

Filling the Gap:

An Oral History of the
Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge
1983-2018



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Lethbridge, Alberta
July 2020

Funding for this publication provided by:

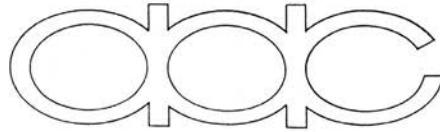


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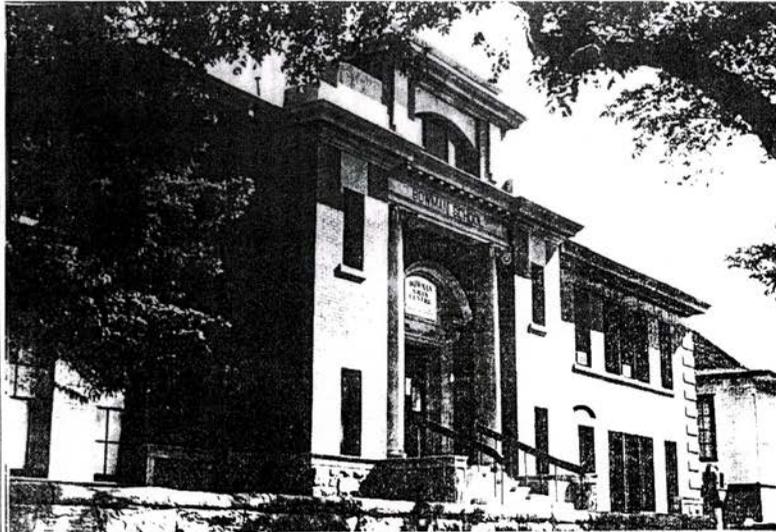
Disclaimer: This essay is based on oral history interviews and research conducted and prepared by Elaine Toth; an independent researcher commissioned by the Allied Arts Council. Providing analysis of the data collected, it serves as a resource for a future book publication which will cover Allied Art Council's complete history. While following accepted academic citation and reference practices, the writing has not been copy-edited and the research submitted does not purport to be complete, and therefore this paper should be understood as a work in progress.

Editor's Note (December 2020): Editors comments are included in a foot note when there are discrepancies in information.



ALLIED ARTS COUNCIL
OF LETHBRIDGE

A HISTORY



BOWMAN ARTS CENTRE · CITY OF LETHBRIDGE



Occasional Paper 1

From The

GALT MUSEUM ARCHIVES



Cover of *Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge-A History*, compiled by Dr. Alex Johntson in 1983.

Filling the Gap

Allied Arts Council: 1983-2018

In her 1961 novel *The Hidden Mountain* Canadian author Gabrielle Roy wrote, “Can we ever know each other in the slightest without the arts?”¹ In what is an increasing politically-divisive world, her question has more relevance now than ever before. By recognizing art and artistry as means to know and communicate with one another, we encourage a more holistic approach to understanding the human experience. Central to societal collective and individual identity, the arts generate emotion, convey reality, and most significantly, promote collaboration and communication amongst its citizens. The Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge (AAC) has long filled a pivotal role in promoting human interaction with the arts and arts community, and in so doing, has strengthened relations and relationships amongst people in Lethbridge and southern Alberta.

In celebration of its sixtieth anniversary, this paper explores a variety of AAC activities occurring in the years 1983 to 2018. Using semi-structured oral history interviews conducted with eleven individuals, who are directly and indirectly involved with daily operations, it encompasses thirty-five years of growth, change and community involvement as remembered by those who graciously consented to record their experiences. Referencing the words of renowned oral historian Lynn Abrams, these individuals relay their “subjective experiences about the past through the prism of the present.”² The value

1 Gabrielle Roy, *The Hidden Mountain* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1974), 120.

2 Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 7.

in these interviews is, in part, their unique capacity to allow the telling of history to be documented by those who lived it. Recognizing the subjective nature of the oral history interview this paper represents an inclusive, though not exhaustive list, of a range of AAC activities. Whenever possible, narratives are cross-referenced with archived materials such as minutes, annual general reports, and other historical works, some of which are documented and stored in the AAC offices and others at the Galt Museum and Archives in Lethbridge, Alberta.³

The following section offers a brief biography of each person interviewed. The years beside each person's name represents their period of involvement with the AAC, however, this is not meant to infer their association ended here. At the conclusion of official roles, many have maintained communication with AAC employees, board members and others connected to the arts community, often offering mentorship and comradery. The distinctiveness in each person's background is worth detailing and will assist when reading interview excerpts throughout the paper. In addition to their involvement with the AAC, shared commonalities with one another include individual artistic skills in a variety of fields, as well as an interest in fostering the arts and art programs for all.

Participants were asked to talk about their personal history, their past and current involvement with the AAC, and perhaps most significantly, they were asked for their reflections on the importance of the arts in general. Evidenced by all those who consented to an oral history interview, an interest in personal artistic endeavours began at a young age and remains active to the present time. The influence of art on individual lives reveals it to not only have provided a tangible way for productive self-expression, but also a means to instill positive self-esteem and interaction with other like-minded individuals. Giving voice to individual experiences, these interviews not only capture history, but also provide layers of perspective and meaning to the AAC as an integral entity in Lethbridge.

³ Original copies of all Allied Arts Council meeting minutes, AGM's, final reports, letters, pamphlets, and news releases are catalogued, archived and stored at the Allied Arts Council office: 318 - 7 St. South; Lethbridge, Alberta.

Participant Biographies

Ron Brown (2003-2015)

Ron's love for nature, the land, horses, and drawing and painting, began at a young age. Encouraged by his parents, he often painted in the wintertime, particularly during the holiday season when he presented his work to family members as Christmas gifts. He said, "I wasn't what I would call an artist growing up, but I did paint a lot and I studied it some."⁴ Raised mostly in rural Alberta, he gives partial credit for his first major painting to a grade seven art class and a teacher who he describes as 'quite good.'⁵ Travelling throughout Alberta and to other Canadian provinces, Ron's successful career specializing in western art has taken him and his wife to show his work at poetry gatherings, rodeos and stampedes. Inducted as a lifetime, honorary member in 2018, his official involvement with the AAC spanned twelve years. Reflecting on his time as a board member, and his involvement on the Casa Facilities Committee, his memories draw attention to the importance of working together as a team. Referring to the impact Casa has had on Lethbridge and the surrounding communities, he stated, "despite what you might think, the building is not what I figure is the best part of it – it's important – very, very, important, but I think the fact that we have representatives of the arts here – they are really good people."⁶

Donna Gallant (1982-2000)

Donna's interest in the arts was encouraged at a young age by both paternal and maternal grandmothers. Describing them as both highly creative in sewing and other domestic chores, she stated the following: "they'd make something out of nothing, you know (laughter), they knew how to do things, so I would just sit there and watch...

4 Ron Brown, interview by Elaine Toth, Lethbridge, Alberta, January 22, 2020.

5 Brown interview.

6 Brown interview.

one showed me how to crochet and sew... they knew how to make something out of nothing.”⁷ While difficult financial times prevented her enrollment in an online school of arts program, she recalls her family being very supportive of her work, and when commenting on her paintings they, “would rant and rave and say, oh, look what she did!”⁸

Born and raised in Regina, Saskatchewan, Donna moved to Lethbridge in 1970 to attend University of Lethbridge in pursuit of a Fine Arts degree. When a part-time job posting to work at the AAC was brought to her attention by a friend, she jumped at the opportunity to pursue paid labour in her field of interest. Officially named Gallery Technician in January of 1983, Donna held that position for almost twenty years.⁹ Her creativeness as an artist is reflected in the following viewpoint; “Day by day is how I build my life and that is how I build my art. It begins somewhere in between the reality of the world around me and the fantasy of the inside me.”¹⁰ Inducted as a lifetime, honorary member with the AAC, she continues to paint and teaches art at both Michaels and Casa.

Kathy Hopkins (1985-2015)

Moving to Lethbridge in the 1970s with her husband and young family, Kathy described herself as an “arts neophyte” in search of cost-free activities for her children.¹¹ She recalls depending on the Lethbridge Public Library for such things as story time and puppet shows, and later valuing the opportunity to attend performances at the University of Lethbridge theater. Kathy’s relationship with the AAC was the result of the intersection of her position as Director of Community Services for the City of Lethbridge with the Council’s request for assistance in drafting first, a master plan in the late 1980s, and then later an official ‘arts policy’ statement in the late 1990s. Consulting with Lethbridge City Council members, AAC members, and several member groups, she was involved in

7 Donna Gallant interview by Elaine Toth, Lethbridge, Alberta, December 10, 2019.

8 Gallant interview.

9 Minutes of Allied Arts Council Board meeting, January 18, 1983.

10 Gallant interview.

11 Kathy Hopkins interview by Elaine Toth, November 13, 2019, Lethbridge, Alberta.

culminating a new vision for the arts community in Lethbridge. Her managerial position with the City of Lethbridge meant an ongoing relationship with the AAC and while her post-secondary degree focused on education and management, advocating for arts was central to both her personal and professional philosophy. Referring to the importance of having the AAC part of Lethbridge she said, “my life became enriched as a result of experience with the arts community – something I didn’t even know about, but it’s so accessible here because we’re a small community with outstanding opportunities.”¹² Recognized as a long-serving supporter of the AAC, Kathy holds status as a lifetime, honorary member since 2018.

Karen Kay (1975-1983)

Born in Lethbridge, Karen thoughtfully described her upbringing: “I grew up in a very loving home, and I was just a kid, and allowed to be a kid and, you know, we went from season to season playing – there was bicycle riding or roller skating, or, simple pleasures, but they were wonderful.”¹³ Exposure to the world of theatre began during her junior high years when her drama teacher seconded her as an usher for a Lethbridge Musical Theatre production. By the time she reached high school, choir, dance, musicals, and a love for the arts were routine in her life. Her involvement with the AAC began in the early 1970s as she became a youth board member. She stated that this was a time when provincial funding for the arts was more of a priority than it is now. Karen recalled her involvement in summer theatre as follows, “the Arts Council was very, very active in the visual arts”, and “in that time period... it was very much a little bit of everything, all aspects, not just performance.”¹⁴ Serving on the Board of Directors for years, she eventually became president of the AAC in 1982, while continuing to participate in many Lethbridge Musical Theatre productions. Presently serving as a director on the Board for

12 Hopkins interview.

13 Karen Kay interview by Elaine Toth, January 22, 2020, Lethbridge, Alberta.

14 Kay Interview

the Lethbridge & District Music and Speech Arts Festival Society, she was also inducted as a lifetime, honorary member of the AAC in March 1986.¹⁵

Laura Kenwood (2002-2007)

Laura's connection to Lethbridge and community began at a young age, as she grew up involved in a variety of extra-curricular activities. Developing a love for contemporary dance at a young age, her interest in the arts gained a foothold as she eventually became a student of art history at the University of Victoria. Referring to the 1980s and her time as a young adult, she said, "we flew by the seat of our pants and everybody encouraged you to do so – so when I grew up, Alberta culture was very much...was very prominent."

¹⁶ Laura's professional career in the art world as an educator, curator, and communications director at various galleries in Calgary, included working alongside Illingworth Kerr and other influential Canadian artists. Eventually moving back to Lethbridge, she brought with her a desire to stay active in the community. Taking a position on the Board of Directors of the AAC, she eventually became President in 2004, holding that position for two terms. Her attitude is as follows: "No matter how you define who you are in the community, you're part of it and it's only logical that if you have a concern, it needs to find a solution, because that's the way we're going to work together."¹⁷ Initiating what is now the AAC's annual Mayor's Luncheon for Business and the Arts and advocating for widespread support of the Casa project, she holds an honorary, lifetime designation as an AAC member, received in 2018.

15 Minutes of Allied Arts Council Board meeting, March 11, 1986.

16 Laura Kenwood interview by Elaine Toth, January 21, 2020, Lethbridge, Alberta.

17 Laura Kenwood interview by Elaine Toth, January 21, 2020, Lethbridge, Alberta.

Dawn Leite (2015-2020)

Born in Edmonton in 1980, Dawn said she “grew up in what I thought was a normal community.”¹⁸ Self-inspired and self-driven, her entry into the world of music and the arts began at a very young age upon discovery of a piano in her basement with “the letters on the keys written out, along with some old books in the seat.”¹⁹ Her interest in music was an organic process, and her participation as a band member in junior high and high school, and then later as a post-secondary student at Grant McEwan University and the University of Lethbridge, served as conduits to her numerous commitments which included the Lethbridge Symphony, the Lethbridge Community Band, and the University of Lethbridge Jazz Band. Dawn’s philosophy on the personal significance of connecting and promoting community and the arts is articulated in the following statement: “it wasn’t until I came to Lethbridge that I really understood what it meant to be part of a community and really saw my role within the arts community and how I could be a major player.”²⁰

Employed with the AAC since 2015, and Community Relations Manager since January 2019, her dedication to arts and the arts community is evident in her determination for a unified voice that advocates for a thriving art scene. Speaking to the value of the arts and why arts are important to her personally, she stated: “I’m not promoting events, I’m not promoting classes – I’m really in the community advocating on behalf of the Allied Arts Council.”²¹ Appointed to the Performing Arts Centre Steering Committee in 2018, Dawn’s passion for her career is evident as she ponders the question: “How can we continue to grow arts in this community?” followed by the statement, “we need to see growth in the arts community.”²²

18 Dawn Leite interview by Elaine Toth, June 15, 2020, Lethbridge, Alberta.

19 Leite interview.

20 Leite interview.

21 Leite interview.

22 Leite interview.

Suzanne Lint (2000 to present)

Suzanne is the current Executive Director of the AAC, a position she has held since 2002. Raised within a family who practiced and encouraged cultural and community awareness, she described her interest in art as follows: "I was interested in art personally at a young age and that was supported in the home....I never felt privileged financially, particularly, but did feel privileged in the environment I lived in...there was always books, there was always music."²³ Valuing the private art lessons she was afforded while a high school student, her interest in painting and drawing culminated in a Fine Arts degree from the University of Lethbridge. Despite working in a variety of fields including a managerial position for a marketing firm and serving as chair of the Lethbridge Catholic Separate School Board, her work as a studio artist and her connections to the art world remained a constant in her life. Suzanne recalled the beginnings of her employment with the AAC in the year 2000, as a part time program assistant under the leadership of Shirley Wyngaard: "it was twenty to thirty hours and it was program based - it was helping with the gallery and whatever came along... and then when Shirley decided to retire – I think she felt I could do her job."²⁴

Suzanne's ongoing passion and vision for the value of AAC and arts in our community are embodied in a statement quoted in the 2019 Lethbridge Community Foundation booklet: "The arts are integrated into all aspects of our lives – they provide identity and they make people feel better about themselves and the world they live in. The arts also provide an economic driver within the community."²⁵

23 Suzanne Lint interview by Elaine Toth, June 9, 2020, Lethbridge, Alberta.

24 Lint interview.

25 Lethbridge Community Foundation, <http://www.cflsa.ca/admin/resources/files/cflsa-giving-together-2019.pdf>

Darcy Logan (2001 – present)

Darcy is Casa's Curator and Gallery Services Manager, a position he has held both at the Bowman Arts Centre and now at Casa since its opening in 2013. Starting as a weekend attendant at the Bowman almost twenty years ago, his association with the AAC is extensive and his passion for Lethbridge's art and artists is conveyed throughout his interview. Encouraged by both his mother and uncle, his exposure to the arts began in his youth and continued with first, attendance at an art school in Grande Prairie, followed by completion of a Fine Arts degree at the University of Lethbridge. His artistic skills span drawing, writing, painting, sculptures, and some performance art including magic, seances and psychic performances.

Darcy's support of the AAC, along with its impact on Lethbridge and community is evident in the following statement: "This organization has grown and changed internally and changed the landscape of the arts community in Lethbridge since it started – from this really insular sort of organization to an organization that has got Casa built....all these incredible initiatives – I'm really proud of the fact that the AAC – we don't have a ton of funding comparatively – we don't have a ton of staff, but man, we punch above our weight and I'm always proud of that."²⁶

Peggy Mezei (2006 to Present)

Born Margaret Foster, Peggy's enthusiasm for music and the arts have long been a focus in her life. Leadership from her accomplished pianist mother meant deep-rooted involvement in music began at a young age for her and her five siblings. Her expertise playing the clarinet led to her moving away to earn music degrees from both Washington State University and Michigan State University, and her return to Lethbridge saw her joining the Faculty at the University of Lethbridge, eventually becoming the Director of the Conservatory of Music, a position she held for over twenty-five years. Recalling her

26 Darcy Logan interview by Elaine Toth, May 26, 2020, Lethbridge, Alberta

mother's influence, she said the following: "she knew the importance of music and not that she ever expected us to be professional musicians, but that the importance of the love of music and the arts was there."²⁷

Peggy's involvement with the AAC as a Board member began decades ago, however, beginning in 2019, she has held the position of Board President. Of her time on the AAC, she views her volunteer position as critical in terms of supporting the arts, the artists, and the longevity of the AAC.

