chernow, the book that inspired the musical!

RECLAIMING NELSON'S SPRING

Society takes the lead in replanting native species in the wetland where Admiral Horatio Nelson once brought his ships for fresh water

There can be no better example of the Nevis Historical & Conservation Society's reaffirmation of its mission to **protect the environmental resources of Nevis** than the Nelson's Spring Wetlands reclamation initiative, currently ongoing.



The Integrating Water, Land and Ecosystems Management in Caribbean Small Island Developing States ([IWEco](#)) Project is a 5-year, regional project that builds upon the work of previous initiatives, to address water, land and biodiversity resource management as well as climate change.

Reforestation and rehabilitation efforts at Nelson Spring Wetland in Nevis began in May 2020 and the effort has garnered widespread enthusiasm from many quarters and has evolved rapidly into a broad community-based cooperative effort. Thanks to the Ministry of Social Development, in particular Janet Meloney, our IWEco



Project is now cooperating with the newly formed St. Thomas Improvement Group – evidence of the strong environmental protection sentiments across the island.

Nelson's Spring, cont'd...

Our current project will serve as a pilot project to feed in data on costs and methods of control of the invasive 'cattail' reed, and replanting of native species. We continue to be very grateful to Jenny Lowery and Keithly Amory, long-time environmental advocates, for their tireless work on this project.

We invite you to learn more about our environmental and ecological work: email us at info@nevisheritage.org and we'll put you in touch with our Biodiversity Committee for more info about how you can get involved.

OUR 40-YEAR MISSION STATEMENT STANDS THE TEST OF TIME

Founded in 1982 by a concerned group of local citizens and homeowners, the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society was conceived and later incorporated around an overarching mission with a trio of cornerstone operating objectives.

As the Society's Board revisited the founding documents and records of the organisation, it became abundantly clear that the focus going forward should stay true to the important purposes for which it was founded. The Board, while adopting a new contemporary identity for the society, unanimously reaffirmed the time-tested purposes that have guided the Society for over four decades.

MISSION
PROTECT AND PROMOTE THE HISTORICAL,
CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES OF NEVIS

CULTURAL HERITAGE (MUSEUMS, COLLECTIONS & ARCHIVES)

THE COLLECTION AND PRESERVATION OF BOOKS, MANUSCRIPTS, RECORDS, ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBJECTS AND WORKS OF ART, INCLUDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MUSEUM IN NEVIS DESIGNED TO PORTRAY AND/OR EXHIBIT THE TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE CULTURE OF NEVIS

NATURAL HERITAGE (NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, ECOLOGY & THE ENVIRONMENT)

THE PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF THE ECOLOGY AND OF ALL NATURAL LIFE FORMS IN AND SURROUNDING THE ISLAND OF NEVIS

HISTORICAL SITES & STRUCTURES

THE PROTECTION, PRESERVATION, CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES, BUILDINGS AND MONUMENTS ON THE ISLAND OF NEVIS

Local Tech Pro Donates Time & Expertise



Quito Archibald made a significant and much-needed contribution to shoring up the Society's infrastructure during October and November. Responding to the critical technology-specific initiative identified in the Board's 2020 strategic planning process, Quito – assisted by staff members Ella and Jonathan – completed an inventory of the existing technology capabilities at the Society, encompassing equipment, software, and networking platforms. Quito quickly identified several shortcomings that were hampering staff's ability to be both effective & efficient:

- *Out of date software, with limited features that impacted efficiency and file sharing;*
- *Obsolete, unserviceable and redundant equipment;*
- *Lack of networking, which prevents group work and file sharing.*

During Quito's assessment and inventory, it became clear that the Society had been limping along technologically, impairing its ability to communicate effectively with members, volunteers and other stakeholders.

Operating with an extremely tight 2020 budget, the Board determined that a few critical technology upgrades were vital to moving the Society forward. Quito is an Assistant IT Manager at Four Seasons – kudos and appreciation to him for his important contribution to the Society!

