



National  
Nordic  
Museum

Annual  
Report 2020



CEO Eric Nelson and Seattle Kraken hockey team announcer Everett Fitzhugh talk about the Scandinavian origins of Seattle's newest sports mascot.

## From the Board President

Dear Members and Friends of the Museum:

No one questions that 2020 was a difficult year for all of us. The Museum was closed to the public for nearly eight months, dramatically impacting our business operations. However, with engaging virtual programming, expense control, and great support from our stakeholders, we were able to weather the storm while creating a path forward. I commend our community for their commitment; there is no doubt in my mind that our constituents were critical to our success. In addition to productively navigating unforeseeable challenges, the Museum was recognized for three major distinctions:

- Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums (MAAM) “Buidy”
- American Alliance of Museums’ Environmental Sustainability Award
- Hazelius Medal in Gold

The hard work done in 2020 by Executive Director/CEO Eric Nelson and all the staff of the National Nordic Museum brought the Museum safely through exceptionally tough times. As we rebound, I look forward to further innovation and growth.

Thomas W. Malone  
President, Board of Trustees



## From the CEO

Dear Members and Friends of the Museum:

While no one would want a repeat of 2020, I look back at the past year with great pride at the accomplishments made possible by the exceptional support of our Board, our Members, our donors, our volunteers, our staff, and our friends in the community.

That the National Nordic Museum was able to innovate and expand its reach while meeting the financial challenges of this crisis was extraordinary. Doing so and ending the year with a minor deficit was amazing! These results are a testimonial to the hard work done by our entire team and all our stakeholders.

In 2020, we were able to open important exhibitions on the work of Danish-American photographer Jacob A. Riis, Swedish designer and entrepreneur Gudrun Sjöden, and Norwegian artist Edvard Munch. We also received many notable gifts to the permanent collection including 943 works by Dines Carlsen. We created high-quality virtual programming beginning with the Nordic Innovation Summit, which has drawn more than 6,000 viewers from nineteen nations, and our first Nordic Genealogy Conference that drew participants from twenty-six US States and two Canadian Provinces. Altogether, our Museum staff launched more than 100 virtual events last year.

While challenging, this past year demonstrated that there is a worldwide audience who is both interested in our programs and is ready to be engaged. In this unusual year, when hope and inspiration were sorely needed, the Museum extended the reach of our vision both nationally and internationally: *Through the history we illuminate, the stories we tell, the connections we make, and the values we promote, we inspire our visitors to create a more vibrant, more just, more sustainable world.*

Eric Nelson  
Executive Director/CEO



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“Museums that practice resource conservation and responsible building operations have tremendous value as models and educational tools for creating an environmentally literate public. . . . A recent example of sustainability, particularly energy efficiency, in new construction is the National Nordic Museum in Seattle. It won a 2020 Sustainability Excellence Award (SEA) from the Environment & Climate Network of the American Alliance of Museums (AAM).”

—Sarah Sutton, Museum Management Curatorship, “The evolving responsibility of museum work in the time of climate change,” November 2020.

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Images, clockwise from top  
Logging items in the Museum’s Nordic America Gallery.  
Dr. Robert Strand livestreams during the Museum’s 2020 Virtual Nordic Innovation Summit.  
CEO Eric Nelson and Nancy Zinn, PhD, accept the Museum’s Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums “Buidy” award.  
The Hazelius Medal in Gold.

# Financials

## 2020 Performance

	2020 ACTUALS
<b>INCOME</b>	
Contributed	\$1,612,217
Earned	\$879,324
Program	\$91,950
Special Event	\$430,309
<b>GROSS PROFIT</b>	<b>\$3,013,800</b>
Endowment Distribution	\$72,957
<b>EXPENSE</b>	
Advertising	\$50,972
Overhead	\$665,792
Program	\$311,476
Payroll Expenses	\$2,065,809
Special Event	\$52,463
<b>TOTAL EXPENSE</b>	<b>\$3,146,512</b>
<b>ADJUSTED NET</b>	<b>(\$59,755)</b>



The Museum was closed to the public March 13 to September 1 and again November 9 through December 31.