Deb Rakos (2001-2003)

Born in Bassano, Alberta, Deb's interest in, and, talent as a weaver, has its roots in her involvement in the 4H sewing club in Taber. Recalling this part of her life, she stated, "I've always had an interest in fiber, like the home economics when you were in junior high and then I went to 4H, and I loved that always and I always like arty things."²⁸ Eventually moving to Lethbridge to complete her degree at the University of Lethbridge, an interest in quilting, hand-woven baskets and pottery led to weaving classes at the Lethbridge Community College. This precipitated a decades-long connection and a current, ongoing membership and active participation with the Lethbridge Handicraft Guild of Weavers. Her personal life mantra that each person should take on their share of volunteer work was communicated as follows, "my personal feeling is that when you're involved in something, you have to take your share of the work...people would take their turns and at some point, it was my turn, so I went on."²⁹ Deb holds true to her philosophy as she first became a volunteer member on the AAC Board and then was elected President of the Board of Directors for the years 2001 to 2003.

27 Peggy Mezei interview by Elaine Toth, May 27, 2020, Lethbridge, Alberta.

28 Deb Rakos interview by Elaine Toth, November 20, 2019, Lethbridge, Alberta.

29 Rakos interview.

Shirley Wyngaard (Hamilton) (1979 – 2002)

Born and raised in Southern Alberta and earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Bachelor of Education at the University of Lethbridge in 1981, Shirley's interest in painting was encouraged by her mother and maternal aunts who inspired an appreciation for nature, specifically the prairies. Referring to her family she said, "I was always interested in painting and observation because of my mother and her sisters... raised out in the rural area with a very large sensitivity to nature... we were always being made aware of the beauty of nature and the sadness of nature too."³⁰

Shirley's twenty-three-year career with the AAC began in 1979 when she accepted a volunteer position as art juror and gallery curator. Her volunteer work included developing and supporting educational and visual arts programs and community arts projects. Starting a full-time paid position in 1988, Shirley became AAC's Executive Director, a position she held for fourteen years before retiring. She received her AAC lifetime, honorary member status in 2018.



Honourary Life Members of the AAC 2018. Pictured left to right. Kathy Hopkins, Laura Kenwood, Rob Brown, Dr. Barbara Lacey, Karen Kay, and Donna Gallant

30 Shirley Wyngaard interview by Elaine Toth, November 22, 2019, Lethbridge. Alberta.

The phrase in the title of this essay, *Filling the Gap*, refers to narrowing the divide between what is preserved and archived in AAC's history via textual documents, with a history using personal testimony obtained during oral history interviews. The first chapter titled *From the Bowman Years to Growing Up: Exceeding Capacity, 1983-1999*, picks up on the AAC's twenty-fifth anniversary and focuses on the next sixteen years of rapid growth and change. Interviews with Karen Kay, Shirley Wyngaard, and Donna Gallant highlight the Council's varied projects and activities, along with exploring a myriad of ways art and artists were active in this time. As well, in her role as Director of Community Services for the City of Lethbridge, Kathy Hopkin's interview offers insight into civic policy as it related to building a constructive working relationship with the AAC.

Continuing to explore AAC projects and events, the second chapter titled *Reaching Out - Civic Engagement, 2000-2009*, also delves into the working relationship between the Mayor, City Council, and the AAC Board of Directors. Interviews with Laura Kenwood, Deb Rakos, and Ron Brown are added to those referenced in chapter one, each person recalling their personal memories as the AAC and art initiatives continued to thrive and grow.

Chapter Three is titled *The Changing Face of Lethbridge Arts – 2010-2018*. Highlighting the opening of Casa in 2013, it looks at what was and is needed for the arts community to widen its reach and secure its sustainability. Interviews with Suzanne Lint, Peggy Mezei, Darcy Logan, and Dawn Leite provide insight into current and future goals.

Chapter One

The Bowman Years:

Growing Up and Exceeding Capacity

1983-1999

The Allied Arts Council (AAC) was officially designated a not-for-profit organization in 1958, however its activities and community involvement remained undocumented for a quarter of a century. This changed when Dr. Alex Johnston's occasional paper titled *Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge-A History*, was completed in April 1983.³¹ Detailing the Council's first twenty-five years of activity, plans to formally publish it in book form were cancelled due to higher than anticipated costs. While council minutes formally acknowledge Dr. Johnston's charitable gesture to donate his writing and research time, and thus lower overall expenses, the decision to photocopy and spiral bind the fifty-eight page paper replaced formal publication.³² Because it is void of citations, references or bibliographic record, it cannot be considered an accredited academic source, however, its value is significant, not only in bringing awareness to the establishment of the AAC, but also in highlighting the AAC's influence on the artistic and cultural growth in Lethbridge and southern Alberta. The completion and subsequent formal launch of Dr. Johnston's paper was honoured in conjunction with grand festivities commemorating the AAC's twenty-fifth anniversary. Annual reports and minutes indicate 1983 celebratory events included a reception at the Genevieve E. Yates Memorial Centre, an open house and art exhibition at the Bowman Arts Centre and a production of the musical, *Talley's Folly*.³³

31 Dr. Alex Johnston, *Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge -A History-Occasional Paper 1*, 1983.

32 Minutes of Allied Arts Council Board meeting, March 24, 1983, and June 7, 1983.

33 Galt Museum and Archives, Lethbridge, Alberta, "25th Anniversary Committee," *Fonds 19901039030-75*, accessed June 16, 2020.



One of Joan Waterfield's many Performing Arts Summer Camp groups held at the Bowman in the 70s & 80s.



Joan Waterfield circa 1980s.



Dr. Van Christou 2014.

The remaining part of 1983 to the end of the twentieth century saw the AAC command a variety of energetic ventures under a new logo designed by Mary Gazetas, AAC visual arts sub-committee member.³⁴ Operating out of the Bowman Arts Centre and promoting the value of the arts and artists in the lives of all persons in Lethbridge and Southern Alberta, the AAC remained committed to the following mission statement:

The Allied Arts Council is a not for profit, umbrella organization that encourages and nurtures cultural pursuits to enhance the quality of life for the individual and our community.³⁵

Recognized as a historic site in 1982 by the Canadian Register of Historic Places, the Bowman building played a unique role that both complicated and advanced the AAC's aims and objectives.³⁶ Providing artistic space and place to many persons and groups over a span of almost fifty years, the Bowman's presence is referenced in many of the interviews in this paper, making it part of the AAC's collective memory and an important component to recognize in historical analysis. Oral history interviewees reveal that the building's presence was, at times, essential to the AAC's goals being met, and at other times, a contentious part of daily operations. For example, when asked to identify some of the more difficult aspects of being the AAC President, Karen Kay promptly answered:

I think the biggest barrier was the age of the building that the arts council was in. We certainly reached the goal of making the Bowman sustainable at that time.... let's face it, it's an old school and there were many, many, many, structural things...it's a building that has a ton of history.³⁷

34 Minutes of Annual General Meeting, February 24, 1984. Logo designed by Mary Gazetas.

35 See Appendix 3.

36 Canada's Historic Place, "Lethbridge Manual Training School, accessed June 8, 2020. <https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=18864&pid=0>

37 Kay interview.

Speaking to its intrinsic value, Dr. Johnston wrote “the AAC owes much of its success to the stable base represented by the Bowman Arts Centre.³⁸ Like Dr. Johnston, some of those interviewed deemed the building to be the very essence of the AAC’s identity, while others considered it a focal point, though not a defining entity. Irrespective of varying interpretations regarding its level of influence, the Bowman building commanded and continues to command a certain presence in the City of Lethbridge’s architectural landscape. The following five interview excerpts, beginning with Laura Kenwood, reveal how lines were often blurred when separating the AAC as an organization versus the Bowman Arts Centre as a building. Laura’s comments when she was first introduced to the Board of Directors in the 2002:

The institution had become its building – the Allied Arts... you were no longer going to an event with the Allied Arts Council... you were going to the Bowman Arts Centre.³⁹

Referencing the Bowman Arts Centre while recalling her employment interview with Joan Waterfield in 1982, Donna Gallant conveyed a sentimental attachment to it as a workspace:

I didn’t know I worked for the Allied Arts Council – I thought it was the Bowman, you know, and it wasn’t until talking with Shirley and like, Joan never said Allied Arts Council to me.

Oh, it was so much more homey, because it was an old building- Lots of creaks and whatever – lots of wood, wood is always homey right?⁴⁰

38 Johnston, 40.

39 Kenwood interview.

40 Gallant Interview

While reluctant to concede that the Bowman building defined the AAC, Karen Kay nevertheless commented on its widespread use and connection to the arts community:

The pottery was there, the Sketch Club was there, the weavers were there, and the board was very active in keeping that building going because it was old.... I mean it was the arts council's home, but I wouldn't identify the arts council by the building - absolutely not- not in my mind.⁴¹

Referring to the Bowman as a building that was 'given' to the AAC for a one dollar per year rental fee in return for a commitment to oversee maintenance, Shirley Wyngaard called it a home for the arts:

But it's an old building...there's requirements for a public building...so that became an undertaking...I think it gave the Arts Council a base, a visible place, an opportunity for rehearsals, for a gallery, for resident groups...a home for the arts...and it served it extremely well and I don't think the Arts Council would have had the long life and fruitful life if it hadn't had that base."⁴²

Succinctly describing just how complex the issues had become over the years, the final excerpt is from Kathy Hopkins, who recalled the words of Van Christou during a weekend art workshop in 1999:

This is my discovery in all this: Van and the others said, "the Allied Arts Council has lost its leadership role because it had begun to be the people who ran the Bowman." Their role became about that building and that's what got lost.

And the council's prime role had become this relationship of running the building, which was the basis of their relationship with the City because the City owned the building. So, the City gave them some money to run the building, take care of the building and their role has diminished from its original inception.....⁴³

41 Kay Interview

42 Wyngaard interview.

43 Hopkins interview.

Interviews, minutes, letters, and annual reports indicate multiple organizations and resident groups relied on the Bowman space for both professional and recreational purposes, making operating out of, and managing it, a complex undertaking. Challenges often mounted as renovations, both minor and major, grew more intense over the years. Regular 'house manager reports' beginning March 29, 1983, referenced the need for building improvements and other ongoing repairs related to the building's age. This included re-shingling the roof, painting the interior, replacing windows and lights, enclosing fire escapes, upgrading security, replacing radiators, refinishing floors, installing a new phone system, installing handicapped access and resolving an ongoing concern with nesting pigeons.⁴⁴ With limited funding, AAC members addressed as many issues as possible. Correspondence with the City of Lethbridge indicate certain repairs were labelled priorities to "maintain the safety and general level of maintenance" of the building.⁴⁵ Upon receipt of funding and grants from the Province of Alberta and the City of Lethbridge, renovations were categorized according to necessity, with re-shingling the roof and repairing the dance floor receiving priority.⁴⁶

In addition to dedicating energy to building maintenance and renovations, regular consultation with resident guilds, post-secondary learning institutions and other not-for-profit community organizations are witness to the AAC's intention to meet a wide range of artistic needs.⁴⁷ Upholding a mandate that nurtured a breadth of cultural and artistic pursuits necessitated regular board meetings continue, sometimes as often as two per month. With increased member organizations under its umbrella, open communication was a vital component in meeting overarching objectives.⁴⁸ Despite their efforts to

44 Allied Arts Council Board meeting minutes - March 29, 1983, September 1983, December 6, 1983, January 1985, June 1985, April 4, 1989, March 1990.

45 Letter to Brian Bourassa-City of Lethbridge, July 25, 1991; Allied Arts Council Board meeting minutes, October 8, 1998; Annual General Meeting February 25, 1985.

46 Letter from John Gogo, September 11, 1989; Allied Arts Council Board meeting minutes, September 11, 1997.

47 Allied Arts Council Board meeting minutes – May 24, 1983, December 11, 1984, March 11, 1985, May 1986, June 10, 1986, September 15, 1986, October 14, 1986, June 9, 1987, February 13, 1990.

48 Appendix 6– Synopsis of 1995 AAC Membership Fees.

address as many requests as possible, again, limited funds along with space restrictions meant some problems were not easily resolved. Evidenced in letters from resident groups and guilds, the AAC addressed an array of shifting needs, many pertaining to rental procedures, space restrictions, and building policies.⁴⁹ The rationale informing decisions did not always result in satisfaction to all and minutes indicate the AAC accepted this as part of their responsibility as both the managing body of Bowman operations and as advancers of art as a whole.

Archived documents reveal there was ongoing interest in contributing to the sustainability of a range of visual and performing arts groups and organizations and this, in turn, compelled the AAC to extend their reach beyond internal matters and offer aid when possible. Listing a select few examples here, this included the following: carrying short term loans for the Lethbridge Symphony and the Lethbridge Folk Club, granting sponsorship to the Pacific Ballet Company, annual donations to the Lethbridge Ballet Auxiliary and the Kiwanis Music Festival, gratuitous exhibition space for the Lethbridge Sketch Club, sponsorship of a Regional Dance Gala Canada event, complimentary reception space for the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, organizing and hosting the Playgoers One Act Drama Festival and no-charge rehearsal space to the Jabberwock Youth Theatre and the Fort Macleod Great West Summer Theater group.⁵⁰

The AAC's ongoing support of youth participation in performing arts is discussed in Karen Kay's interview. Beginning in junior high school, her connection to musical theatre and AAC-sponsored summer theatre, initiated her position on the Board as a youth member which was intended to procure a "younger perspective on things."⁵¹

49 Letters: Textile Workshop - November 16, 1989, Lethbridge Handicraft Guild-February 25, 1999.

50 Allied Arts Council Board meeting minutes dated January 23, 1984, February 21, 1984, May 15, 1984, January 1985, May 1985, October 17, 1985, March 16, 1987, July 1987, April 12, 1988, May 1988, April 6, 1989.

51 Kay interview.

Eventually leading to a long-term position, her memories of activities in the early 1970s up until about 1983 are as follows:

Those were rich years in the province and culture was very much one of the big benefits of being in a province that was going well...and Council brought in quality, quality performances of things that people would never have seen at that time...without travelling outside the city...the Royal Winnipeg Ballet used to come here – things like Jose Greco came here- there was always art gallery openings and really promoting local artists – the council at that time was very much an active working board...they brought in sets, helped strike down the set...sometimes housed the entertainers.⁵²

As an active working Board and one that has always been focused on promoting creative synergy between artists and artistic groups and the wider public, intersecting environment and audience has been a priority. Dedicated to engaging a wide array of public interest and encouraging exploration into the arts, an outdoor Art Walk was designed to navigate pedestrians through the City of Lethbridge to view public art venues. Promoted as a self-guided tour, Art Walk began in 1990 and was described in the AAC's 1995 report as "greatly enhancing the public image of the Council."⁵³ Identifying the important contribution of volunteers in this program, Donna Gallant remembered that Art Walk "had a lot of volunteers for that – sometimes I'd have to work with volunteers to help organize them, but most of the time Shirley kind of had that under control."⁵⁴

Affirming the positive influence of organized events on the growth of cultural and artistic interest, Shirley noted the following:

52 Kay interview.

53 Allied Arts Council board meeting minutes dated April 10, 1990; Final report dated February 1995.

54 Gallant interview.

Art Walk kind of evolved out of the Arts and Crafts Festival...and the AAC coordination of Art Walk for many years brought the art community together. When an economic downturn resulted in empty stores in the malls, we successfully negotiated the use of space for Art Walk reaching a greater audience and drawing customers.⁵⁵



Lethbridgians visiting Art Walk locations in the downtown core during Arts Days 2017. Photographer Henriette Plas

The opportunity to experience art by creating it oneself has also been a component in AAC's mandate. A part of the continued commitment to draw in children and youth participation, the "Visual Arts Summer School," was a vital tool to meet 'cultural pursuit' objectives as stated in the mission statement. With the option to choose from a wide range of hands-on artwork including clay, painting, drawing, and cartooning, summer classes for ages five to sixteen consistently reached enrollment capacity.⁵⁶

55 Wyngaard interview; Wyngaard, Shirley, "*Memories of Shirley (Hamilton) Wyngaard*," (December 18, 2019), 13.

56 Allied Arts Council Board meeting minutes dated September 13, 1983, September 15, 1986, 1992 Final Report.

Promotional pamphlets introduced the program as follows:

This course is designed for students who are interested in the visual arts and have taken some instruction but wish for a more intense, in depth and creative experience.⁵⁷

A performing arts for youth program was introduced in the summer of 1983.⁵⁸ Spearheaded by long-time AAC associate Joan Waterfield, the "Performing Arts Summer School," proved extremely popular as enrollment regularly reached capacity.⁵⁹ Directed to ages eleven to seventeen, it offered instruction in creative drama, speech, scene development and more. This program was geared towards anyone with "a desire to learn and an interest in the theatre are the only prerequisites for attending the Performing Arts Summer School."⁶⁰ Also further advancing community-art connections, classes with attention to arts education for adults with special needs was promoted for individuals as "an opportunity to express themselves creatively through visual arts, thereby enhancing the quality of life."⁶¹

Sentimental moments arise as Shirley Wyngaard and Donna Gallant recalled their personal memories:

Shirley: We didn't call it art therapy, because we weren't therapists, but it was special needs art programs – and that was a joy – that developed so beautifully – it was so successful, and the joy was when we had an exhibition of the work, and this very tall, young woman who was non-verbal, was grabbing people on the landing and bringing them, showing them, "I did this, I did this."⁶²

57 Pamphlet in Allied Arts Council 1989 meeting minutes file.

58 1992 Final Report.