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Despite a year of challenges amid a global pandemic, the Nevis Historical & Conservation Society has new energy and momentum as we head into 2021. As our organisation embraces a new decade of high impact, our staff is newly energised, our planned programming and projects have taken on new vitality, and our work to preserve the historical, cultural and natural resources of Nevis has never been more exciting... or more important. I hope you feel our excitement and are eager to get involved in one of our major project activities in the coming year:

IN PROGRESS

- Recording of submerged cannons and artefacts at Fort Charles
- Nelson's Spring restoration/reclamation
- New River and Hicks Quarry reforestation
- Construction of a Nevis Archaeology Research Centre at Bellevue
- New signage and maintenance of Cottle Church and Jewish Cemetery
- Continued digitisation of archival material
- Website update and improved social media presence
- Alexander Hamilton Scholarship Fund for 2021 and Hamilton statue inauguration (2022)
- Liaison with government for improved protection of historical sites and structures
- Museum Collections Project (read more about this on page 9!)

PLANNED

- Restoration of Fort Ashby wetland
- New signage for the Heritage Trail
- Architectural preservation/restoration of vernacular buildings
- Enhanced visitor experience and educational programming at Hamilton House
- Beekeeping project in honour of the late Quentin "Beeman" Henderson
- Expansion of the current Nelson Museum into a Nevis Maritime Museum & Nelson Collection
- Increased lobbying for the ban on single-use plastic
- Implementation of a Museum Object Collection Policy with assistance from visiting curators and members, Tina Bates and Phil Dunning

We know that many of you value the social component of your membership, and we will continue to host an array of events in 2021, all compliant with current Covid-19 protocols.

Despite limited financial and human resources, we continue to strengthen our administrative operations by holding weekly staff meetings and monthly Board meetings; upgrading our IT assets; reviewing our human resource and other policies; and improving our membership and communications services.

Whether our environmental efforts stir you, or our historical preservation work with our museums and historical sites and structures intrigues you, or whether you are compelled by celebrating the unique cultural practices of our local communities, we invite you to GET INVOLVED. As a member. As a volunteer. As a donor.

I believe that the future holds great things for the Nevis Historical & Conservation Society.

Richard S. Lupinacci
President

REMEMBERING THE MV CHRISTENA

2020 marked the 50th Anniversary of an event that defined our Federation

On 1 August 1970, the MV Christena – a government-operated passenger ferry – sank while making the journey from St Kitts to Nevis. The Christena had a maximum capacity of 180 but was carrying 321 passengers at the time of the tragic incident. Only 91 persons survived. As a small and tight-knit island community, virtually every Nevisian family was struck in some profound way by the tragedy. Fifty years later, on 1 Aug 2020, family members, survivors and dignitaries gathered on the waterfront at the Christina Memorial, adjacent to the Museum of Nevis History and Hamilton House Museum, to remember and



reflect on that horrific event which claimed so many lives. It was preceded by a special sitting of the Nevis Island Assembly on 31 July 2020, at which Premier Hon. Mark announced three new initiatives from the Nevis Island Administration in memory of the lives lost on that fateful day: the MV Christena Memorial Scholarship; the MV Christena Memorial Fund; and the MV Christena Memorial Foundation. “A disaster such as this often forces us to do some introspection and reflection on the manner in which we live our lives and on our relationship with others,” said Brantley.

Mr. Stevenson Manners, who has been doing an investigative study on the MV Christena Disaster, was a guest on online show *Real Talk Corner* on 5 August for a reflection on the event. He noted that the tragedy had impacted every facet of Nevisian life as persons critical to the various sectors of the economy perished on the journey.

Prime Minister Dr Timothy Harris observed that “We are here 50 years later to recall this tragedy, and to remember the 200-plus souls that perished when Christena slipped below the waves. We come, too, to celebrate the strength and resilience of the 91 survivors. It is a testament to the transformative nature of the event on the Nation: on the people of Nevis and the people of St. Kitts.”

Society Unveils Compelling New Identity: Reaffirms an Enduring Mission Statement

On 14 December, the Society proudly unveiled its new logo: a key component of a top-to-bottom overhaul of the organisation’s identity. The new logo incorporates representations of our unique traditional architecture (Hamilton House Museum), historic sites (a hillside sugar mill ruin), resplendent nature (Mount Nevis) and maritime traditions (Nevis Lighter). While new and symbolic, the logo reaffirms the Society’s original mission, first articulated by the Society founders to **Protect & Promote the Historical, Cultural and Natural Resources of Nevis**. An identity overhaul, extending to consistent applications of a common, compelling “look & feel” for the Society’s signage, materials, websites and other messaging tools, emerged very early on as a priority initiative during the Board’s nine-month strategic planning process. Two volunteers, each with extensive professional communications and brand identity backgrounds, Stacey Tyrell and Rochelle Lamm, worked *pro bono* with the Board to develop the new identity and logo with the designer, and shepherd it from conception through approval. Overall, response from our Membership has been encouraging:

“ **THE NEW LOGO..** Combines those features of Nevis that, to residents and citizens, characterise our specific island. They are also features that would intrigue and attract visitors to our shores.”



