

# THE ANNUAL



# FROM THE DIRECTOR

This year, we celebrated a remarkable milestone: thirty years since our late Founder, Mrs. Sonja Bata, first opened the doors of the Bata Shoe Museum to the world. What began as one woman's extraordinary vision has grown into a globally recognized museum and research institution. This anniversary gave us a wonderful opportunity to celebrate that legacy through continued world-class exhibitions, special programming, a commemorative documentary, and an online timeline that charts the museum's journey across three decades.

In a fitting tribute to this milestone, we were proud to launch two landmark exhibitions,

*Rough & Ready: A History of the Cowboy Boot* and *André Perugia: A Design Legend Unveiled* during our anniversary year. The sold-out Founder's Lecture, featuring Canadian fashion icons Thierry-Maxime Loriot and Jeanne Beker, was another highlight of the anniversary celebrations and a heartfelt tribute to Mrs. Bata's enduring vision and impact.

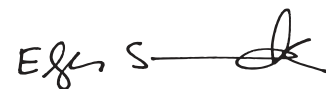
2025 saw Education and Programming reach new heights, with 174 school groups welcomed through our doors, our *Step Ahead* Program at capacity and a vibrant calendar of 34 public programs that drew visitors into meaningful, thought-provoking experiences throughout the year. Our commitment to Indigenous

communities also continued to grow through repatriations, Indigenous-led programming, and the hosting of two Indigenous high school student interns.

We also welcomed thousands of visitors on Free Sundays throughout 2025 and our shop delivered another record-breaking year, reflecting the strong connection our visitors feel to the museum's mission and identity.

None of this would be possible without the generosity of our supporters, donors, funders, and partners, nor without the dedication of our remarkable staff, volunteers, and Board of Directors. Thank you. Your belief in the importance of our mission inspires everything we do.

Looking ahead, I am energized by all of the possibilities before us. For thirty years, the Bata Shoe Museum has been a place of curiosity, discovery, and connection and we remain committed to bringing people together through the remarkable stories that shoes tell about our shared human experience.



**Elizabeth Semmelhack**  
Director & Senior Curator







# CELEBRATING 30 YEARS

Founded by Mrs. Sonja Bata, the Bata Shoe Museum first opened its doors on May 6th, 1995, with the mission to illuminate human history through footwear. A rare cultural gem, the BSM began as a small personal collection that has since transformed into an internationally celebrated destination and research organization caring for over 15,000 shoes and shoe-related artifacts spanning over 4,500 years.



On May 6, 2025, the Bata Shoe Museum celebrated a remarkable milestone: 30 years since first opening the doors to what has become one of the world's most celebrated and beloved cultural institutions. To honour this occasion, the museum embarked on a year of special programming and celebrations that reflected on our extraordinary legacy while looking ahead to an exciting future. Highlights include the launch of our 30th anniversary documentary, offering an inside look at the institution's history, its world-renowned collection, and the people who have shaped its story over three decades. An online timeline was also unveiled, inviting audiences around the world to explore key moments in the museum's history and celebrate the milestones that have defined our evolution and cultural impact. Combined with various other related initiatives, we captured the spirit and honour of connecting communities to the rich, global story of footwear for the past 30 years.



# EXHIBITIONS



## **DRESSED TO IMPRESS: FOOTWEAR AND CONSUMERISM IN THE 1980S**

November 2023 - March 2025

The 1980s are a decade known for bold fashions, bright colours, sharp silhouettes, cone heels, and high-status sneakers. *Dressed to Impress* explored how and why fashion and footwear were promoted as a way to flaunt a successful career, social status, and an enviable lifestyle.

## **FUTURE NOW: VIRTUAL SNEAKERS TO CUTTING- EDGE KICKS**

On Tour

In partnership with the American Federation of Arts, this exhibition toured across six museums in the USA throughout 2024 - 2026. *Future Now* considers how cutting-edge technologies, unexpected materials, and new ideas are transforming footwear today through a showcase of digitally designed and 3D-printed shoes, sneakers made from mushroom leather and reclaimed ocean plastics, as well as footwear created for the metaverse.