59 Allied Arts Council Board meeting minutes dated February 2, 1982, February 1983, May 10, 1983, June 7, 1983, May 15, 1984, March 11, 1985, May 31, 1985, June 18, 1985, September 13, 1983, May 13, 1986, June 10, 1986, September 15, 1986, March 10, 1987, Annual General Meeting, March 10 1983, June 14, 1988.

60 Pamphlet - Allied Arts Council 1989 meeting minutes file.

61 Ibid.

62 Wyngaard interview.

Donna: Allied Arts Council also helped the public be aware of the arts...Through their education programs... I think of the kid's classes – the only thing they kind of lacked at the centre (the Bowman) was the music – Which now they have at Casa which is lovely when you're walking around and you hear someone playing or singing... Helping different community organizations, like special needs, getting programming for them and exhibitions... they had their core classes...drawing, painting...I taught for them and then I started teaching for the Senior's Centre as well.⁶³

The relationship between the AAC and both established, and neophyte, artists and artisans was evident in the ongoing support and promotion of regular art exhibitions in the Bowman Arts Centre.⁶⁴ Running for approximately three weeks at a time, selected artists were identified by name, medium and sometimes presentation title, then promoted via news release into the community. Exhibition openings were often accompanied by an evening reception with artists in attendance.⁶⁵ Not without a history of complicated interactions, the AAC also advocated for the artist by hosting a juried competition to have their work displayed at the annual AAC Arts and Craft Exhibition.⁶⁶ This was a popular event and while its objective was to execute a professional standard, this restriction meant novice artists often faced rejection. A first-time participant in 1979, Shirley Wyngaard recalled the first time she submitted a painting:

They invited recognized artists to come and select works from three or four hundred entries...and then that would be hung in the Bowman Gallery...they only had the one gallery space in the Bowman, so they really had to whittle it down, you know, even if you hung it floor to ceiling... it was so disappointing for somebody who is sort of just

63 Gallant interview.

64 News release in 1986 AAC correspondence file.

65 News release in 1986 AAC correspondence file.

66 A juried art competition is judged by a gallery director and/or a panel of established artists who select works they deem to be worthy of display. Helen Glazer, "Riding the Carousel-An Artist-Curator Looks at the Selection Process," *Art Papers* 20, (May-June 1996): 8-13.

learning and so excited to participate in an exhibition and that was one of the reasons to have this festival was to give a first-time exhibition opportunity.⁶⁷

Referring to artist dissatisfaction pertaining to AAC's selection process, Shirley stated that while her own submission was accepted, she felt compelled to compose a letter suggesting a new way to select artists, expand participation, and at the same time, build community relations. Remarkably, it was this letter and the suggestion to implement a three-tiered selection process that served as her introduction and eventual long-term involvement with the AAC. Expanding on the origins of her association with AAC, she described her thoughts at that time:

I wrote a letter offering the suggestion that perhaps they should do a three-tiered submission so that, you know, they could recognize excellence in any level – so they adopted that eventually, but then of course, it was me who ended up adopting it...it ended up that I was on the board and doing this role as a visual arts coordinator...an unpaid position.⁶⁸

Inextricably connected to her identity as an artist, Shirley Wyngaard's commitment to many aspects of the art community proved instrumental into what resulted in a multi-decades-long dedication as an AAC member and employee. Commenting on the number of challenges she faced as Executive Director, she laughed and stated:

Oh, shall we talk minute to minute? Balancing the board, the artists, the staff, the City, Alberta Culture or you know, provincial organizations, I mean there was a myriad of them, lifelong education, there's a whole list of board, and committees...⁶⁹

67 Wyngaard interview.

68 Wyngaard interview.

69 Wyngaard interview.

Throughout her interview Shirley Wyngaard was eager to name those who she identified as playing a significant role in assisting her while she was with the AAC. Highlighting the importance of teamwork and inclusion, she recounted being surrounded by various persons and groups who assisted her in completing tasks at hand. Her detailed memoir recalling her accomplishments and identifying key individuals while describing her growth and successes as an AAC member is included in the appendices of this paper.⁷⁰ The details in this document have not been independently verified and, as a result, are included as a personal and reflective addition to this essay.



Shirley Wyngaard

When asked to describe an achievement of which she is most proud in her time with AAC, Shirley laughed and indicated there were many. She began by talking about the Art Rental Program.⁷¹ Successfully merging corporations and other businesses into the arts and art community, this program began in 1991, and is described in the 1995 Annual General Meeting Final Report as a project that “draws attention to [the Allied

70 Wyngaard memoir – Appendix 7.

71 Allied Arts Council Board meeting minutes dates April 1991, May 1991, November 8 1994, February 14, 1995, Revenue Sheet September, 1996, Statement of Receipts and Disbursements January, 1997, August 7, 1997, AGM, February 1999.

Arts] Council.”⁷² Shirley described it as a way “to get artwork out there because not many people come into galleries.”⁷³ She cited Canbra Foods, a large local manufacturing company, as an example, noting they eagerly bought farm and rural artwork for their offices. Applying her formal art education background meant that all artists wishing to be considered for the program were required to present their work in a professional manner by preparing a portfolio that included a CV, up-to-date slides and prices.⁷⁴ Qualifying the program as an ideal way to promote regional local artwork, she recalled, “I remember one office which had to do with financial investments – they had engaged us and we had all these paintings in there and it really spiffed up their environment.”⁷⁵

During her employment with the AAC as Gallery Director, Donna Gallant worked alongside Shirley Wyngaard most of the time. Many of her memories also focused on the art rental program and its effect on her position as director and on her personal advancement as an artist. She began first by mentioning Shirley’s success in expanding gallery space which increased her opportunity to install exhibitions:

She found granting sources and different revenue avenues so that we could include more and so we went from one gallery space at the Bowman...to two gallery spaces... and then we got the Yates...and then twice a year we had City Chambers to set up an exhibition and then, she brought in the art rental – which was wonderful because it enabled people to get their work, their community, into the community, and it was much appreciated because I know whenever we’d go in and take a painting down, “Oh I really like that one.”⁷⁶

While recognizing it to be a labour-intensive project as clientele increased, she credited the Art Rental Program to furthering her career in its requirement for artists to

72 AGM, 1995.

73 Wyngaard interview.

74 Wyngaard interview.

75 Wyngaard interview.

76 Gallant interview.

execute a standard of professionalism when presenting works for curation. Indicating she was successful in selling her own works through the program, she stated:

Just knowing or being taught certain things – like I said, presentation is everything...when you're trying to get your work out there, you need to have it presented properly...it taught me how to present art and that's how I think they (Allied Arts Council) helped me with my career ...I was really disappointed when the art rental program became defunct.⁷⁷

Donna's memories of the program referenced opportunities to interact with other artists and performing groups that she otherwise would not have encountered:

I ended up matting and framing pieces for the artists – we also ended up doing resumes for them – we ended up photographing their work for slide presentation...really helping them get more professional in their approach to their presentation – their career.

We had dancers there too... like the Troyanda Dancers and the Musical Theatre – they used to come and rehearse there all the time at the Bowman, ya, New West Theatre when they first got started – they'd rehearse there, so, we got to know all the performers and stuff, so it was actually really fun.⁷⁸

As the decade neared its end, the AAC's relationship with the City of Lethbridge grew more complex. Kathy Hopkins reflects on what she identifies as a "change of necessity," which meant certain policies and decisions would be made by City Council members who demanded accountability in terms of organization, finances and often, personal political goals.⁷⁹ While externally associated with AAC operations, her perspective highlights the importance of a unified vision and strong leadership when aspiring to present the

77 Gallant interview.

78 Gallant interview.

79 Hopkins interview.

needs and wants of a large group. Survival of the collective, rather than the individual, is reflective of many decisions made by the AAC and remains a consistent theme in the next chapter.



Community mural project to cover an abandoned construction project on 7 Street South.

Chapter Two

Reaching Out – Civic Engagement

2000-2010

Reaching out and advocating for sustained civic engagement has long been on the Allied Arts Council's (AAC) agenda, gaining in intensity at the start of the new millennium. Beyond addressing the intersection of politics with access to arts and culture, a formal civic endorsement for the AAC would help ensure processes remained in place for sustained access to the arts for all citizens. In her interview harkening back to the time period 1975-1983, Karen Kay offered her perspective on the AAC's relationship with the City of Lethbridge:

The funding notwithstanding, when you're entrusted with funds that are meant to bring a piece of something to the community, you have to be very good stewards of those funds...by doing that, you enrich the community which only enriches the city, so to me it's a kind of symbiotic relationship.⁸⁰

Karen Kay's sentiment, while referencing decades gone by, is not ephemeral in nature, but rather is symbolic of AAC's ongoing mandate to secure a formal civic policy specific to the arts. By implementing a pro-active framework along with forming ad hoc committees, board meeting minutes indicate that strategizing with the city council began in earnest at the end of the twentieth century and remained constant.⁸¹ A formal

80 Kay interview.

81 Allied Arts Council Board meeting minutes dated February 13, 1990, November 10, 1992; Executive Director's report dated February 21, 1995.

presentation to Lethbridge City Council on December 2, 1996 titled the "Vision for the Arts and Culture Project," was touted as "advocacy being carried out for the purpose of gaining formal recognition of the importance of the arts to the health of our community." Defeated in City Council Chambers by five votes to three, it called for an official "statement of support of arts in the city," one that recognized AAC as spokespersons or liaison on art issues.⁸² Meeting transcripts indicate the majority of City Council members were against adopting a policy such as this, because it would, according to then Mayor David Carpenter, "create a suggestion that those not included under the umbrella of the AAC must deal with them (the AAC) prior to dealing with us (City Council), which we would not expect."⁸³

Despite facing such obstacles, forming a comprehensive civic arts policy remained active on the AAC's agenda.⁸⁴ In 2004, a steering committee, inclusive of artists and art organizations, proposed a two-day workshop to implement strategies that would once again advocate for securing a policy that offered "recognition, affirmation, support and value of the arts."⁸⁵ Bringing together over sixty participants from a cross section of local arts and culture partners and City of Lethbridge employees, the workshop was presented as a way for Lethbridge "to undergo a cultural renaissance drawing the eyes on its vibrant community."⁸⁶ A discussion paper titled "Development of a Municipal Cultural Policy," resulted from the workshop and was drafted and presented to City Council in the fall of 2005.⁸⁷ One of many statements indicative of the mindset evolving from this collaboration was as follows, "when you come to Lethbridge, you'll know you're among artists."⁸⁸ While a formal civic arts policy was never actually drafted and approved, the

82 Allied Arts Council Board meeting minutes, file labelled "Board Committee Meeting Minutes," April 1997 City Council Proceedings Transcript.

83 Allied Arts Council Board meeting minutes, file labelled "Board Committee Meeting Minutes," series of letters, dated April 4, 1997.

84 Allied Arts Council Board meeting minutes April 4, 1997, March 12, 1998, June 11, 1998; President's Report in AGM, 1999.

85 Allied Arts Council Board meeting minutes June 30, 2004, document titled *Arts and Culture in Lethbridge-Follow-Up Planning to Build A&C Policy*.

86 Ibid.

87 Allied Arts Council Board meeting minutes, City of Lethbridge document, October 2005.

88 Ibid.

AAC began to operate as a policy governing board during this time period, and in her role as Director of Community Services for the City of Lethbridge, Kathy Hopkins identified this as a significant moment in AAC history. She qualifies the AAC as a place where “all of the arts people could turn to get the support they needed:”⁸⁹

We managed to get about fifty, sixty people into a room on a Friday night and then all-day Saturday...we used a process called Future Search.... you start very, very softly, identifying the big pots of activity or the issues that need to be addressed that would block you from where we’ve been to where we’re going to go....and it’s an elaborate process....and it’s messy, but that’s why it takes long, because for everybody to get their voice...but there were some just, an amazing group of people who could pull out some amazing thoughts.

From that workshop, we moved to a new concept of policy for the City which was.... really, that the arts are important to our community and as such, the city will support the infrastructure and programs that are required to make that happen. But we will not be the provider and that was adamant in this discussion, at this workshop, that the City of Lethbridge would not, take over physical leadership of the arts – that would be delegated to, in policy, the Allied Arts Council.⁹⁰

An external, albeit, invested affiliate in AAC affairs, Kathy Hopkin’s lengthy relationship with the City of Lethbridge offers an intriguing perspective. Referring to the first few years into the new millennium, she summed up the tasks AAC faced when striving to raise their profile:

I think like everything else; it ebbs and flows and, there will be different pressures on a city from you know, one decade, or one double decade to the other – we have just gone through, and I happened to be there when it was,

89 Hopkins interview.

90 Hopkins interview.

when it emerged – a kind of renaissance in the relationship between the city, the council, which is different than the bureaucracy...

And then the council (City) and the board of the Council (AAC) and the leadership of the day has the wisdom to take a little bit of a political tone....and hence, they started an initiative that asked members, 'well what do you think about the arts?' and 'what would you support in the arts?' It certainly raised awareness at a political level, and the timing was almost perfect, not quite.... We, the city, received a lot of support from the province and building facilities through the first decade of the 2000's.⁹¹

Continuing to strive for improvements to Lethbridge's art facilities, in March, 2007, the AAC Facilities Committee introduced what was identified as a "grass roots campaign to raise awareness and support for its arts facilities in Lethbridge and surrounding region."⁹² Titled *Arts Re: Building Together-It's Time* this multi-tiered campaign called for the funding of a public art program, an expansion and upgrade to the Southern Alberta Art Gallery (SAAG), a vision for an expansion or replacement of the Bowman and a new performing arts centre.⁹³ Meant for wide public distribution, it included a call to the citizens of Lethbridge to add their voices to the AAC's pleas to City Council for funding, protection, and progress of the arts community. Commenting on success of the campaign thus far, Suzanne Lint wrote,

Arts Re:Building was an AAC initiative. The AAC board and staff worked with the City administration on assessing art facilities and launched an advocacy campaign geared towards the community and City Council to improve the art facilities in Lethbridge. It was very successful and resulted in the funding of a public art program, an expansion and upgrade of SAAG and the building of Casa. The final piece of the campaign was the building of a new Performing Arts Centre. We are still working on that one!⁹⁴

91 Hopkins interview.

92 Appendix 5.

93 Appendix 4.

94 Email from Suzanne Lint to Elaine Toth dated May, 18, 2020.

Opinions easily sparked when interviewees were asked to comment on the rapport between AAC and Lethbridge City Council. Influenced by a range of art-specific backgrounds, some intimated they felt City Council, at times, were indifferent towards the cruciality of art and culture initiatives in Lethbridge. Again, referring to her involvement at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Kathy Hopkins identified the procurement of public arts programs and policies as a 'journey' and stated the following about the role Lethbridge City Council played:

Arts Re:Building Together and that's been a struggle from the get-go but then again, that group was...they were there at the right time, at the right place lots of them had interest in the arts and they had this great big envelope of money that was going to last for almost twenty years and they just had to work on it and how to spend it wisely.⁹⁵

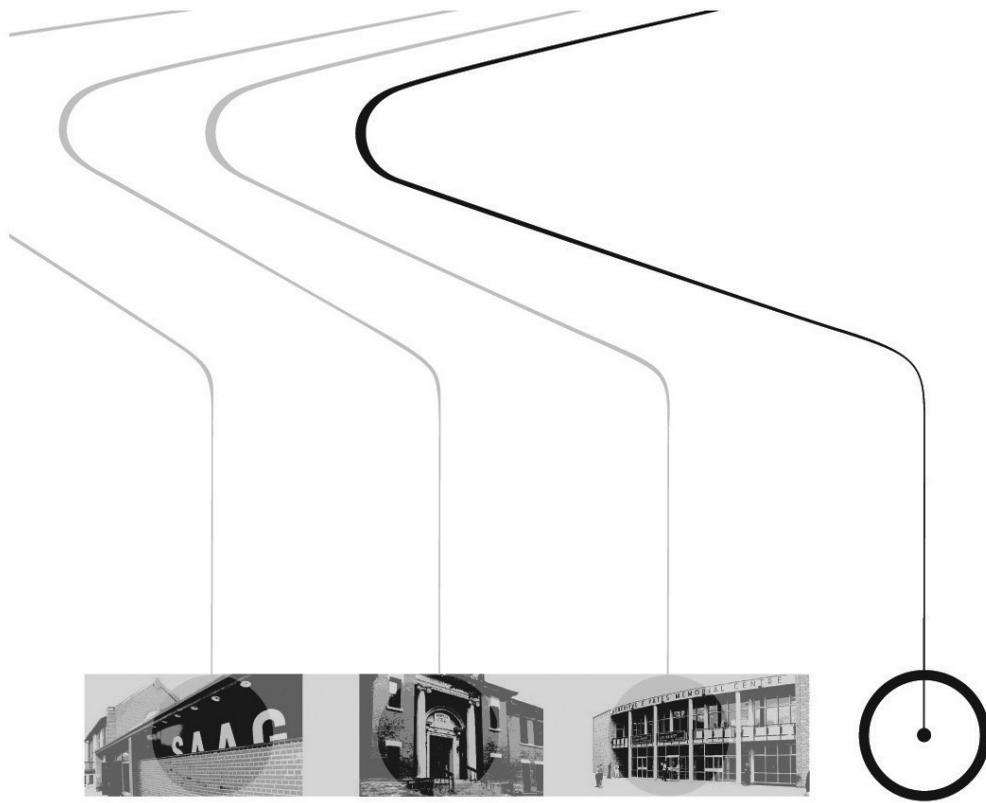
Deb Rakos talked about the importance of 'likeminded thinkers' when constructing a business plan and the necessity of asking questions such as 'what do we want to be out there and how do you get there?'⁹⁶ Her views on promoting a clearly laid out proposal that would support expansion five and ten years down the road, were as follows:

I learned that through work... there needs to be a plan, which we had people on Arts Council at that time, and I'm not trying to negate...but they didn't think like that: "well we don't have to do that – we're not a business." No, you're not a business, but you've got to have a plan and you've got to financially plan farther out than this year. The first one is always awful, but at the end – there was a plan and the plan said, "ya we want to be bigger; we want, we need the Bowman to be bigger – we want to incorporate more – there was concepts that looked out five years and ten years and said, "what do we want to be out there and how do you get there?" So, the work kind of started.⁹⁷

95 Hopkins interview

96 Rakos interview.

97 Rakos interview.



ARTS RE:BUILDING TOGETHER **it's time**



www.artslethbridge.org



The Arts Re:Building Together campaign had many communications pieces to help gather support and educate the community about the need for arts facilities in Lethbridge.