The Society’s new identity will – limited budget permitting – be rolled out over the course of 2021 in signage, new website, posters, flyers and other communications materials. Look for it – it means your Society is at work!

COMMUNITY OUTREACH SURVEY RANKS AS PRIORITY

Feedback, it has been said, is the “breakfast of champions”

Top performing non-profit organisations seek feedback to learn from the opinions of their members, their volunteers and the communities they serve.

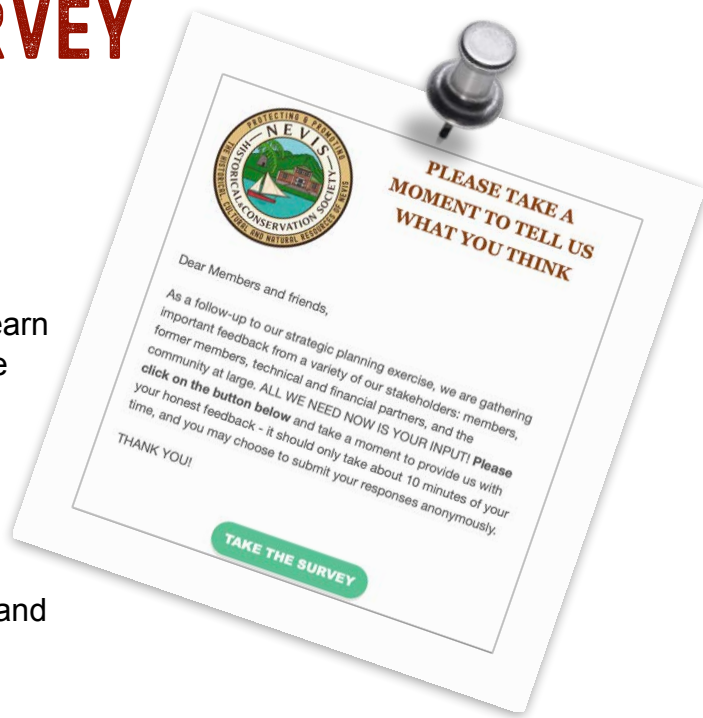
It was with this spirit of gaining insights and learning how the Society might better serve its varied stakeholders, that the Board – as part of its 2020 strategic planning process – commissioned the development of its first-ever awareness and opinion survey.

The survey was distributed electronically to approximately 445 potential respondents on 17 December and will also be circulated by hand in Charlestown and in each of Nevis’ parishes.

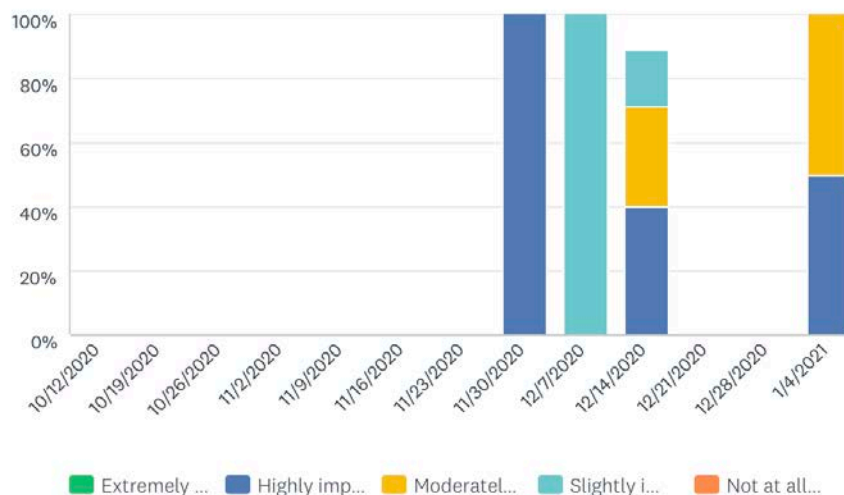
Initial survey results suggest that while the majority of respondents are impressed by our work, there is still room for improvement. The Board of Directors will be thoughtfully considering the valuable feedback that we received through our survey tool and will consider how to build upon our strengths and address our shortcomings.