## EXHIBIT A: INVESTIGATING CRIME AND FOOTWEAR

April 2024 - September 2025

Examining the development of footwear forensics as a means of solving crime and the social constructions of criminality from the nineteenth century to today, this exhibition took visitors on a journey to sleuth out the central but complex role of footwear in crime, policing, the judicial system, and our cultural ideas of criminality.



## ART/WEAR: SNEAKERS X ARTISTS

October 2024 - February 2026

Through their deconstruction, re-imagining, and political use of sneakers, artists invite viewers to reconsider the intersections between art, fashion, and identity. *Art/Wear: Sneakers and Artists* explores why artists are drawn to working with sneakers and why so many of us are interested in wearing these pieces.

## ROUGH & READY: A HISTORY OF THE COWBOY BOOT

May 2025 - September 2026

The story of the cowboy boots is steeped in history and legend. Since their invention in the late nineteenth century, they have been used to both celebrate individualism and forge cultural cohesion. Whether worn in the saddle, on screen, or in the streets, cowboy boots remain a cultural touchstone, embodying both tradition and transformation in a constantly changing world.



## ANDRÉ PERUGIA: A DESIGN LEGEND UNVEILED

October 2025 - April 2027

From his first boutique in Nice in the early 1920s, Perugia revolutionized luxury footwear for houses like Dior and Schiaparelli and clients including Josephine Baker and Princess Lillian of Belgium. This exhibition features over 95 examples of the Italian-French shoe designer's work, highlighting key innovations such as the articulated sole and stiletto heel.

## ALL ABOUT SHOES: FOOTWEAR THROUGH THE AGES

Permanent

*All About Shoes* takes visitors on a global voyage through 4,500 years of footwear, focusing on the importance of shoes to our lives, identities, and imaginations. With only four percent of the collection typically on view at any given time, *Behind the Scenes: A Glimpse into Artifact Storage* gives visitors a peek into the museum's two storage vaults by offering a rotation of artifacts from the permanent collection.

# THE COLLECTION

The museum acquired 105 new artifacts in 2025, a 44% increase over last year, through generous donations and purchases. Every addition to the collection is the result of a carefully considered process of evaluation, ensuring that each object meaningfully contributes to the museum's mandate and enhances its ability to tell the rich, global story of footwear. The Bata Shoe Museum's permanent collection now reaches over 15,000 shoes and shoe-related artifacts.

## HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:



Manolo Blahnik Caldean Mules  
Generously donated by  
Manolo Blahnik.



Schiaparelli trompe l'oeil sandals  
Generously donated by  
Maison Schiaparelli

In 2025, the museum borrowed 80 objects from the following 15 lenders: Adam Goeglein, Autry Museum of the American West, Barry Ace, Erik Semmelhack, Flora Knight, Fondation Azzedine Alaïa, The Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Jamie Cuevas Nudie, Lee Miller, Lisa Sorrell, Lucchese Bootmaker, Musée de la chaussure, Orville Peck, Sarah Madeleine T. Guerin, and Tony Benattar.

# INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT

Rooted in a genuine commitment to reconciliation, the Bata Shoe Museum actively works to build respectful, reciprocal, and lasting relationships with Indigenous communities. Guided by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #67 and the principles outlined in *Moved to Action: Activating UNDRIP in Canadian Museums*, the museum places Indigenous expertise and community guidance at the centre of how it cares for and stewards Ancestor belongings within its collection.

In 2025, the museum welcomed three new objects into the permanent collection: moccasins by Jamie Gentry, Ocean Kiana Woodland cowgirl boots, and Kunitz x Lance Cardinal Kxlc Iskwew sneaker. Additionally, the museum completed a repatriation of a pair of Hivuralik kammak (embroidered boots) to the maker's family from the Inuinait community of Kugluktuk, Nunavut. The museum is dedicated to moving beyond acknowledgment toward authentic, sustained, and transformative action in this area and looks forward to continuing to listen, learn, and act in ways that honour the communities, histories, and living cultures represented within its collection.