How do you start going after it? You know, instead of the one council member (city) who might be a member and they might get to one meeting a year (AAC meeting) or two meetings, no...you've got to get them on your side and you've got to get them to talk about the arts...you've got to get people (city council members) to come to the openings.⁹⁸

Shirley Wyngaard recalled her interactions with City Council when defending the need for AAC to operate as a separate entity from the SAAG. She began by discussing her connection to SAAG and then addressed the cruciality of community connection with the mayor and council members, some of whom placed art organizations as high priority:

I was a liaison on their board (SAAG)... we could collaborate, co-operate... We had a city council that really wanted to divide and conquer and they said we can't have Southern Alberta Art Gallery and the Bowman...of course, people who weren't savvy in the arts wouldn't understand that there's all different types of exhibition programs and mandates.

So, I went and gave a presentation to City Council – explained SAAG is an internationally recognized gallery with a totally different mandate than us (AAC)... we are more fostering and nurturing at the emerging art level. So, we satisfied them...I don't remember who the ones were who took issues, but the ones who really supported us were Barbara Lacey, Bridget Pastoor, Liz Iwaskiw and Bob Tarleck – they understood the role of the arts.⁹⁹

Ron Brown recalled how his initial role on AAC's Facilities Committee coincided with City of Lethbridge Council's focus on revitalization of the downtown. His frustrations are evident as he described attending City meetings which were often bureaucratic in nature and non-productive in terms of reaching consensus:

98 Rakos interview.

99 Wyngaard interview.

When I first started with the Allied Arts Council, the City was having a program about revitalizing the downtown... there had been money set aside – I think around 10 million in Carpenter's era – for rehabbing the Bowman, but they used the money on City Hall, which didn't sit too well with some of us, but I understood, like when we started going to the City Hall...we were trying to get the Casa building.¹⁰⁰

These perspectives reveal that securing official civic support for the art community was a complex undertaking, often requiring long term commitment from those who were dedicated to creating art-promoting policies for approval, funding, and implementation. Unsurprisingly, there is a mix of opinion on how to best to address disparities, while at the same time, defend the cultural life of the community. The intricate role AAC plays on behalf of Lethbridge can be further evaluated by exploring the effect of arts, both direct and indirect, on industry. When asked for their personal insight on how arts contribute to Lethbridge's economy, interviewees readily responded with a wide range of considerations. Both Ron Brown and Donna Gallant identify a trickle-down effect connecting arts activity to a post-secondary education and increases in job security:

Ron: Evidence is the fact that we've had people get on the board who were new to the community.... especially people who've gone a little higher in education...it behooves us to have an education system in place.¹⁰¹

Donna: It's quite important because, not just industry, but jobs, you know it helps with the growth...I have to give the University most of the credit though, because once they got into the picture – once they started having classes, our base of artists, not just visual artists, but performing artists and the rest of the group – because now we had young people coming into the community that wanted to do something.¹⁰²

100 Brown interview.

101 Brown interview.

102 Gallant interview.

Shirley Wyngaard referenced the effect of multiple cultural facilities as a conspicuous drawing tool:

Any industry that does its homework and knows that there's a university and a college, and art galleries, and performing arts centers and all kinds of groups and organizations related to the arts, and does not utilize that as an attraction for selecting to have their business in a community... because when they want to engage top-end employees who have families, they want to have the arts and culture and they also want to have recreation facilities and good schools – those would be my questions when I'm moving.¹⁰³

Arguing for its positive influence on economic impact rather than economic interest, Kathy Hopkin's consideration of the AAC as a direct drawing card for industry prompted the following reflection:

It (industry) has everything to do with what draws economic interest – does it (the AAC) have economic impact? Yes, but...our largest economic contributors in Lethbridge are all public institutions...one is the Regional Health Authority – which is bigger than it ever was - the University, and then it's a tight race for third and fourth between the City and College. It (the AAC) can make people move there because of their employer, have a better quality of life and their employer and people exercise that. It isn't about bringing the industry – it's about bringing the individuals for the industries. Which is a different perspective.¹⁰⁴

Connected to her long-term career with the City's electrical department, Deb Rako's answer reflected her involvement when tasked with attracting highly-skilled line workers to Lethbridge for employment. She refers to the merits of art and cultural diversity:

103 Wyngaard interview.

104 Hopkins interview.

I work in the electric industry and for many, many years, it was a big issue of attracting linemen...Fordis, Trans Alta – they could out pay us by a long shot...how can you get them here? It's a lifestyle thing, right?

But I think generally, as industry is becoming more diverse and our community is growing and changing, and people are coming from all over the world, culturally, they look for lifestyle.... culturally, they look for lifestyle.... cultural things are never based on industry – they're based on tradition, which is food, culture, art, music, so you need...if you're attracting people, you have to offer them something like that in your community – so ya, I think having a strong arts community is big for businesses.¹⁰⁵



Key to the City presented to the Allied Arts Council on November 13, 2009 by Mayor Robert Tarleck

As a professional artist and a long-time employee of the AAC, Darcy Logan's response summarized the dynamics existing between art and industry and Lethbridge City Council:

That's absolutely critical and it's had its ups and downs. It always depends on, I guess, how open and visionary

105 Rakos interview.

you have your council at any given time... you can't ever predict that, and I think it goes through cycles.

If you're going to expand your business or if you're looking at a place to open a new branch of your business, and you want young, invested people to go there and work, you've got to have a rich, interesting, vibrant community and an important facet of that is an arts community.¹⁰⁶

The notion of art and industry as mutually beneficial to a rich and vibrant community is an often-overlooked commodity. Valuable for its educational, social, and economic contributions, this interdependent relationship also applies to public art installations. In their study of the effects of urban regeneration and public art, researchers Tim Hall and Iain Robertson write, "public art projects have sought to articulate and communicate what some have seen as four values fundamental to community development: shared history, identity, needs, and aspirations."¹⁰⁷ Touted as a "vital ingredient in the cultural fabric of Lethbridge," and created in part, to foster community engagement with the arts, the City of Lethbridge's formal public arts policy was enacted on October 1, 2007.¹⁰⁸ Heeding the words in the 2004 document titled *Arts and Culture in Lethbridge - Follow-up Planning to Build A&C Policy*, the AAC members serving on the City of Lethbridge's Public Art Committee continue to promote a vision that "embraces all individuals to celebrate the beauty of their creative skills."¹⁰⁹

Briefly referenced in chapter one, the capacity for AAC's annual Art Walk to reach a wide audience and promote public art is further addressed in the following interview excerpts. When interviewees were asked for their reflections, Hall and Robertson's 'four values fundamental to community development' frequently arose.

106 Logan interview.

107 Tim Hall and Iain Robertson, "Public Art and Urban Regeneration: Advocacy, Claims and Critical Debates," *Landscape Research* 26, no. 1 (2001): 10.

108 Appendix 4.

109 Allied Arts Council Board meeting minutes, document "Arts & Culture in Lethbridge-Follow-Up Planning to Build A&C Policy, June 30, 2004.

Beginning with Ron Brown, whose answer was both animated and telling of his passion for specific types of art designated as public, is consideration that there exists a wide range of community needs:



Installation of *A Departure* by Ilan Sandler on October 13, 2009

I think it's really important, (public art) like, you know if you go to the airport in Calgary, there's a guy named Roenisch... Rich Roenisch, he did the massive big life size bronzes – I love his stuff. I've got clients that, they don't buy much art... now there are some really wealthy people –oil people especially in Calgary who bought my stuff because they want it in their office...

(Public art pieces are) getting to be more and more (in Lethbridge) absolutely important...Some things...I'm thinking.... Suzanne...what were you thinking? I don't like them at all. But you know you don't have to like it you just have to appreciate the fact that it needs to be there... not so much because it stops the wind or we're going to grow rutabagas – it just needs to be there because – we celebrate our art.¹¹⁰

110 Brown interview.

Deb Rakos' outlook on public art considers fiscal management and is telling of her long-term experience working in the Rates and Regulatory Department for the City of Lethbridge. When asked about City Council and their influence on advancing public art, she answered as follows:

If there's a dollar attached to it, there's going to be an effect – that's what I think... when the province tightens up, everybody has to jump suit...they tend to sacrifice things that they think the broadest community is willing to give up – I think that the arts are considered by some people to be frivolous – they're an extra – of course we support the arts when there's extra money.¹¹¹

Laura Kenwood addressed how Lethbridge's shared history and identity can be represented in public art:

Well, again I think it's essential – I am a firm believer of having people understand what they're looking at...I think that's very important, especially in a community like ours where we have so many types of people informing what we're doing – if you go to the Farmer's Market on Saturday morning, you're very struck by our agrarian cousins and the people who are bringing artwork in, aren't falling under that definition – they are seeing things differently and inventively and spontaneously and that's all great. To invest in art, for the City to invest in art, it really has to be wide reaching, but it has to be done rather carefully.

I think that public art, first of all, needs to be recognized as such and needs to be understood as such and hopefully through those two entities, it can be appreciated.¹¹²

Addressing the controversy that occasionally accompanies the cost of public art installations, Karen Kay's answer referenced its ability to spark strong personal reactions. Referring to AAC's civic responsibility she said:

111 Rakos interview.

112 Kenwood interview.

I don't think it's up to [City] Council to try and please everybody, because they never will...I think they have to be very cognizant of where the money is coming from and I think they also have to be very transparent as to where the money is coming from (because) if somebody's street is not being plowed and they see \$40,000 go into a piece.... they don't get it and I don't blame them.

It's very complicated and somewhat controversial. I'll be honest and say I don't like some of it, but I don't mind it either...I appreciate it enough to know when I like something when I don't, I figure if it makes me think about it, then I must appreciate it.

I think it's the responsibility sometimes to have that public art incorporate itself into one's life in the community without even worrying about it – whether you like it, whether you don't like it – it's just part of your existence, because you know that it's there.¹¹³

Concluding this chapter, Kathy Hopkin's intimate and lengthy response addressed the role of public art as a conduit to social awareness. Referring to the establishment of an arts policy, her thoughts addressed the challenges of capturing the characteristics of a community along with highlighting the labors and necessity for the City and AAC to work together to promote art education and social change:

When you talk about the relationship between the City and Allied Arts, or in general, in the arts community, I think it's quite remarkable when an organization like the Allied Arts Council takes on something that's a little bit unknown to the community. So, building a theatre is known -we have two of them.... we know what an art gallery looks like, we understand what a symphony sounds like...but when you talk about public art – it's very, very different.

So, establishing a public art policy and a funding mechanism, and most importantly, a way of procuring it, opens us into something that's foreign to almost every ordinary citizen including the people that work for the city – so procuring

113 Kay interview.

art is quite different than procuring pipe for a project... So, I think it's (the Public Art Policy) an example of where the Allied Arts Council really did demonstrate leadership that pulled the City into a domain that was very trusting.



Installation of *Sphere of Social Consensus and Influence* on 7 Street in commemoration the AAC's 50th Anniversary.

The City Council trusted Allied Arts Council to go forth, do this with a process, be sensitive to the political implications of going out on the edge... I think the projects that were selected and chosen have done a really great job.

Her favorite: I can't even remember what its proper name is, but the wheels at the edge of the coulees (A Departure by artist Ilan Sandler) – I walk by there probably twice a

week and I think it's a remarkable piece.... that was the first piece, listening to the whole process that was used to have artists bid the work and how much effort they put into putting that forward and having that respect for what an artist brings... And the other one in it was because of the firehall – the smoke – that was a department that worked – that was under me and getting that new fire headquarters was a big deal and that piece of art on that location and that artist and his empathy for what was required and yet it was something that was so outside of what anybody would have expected (Signal by artist Douglas Senft) ... the retired fire chief was on City Council at the time, when he saw it, he started to cry – isn't that what art is supposed to do?¹¹⁴



Signal. Sculpture by Douglas Senft.

114 Hopkins interview.

Fostering civic engagement while promoting the arts as necessary to a healthy and vibrant community is a complex undertaking and one that AAC continues to address and take seriously. Shaping the future for the better, the next chapter focuses on further developing and acknowledging their civic role as an arts organization, while at the same time, vibrantly pursuing the long-term benefits for every citizen when arts and artists are viewed as investments in urban growth. A difficult task at the heart of this work is also its most rewarding: reaching out and becoming an active and engaged part of the community.



Casa a month prior to opening. Photo taken on April 9, 2013.



Chapter Three

The Changing Face of Lethbridge Arts

2010-2018

Taken from the 2007 document titled *Arts Re:Building Together: It's Time*, the following quote captures the essence of this chapter: "The arts are not a luxury. They are a natural expression of our innate creativity as human beings."¹¹⁵ Such is the prevalence heard in the interviews of those whose voices are highlighted in the following pages and who are currently associated either as employees of the Allied Arts Council (AAC), or as a Board member of the AAC. Suzanne Lint, Darcy Logan, Peggy Mezei, and Dawn Leite are integral to our arts community, and the work they do underscores the future of the arts. Capturing their dedication to the AAC and to the City of Lethbridge, their stories draw attention to educating, promoting, celebrating, and ensuring opportunities are available for everyone to access the arts and to have the arts play a fundamental role in daily life.

The completion of Casa, open to the community in May 2013, is a physical manifestation of the above philosophy. Focused on growth and expansion, Suzanne reflected on the opening in her 2013 Annual Executive Director's report:

The past year was a time of change and growth for the Allied Arts precipitated by the completion of the new community arts centre. Opening Casa presented great challenges as well as great rewards as we worked to maintain on-going programming while adding new and expanded programs

115 Document dated March 19, 2007 Appendix 5

for the facility.¹¹⁶

Referred to as a “truly functional 42,000 square foot art centre,” it advocates for the arts and the artist and was “designed to provide appropriate space for the creation and presentation of works of art from artists working in all disciplines.”¹¹⁷ Now in its sixth year of operation, the Arts Lethbridge website reflects on Casa as follows:

Casa is the realization of a 20-year dream, shared by many in the Lethbridge arts community, to expand or replace the Bowman Arts Centre. This unique new facility far surpasses the original vision for expansion and sets a new standard for interdisciplinary arts centres. It is about experimentation, incubation, learning and growing. Casa was built to serve a multi-generational community, with varying art skill sets and interests in all disciplines of the arts.¹¹⁷

For the majority of interviewees, personal memories surrounding the creation of Casa embraced both the complexities and nuances attached to sustaining arts awareness. The following excerpts begin with Darcy Logan, who mentions Lethbridge City Council and the role its members played:

When Casa was built, we had a real visionary council... these people really got things done and there was also the big push for the downtown Heart of the City revitalization... I think Casa got built at a unique moment in time...and maybe... before or after as brackets, it wouldn't have happened.¹¹⁸

Calling her personal journey with the AAC an “evolution with the arts and with

116 Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge, Annual Report, 2013, <https://issuu.com/aacleth/docs/aacannualgeneral-report2013> accessed June 30, 2020.

117 Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge, Annual Report, 2013, <https://issuu.com/aacleth/docs/aacannualgeneral-report2013> accessed June 30, 2020.

118 Logan Interview

the community;” Suzanne Lint discussed how a unified voice with those she worked with contributed to Casa being built:

There were people that serendipitously wanted the world to look different... when Casa was being built – there were these people that really did believe that arts had value... they had these community pillars and one of them was arts and culture.

