

# EMPLOYER Q&A

## ROSEANN DAVIDSON EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HERITAGE PARK

### Q: WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST HR CHALLENGES?

The most challenging thing for us is finding and hiring staff, and then keeping staff. We are a museum so our rate of pay isn't as high as others, and we're seen as a stepping stone before people move on to somewhere else.



### Q: HOW DO YOU OVERCOME THOSE CHALLENGES?

Those we've had with us for years just love the work they do. It's a different environment for us. We call it our own little village. We're also always growing and expanding our programming because Fort McMurray is growing and expanding, so we have to keep up with the times. I think they like the challenge of being able to do that.

### Q: WHERE DO YOU FIND STAFF?

We use the websites available to us through the Alberta Museum Association and the Canadian Museum Association. We will advertise in the local newspaper and online as well, but we have the most success with the museum associations. You know, folks who are actually interested in museum work are going to be looking there, and that's our goal — to find those kind of people.

### Q: WHAT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES DO YOU OFFER STAFF?

We train all the time. We try to get to conferences, which are a big learning tool for us. Also, if our staff finds any courses they feel are going to help them move forward in their careers, we will offer to pay for them.

# EMPLOYER PROFILE



## HERITAGE PARK

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## FORT MCMURRAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Heritage Park is operated by the Fort McMurray Historical Society, a charitable, non-profit organization whose sole purpose is to maintain and cherish Fort McMurray's unique heritage. Funded by grants, sponsorships and donations, the goal at Heritage Park is to educate the public by providing access to the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo's treasured artifacts, archives and photographs. Thank you to the wonderful sponsors and community volunteers. It is through your community spirit and generosity that Heritage Park continues to be a vibrant and innovative museum.

## HERITAGE PARK'S APPROACH TO HR

Employers in Fort McMurray face the challenge of retaining employees in a city known for its high cost of living, particularly when other employers are offering more pay and benefits. So what's an employer to do when it doesn't have the budget to compete financially?

It offers a different kind of benefit — the benefit of working in a field employees love.

"Our staff really love the work and have a passion for learning history," says Roseann Davidson, executive director of Heritage Park. "I think the ones that really enjoy museum work will give up certain things to be able to work in the museum."

They also thrive in a setting where they can take part in, and give back to, their community. "The community is growing and we want to be here to serve them," says Davidson.

# EMPLOYER

## Challenges and Solutions

### CHALLENGE #1

#### FINDING EMPLOYEES WITH A PASSION FOR THEIR WORK

##### SOLUTION

Heritage Park has the most success finding individuals with a passion for museum work by advertising through museum-related associations. This helps ensure applicants are specifically looking for museum work, and not just responding to random job ads. Finding workers who love what they do keeps the enthusiasm alive at the museum, and means workers are less likely to look elsewhere.

### CHALLENGE #2

#### RETAINING WORKERS ON A NOT-FOR-PROFIT BUDGET

##### SOLUTION

Heritage Park is operated by the Fort McMurray Historical Society, a not-for-profit organization that aims to conserve and celebrate the city's heritage. With a low budget, Heritage Park has to rely on its employees' passion for their jobs to retain them. It helps to allow employees to indulge their passion by giving them opportunities to learn, participate in different museum programs and move up through the ranks. Roseann Davidson, executive director of Heritage Park, started out volunteering before she worked her way up to her current position.

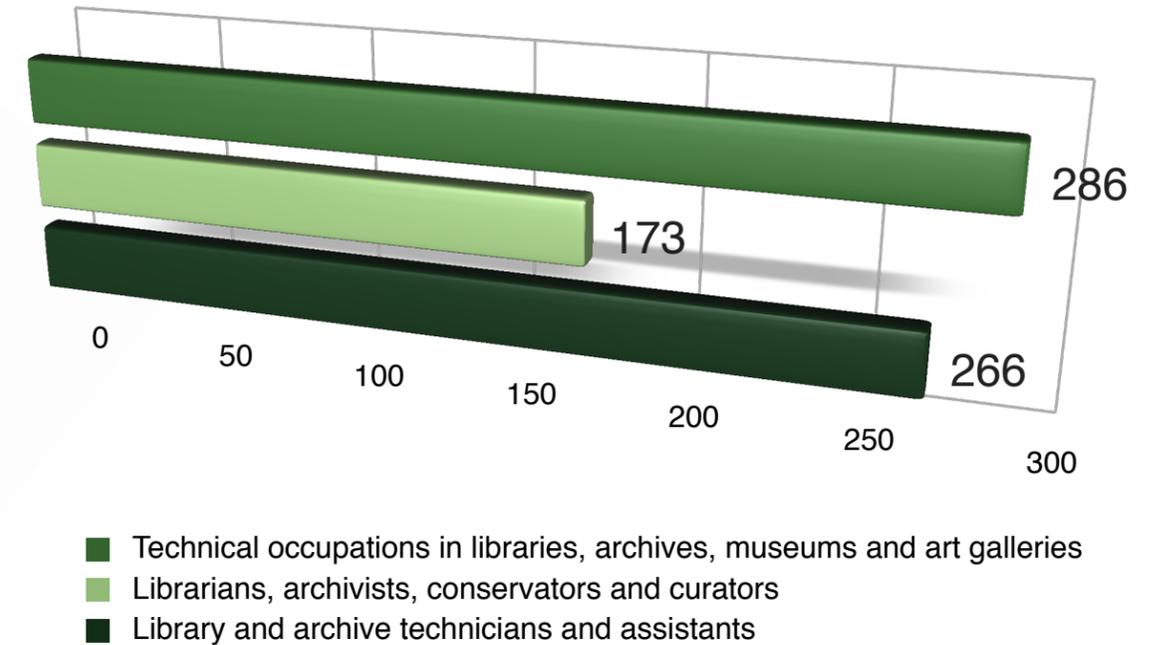
### CHALLENGE #3

#### GROWING AFTER SETBACKS

##### SOLUTION

Spring floods damaged and destroyed many of the buildings at Heritage Park. Rebuilding has taken a lot of time and effort, and it's also forced the organization to cut back on programming as it hasn't had the resources it once did. This is where a passion for museum work and a commitment to the community has been essential, as workers have overseen the rebuilding of 13 buildings that were destroyed and created new programming and exhibits. Keeping a positive outlook and seeing opportunity within a challenge are traits that have helped Heritage Park come out ahead in spite of the recent challenges it has faced.

## ALBERTA-WIDE EXPECTED SHORTAGE FOR JOB IN MUSEUMS BY 2021



Source: Alberta Occupational Demand Outlook - Average annual growth in jobs.

### WORKER RETENTION STRATEGY: STEADY WORK OPPORTUNITIES

*"We usually get 12 or 13 summer students, so our workforce almost doubles. It can be a challenge, however we are very selective and we've been able to find students who really want to learn more about the museum industry. When we hire, we usually hire with specific projects in mind, so the students are trained in the areas they're hired for. We've had a lot of success acquiring summer students for three or four years while they're in university. They keep coming back to us."*

— Roseann Davidson