Image: Gwiiwzens Dreamed of Spirit Horses, Barry Ace, M'Chigeeng First Nation, Anishinaabe (Odawa), 2023  
Image: Bata Shoe Museum/ Darren Rigo

# AT A GLANCE



**18,841**

Free Sunday Attendees



**139**

Tour Groups



**7**

Exhibitions



**10.2M+**

Digital Impressions



**328,342**

Unique Website Visitors



**70,117**

Visitors



**105**

New Acquisitions



**176**

Earned Media



**80/88**

Loans in/Loans out



**3,044**

Students Visited



**351,659**

Social Media Followers



**34**

Public Programs



# PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

BSM programming continued to evolve as a core function of the museum, attracting visitors to experience a spectrum of interactive activities, both entertaining and deeply meaningful for attendees of all ages. In January, inspired by *Dressed to Impress: Footwear and Consumerism in the 1980s*, we hosted an energetic 80s aerobics class, a live music performance titled *Echoes of The 80s: A Musical Journey*, and a panel discussion exploring the power of design that influenced the 1980s and beyond. We also held our second Lunar New Year festival, one of our new annual visitor favourites, as well as a Sneaker Design Battle in partnership with local non-profit



YETI Arts (Youth Engagement Through Interactive Arts).

In February, March, and April, our popular 80s aerobics series continued, along with 80s Trivia, and a lively 80s video dance party. Expanding beyond the themed exhibition-inspired programs, we also held a natural foot scrub making workshop, celebrated Family Day with a variety of family-friendly activities and crafts, and presented a curator's talk with BSM Curator Nishi Bassi titled *Celebrating Women in Shoe Design*.

March Break drop-in programming invited families to step into a fun-filled environment of games and tours, while April included special programming for Earth Day and a unique presentation by 43-year Toronto Police Department veteran Detective Ed Adach, inspired by *Exhibit A: Investigating Crime and Footwear*. May, June, and July centered around this new exhibition, as well as the 30th Anniversary opening of *Rough & Ready: A History of the Cowboy Boot*, including a free Exhibition Opening day, country music trivia, a line-dancing inspired Pride Hoedown Party, and an exploration of identity, culture, and history as part of a panel discussion titled *Outlaws and*



*Allies: Cowboys and Queer Culture.*

Reflecting our commitment to building and developing Indigenous relationships, we are grateful to have hosted several related programs in 2025. These offerings included an *Intro to Powwow Dance Workshop*, two Indigenous Walking Tours in partnership with The Indigenous Peoples Garden, an inspiring and emotional presentation by Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) artist Joseph Sagaj of the Sturgeon Clan, a three-part moccasin-making workshop led by Anishinaabe artist Natalie Ortiz, and an impactful evening with Karen Chaboyer, an Ojibwe kwe,

author, educator, and Residential School survivor.

Throughout the second half of 2025, the museum delivered a vibrant series of monthly programs that brought the community together in exciting new ways. August welcomed visitors to explore everything from *Stitch by Stitch: The Art and Design of Cowboy Boots* panel discussion to dynamic workshops, including *Discover Dance Class: Intro to Hip Hop* and *Discover Dance Class: Intro to Indian Bharatnatyam*, alongside the thought-provoking *Ladies First* Panel Talk.

In November, we were thrilled to present a special edition of the annual Founder's Lecture, which honours Mrs. Bata's birthday, by welcoming two Canadian fashion icons, Thierry-Maxime Loriot and Jeanne Beker, for an intimate conversation about the transformation of fashion from concept to runway spectacle to museum artifact. We also hosted *Embroidery 101* and *Indigenous Beading Workshop: Hoop Earrings*, a captivating *Vintage Fashion Panel Talk*, and a joyful choir concert that filled the museum with seasonal spirit, culminating in Winter Break family programming.