In light of the pandemic, with our borders closed, Nevis’ heavy reliance on tourism was underscored. For our part, we have seen that we must aim to make our museums more relevant to our communities, and work harder to engage Nevisians, especially the youth, in exciting and relevant exhibitions and programming.

If you were somehow overlooked in our survey distribution, or have not yet responded to the survey, we encourage you to access the survey [here](#). Less than 10 minutes of your time can help us fulfil our mission to **Protect & Promote the Historical, Natural and Cultural Resources of Nevis**.



Overall, how impressed are you by the work of the Society?



ACTIVITIES & EVENTS



Welcoming St. Kitts Ministry of Tourism staff

In November we welcomed a delegation from the Ministry of Tourism St. Kitts, which was hosted by the Ministry of Tourism Nevis and the Nevis Cultural Development Foundation. A visit to the new exhibition at the Museum of Nevis History and the Hamilton House Museum was only part of the wider familiarisation tour that also took them

to the Bath Hotel and Stream, Cottle Church, New River, The Hermitage, and the Heritage Village.

First Ever Holiday Fair

The versatility of the Society's waterfront complex was underscored on December 15th when members and friends gathered for an afternoon of holiday shopping, music and food. Spearheaded by Society staff Elmon Coram and long-time member and volunteer, Miriam Knorr, the outdoor fair featured beautiful locally made items and crafts, baked goods and plants for sale, and fun activities for all ages. The newly painted Café des Arts was also bustling.



Below: Deborah Tyrell, Director of The Charlestown Gallery, never fails to disappoint with her exciting array of fabric art and clothing



Above: Denys Douglas Hoyt and her daughter Nicole Rogers had a stunning display of waterpainting craft and delectable holiday baked treats

Thanks to everyone who participated, we earned a total of EC\$ 1,445 that will go towards our programme activities. The fair generated so much enthusiasm that we decided to add it to the Society's roster of regular events – to be held biannually at the end of June and mid-December. **The Museum Gift Shop remains open throughout the year, and "Meet the Artist" cocktails have resumed every last Tuesday of each month – don't miss them!**

CONSERVING OUR BIODIVERSITY

Our Biodiversity Committee, ably chaired by Board Member Isabel Byron, had an active last quarter in 2020 – with a number of activities made possible through funding from the [UNDP](#)

The annual **Coastal Cleanup** in September, coordinated by one of our staff, Ella Bendeito, had a huge turnout despite Covid-19 restrictions. 184 individuals volunteered: 140 adults, and 44 children (12 years and under). The 19 teams cleaned 19 beach and in-land areas, of a distance estimated to be 20 miles. In all, the the teams collected 161 bags of garbage, weighing approximately 2,325 lbs.

The highest volume of garbage was collected at Coconut Walk Bay at New River in Gingerland. Not unsurprisingly, the most collected material was plastic, with 6,092 pieces – 2,399 of which were bottles. A BIG Thank You goes out to everyone who helped us keep Nevis clean!

In October the Committee organised a slogan competition, encouraging youth to submit entries about the single-use plastic and styrofoam ban, global warming, climate change and conserving our biodiversity. Winners received \$50EC and a T-shirt bearing the winning slogan.



Photos courtesy: (above) Premier Mark Brantley and (below) Ministry of Tourism Nevis



November was Arbour Month, and it was highlighted with a quiz “Trees in Nevis” that was aired every week on VON Radio's “Youth on the Go” for primary and secondary school students.

On 5 December, the Committee held a “Tree-sure Hunt”, and each of the three winning team members received cash prizes. Congratulations to **Girls Forever** (Nevis Academy), **Stars** (Gingerland Secondary School), and **Fantastics** (Nevis International Secondary School - NISS). We congratulate all the young sleuths who participated!

DID YOU KNOW... that we have Youth Memberships available at a reduced rate? Join today and get involved in Keeping Nevis Clean, and Banning Single-Use Plastics!