It’s almost unbelievable that it happened in some ways. Again, it was like a moment in time when a bunch of things came together, and we ended up with something that’s pretty amazing.¹¹⁹

Ron Brown’s memories of Casa are specific to early-stage discussions and provide a viewpoint indicative of the hurdles faced by those who were striving to ensure art and artist sustainability was secure and open to growth:

We had meetings, sometimes two or three a week...trying to get them to build us a building and then we went to almost every council meeting, sat there and listened to the crap that politicians.... politicians tend to hedge their bets, so getting re-elected is primary and the bad part about it is, there is nothing guaranteed that what they say today is actually going to be tomorrow – frustrating for me because I wanted to get this building built.¹²⁰

119 Lint interview.

120 Brown interview.

Spanning both the past and the present, Donna Gallant's reflections addressed a viewpoint encompassing her experience both as a past employee of the Bowman Arts Centre and a sessional art instructor at Casa:

The only thing they kind of lacked there at the center (Bowman) was the music - which now they have at Casa which is lovely when you're walking around and you hear somebody playing or singing or something – so that makes Casa lively – but they don't have as much activity going on like they had at the Bowman – because they don't have the potters there anymore – the weavers are not there as often as they used to be and the textile people and I think the stained-glass people are gone now too. But the woodcarvers are there and the people down near the offices, they're much more visual, so people can see them – so, you know, there's pros and cons to both places – we've got more integration in Casa than we did at the Bowman.^{121 122}

Donna Gallant was not alone in her feelings surrounding the advantages and disadvantages of leaving the Bowman. Often referred to as the "Bowman Years," many had long-term connections to its presence, either as individuals or as part of a guild and many were resistant to altering what they considered a time-honoured tradition. It seems for those whose artistic history was tied the Bowman, space and place represented a bond between its people and their lived experiences. Albeit a small representation of those connected to the Bowman over the years, the above reflections are important and contribute to the overarching history that helps define the collective memory of those past and present.

121 Gallant interview.

122 *Editor's note:* Upon the closure of the Bowman, the Oldman Potters Guild and the Stained-Glass Society chose to move to private locations. Casa has in fact attracted new clay artists to its studios and pottery remains one of the more popular activities at the centre. The Lethbridge Weavers Guild have permanent studio space in Casa. The Textile Surface Design Guild and the Lethbridge Artists Club also actively use the centre.

In discussions about AAC's identity, Laura Kenwood recalled the beginning of her term as President in 2002, and her determination to resolve issues surrounding the emotional and physical attachment to the Bowman:

I'd attended a few meetings, and I was very struck by one very key thing...and that was that the institution had become its building.... you were no longer going to an event with the Allied Arts Council... you were going to the Bowman Arts Centre – so I said, kind of quietly, but stridently, "what if we moved the administration out of the Bowman Arts Centre, gave it its own identity and then went back and talked to the membership and asked them what they needed in order to succeed?" ... and by the time...I would sense that I'm now in the Chair, and those were very interesting conversations – they were not for the faint of heart.

I've always come out of community and understood that no matter how you define who you are in the community, you're a part of it and it's only logical that if you have a concern, it needs to find a solution because that's the way we're going to work together and I think that's what ended up culminating with the benefit of what is now Casa.¹²³

Expanding on Laura's reference to finding a solution, Deb Rakos pondered how collaborative efforts focused on what was needed and how AAC members rallied to address past issues, and how that has impacted who the AAC is today:

The Arts Council itself had to be stronger in order to help new groups develop and to help the existing groups have better facilities... I think they've become an amazing thing in the last eight years... I think now Lethbridge Arts Council can hold themselves on par with any of the big cities...

123 Kenwood interview.

I think that the community as whole – if you think of what was our arts feel to our community twenty years ago compared to what it is now, I think that people would say, “oh no, no, - we have a very strong art and music community.” Which I think twenty years ago, people would have said no.¹²⁴

When asked to recall his time at the Bowman, Darcy Logan added to Laura Kenwood’s comments by addressing some of the limitations faced and referencing a lack of inclusivity and a narrower vision:

When I kind of entered into the art community in Lethbridge... there were a lot of schisms and divisions and polarizations, but I’ve really made it my personal goal to try and make the arts an arena where everybody gets to participate because I think we’re all richer for it.

It’s been a long journey – I know when I first started at the Bowman – the Bowman has a reputation for.. they showed watercolors by people that liked to paint on Sunday afternoons and I came out of the University as an academic and I wanted to kind of raise the profile and it’s been a long journey, but a satisfying one I think to build the program.¹²⁵

Raising the profile and building the program encompasses a large part of what was implemented in the past and continues to be an ongoing focus in the present. An expression of culture and values, deep-rooted protocols and beliefs also strive to recognize the driving innovation that exists behind the individual artist. Artist advocacy is prevalent in the following interview excerpts along with supporting a viable environment for artists to create their art and earn a living. Reflecting on his role as Casa’s Curator and Gallery Services Manager, Darcy Logan’s thoughts are holistic in terms of including both the professional and the budding artist:

124 Rakos interview.

125 Logan Interview.

I really enjoy giving an opportunity for artists, professional artists, working at a high level to show in the main gallery, but equally, I love people that wander in and say, "I've never shown anything, what do you think?" and I say, "we have all these wonderful auxiliary spaces-let's give you your first exhibition ever!" ...and sometimes you get some really amazing things.

We play the role of giving artists a very serious and legitimate entry into the arts – we're the sort of gallery where you might have your first show, or maybe you're a mid-career artist that's had some fairly successful exhibitions and you want to share what you do with the community...

When we opened Casa, we talked about it being an arts incubator which was a great term – where you can nurture people, especially emerging and career artists.¹²²

Suzanne Lint addressed the Bowman history as a necessary and natural progression in the development of AAC programs. For her, it was a means of growth that was, at the time, both complicated and harmonizing:

You know, we have the organization in '58 that moves into the Bowman (in 1967) and gets the stability of the Bowman and needs that in order to go onto the next... so then it carries on until you get into 2000, where the decision was made to move over here and shift again – move away from being just about the Bowman. The organization needed that major shift into this leadership role – to re-envision itself and move forward and now we have Casa.¹²⁶

Coming from another direction, she also reflected on the role of the AAC to address conservatism and bureaucratic restrictions:

Part of our role and our work should be artist-focused, and I'll say it again – it's the work we do in our community and we talk about public art and I feel our role is to bridge the

artist through the bureaucracy... it's an interface between the artist and what they do and the larger community and making a place for the artist...and I think when you look at our mission, that's what it is....to advance, enhance and grow the arts.¹²⁷

As a volunteer and engaged AAC Board member, Peggy Mezei's response furthered Suzanne Lint's sentiment for creating support for artists in our community and is reflective of current global challenges related to COVID-19. She states that everyone is concerned and:

It's too bad Covid is happening... but how do we support these artists... this is their life and now there's funding for it – there's nobody coming to classes...everybody's been very creative and one of our board's stances is, "well if we're not going to support these artists, who's going to support them? So, we are behind them 100% to make sure that we push them through to the next stage in all of this.

We have to stay in the forefront – we have to keep advocating for the arts – we have to have them out there and often you will run an event, and it's not so much to remind the artists of what it is, it's to remind the rest of the community of what we are – so the artists always support things like that.¹²⁸



AACE Award statuettes.

127 Lint Interview

128 Mezei Interview

A dedicated member of the AAC team since 2015, Dawn Leite's passion as Community Relations Manager is palpable as she expanded on the above excerpts by detailing events and celebrations that inspire her work. Beginning with the annual Mayor's Luncheon, launched in 2006 (the brainchild of Laura Kenwood et al), she talks about celebrating the inextricable connection between the artist, arts community, local businesses, and the City of Lethbridge. She referenced the importance of building community relationships and about recognizing those artists who can be defined as 'arts champions':

The luncheon itself is first, to recognize and celebrate the critical relationship between business, arts, and the municipality and how when you have these three working together, you create that vibrant arts community, you create that community that is attractive for other businesses.... then at that event, we host and recognize arts champions within the community.

There's one award called AACE...Allied Arts Council Excellence Awards and there's three categories: individual, business, and service organization. We've had the Joan Waterfield award, now for, I think seventeen years and that is, I guess in the most laymen's terms, a lifetime achievement award to an individual demonstrating leadership and mentorship...

There are two new awards – the Young Artist Award for someone who is between the age of eighteen and thirty-five who is just in the initial stages of their training but are demonstrating community to community. And then, our newest award, the Aspiring Artist is the same equivalency of that Young Artist, but younger, so grades nine through twelve.¹²⁹

While tackling a variety of themes throughout this project, all interviewees bore a strong resemblance to one another in their promotion and celebration of the arts as an exercise in inclusivity. Dawn Leite's enthusiastic manner when discussing additional events and projects further illustrates how a commitment to camaraderie is woven into the AAC mandate:

I think the Lieutenant Governor's Distinguished Artist's Awards that the Allied Arts Council co-hosted with the City of Lethbridge in 2016... that event consisted of a reception at City Hall, a gala performance at the Yates and then a gala dinner at the Lethbridge Lodge... folks attended, not just from Lethbridge, but all over the province... and then to see Lethbridge artists...because we engaged with Lethbridge area artists to produce the shows...was a real fantastic event.

The Kiosk Project*: Suzanne saw in Old Montreal a number of years ago, these shipping containers that were converted into little artist kiosks and the work that was required through the City with their development process and the collaboration then with the team over at Casa to work together and to finally see that come to fruition after we just had the idea.¹³⁰

When asked to identify a personal pride moment, Dawn Leite paused before speaking. She then thoughtfully and quietly said, "I think all of it."¹³¹ What is expressed here emerges in the collective memory of all interviewed and in the way the AAC influences each person's sense of belonging, sense of place and identity. Interviewee's views on strengthening the connection between people, place and the arts also extends to the notice of volunteerism. While the contributions of volunteer time are not extensively

130 Leite interview. *As per Allied Arts Council Annual Report 2018, the artist kiosks were made possible through a grant received by the Community Foundation of Lethbridge and Southern Alberta "in support of a project to convert sea-cans to be used as artist kiosks in Rotary Square

131 Leite Interview



Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Arts Awards. VIPs arrive at the Genevieve E. Yates Memorial Centre in 2015. Photographer Henriette Plas.



Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Arts Awards after party at Casa in 2015. Photographer Henriette Plas.

explored, when questioned, interviewees identify it as significantly contributing to the Council's sustainability. Coping with unending budgetary restrictions, volunteers not only enhance the quality of the arts and community, some even contending they have kept AAC a viable organization. Karen Kay, who began her association with the arts community as a volunteer usher in her teens for Lethbridge Musical Theatre, states, "had the volunteers not existed, the Arts Council would not have existed."¹³² Laura Kenwood refers to its benefits on a grander scale:

I don't know of any event that a public art institution and/or organization can put forward without relying on the benefit of volunteers and it's such a wonderful way to activate the people too – it begins to share that notion of ownership back.¹³³

Speaking as a long-time volunteer within the arts and other areas of community service, Deb Rakos' reflections are symptomatic of her exposure to a wide range of organizations that depend on volunteers:

In this world we live in today, I actually am a little concerned with what's going to happen and what the long-term prognosis is for a lot of community things – I see a general reluctance of people to step up and volunteer – they don't volunteer as much.....I think that if you, when you volunteer, it's not... it is what you're giving to the organization, but I think that you as a person, also grow and learn so much.¹³⁴

Both Peggy Mezei and Dawn Leite's analysis of volunteerism is specific to the Board as they each pay tribute to those who serve now, along with the history of the many who came before them. When asked about the impact of volunteerism Peggy Mezei said, "it's

132 Kay interview.

133 Kenwood interview.

134 Rakos interview.

critical,” and she is referring to the breadth of those she is serving with right now who willingly volunteer their expertise at monthly meetings. She added they all:

Advocate for all the arts there, so we're very mindful on...we take a broad view of the community and a lot of people think, well...you're all artists. And that's not true at all because we have an accountant, we have a lawyer, we have a downtown businessman; we have a person that's retired and has been in the arts...so we try to be global, we touch all areas to come in and nobody has any (personal) agenda here.¹³⁵

Dawn Leite further expanded on the leadership of the Board of Directors by first commenting on volunteers in general: “Volunteers play a role in the success of any arts organization, of any organization, absolutely” followed by emphasizing their ability as a group to form a viable concept and work together:

The board is volunteer-run, and they are providing the strategic leadership for the organization – they are steering the boat for us and then it's up to the relationship that the president has through with the executive director and then the executive director with the staff to be able to provide the “how are we going to get there?” So, certainly leadership through the Board in identifying what those priorities are and steering the boat in that direction.

A lot of it has to do with Suzanne and her direction, but a lot of it has to do with those fifteen people (original) and now nine people sitting around that board table. They do their own work in understanding what the vision is for the organization and for the arts overall.... that's all-volunteer work... really that visionary, that strategic piece is really coming from the board as a volunteer component.¹³⁶

The capacity for volunteer Board members and AAC employees to act together, provide leadership, and address matters of art in our community is crucial in its ongoing

135 Mezei interview.

136 Leite interview.

interaction with those who do not have a vested interest in artistic matters. Revisiting the contribution of public art to community awareness, the next four excerpts supplement discussions contained in Chapter Two. Referring to processes involved in the installation of A Departure in 2009, Suzanne Lint identified its contribution to placemaking:

I think public art is placemaking...it is something that gives community identity – it gives people something to rally around...you know the pieces become sort of, part of our cultural identity...we as people relate to them...I also believe public art is just about things...its also about public engagement.

I really like Departure...it was done to recognize the anniversary of the Bridge. It was funded by the City – it was the first real big project in terms of budget and there being a national call.... bringing artists in for a site visit... going through a juried process with an established jury... there's all kinds of layers to that particular piece...Ilan (the artist) contracted a local artist to help him with the install... so one of our artists got to work on a project with a senior artist...everything about that was fabulous.

Putting public art into our community is a way to advance, enhance and grow because it's good for people and it's about community development.¹³⁷

Darcy Logan, Peggy Mezei, and Dawn Leite's views on public art relate to creating communication and public awareness by addressing its vested interest in community building:

Darcy: I think public art is important – again when you go to any interesting city, you experience public art – it brings dialogue and discourse and conversation around art that maybe wouldn't happen – it beautifies the city..

I think there should be a balance between these monumental pieces of 'plop art'... with I think more social intervention and ephemeral type of public art, like for

137 Lint Interview

example, an archive of oral history of something that's happened.¹³⁸



A Departure. Sculpture by Ilan Sandler.

Peggy: Absolutely needs to happen and it's about, not about the money, but it reminds all of us in the community of art – whether it be a statue, like on Mayor Magrath Drive (Migratory Gift), whether it's a mural on a wall and that's to say, "wow that's pretty nice."¹³⁹

Dawn: I think it engages the community with art in a way that maybe they didn't anticipate and if the public art piece has done its job well, it encourages strong reactions – positive or negative – I think it enhances community – I think it enhances placemaking – it creates conversation.¹⁴⁰

138 Logan Interview

139 Mezei Interview

140 Leite Interview

Amid discussions of public art and the AAC's annual Arts Days, Casa classes, programs, workshops, gallery exhibitions, and music, dance, theatre, and other celebratory events, there occurred talks associated with the creation of a performing arts centre. Notions of design, purpose, space, and place enthusiastically surfaced when interviewees were asked for their concept; for their vision; and for their dream of what a center might look like. Darcy Logan explained that the centre was proposed as part of the 2007 Arts Re:Building movement and that, "it was a multi-tiered kind of advocacy approach to get the first expansion of the SAAG done, and then the building of Casa and then the third advocacy part was going to be the construction of the performing arts centre."¹⁴¹ Peggy Mezei eagerly discussed her focus for a performing arts centre:

Future endeavours for me is the Performing Arts Centre – I think its really critical for this city moving forward and I believe that it will happen and it's just getting the right facility for our community – it's supported by the Allied Arts Council 100%...

I think it absolutely should be in the downtown core – it needs to be – we had a discussion on this and I'll steal somebody else's words – "purposely built" a performing arts centre that is everything to all people ... for a population that is continuing to grow.¹⁴²

Dawn Leite discussed how her influence and participation as AAC's lead staff member in meetings, includes a responsibility for her to address intricacies that bind her to this community:

I think the biggest challenge in my role as Community Relations with the Allied Arts Council is when we do need to be coming together as a unified voice.... Particularly around the performing arts centre – certainly, in the last five years

141 Logan interview.

142 Mezei interview.

that I've been here – I've been lead staff member on that and to be able to go to meetings or any kind of public event – you want to have that unified voice of the arts community to be able to say, "this is what we need," and certainly, around the performing arts centre because every organization is going to have its own take of what it is that they want.

So, for me to see the evolution of the organization for fifteen years and where it has come to, where it is now, and then the potential-if the Performing Arts Centre was to come online.... personally, and professionally, my hope is that that facility would be run by the Allied Arts Council as well, and then to see the potential future of the Allied Arts Council growing and expanding that way.

I keep on going back and forth between two locations: Either Civic Square where the old Y was, or right beside Casa – closing down 7th Street and the reason why I flip-flop is, I think if it was to be downtown, downtown proper, not on the periphery downtown, it really can solidify what that cultural corridor looks like with Casa, a Performing Arts Centre and SAAG... but then I look at Civic Centre and what the Civic Commons master plan wants to try to achieve, with having a real community civic space and.... because, you have City Hall, you have the Yates, so it could be a theatre corridor, there right?