In 2020, the Museum was open to the public only 103 days as opposed to a normal 308 open days. To offset the loss in earned revenue, the Museum:

- Reduced operating budget by 25%
- Significantly increased contributed revenue
- Found new sources of earned revenue
- Received government support including PPP loan of \$410,445 (shown under Contributed Revenue for 2020)

## Museum Store and Operations

- Launched online Museum Store in March 2020
- More than \$213,000 in Museum Store sales by year end

## Programs and Events:

- Our first-ever Nordic Genealogy Conference debuted as a virtual event and raised over \$23,000 in ticket sales
- Virtual Run Like a Viking raised \$15,000 and set a record for number of participants

Philanthropy was essential in 2020—we invited the community's help and you answered the call. Regular and new donors responded throughout the year, including many new participants who attended our two online Auction events.

### Annual Fund:

- Special Gift Campaign in the spring received 559 gifts and raised \$170,000
- Year-End Appeal raised \$205,000 from 328 individuals
- Annual Fund gifts from individuals totaled \$480,000

### Auktion:

- Auktion 2.0 in June raised \$150,000
- Northern Lights Auktion in October raised nearly \$300,000 including a generous challenge match from the Board of Trustees of more than \$100,000

### NIS 2020:

- Virtual Nordic Innovation Summit received nearly \$145,000 in sponsorships



Images, counterclockwise from top The Museum Store went online in 2020. CEO Eric Nelson masks up to welcome back visitors to the galleries. The Friis family cheers on their runners in our Virtual Run Like a Viking 5K race.

# Programs and Special Events

Virtual programming in 2020 reached audiences in six continents and fifty-four countries. Overwhelmingly, survey responses indicated that participants enjoyed their experience and more than 95% indicated they were 'very likely' to attend virtual Museum programs in the future.

## 2020 Special Exhibitions

- Jacob A. Riis: How the Other Half Lives
- Legacy: Social Justice in Contemporary Danish Photojournalism
- The Deported
- Why We Collect: New Acquisitions from National Nordic Museum
- Gudrun Sjödén—A Colourful Universe
- Swedish Dads
- La Vaughn Belle: A History of Unruly Returns
- The Experimental Self: Edvard Munch's Photography

## 2020 Programs, Conferences, and Festivals

- Mostly Nordic Chamber Music Series
- Nordic Lights Film Festival
- Virtual Crafts & Cocktails
- Virtual Julefest
- Virtual Meet the Author Series
- Virtual Nordic Genealogy Conference
- Virtual Nordic Innovation Summit
- Virtual Nordic Sól
- Virtual Nordic Stories
- Virtual Sámi Film Festival

## 2020 Collections Highlights: Recent Acquisitions

More 1,000 objects entered the permanent collection, including:

- One oil painting and 943 drawings by Danish-American artist Dines Carlsen from the Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields
- Greenlandic Inuit objects including a kayak
- "The Scandinavian Hour" Radio Program Collection
- The Norwegian Male Chorus of Seattle Collection
- William C. Miller Architecture Library

Additional expansion of the collection in 2020 included launching the oral history project "A Pandemic Preserved: The COVID-19 Crisis in the Nordic Countries and the Pacific Northwest."

Images, counterclockwise from top  
A drawing by Danish-American artist Dines Carlsen. Munch's Dog "Fips" at Ekely. Silver Gelatine, 1930. Gallery view of Gudrun Sjödén—A Colourful Universe. Photo from Swedish Dads. Painting from La Vaughn Belle: A History of Unruly Returns.



Property of the Munch Museum



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“I love having the opportunity to access such fine lectures presented by your Museum. It is very important to me that I am in contact with art and new information brought forth in your lectures. Thank you.”

“The National Nordic Museum acknowledges colonialism—the Museum went way up in my estimation because of this event.”

“Wonderful education about the advanced Nordic nations. Very impressive speakers and topics. A worthwhile look at the current world situation. The Museum should be very proud to offer quality programs like this!”

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