FAREWELL TO A DEDICATED MEMBER

2020 was without a doubt a year of challenges and tragedies, including the loss of Nevis' beloved [Quentin "Beeman" Henderson](#), who passed away in Nevis in May. Beeman first arrived in Nevis in 1987 with the British Volunteer Services Overseas programme and made Hull Ground in Gingerland his home.

He revived beekeeping in Nevis and was a treasured citizen who was dedicated to a variety of causes and initiatives, including the Society's environmental projects and fundraising events. A humble, open-hearted member of the community, he will be remembered fondly and missed by adults and children alike.



The Society hopes to initiate a Beekeeping project in honour of Beeman. If you would like to donate or get involved, please contact us.

CALLING ALL MEMBERS...RENEW, RENEW, RENEW!

Since early March 2020, the Covid pandemic has had a devastating impact on the financial situation in Nevis, and the Society has not been spared. With our borders closed to tourism for most of the year, and with homeowners – including many of our longstanding members and faithful volunteers – unable to return to Nevis this year, admissions to our Museums has been reduced to zero, and Society-sponsored events and Gift Shops sales were greatly diminished.

Members who have not yet renewed their membership – and those wishing to join – are encouraged to do so by coming by the Museum of Nevis History and renewing/joining in person, or by submitting the online form at www.nevisheritage.org!

Please consider supporting the Nevis Historical & Conservation Society as a member or donor, so we can strengthen our efforts to protect and promote the historical, cultural and natural resources of Nevis!

Your contribution WILL make a difference.



Member's Corner



Tina Bates is Curator Emerita, Canadian Museum of History. She and her husband, Phil Dunning, are passionate about museums and museum objects. Tina has worked as a museum history curator for over 20 years at the Canadian Museum of History; while Phil is also a museum/heritage professional, having worked in archaeology for twenty-two years as a finds specialist for Parks Canada. Tina and Phil have been coming to St. Kitts and Nevis since 1976, and have been dedicated volunteers and advisors to the Society, in particular for the drafting of a Museums Objects Collection Policy,

THE MUSEUM COLLECTIONS PROJECT: KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Nevis has a rich collection of objects that are hidden away and rarely have been seen! This article is about a project to bring them to light. So we thought we would combine our expertise – with the help of many others – to initiate a project to document objects belonging to the Society. In 2019, from 11 March to 3 April, a team of volunteers located, assessed and documented 349 museum objects. In 2020, we assessed what still needed to be done, and how to put the collections data into a museum documentation software. I submitted a draft Museum Objects Collections Policy to the Society for consideration.

The aim of the NHCS is to “**Protect & Promote the Historical, Cultural and Natural Resources of Nevis**”. Historical objects that interpret Nevis history and culture is part of this mandate. Why do museums have collections? Both to preserve cultural heritage in the way of tangible objects for future generations; and to provide community access to those collections for learning and enjoyment through exhibitions.

The first step to achieve this is to know what collections you have. We created a excel file with information on 349 of what I call “Nevis Life” museum objects. At this stage, we did not include archaeological material, Amerindian artifacts or paper documents, but certainly in the future, that material should be combined in the database. Each object was located, catalogued, photographed and labelled.

The lead documentalist, filling in information into the excel file was Maureen Ferg, assisted by Veronique Hasson, Carolyne Johnson and Stacey Tyrell. John Guilbert led the object retrieval, emptying a container and shed behind the Nelson Museum of objects, assisted by Larry Hasson, Harvey Hendrickson, and Almon Dasent. We were further assisted by Isabel Byron, Fenella Jeffers, Alan Kaye and Andrea Kaye. With the assistance and guidance of former Executive Director Pauline Ngunjiri, President Richard Lupinacci and the Society’s staff.

What is the database for? It is a tool that can lead to research on Nevis history and culture. For example, one of the topics for the Intangible Cultural Heritage project is pottery making.

A search in the database will find items that will help them with this project including:

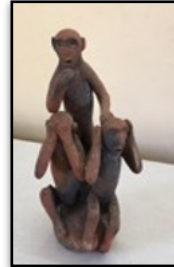
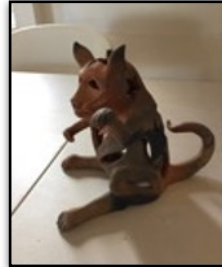


A teaching kit with a well-researched written history of pottery on the island and miniature examples of Newcastle pottery objects (left)

Exceptional Newcastle pottery figures (below).