The ways in which those involved in AAC encourage people to explore their creative side is multi-faceted and its aim continues to be wide-reaching. The goal to create artistic connections between people, while difficult at times, improves social interaction, along with appreciation of one another's differences and similarities as humans. Expanding on some of the challenges they have encountered, Peggy Mezei and Dawn Leite offer the following intimate observations:

Peggy: It goes back to my first comment which is that you know, you do music lessons, not because you think you're going to come out here and be a professional but you're going to have a person that truly comes out and understands, or appreciates, maybe not understands, but appreciates the arts and I always say, there's just more than one way to support our arts community and it doesn't have to be money – it doesn't have to be playing an instrument or being a painter... its appreciation and saying, you know what: Have you been to Casa lately to see what's going on in there? Have you heard the music? Have you seen the potters? You know, that's for everybody –that's not for an elite group – that's for everybody.¹⁴³



First concert held at Casa May 2013.

Dawn: Communicating and advocating to the community - the value of the arts is really a big challenge... I think people inherently understand that they like art – they like music, they like dancing, they like theatre, but to

143 Mezei interview.

articulate to an individual why the municipalities should be supporting the arts umbrella, with your tax dollars – why the provincial government should not be cutting funding for the provincial arts funding - why the federal government should be increasing dollars – that is, I think, the biggest challenge.... advocating that value.¹⁴⁴



Arts Days 2013 in the Casa Clay Studio.

The changing face of Lethbridge arts is powerful and plays an important role in the overall well-being of our community. What is at stake in this ongoing conversation about the arts? A powerful means to encourage dialogue and diverse ideas and perspectives, all designed to connect us and meaningfully shape our futures. In other words, a necessity in all our lives.

144 Leite interview.



Box City at Family Fun Day in 2017

Conclusion

Recent research by King's College London titled *The Civic Role of Arts Organisations: A Literature Review* for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, draws awareness to the intersection of arts organizations with civic responsibility. Addressing matters of politics, social justice, financial challenges, and citizen rights, much of their analysis can be applied to issues faced by Lethbridge's AAC. Describing how arts organizations affect place, people, and civic matters, the review states "the arts can be used to provoke, to catalyse, to enable and inhibit the way that people engage with the world around them."¹⁴⁵ Marking a sixty-year commitment to fulfilling and growing their civic role, this statement speaks loudly to the AAC's philosophy.

Celebrating its sixtieth year in 2018, an "arts focused gala celebration" honoured the AAC's diamond anniversary.¹⁴⁶ In addition to new marketing and communication logos recognizing both the Council and Casa, an endowment fund was created through the Community Foundation of Lethbridge and Southwestern Alberta. Providing "an essential initiative that will provide further stability and financial sustainability for arts programming in the future," creation of this fund is representative of the commitment of those past and present, since 1958, who have striven to maintain arts in the community. Speaking on behalf of the AAC and Casa in a 2018 on-air video broadcast with Radio station 98.1, Dawn Leite excitedly talked about celebratory plans and the launch of the fund:

145 The Civic Role of Arts Organizations: Kings College London, accessed July 3, 2020, p 3. <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/cultural/resources/reports/cgf-civic-role-literature-review-final.pdf>

146 Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge, Annual Report 2018, <https://issuu.com/aacleth/docs/aacreportweb2018>

It's going to be at Casa, we're going to open up our art-making spaces, you get to come make art, do some dance lessons, there's going to be clay opportunities, some paper marbling...we're going to have nibbles from LA Chefs, we're working with Coulee Brew to do an 'artsy fartsy' ale, Eric Dyck did our label for us, which is amazing.... we have a martini bar.... we're converting our community room into a martini lounge... we'll have Cal Toth performing on the piano, we'll have swing dance lessons up in the dance studio, we're going to have a wine bar, desserts, it's just going to be an all-round good night – we're going to have caricatures, so if you want your caricature done, come and do that, living statues, we're going to have live music...it's just a celebration of the arts and all monies raised is going to our endowment.

So, there's lots going on, but not your typical fundraiser... it's a night to come out, let loose, celebrate the arts!¹⁴⁷

Titled Sixty Years Young, the gala was an extraordinarily successful event, and surpassing its target starting sum of \$10,000, the endowment fund officially opened in October 2018 with a grand total contribution of \$14,162.¹⁴⁸

Most important, now under the weight of COVID-19, is consideration of what it means in the future for those who continue to dedicate their livelihood, their volunteer time, and their commitment to sustain an engaged arts sector. All interviewees were passionate in their viewpoints that people will continue to come together in the creation and celebration of all things art. Suzanne Lint's optimistic reflection concludes this essay's interview excerpts:

It's always about quality of life and it's not just arts and culture, but it's all those things that make a community the kind of place you want to live, so, it's the parks and its arts and culture institutions, it's recreation institutions – people want to be able to go to the theatre and shop....

147 98.1 The Bridge, "Allied Arts Council-60th Anniversary," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4M-COamedA9k>

148 Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge, Annual Report 2018.



Performers during the Allied Arts Council's 60th Anniversary in 2018. Photo by Courtney Faulkner.



Upside Downtown Concert with Shaela Miller in July 2021.

eat in nice restaurants, have cultural experiences – those are the kinds of places you want to go visit and those are the kinds of places we want to live.

I think that's why this organization exists – I think Van Christou and his friends knew that...and throughout our history, there's been people along the way, there's been good board members who know that, there's been good City people who know that, and there's been good community supporters who know that.¹⁴⁹

When you talk about Arts Days and all of the things that we do to create awareness and move out into the community with the arts.... we're always evaluating those. There will be those things, but they may look different if we need them to look different in order to continue to grow and support the community.

It's a really interesting time to be sort of writing this piece, because...you know if we cover right up until today, 2020.... that filling the gap.... what happens in 2021 is going to look remarkably different – so then there will be a morphing of Mayor's Luncheon and Arts Days and all those things out of necessity this year and as a result – maybe there will be something better.¹⁵⁰

This essay begins by asking if we can ever know each other in the slightest without the arts. The answer gleaned from those interviewed for this project is straightforward: no, we cannot. Reflected in each person's story are the ways in which art was, and is, a manifestation of one's engagement with the world, how one seeks to understand it and how we communicate and learn from one another through artistic expression. As AAC members, both past and present, each person reveals an intimate connection with their own artistic passion; with those they work with; with those they advocate for; and with those they are drawn towards who seek to ensure art continues to "provoke, to catalyse, to enable and inhibit the way that people engage with the world around them."¹⁵¹

149 Lint interview.

150 Lint interview.

151 The Civic Role of Arts Organizations: Kings College London.

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Appendix 1

Oral History Interview Details

Brown, Ron, interview conducted on January 22, 2020 - Allied Arts Council Boardroom, 318 – 7 St. South, Lethbridge, Alberta.

Gallant, Donna, interview conducted on December 10, 2019 - 120 Beaverpond Court North, Lethbridge, Alberta.

Hopkins, Kathy, interview conducted on November 13, 2019 - Casa, 230 – 8 St. South, Lethbridge, Alberta.

Kay, Karen, interview conducted on January 22, 2020 - Allied Arts Council Meeting Room, Lethbridge, Alberta.

Kenwood, Laura, interview conducted on January 21, 2020 - Allied Arts Council Boardroom, 318 – 7 St. South, Lethbridge, Alberta.

Leite, Dawn, interview conducted on June 15, 2020 - Allied Arts Council Boardroom, 318 – 7 St. South, Lethbridge, Alberta.

Lint, Suzanne, interview conducted on June 9, 2020 - Allied Arts Council Boardroom, 318 – 7 St. South, Lethbridge, Alberta.

Logan, Darcy, interviewed conducted on May 26, 2020 - Allied Arts Council Meeting Room, 318 – 7 St. South, Lethbridge, Alberta.

Mezei, Peggy, interview conducted on May 27, 2020 - Allied Arts Council Meeting Room, 318 – 7 St. South, Lethbridge, Alberta

Rakos, Deb, interview conducted on November 20, 2019 - 31 Coachwood Road West, Lethbridge, Alberta.

Wyngaard, Shirley, interview conducted on November 22, 2019 - Allied Arts Council Boardroom, 318 – 7 St. South, Lethbridge, Alberta.

*Digital recordings and transcripts stored in Allied Arts Council office:

318 7 St South, Lethbridge, Alberta, T1J 2G2.

*All interviews conducted and transcribed by Elaine Toth.

Appendix 2

Draft Mission Statement

10.c.3

Revised Draft 2, September 29, 1999

Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge Bylaws

Description

The name of the Society shall be The *Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge*.

The Mission Statement of the Society is:

The Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge is a not for profit, umbrella organization that encourages and nurtures cultural pursuits to enhance the quality of life for the individual and our community.

The Objects of the Society are:

- a) To encourage, foster and sponsor cultural activities in Lethbridge and district.
- b) To aid in coordinating the activities of member groups.
- c) To co-operate with other persons, groups or individuals engaged in the promotion of cultural activities; to provide facilities for the cultural development of the community or for the pursuit of objects similar to the Society.

Appendix 3

Logo designed by Mary Gazeta

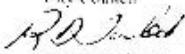


Evolution of the AAC logo.



Appendix 4

City of Lethbridge Public Art Policy - 2007

Number: CC 36
Administered by: City Council
Approved by: 
Effective date: October 1, 2007
Page: 1 of 2



CITY OF
Lethbridge

PUBLIC ART POLICY

PURPOSE

The Council of the City of Lethbridge has a broad mandate to provide good government, develop a safe and viable community and to supply desirable and/or necessary services to the community. The purpose of this policy is to establish the framework for the acquisition of public art.

PERSONS AFFECTED

City Council/Department of Recreation, Parks and Culture/Community Groups, Organizations/Allied Arts Council/Artists/Businesses/Citizens

POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the City of Lethbridge to support the acquisition of public art. Public art is a vital ingredient in the cultural fabric of Lethbridge. This policy provides a framework for developing public art that:

- Builds a visually rich environment.
- Plays a role in attracting creative businesses and workers.
- Provides arts opportunities that are freely accessible to all.
- Encourages the growth of a culturally informed public.

The outcome will be a distinct and vibrant artistic legacy for citizens of Lethbridge.

RESPONSIBILITIES

City Council to:

- a. Provide an additional 1% of total cost of all Community Services capital projects within each 3-year Capital Improvement Program
- b. Allocate 10% of each year's public art fund to a maintenance reserve
- c. Establish a volunteer advisory body called the Public Art Committee
- d. Be the final approving body

Community Services Department to:

- a. Liaise with Public Art Committee
- b. Establish an ongoing maintenance program
- c. Coordinate the installation of public art projects

The Public Art Committee to:

- a. Advise on public art policies and guidelines
- b. Participate in the development of a Public Art Master Plan and individual public art project plans
- c. Coordinate the adjudication process for acquiring public art
- d. Develop and implement a communications framework
- e. Ensure the maintenance and support of the Public Art Collection
- f. Provide advice on the decommissioning of public art

DEFINITIONS

Public Art will be defined as that which:

- builds a visually rich environment.
- provides art that is accessible to the community at large.
- reflects our diverse culture and celebrates our living heritage.
- demonstrates diverse expressions of art.
- encourages knowledge and understanding of art.
- creates pride and achievement in the community.
- ensures a lasting legacy.
- provides an opportunity for business to participate in a public art program.
- applies only to visual art.

REFERENCE

- Civic Arts Policy

REVIEW/REVISION HISTORY

- Replaces City Council Policy #24 reissued October 15, 1986 - The City of Lethbridge Art Acquisition Program
- October 1, 2007: Re-issued (CC30)

Appendix 5

Arts Re:Building Together – It's Time

Introducing a grass roots campaign initiative to raise awareness and support for arts facilities in Lethbridge and our surrounding region.

Arts
Re:Building
Together
it's time

This campaign is a symbiotic development in line with the current facilities review being conducted by the city of Lethbridge. Today and tomorrow, the city is holding an open house regarding its review of city facilities in the atrium of City Hall and we encourage all citizens to attend this open house and have their say.

The Arts Re:Building Together Campaign identifies our city's three arts buildings: the Yates Memorial Centre, the Bowman Arts Centre and The Southern Alberta Art Gallery as cornerstone facilities in our community requiring care and attention to growth. These are represented by the three yellow dots. The final purple circle is not filled in and it symbolizes the future performing arts centre.

The Allied Arts Council and the Facilities Steering Committee – composed of representatives from the Bowman Arts Centre, Lethbridge Musical Theatre, Lethbridge Symphony, New West Theatre, the SAAG, Lethbridge College, City of Lethbridge Community Services, Downtown BRZ, Economic Development Lethbridge, and University of Lethbridge – Firmly believe that the time has come for the city to reinvest in all our arts facilities.

Since 1963 the Bowman Arts Centre has been the centre of arts programming in Lethbridge. There are 5 resident guilds and 20 groups that use the Bowman on a regular basis. Add to that: visual art, speech, dance, performing art classes and 2 functioning community galleries. It's not uncommon to brush shoulders with a potter, a ballerina, a weaver and a musician all on the same crowded stair, at the same time. This is a critical facility to the life of arts programming in Lethbridge and it has not seen a significant capital investment in terms of upgrade or expansion to meet the growth of this city, since the building was occupied in 1963, and our population was a mere 35,000 people.

The SAAG was the result of grass roots movement and farsighted vision. Since 1976, the gallery has helped to broaden the exposure of southern Albertans to activities in the visual arts on a provincial, national and international level. With an extensive archive of its program, the activities of the gallery are well known across the country. The facility consists of the 1927 Carnegie Library building and the 1953 addition – the gallery has functioned in the same space for over 30 years with minimal capital reinvestment and no expansion. The facility requires a major upgrade and a modest expansion at the rear of the building.

Through the muck and mire of much controversy - The Yates Memorial Centre was built in 1966. A fine dignified civic building, it serves well as a community theatre but is beyond its capacity now. There are grave acoustic and capacity limiting issues that are financially prohibitive to

address within the current building. When the Yates was built the population of Lethbridge was about 38,000 people. Today our population is over double, and projections put Lethbridge at over 100,000 people in less than 25 years. We together must have the vision to recognize that our city needs a new performing arts centre capable of addressing the acoustic and capacity issues as our city continues to grow.

The *Arts Re:Building Together – its Time* campaign is about raising public awareness regarding the need to address current capacity and facility issues at our civic arts facilities, and to plan for the future of our city as well.

The arts are not a luxury. They are a natural expression of our innate creativity as human beings. Arts in Lethbridge contribute to our quality of life, our economy and our sense of identity and our ability to attract and retain a quality workforce in a highly competitive provincial marketplace. Cities the world over recognize the arts as attractors of growth and prosperity.

In Lethbridge, we have many blessings, and specifically we have a wealth and diversity of artistic expression in our community – much of it invisible at times due to limiting capacity in facilities that have not seen any significant capital investment in forty years.

The Allied Arts Council asks all citizens of Lethbridge to add their voices to this movement.

In the days and weeks ahead people will start seeing these posters and buttons throughout the city in various locations. We ask every citizen to add their voices by filling out postcards and sending them into to this office or dropping them off at the Yates, the SAAG or the Bowman. It is critical that our city council get the message from our concerned community. This is the first step.

Our website: www.artslethbridge.org will also have this information on it under the heading of the campaign logo.

The next step is the announcement of a capital fundraising campaign.

The Allied Arts Council is taking the initiative by dedicating our current building fund of \$40,000 to a capital projects fund, with an additional \$10,000 earmarked for marketing and fundraising strategies.

With this \$50,000 donation, the Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge is prepared to be a committed partner in this fundraising campaign. We look forward to the months ahead in developing this fund with the help of partners.

It's time. We have an obligation to advocate for the vision of a Lethbridge that has Arts Facilities that **enhance our quality of life while** reflecting our rich and diverse arts.

Let's start building that future today.