# EDUCATION

Education remains a cornerstone of the Bata Shoe Museum's mission, and 2025 was a landmark year for school and community engagement. Through intentional outreach to schools, summer camps, and community organizations across the region, the museum has cultivated strong and lasting relationships that have translated into remarkable growth in our educational programming. This year, we welcomed over 3,000 schools with bookings consistently reaching or exceeding available capacity, a testament to the growing demand for quality cultural education that goes beyond the classroom. Aligning with the Ontario Curriculum, programs included *Footwear in Our Community* for JK/SK through Grade 2, *Shoes Around the World* for Grades 2 through 4, *Be A Shoe Designer* for Grades 4 through 12, and *Shoe Designer - Eco Edition* for Grades 7 to 12.

We also continued to deliver our *Step Ahead* program, which subsidizes curriculum-based programs for underserved communities by providing enriching learning opportunities to 1275 students from 37 schools across the GTA.

Educational visits to the BSM offer young learners meaningful,

inclusive opportunities to explore diverse cultural perspectives through the universal lens of footwear, sparking conversations about history, identity, innovation, and the shared human experiences that connect us all. By centering diverse voices and celebrating a wide range of cultural narratives, the museum's educational offerings create spaces where students feel seen, curious, and inspired.







# DIGITAL COMMUNITY

## WEBSITE



Unique views  
**183,223**



Canadian  
**76%**



American  
**16.5%**



International  
**7.5%**

## SOCIAL



TikTok  
**121,837**  
followers



Facebook  
**124,490**  
followers



Instagram  
**93,020**  
followers



**692,340**  
YouTube views



**337,799**  
YouTube impressions



# BSM SHOP



The Museum shop had another exceptional year in 2025, eclipsing last year's total shop revenue by 10% and surpassing previous benchmarks through a continued commitment to purposeful, mission-aligned retail. This growth reflects not only strong visitor engagement but also the shop's evolving identity as a unique destination, offering a carefully curated selection of products that extend the museum experience.

The shop deepened its support of local, Indigenous, and Canadian makers and brands, ensuring that its product mix reflects the diverse voices and cultural narratives at the heart of the museum's work. Throughout the year, the shop proved that retail, when rooted in institutional values, can serve as a powerful extension of the museum's broader mission to foster community, celebrate creativity, and invite visitors to take a piece of the BSM story home with them.





# SUPPORTERS

The Bata Shoe Museum's ability to deliver meaningful cultural experiences, both within our spaces and across our global digital platforms, is made possible through the generous support of our funders, donors, and partners who believe in the importance of shared stories and accessible engagement for all. Thank you to all those who supported the Bata Shoe Museum in 2025.

## Donors and Foundations

Bata Shoe Foundation  
Williams Wilson Sherport Foundation  
Lesy Statky Forest and Estate

## Government Supporters

Canadian Museums Association  
Community Museums Operating Grant  
Department of Canadian Heritage, Young Canada Works  
Employment and Social Development Canada  
Government of Canada, Canadian Heritage  
Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Gaming  
Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund

## Friends of the BSM

Sustaining Level +

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# FULL TIME STAFF

|                                                             |                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Director &amp; Senior Curator</b> .....                  | Elizabeth Semmelhack     |
| <b>Deputy Director &amp; CFO</b> .....                      | Amy Prilika              |
| <b>Manager of Exhibitions &amp; Assistant Curator</b> ..... | Nishi Bassi              |
| <b>Collections Manager &amp; Registrar</b> .....            | Alexandra Geropoulos     |
| <b>Curator of Indigenous Collections</b> .....              | Justine Woods            |
| <b>Conservator</b> .....                                    | Mitra Saeedi             |
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| <b>Marketing &amp; Social Media Manager</b> .....           | Adrienne Naval           |
| <b>Senior Designer</b> .....                                | Gus Aguirre              |
| <b>Head of Facilities</b> .....                             | Chris Shim               |
| <b>Manager of Visitor &amp; Venue Services</b> .....        | Jordan-na Belle-Isle     |
| <b>Development Manager</b> .....                            | Anne Cobban              |
| <b>Bookkeeper &amp; Office Manager</b> .....                | Anupsingh Verma          |
| <b>Front of House Lead</b> .....                            | Aurica Manole            |
| <br><b>Auditor</b> .....                                    | <br>Doane Grant Thornton |



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