The Nevis Life object database can be used for future exhibitions, for example:

- ▶ Maritime history
- ▶ Music in Nevis
- ▶ History of the Bath House and stream
- ▶ Stories and sayings
- ▶ Growing up on Nevis Childhood
- ▶ Waste Not, Want Not: (eg: right)



The database of museum objects will also be the basis for future collecting of objects that document Nevis life. The total catalogue will be analyzed to determine what aspects of Nevis history and culture are illustrated through the collections and what is missing. What stories do you want to tell and what aspects should the Society collect to fill in the blanks and to write a collections plan.

This work we are doing will put the Society in the position of taking the first steps in international standards of museum collections management. I think this will help the Society's credibility to apply for funds to develop the collection. Granting agencies would see that, indeed, there is a plan in place to build on.

World health situation permitting, Phil and I plan to carry on with this project next in 2021, to complete the inventory and write a collections development plan. We hope this work will help to build on one aspect of the Society's mandate:

"...role of museums in building national identity and audiences - locals and tourists."
- Plantation to Nation: Caribbean Museums and National Identity
 Edited by Alissandra Cummins, Kevin Farmer and Roslyn Russell, 2013

The Nevis Life collection database is a TOOL.

I hope it will be used in future NHCS planning for:

- Exhibitions
- Public Outreach
- Research
- Developing the collection
- Applying for grants

Here are just a few objects that we found that have so much to say about Nevis Life and history:



Left: Baptismal font in gothic style, Cottle Church, 1824-1900 (on exhibit)

Right: New River Sugar Estate sugar skimmer and ladles, 1860-1920 (on exhibit)



Below, left: Musical Instruments made by Owen Hendrickson Bussue (on exhibit)



Below, right: Scales and weights, marked General Post Office, ca.1850-1900



Left: Harbour Light, 1900-1950

Below: Handmade market basket



Right: Child's wheely toys, made from tin cans



Below: Sign for Newcastle Post Office Post office box



Right: Post office box, 1952-1983



Far right: Bath Hotel Table Service, ca. 1910, and pewter tankard



CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2021

Please get in touch if you'd like to donate towards, or get involved with, any of these activities! Our success depends on YOU!

- ▶ 11 January: Alexander Hamilton Birthday
- ▶ 31 January: Deadline for new Board nominations
- ▶ February: Heritage Month
- ▶ February: Annual General Meeting (virtual - date to be confirmed)
- ▶ February: Evening with the Arts (date to be confirmed)
- ▶ 13 February: Jumble sale
- ▶ 11 March: Nelson wedding anniversary
- ▶ 22 April: Earth day
- ▶ 18 May: International Museums Day
- ▶ June: Biannual Craft Fair (date to be confirmed)
- ▶ September: Coastal Cleanup (date to be confirmed)
- ▶ November: Arbour month
- ▶ 15 December: Biannual [Holiday] Craft Fair
- ▶ Third Thursday of every month: meeting of the Executive Board
- ▶ December: Membership renewal!



AND DON'T FORGET:

Every last Tuesday of the month is "Meet the Artist" cocktail hour at the Museum Gift Shop!





NEVIS HISTORICAL & CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Our Team

Gail Dore – Senior Archivist / Ag. Administrative Officer
Elmon Coram – Gallery attendant, Nelson Museum
Nevena Seelall – Gallery attendant/Membership Officer
Arcquela “Ella” Bendeito – Gallery attendant/Assistant archivist
Jonathan Ward – Gallery attendant/Admin. assistant
Deus Herbert – Gallery attendant / digitisation
Jamilah Clarke – Museum Gift Shop attendant
Miriam Knorr – Museum Gift Shop supervisor
Lorna Glover Abungu – Museum / communications advisor
Keithly Amory – IWEco project coordinator
Jenny Lowery – Consultant, Nelson Spring restoration project

Executive Board 2020

Richard Lupinacci – President
Todd Miller – Vice President
Warren Moving – Treasurer
Isabel Byron
Gillian Hobson
Andrea Kaye
Kris Liburd
Sylvester Meade
Marcia Myers
Maurisha Robinson

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[#museumofnevishistory](https://www.instagram.com/museumofnevishistory)

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