AAC Facilities Committee, March 19, 2007

Appendix 6

Synopsis of 1995 AAC Membership Fees

Synopsis of 1995 AAC Membership Fees January 21, 1997		A:\AACMEM95.WQ1 D.Gilbertson
DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	REC.#
1 Lethbridge Handicraft Guild	\$16.05	85694
2 Lethbridge Sketch Club	\$16.05	85699
3 Textile Surface Design Guild	\$16.05	85697
4 Oldman River Potters Guild	\$16.05	85696
5 Highland Dance	\$16.05	85721
6 Canadian Fed.of Univ.Women	\$16.05	
7 Toastmasters	\$16.05	85702
8 Czech Society	\$16.05	85722
9 Galt Museum	\$16.05	
10 Guitar society of Lethbridge	\$16.05	
11 Beta Sigma Phi City Council	\$16.05	
12 Centennial Quilters	\$16.05	85708
13 Leth.Community Band	\$16.05	
14 Leth.Community College	\$16.05	85716
15 Leth.Photo Club	\$16.05	85719
16 Leth.Public Library	\$16.05	85723
17 Leth.Stained Glass	\$16.05	85732
18 Mathesis Club	\$16.05	85724
19 New West Theatre	\$16.05	85715
20 Playgoer's of Lethbridge	\$16.05	85717
21 P.E.S.G.	\$16.05	85709
22 S.A.A.G.	\$16.05	85707
23 Young Croatian Dancers	\$16.05	
24 Lethbridge Symphony Assoc.	\$16.05	85698
25 University of Lethbridge	\$16.05	85700 *
26 Yates Memorial Centre	\$16.05	85701
27 Star Singers	\$16.05	85703
28 Kiwanis	\$16.05	85704
29 Musical Theatre	\$16.05	85706
30 Southern Alberta Ethnic Assoc.	\$16.05	85711
31 Anne Campbell Singers assoc.	\$16.05	85712
32 Jolliffe Academy	\$16.05	85713
33 Lethbridge Ballet Auxilliary	\$16.05	85713
34 Centre Stage Productions	\$16.05	85714
35 New West Theatre	\$16.05	85715
36 Troyanda Dance	\$16.05	85734
37 Friendship Force	\$16.05	85774
38 Lethbridge Regis.Music Teachers	\$16.05	
39 Lethbridge Folk Club	\$16.05	85767
	=====	
TOTAL EXPECTED MEMBER FEES:	\$625.95	

Appendix 7

As Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge
Memories of Shirley (Hamilton) Wyngaard
Volunteer 1979 - 1988 Board Service/Curator/Programmer
Executive Director/Curator/Programmer 1988 - 2002

Mandate/Mission

I considered my role, as a volunteer or as Executive Director, was to carry out the mandate/mission of the Allied Arts Council which was to foster and nurture the arts in our community. Presently the terms used are to enhance and advance. This was a good fit with my personal philosophy in that I regard the fine arts to be an integral aspect of a healthy society, and I regard creative expression essential to the well-being of individuals.

My involvement with AAC commenced as a result of writing to AAC in response to complaints made about too many works being "juried out" in the AAC Arts and Crafts Exhibition. My submission to the exhibition had been included, so I felt comfortable presenting ideas to address this issue. I suggested a three-level entry format which would allow for more entries being accepted. The jury could feel more comfortable and fair in their decision process, and thus able to recognize achievement and encourage development at several levels.

This letter resulted in my receiving a call from Carol Watkinson of the Allied Arts Council requesting me to come in and discuss the possibility of serving on the Board. Carol was passionate about the AAC and the arts. She had a twinkle in her eyes and a "big laugh" that drew you in. After long, valuable service, Kathy Evins, visual arts instructor and set designer, was retiring from her involvement with AAC at that time. I then started my involvement as a Board Member.

I had the privilege of working as a volunteer alongside Joan Waterfield (the then AAC Administrator, writer, actress, director and teacher) for many years. I learned a great deal about the performing arts and event planning from her. During this time she encouraged me to fill the growing demands of Visual Arts Program development and pursue other opportunities coordinating community projects like Art Walk. This included acting as Curator of the Galleries and developing educational programming. This was all undertaken as a volunteer with a small honourarium to cover my expenses.

Joan Waterfield had advised me that "you attract more bees with honey than with vinegar." When we received criticism I perceived it as an opportunity to inform, seek information and understanding, formulate ideas, and to invite the critic to become involved.

At this time I was also working toward completing my BFA and BEd at the U of L. While taking an Arts Administration course from Robert Cook, the Dean of Fine Arts, he often called upon me for first hand stories and situations in Arts Administration to share with students.

Fostering and nurturing required seeking an awareness of needs and developing projects, programs and events to meet these needs. It was essential to pay attention to the arts community and to the community as a whole. I firmly believed in the "grass roots" principle of identifying real needs rather than dictating needs from above to match "agendas."

Sometimes this was achieved through AAC initiative and often this was in collaboration with other

organizations, agencies and individuals. This was integral to the umbrella role of AAC with 30 to 40 Member Organizations. Members included a small Textile Arts group to the SAAG, Lethbridge Folk Club, the Jolliffe Dance Academy, Troyanda Dancers, Oldman River Potters Guild, the Handicraft Guild, Lethbridge Sketch Club, Toastmasters, Lethbridge Musical Theater, Lethbridge Playgoers, New West Theatre, Lethbridge Public Library, Lethbridge Symphony, Lethbridge Community Band, Galt Museum, Lethbridge Community College and University of Lethbridge with diverse needs and roles related to the mandate/mission of the AAC.

The role of the AAC was complex in that it served as an “umbrella” and also a direct provider with its own programs and facilities.

There was also a political “balancing act” among Member Organizations (including the Southern Alberta Art Gallery, the University and College, AAC itself) the City of Lethbridge, the Provincial Government (Alberta Culture, Alberta Art Foundation) and other agencies. I found I was always on the alert to the need for clarification of roles and opportunities to create “win/win” results.

With multiple service and program providers, we all had to ensure that our activities would not be considered a duplication of services. Arts Council often undertook pilot project which developed into strong, viable programs. Eventually other entities wanted to start similar programs or sometimes take over programs because they had grown too large for our facility and staff such as the larger Performing Arts sponsorships. This situation required awareness, honesty, sensitivity and a lot of public relations.

I was engaged in being involved in a number of Committees and Boards (Lifelong Learning, Yates Memorial Theatre Plan Development, Alberta Arts Foundation Juries, Southern Alberta Art Gallery Board, LCC Fine Arts Education Advisory Board, a Member of the Alberta Municipal Association for Culture and many others). By collaborating with others, offering council and grass roots support and through networking, I made a conscious effort to fill gaps, foster cooperation, initiate collaboration when appropriate, and be complementary rather than competitive in our initiatives.

A case in point was the annual fundraising (for galleries, arts groups, artists and craftspersons) Xmas sales at the Bowman and the SAAG. At first they were on different dates. I could see the benefit of them taking place at the same time and made this suggestion. After some resistance the plan was adopted. It was very successful with increased attendance on the “Xmas Sale weekend.” Later however, commercial entities caught on and held trades fair like sales which were not in the same spirit of original art and craft. However, I hear that the pendulum has swung back to a strong original art and craft event(s) again successfully take place.

The long life of AAC has always involved change and growth which requires a willingness to cooperate, collaborate or to let go and move ahead with new ideas. The “measure” is if the change meets the Mission and Mandate of the Organization and will it be a positive benefit to the community as a whole in the long term?

Performing Arts

In the Performing Arts AAC provided assistance with sponsorship, volunteers, the provision of rehearsal space, selling tickets and promotion. This included Lethbridge Musical Theater, Playgoers, the Lethbridge Symphony, New West Theater, Drama Festivals, Dance Festivals, Kiwanis Music Festival, the Christmas Pantomime (initiated by Muriel Jolliffe) and many more including touring productions like the Royal Winnipeg Ballet.

The AAC involvement in the Performing arts changed greatly through the years of my involvement:

The Sterndale Bennett Theatre was added to the Yates complex. The more intimate "black box" theatre greatly enhanced City performing arts facilities, but reduced demand for rehearsal space at the Bowman. We experienced wonderful support and assistance from Yates Manager Ed Bailey and his staff Valadis ? and Gus Credico during theatre events and with the Yates Gallery.

AAC had been a major sponsor of touring performing Arts including the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, international choirs and many others. The costs of such productions grew and granting subsidies which were relied upon dried up for both performing artists and for sponsors. There was also a need for amenities only provided by more modern facilities.

The University of Lethbridge experienced a major growth in the drama and music departments and built a modern theatre. They were in a position to take over many of the program sponsorships. They also took on the presentation of touring productions.

Ticket sales management went to major ticket sale providers.

The AAC role in the Performing arts continued to support Community groups. Playgoers, New West Theatre, Lethbridge Musical Theatre and many others rehearsed at the Bowman. The Staff had the songs and dialogues memorized by the time the productions were ready to go to stage. We enjoyed the benefit of entertainment while working and always appreciated the complimentary tickets. Several members were involved or became involved in the AAC including Jeff Carlson who was always a joy to work with. Neil Boyden (teacher, actor, director and delight as well), Fran Rude (director), Candy Chiselle-Williams (dance instructor and choreographer), Bob and Cherie Bounton, were also key figures along with Brian Parkinson and Ches Skinner from the U of L.

The AAC educational program Performing Arts Summer School which had been initiated by Joan Waterfied very successfully continued. It was, along with the Visual Arts Summer School, an important and impactful program for youth. They loved it. I recall one student who was a resident of Sifton House. I received a call from the administration as they had been suspicious of her attendance because she always wanted to arrive early. Was she actually attending? I confirmed she was present and enthused. She went from at first trying to impress students with her B and E (breaking and entering) activities (which did not work) to singing "You Are The Wind Beneath My Wings" with such feeling that the audience was in tears during the sharing time concert at the Yates. This did impress everyone. She had gained a new identity.

Facility

The Bowman had become a Designated Historic Site near the beginning of my involvement. This was accomplished with the help of Board Member Jim Mountain. Designation resulted in leverage for financial support for facility projects.

When I was first involved with AAC, I recognized the great contribution of Board Member Clare Malmberg. His proactive involvement, knowledge and great personal skills resulted in many maintenance issues being successfully attended to under his direction, including the installation of new windows.

Later, Reg Areshenko of the City took on the role and implemented a program which identified the facility status and time lines maintenance projects in the future. He was a joy to work with as evidenced by his assistance with major needs and his willingness to produce, at our request, unusual signs reading "caution, low toilets". Since the bathrooms were originally designed for small children, and some patrons with special needs were used to higher toilets, there was potential for accidents. However, these signs seem to become collectors items as they would disappear and need to be replaced.

The City was aware that the Arts Facilities needs were changing. With encouragement from Brian Bourassa, Director of Lethbridge Community Services, I initiated and accessed funding for a major Needs Assessment undertaken by Cooper Lybrand Consulting in 1990. This involved all Member organizations, other agencies and many individuals. Discussions took place in small round table discussions involving a mix of participants from key players to members of the general public. This process engaged the community and the resulting report, giving validation to needs, was of great assistance in plans moving forward.

Another grant provided the funding for a major feasibility study (1992) undertaken by Horton and Watson Architects regarding the expansion of the Bowman Arts Centre. Roger Horton paid keen attention to the needs assessment and provided exciting design options for renovation of the Bowman. The renovation of the Bowman did not take place but the study was a key reference point to moving forward. The Needs Assessment and Feasibility Study designs provided a foundation and were referenced in the eventually building of Casa. A major investment was made by the City for a much larger, modern facility which would meet the needs of the arts in the community for many years to come.

I had retired before that decision was to build Casa was made, but I frequently heard how many mourned the demise of the Bowman. The warm, familiar environment was lost and so was the sprung dance floor which was greatly valued by the Jolliffe Dance Academy and Troyanda Dancers! I have happily been made aware that the dance studio at Casa has a "sprung" floor.

In the interim while I was still involved some major renovations were undertaken at the Bowman. The Oldman River Potters installed a new big kiln and the City undertook a "boiler retrofit" which involved tearing the building apart inside (1992). This involved wonderful cooperation of the resident groups involving the stoppage of work, dismantling of looms, moving of pottery wheels etc... I successfully applied for a Federal Cultural Initiatives Grant and Section 25 Grant which funded flooring and wall covering upgrades to complete the project. The City appreciated our involvement and initiative taken in accessing additional funds to complete projects. This included barrier free access (1996) and dance floor replacement (1997).

There were technical difficulties with the successful operation of the new kiln and the new boilers. These were eventually addressed after several consultants finally realized that the solution required a rebalance of the air intake system.

The office continued to operate amidst the noise and dirt of projects. We had good relationships with the construction crews. This was helped with the provision of ongoing fresh coffee with real cream and a flat of fresh Spudnuts on Fridays! The new heating system involved a new job for our technical whiz, Administrative Assistant Darren Gilbertson who was trained in the operation of the thermostats. He also was on duty at midnight of 1999 for the "Millennium Scare" (fear that operating systems might shut down or be adversely affected when the year 2000 arrived) which was in fact uneventful.

Energy efficient, motion sensed lights were installed in the Gallery spaces. Board Member/actor Jeff Carlson used this to advantage in a meeting taking place in one of the galleries. He was about to make a point and the lights went out. He waved his arm, the lights went on as he made his point...very dramatically!

Barrier free access was a focus for me. My appeal to the City resulted in their willingness to build a large ramp to access the front entrance. I responded with "then what?" People would then be inside the building on the landing with stairs up and stairs down. Their suggestion had not considered the fact that the Bowman was a split entry facility!

Eventually the need was met with the installation of a lift to accommodate barrier free access. Unfortunately design flaws resulted in many a stalled lift and panicking users. I asked Reg Areshenko for special signage which the City provided. Later, when the same type of lift was installed in the old City Hall, they

encountered the same problems and installed the same signage. Adjustment to the lift door opening sensor to accommodate the "not so level floors" of the old buildings solved part of the problem.

Brian Bourassa, Director of Community Services for the City, shared some wisdom with me early which I frequently applied. He had found that if you make people a part of the process in a situation, they will "buy in" and assume a sense of "ownership" which will pay off. This was successfully applied to proactive strategic planning, program planning and operational needs. The result was more comprehensive understanding resulting in effective results and the side benefit was commitment. There was dedication.

One such situation was when facility access problems were resolved by calling together a committee of resident users who helped develop a policy and procedure to enhanced security. They also became dedicated enforcers which I greatly appreciated. Receiving calls in the middle of the night from the police to inform me that one of the resident members had left the back door open was not fun!

Muriel Jolliffe and daughter Carol Godlonton, of the highly respected Jolliffe Dance Academy, were very helpful in our understanding and appreciating the special facility requirements for dance. Their residency was a great benefit to the Arts Council as were the other resident groups. Long time Oldman River Potters Guild Member and LCC Fine

Arts Programmer, Elaine Harrison, was always diligent and kept alive liaison opportunities. Having our AAC offices in the building with the Resident Groups ever present, the students, artists and general public coming and going fed our awareness and provided opportunities. Interaction provided mutual recognition and visibility and a first line for observation, communication, caring and sharing.

In early days, a lot of thought went into security...preventing unwelcome visitors coming in and sometimes staying the night in the warmth of the furnace room. A guard dog, security cameras (far too expensive), a false security camera, mirrors, security checks were all considered. Finally, a simple, loud door bell on the entrance door and a back-door buzzer was installed alerting staff to people entering and exiting. This made the public aware we were watching. More security checks were also implemented. This was found to be effective.

Board Member Doug Alger, lawyer, greatly assisted with the formulation of rental agreements clarifying obligations and responsibilities for both for Resident Groups and casual renters. We also developed written policies and procedures for facility rental. Doug always stated that his Board Service was paid in good coffee, real cream and Voortman Cookies which were provided at every meeting!

The City gave us advanced warning of the reduction in City subsidy for operating costs. This would require more "cost recovery" operation. I developed a system of cost analysis for facility operation which provided a legitimate guide for rental rates and reference for facility costs for programs. This required considerable increases but users were agreeable because they could understand the need and could see the fairness of the assessment. Increases were incremented overtime to make them manageable.

When the adjacent Pemican Club Building was demolished, our request to the City for the AAC to have authority over the resulting parking lot was successful. This retained staff parking and generated some revenue from "paid" parking.

A new City Hall resulted in AAC being on the receiving end of a great deal of furniture; there was so much of it that we could not handle it all and contacted member organizations like SAAG to share the wealth which they did gladly.

The breadth of use of the Bowman gave visibility to so many aspects of the arts. There was also a "cross fertilization." The Toastmasters, who met in the Music Room Gallery at the Bowman, became more interested in the Gallery program. While people waited for meetings and events they could wander around in the building and see weavers, potters, painters, dancers, and others in action.

Staff

When I was appointed Executive Director I requested the Board to support the development of job descriptions and role expectations. The expertise and complexity of the Staff's role was not recognized. The Staff up to that point worked with only verbal understanding which no longer facilitated operational needs. Also, the Board had little comprehension of the Staff's huge role in operations, or hours spent. There were no benefits except the required CPP, no written agreements and no performance reviews.

One of my goals was the formulation and implementation of job descriptions, policies and procedures. When, at the request of the Board, work hours were recorded for a period, there was a recognition of overtime owed that went into weeks! The support of Board Members, particularly Treasurer Dave Parsons, was greatly appreciated. The Board worked with City Staff to develop job descriptions and address issues. Pro active performance reviews were also implemented. I hear that the staff position has since greatly improved with significantly more staff and improved conditions.

At one time a Board Member questioned how much work the staff was achieving because there was so much laughter and friendship among us. I responded that when you work as hard and long as we do with such a multitude of responsibilities and difficulties to deal with, you either maintain your humour, laugh and cooperated... or give up! We choose to laugh. Organization, clear communication and multi-tasking were also essential. Staff meetings and Teacher's meetings built strong teams and a sense of ownership of operations and programs.

The Gallery Exhibition "turn around" time was adjusted to a more realistic timeframe reducing the intensity of work load. We had been installing new exhibits in the three galleries every month with a part time gallery technician, a portion of my time and staff time, whereas Galleries with a full-time gallery staff mounted exhibitions every six to eight weeks. The Board needed to be informed of the unrealistic situation to understand the need for change. It did not impact our funding or credibility.

The "day book" (a reception desk diary) listing rentals and room use was in place when I arrived on the scene. We expanded its use by adding events, incidents and messages and it became the centre for reference. This system even impressed Leo Vanden Heuvel who handled City insurances. Our record of any incidents was of good use to him.

During my involvement the computer and the internet age emerged. We went from two old typewriters and lots of white out to computers. This was frightening. There are many amusing related stories. The Administrative Assistant at that time, Hazel Skaronski, who had never faced a computer was sent to learn MS Dos, word processing, book keeping and data base program in a two-week course. Her considerable diligence and dedication were challenged beyond the call of duty, but she survived. Hazel also contributed her excellent reception skills as well as costume design and fabrication, and acting skills to AAC sponsorships for many years.

When Hazel retired Darren Gilbertson, Fine Arts graduate and computer whiz, top notch multi-tasked saved the day. His dedication and skill made a huge contribution. We could always rely on Darren to get the job done. He was very skilled at reception duties, keeping up with class registration and rental requirements. This gave us a great reputation. His computer accounting skills facilitated my insistence on quarterly reports/reviews, year end reports and grant applications.

My goal was to develop good programs of high quality and value. They should also be cost effective and generate revenue to contribute considerably toward the organization's operation...to keep subsidies at a minimum. These fiscal monitoring systems provided the reference to implement the philosophy. We consistently grew our operating budget and operated with a surplus at year end.

At the beginning of my involvement, the janitorial and evening attendant which facilitated room rentals and general security were combined. Staff member John Lyons, who served us well in this position, observed that rental demands and a high level of evening facility use made this combination undoable. Staff was successfully restructured as a result.

Janitorial duties were successfully contracted out. Evening Personnel took on more reception duties and office work along with the accommodation of rentals and security. Evening and weekend staff needed computer skills to assist with office duties. I attached task lists to job descriptions for more effective use of staff time and to reduce the need for supervision time.

Darren Robertson's writing skills were an asset. Len Komanac also did well in this role.

Computers facilitated our initiation of the arts planning calendar to which all groups could contribute and subscribe with information on planned events, dates, times and locations (either tentative or confirmed) which was posted and shared. This service came about when we had observed conflicting schedules had resulted in losses for presenters. I recall that the Xmas program of the Anne Campbell Singers and the Lethbridge Symphony were scheduled at the same time across the street from each other. They shared a similar audience and patrons were left in a "patronage quandary" with disappointing results for the organizations.

We went from hand designing invitations and ads with electro set to using computers. The move from typewriters to computers for reports and promotion copy as well as general communication was a huge blessing even considering the learning curve. However, this also involved increased costs. Fortunately, we were able to achieve program growth and year end surpluses which I contributed to a reserve for such expenditures.

The City, under the direction of Sheila Buelow, created an events and activities flier which met the AAC need for cost effective promotion. We also participated in other groups promotions provided for by the City. it was a one stop shopping reference for cultural and recreation opportunities.

Exhibition Program

When I started as a volunteer in 1979, AAC had only one gallery in the Bowman. Eventually the AAC managed three gallery spaces; two in the Bowman and the gallery at the Yates. The installation of display cabinets in the foyer gave Resident Groups an opportunity to display works. It also facilitated the exhibition of very small artwork.

We successfully increased our granting support and gained a reputation as a desirable gallery for exhibition and were held in high regard in the province. Annual gallery funding grew from \$0 to over \$42,000. Les Graff, Don Mabie and Ross Bradley and Clive Padfield of Alberta Culture and the Alberta Art Foundation were of great assistance in accessing funding and gaining a reputation.

Group exhibitions often gave newer artists a first opportunity to exhibit. It was also educational in learning what exhibiting involved.

We were committed to spending public funds responsibly; to invest in artists and programs of merit and promise. An exhibition policy, process and written exhibition agreement were formulated. This helped facilitate commitment.

Gallery Assistant Donna Gallant also proved to be a talented artist and art instructor. Her "eye" for the installation of artwork in exhibits, was of great value in the success of exhibition programs. Donna was a great help through the curatorial processes both for the Gallery Exhibitions and Art Rental Program. She framed and installed the artwork, and prepared refreshments for openings. Openings were well

attended and a popular social event. Another appreciated contribution she made was her optimism and the encouragement she gave to everyone.

Our exhibition program was valued by local artists with diverse modes of expression: Carol Mallinson-Johnston's innovative photography, Otto Rapp's Fantastic Realism, Van Christou's photography, Ron Gust's shaped canvas paintings, Brenda Frederick's innovative works, Amy Dodic's puppets, sculptures and paintings, Bob Webb's colorful figurative works, Alex Pavlenko's impactful paintings, Bob Croskery's location watercolours, Marcella Cooper's drawings, Angela Wood's paintings and drawings, Gerhard Beyer's sensitive landscapes and portraits, Helen Flaig's delightful folk images, Eric Marten's sculptures, Barb Goodman's keenly observed still life paintings, Donna Gallant's confident drawing, painting and printmaking, Karen Brownlee's grain elevator series recorded history, clay works by Cindy Gibson and Talva Jacobsen, Elizabeth Ginn's bold, fresh paintings, Thep Thavonsouk's brush paintings, Olive Green's paintings, Peter Green's photographs, and large ink drawings by Mary Gazetas, inspired by her ocean kayaking trips, were all most impressive. Marj Jordan's large encaustic paintings created new interest. A professor at the U of L, who's name I unfortunately do not recall, exhibited sensitive watercolours related to his many travels. There were so many more!

An applied/functional art installation of hand-crafted furniture by Peter Gilligan, and decor pieces by Suzanne Lint and Susan Savill was popular.

Barb Wilson's Frank Slide series of on location paintings was a major accomplishment. Barb also exhibited with her daughter Mary Ann Wilson (Cooley) which was a special event.

Another mother daughter exhibit featured Irma and Melissa Malkas.

Artists from outside the Lethbridge area included: Roger Chomosta's drawings of working in the underground mines, Elise Elliot Los's installation, nationally known artist Brent Laycock's landscapes, Barb Amos's drawings of children at play, and the work of Bev Tosh of Calgary who also gave a workshop. The eclectic nature of the art pieces including painted coats and fanciful jewelry of artists Linda Gordon, Jo Anne Kalvaitis, Evelyn Kleis, Valerie Cullen and Deborah Forbes, from the then Studio 6 in Medicine Hat, was stimulating for the Lethbridge Art Scene. Other exhibited Medicine Hat Artists included Elizabeth Blair Matisz's fantasy drawings inspired by Tolkien, Joan van Belkum's location landscapes, Donna Maclean's landscapes, James Marshall's drawings and Linda Carney's watercolours. George Markel's simply delightful folk sculptures of horses and farm animals composed from found materials were a real find. Gary Newton of Medicine Hat exhibited Magic Realism etchings. Sharon Graham Sargent of Calgary gave us insight into the work of a courtroom artist. Edmonton artists Tom Gale exhibited large landscapes, and ??? exhibited small, intimate pencil crayon paintings about relationships and identity which gave new insight to the viewer.

In the research for writing these memoirs, I was delighted to discover that an unusually large proportion of the artists who exhibited in AAC Galleries continue to create and gain considerable recognition. James Marshall created the masonry sculptures on the Lethbridge City Hall. Otto Rapp enjoys international recognition to mention just two. Many also became instructors or administrators.

The exhibition of artists from elsewhere in the province opened doors for local artists to in turn exhibit in other centres.

An interesting exhibition experience involved an artist who was currently serving a sentence in a detention center. It was initiated by the "system" and promoted on CBC radio.

I also had the opportunity to honour significant artists in the community who had fallen "between the cracks". Painter Michael Pisko, printmaker and jewelry artist Gen Stafford and painter Jessie Ursenbach

(who had studied with the Group of Seven) had never before enjoyed a solo exhibition of their considerable work. The University of Lethbridge assisted with the production of a brochure for Jessie's exhibition and her work is now held in the collection of the University of Lethbridge.

I had the honour to exhibit the photographs of Evan Gushul; both the observant and sensitive portraits and his scientific work inspired by his work at the research station. They showed such sensitive insight and were technically perfect. When you looked at his photograph of friends around a kitchen table having coffee, you could smell the coffee and feel the warmth of their friendship! A photo of a little ill cared for child brought tears to the eyes. My staff gifted me a print of this image as a retirement gift. This gentleman serenaded us with his violin and gave us all a very special experience. We corresponded for years until he passed away.

Evan's family bequeathed his father's photography studio in Blairmore, the Gushul Studio, for the purpose of an "artists in residence facility." Many of us have benefited from an experience there including Barb Wilson during her creation of the Frank Slide Series.

Another highlight was to hold a solo exhibition of the oil pastel paintings by Pauline McGeorge, our highly respected and much loved (first) instructor in the U of L Art Department. The University also assisted with the invitation for her exhibition. Her work reflected her love of nature. She captured the viewer's attention with her sensitive depiction of colour and light on natural forms.

Our exhibition program focused on emerging regional and Provincial artists which complimented that of SAAG with their focus on established national and international artists. Arts Council also performed a role in clarifying and justifying these complementary roles to the City and public. We often worked with SAAG Director/Curators Alf Bogusky, Joan Stebbins and Marilyn Smith, and staff Janet Walters and Annine Vonkeman on projects such as Art Walk. Alf Bogusky was our first presenter in our "Artist and the Gallery Workshops."

I saw a need for local artists to promote themselves in a more professional manner and addressed this with Artist and the Gallery workshops, assistance with photography to document work and some framing services.

Dianna Lanier was a keen supporter who served on the Board of the Alberta Art Foundation. She successfully ensured representation of deserving local artists in the AAF collection.

The exhibition program also led to initiating an Art Rental Program. Artists could submit slides of available work and cv information. We would make presentations to interested businesses and install artwork on a rental or rental to purchase basis which enhanced their environment and gave welcome exposure to artists. The consulting and selection of artwork process provided an enjoyable educational interaction...a win/win/win project.

The AAC coordination of ARTWALK for many years brought the Art community and business together. When an economic downturn resulted in empty stores in the malls, we successfully negotiated the use of space for Art Walk reaching a greater audience and drawing customers. The street between the Library and Bowman was the scene of colourful festival activities.

Educational Programs

At the suggestion of Elizabeth Ginn, artist and valued arts instructor, we developed special needs visual art programs. Her knowledge and interest in this area was integral to the great success of this program. The artwork was of merit with honest, creative expression. Exhibitions took place of the student work which brought great joy. On one occasion, the local Band "Free Will" of the Winston Churchill "Gifted Program" performed at the opening...what a party! I still own and treasure many artworks I purchased from these wonderful students.

Our visual arts educational programs success was in a great part due to highly qualified, dedicated instructors who were recognized artists with great teaching skill levels. Their love of their subject and enthusiasm spilled over to the students. We developed a structure and high standard of planning and execution which had great results. Instructors included Carol Mallinson, Donna Gallant, Amy Day Dodic, Linda Stoddard, Gail Mikla, John Lyons, Elizabeth Ginn, Mary Gazetas, Cindy Gibson, Bea Jovenazzo, Edith Tanne, Lea Martens, Talva Jacobsen, Aaron Hagar and many others. I so often have adults I meet tell of their fond memories of attending classes and of their children attending classes at the Bowman. Artist and instructor Lynne Hunter-Johnston effectively contributed to committee work and programs. She taught me the value of written agendas.

A program was initiated to fill a request from parents "Home Schooling" their children. It was very successful and also gave opportunity to have parents better understand schema development in children...the age-related development of the way they see and express themselves visually. The sudden growth in student population required and unexpected adjustment to our stock of paper towels and toilet paper. We had a good class related system in place for the stocking of art supplies, but this need for more paper towels and toilet paper was missed!

A Bursary Program for students in need of financial assistance to attend our programs was established with the Board helping to access sponsorship from businesses. I am delighted that this program has continued. To me involvement in the arts can greatly contribute to the well being of an individual which in turn feeds the health of a community. This opportunity needs to be available to everyone.

An open House where a bank manager was given the opportunity to get muddy while working at a potter's wheel. This was a catalyst. Aldermen, business men were given an opportunity to have their portraits done.

A similar opportunity to impress occurred when then Arts and Culture Minister Gary Mar paid a visit and discovered that the Handicraft Guild used "Kool-Aid" to dye fibers. He was amazed!

We sponsored an ongoing Figure Studio in which artists could work from live models. This was inspirational for artists and the foundation for many exhibits, some of which travelled to other Galleries in the Province. Nanama and Celeste were favorite models. Exhibitions resulted from artworks inspired by them.

Along the way Photographer and Board Member Morry Katz provided a Bowman Photo for letterhead.

Mary Gazetes designed the Allied Arts Council Logo and made banners.

AAC Board of Directors

There was valuable assistance from the everchanging Board of Directors of AAC. As in all Boards there were cycles of involvement, expertise, styles and micromanagement resulting in varying degrees of effectiveness. The Board Development Workshops provided by Alberta Culture facilitated by Robert Benn, provided great counsel and structure as well as facilitating an effective planning process. They addressed the roles of the Board and Board staff relationships. Understanding of the mission of AAC and creating a vision with accompanying planning processes strengthened the Board. The AAC involved a complex mix of governing and working roles.

Greg Goodman, Treasurer, was both pleased and amused with my passion for fiscal responsibility. My "tight ship" financial management included realistic budgeting and planning, quarterly reports and projections, and resulted in year end surpluses. Greg would very quickly and accurately review financial reports and had the fastest pen in the west! He also told me I would not have to work so hard if I didn't come up with so many new ideas!

Karen Kaye was a strong President at the beginning of my involvement. Berthe Perry was a very keen Board Member and President who was dedicated to her involvement in AAC. Doris Balcovsky returned to

the Board after many years.

Celeste Pryde (Board Member, artists model, and Handicraft Guild Member) was the champion of the Resident Groups and barrier free access. She helped to create an awareness of the Board of their needs and their value.

Librarian Duncan Rand served as an insightful Board Member creating a valuable relationship with the Library and advocate for the Library and AAC to Alberta Culture.

Rita Kolpak, Glenda Everett and Jean Phelps all served the Board well. As LCC staff they brought experience and expertise. Rita was also a performer, entertaining us as "Baba Yaga."

Bill Wong served as Treasurer, and Terry Whitehead brought performing arts and promotion expertise. Deb Rakos provided insight from the resident groups and advocated for barrier free access.

I have already sung the praises of Board Members Doug Alger, Jeff Carlson, Dave Parsons, Bob Baunton and Jim Mountain. I am sure to have missed some significant contributors and I do apologise for that oversight.

Clare Malmberg, gentleman and father figure of the AAC Board, would sometimes console me in times of conflict with these words of wisdom, "Some people believe you can skid further on gravel than on pavement." This insight helped me stay objective when dealing with overly aggressive people who thrived on conflict.

When I was first involved Board minutes were hand written by Hazel Schwass and Sonja Batty. I liked to provide the Board with agendas and related information ahead of meetings as this kept their interest and helped them make informed decisions. I always believed it important to note the information leading to a decision and the action to be taken, by whom, timeline etc.. I called them "working minutes". I found this to be very effective.

Volunteers were an integral part of the AAC operation. Artist Bob Webb held the record for the number of occasions that he was designated "Volunteer of the Year" at our annual Xmas Potlucks which were always well attended. It was a chance to celebrate the achievements of the past year and to express appreciation for Staff, Volunteers and the families who supported their involvement.

The ongoing support, assistance and counsel of City Staff (Brian Bourassa, Kathy Hopkins, Sheila Buelow, Carol Thibert, Reg Areshenko and Leo Vanden Heuvel) were key to the successful operation of the AAC in facility operations and maintenance, proactive strategic planning, board development and promotion of programs and events.

Barbara Lacey, Bridget Pastoor, Liz Iwaskiw and Bob Tarleck were among City Alderman who were very supportive. Jeff Carlson and Rajko Dodic and likely others continued this support after I left.

When I decided to retire, I gave advanced notice and encouraged the Board to start the process of seeking a replacement. From experience I knew that my replacement would need experience in the role before I left. I recognized the role would change but you need to have knowledge of where you are in order to get where you are headed. The AAC was very complex and multifaceted. The situation I left was "organized": structures, systems, policies and procedures in place; lots of reference files and great support staff. However, I knew the candidate would need a good comprehension of the role, skills, political savvy, knowledge of the community and have a fine art background. They needed a strong belief in the mission and value of the AAC.

Some thought they should do a nationwide search...until I asked about the funding...the ads alone would

have cost more than our yearly promotion budget...and flying people in for interviews?

Suzanne Lint applied for an interim position at the last minute. I was greatly relieved!

I had also recently hired Darcy Logan, a U of L Arts Student to fill a part time position and he has stayed on!

This process has renewed my joy in my involvement with the AAC. My appreciation for the people I came into association with was enhanced.

The biggest surprise of my involvement was my retirement gift. The "Main" Gallery at the Bowman was renamed the Shirley Wyngaard Gallery. Since then I was awarded a Lifetime Membership in the Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge. I so appreciate this honour but, even without this honour, I would be in my mind and heart a "Lifetime Member".

I regret that I have neglected to mention many people and events. This process opened the floodgates of memories and they are still coming to light. Please accept my apology and also my sincere appreciation for your association.

Best regards...Shirley Wyngaard
December 18, 2019

providing leadership in
Advancing
& Enhancing
the **ARTS**
in Lethbridge



A publication of the Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge
ARTSLETHBRIDGE.ORG