

PRESIDENTS REPORT

March 30, 2021

I would like to start by acknowledging with respect and gratitude our great good fortune of being able to gather on the unceded territory of the Coast Salish people, and specifically the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation.

This AGM follows closely on the heels of the previous one, which COVID delayed until October last year. I'm happy to report that we continue to make good progress in re-establishing an exciting calendar of events and the funding to support them.

Many people contributed to this progress in 2020. Our present Board of Directors put in many hours of dedicated volunteer work. There were other Directors who served in 2020, whose lives have now taken them in different directions. These include Cody Fonda, Margie Johnson, Andrew Homzy, Audrey Raines, Laura Ramsden, and Graydon Schilds. Our Volunteer Coordinator Barbara Norman and our website contractor Zshandi Krahn also made important contributions. Many others working at various institutions such as the City of Nanaimo, Vancouver Island University, Vancouver Island Regional Library, the Nanaimo Chamber of Commerce, and the BC Arts Council, all smoothed our path, and helped us to achieve so much in such a short time. I am extremely grateful to all of these people, and on behalf of the entire membership I would like to recognize their efforts, and extend our heartfelt thanks.

Our first priority has been to serve our members. We plan our activities for their relevance to current members, and with an eye towards attracting more members from various fields of artistic endeavour. As our constitution stipulates, our mandate is to serve a wide range of aesthetic and cultural activities, and our mission is to facilitate connections between artists, arts organizations and the community to encourage creative opportunities for all.

Looking back at 2020

As most of you will know, the Nanaimo Arts Council almost went out of existence last Spring, so 2020 was a year for regrouping.

In response to an emergency call for new Directors, several people joined last May, and the new Board began the process of revitalization and rebuilding – and this process is still ongoing.

The work fell into four major areas: Funding, Programming, Organizational Development, and Communications.

Our Vice President, Steven Dennis, oversaw Funding. Besides several smaller grants, we successfully applied for Culture and Heritage operating and project grants. These, together with grants from the BC Arts Council, will form the basis of our financial resources for 2021.

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Our Programming Committee re-established some past programs and added new events. In 2021 this includes the Islands Short Fiction Contest, our Art Around Town exhibitions (as COVID permits), members' exhibitions and professionally curated CARFAC exhibitions in our new Online Gallery, an Ekphrastic Celebration combining visual and literary arts, and the Nanaimo Artwalk. Another program, NAC At Night, is unlikely to take place this year due to the COVID-related cancellation of the Night Market, but we are currently planning alternative programming.

In Organizational Development, we updated our Bylaws to improve organizational stability and succession planning through director's terms and voting procedures, and to allow the NAC to operate effectively via electronic meeting services in response to COVID. Thanks to Director Aaramë Robillard, we began our 5-year Strategic Planning in November, examining the topic of Relationships and Personnel. Further sessions are planned, and strategic planning will cover:

1. Personnel & Relationships - Who Are We?
2. Community & Communications - Who Do We Serve?
3. Funding & Finances - What Resources Do We Require?
4. Governance & Succession - How Do We Operate?
5. Facility & Space - Where Do We Operate?

Our Communications Committee, chaired by Laurel Karjala, was another backbone of the organization. This committee oversaw website development, social media, and the NAC newsletter with Lena Rasmussen as chief editor.

I can't begin to name all the work people did, but I'd also like to thank Chai Duncan for his important work as Chair of the Nominating Committee; Margot Fedoruk for her articles, editing work, and work on projects such as the Islands Short Fiction Contest; Laurel Karjala for her outstanding service as our past Board Secretary, and as organizer of the membership lists; Kamal Parmar for her committee work and her work as an advocate for literary projects; Lena Rasmussen for her work on the newsletter, website, and many committees; Aaramë Robillard for sharing her experience and wisdom with us on several committees; Kam Sandhu as Treasurer; and Becky Thiessen for her work as Membership Committee Chair. My personal thanks go to everyone for their help and mentorship in many aspects of performing my duties. Thanks also to John Collison Baker, who organizes the Art Around Town Exhibitions.

Two people who were not here in 2020 have joined us recently, and I'd also like to mention the important work they are doing. Sandra Miles is our current Board Secretary. Besides carrying out the regular duties of that position, she also organized this AGM; and Miles Hayes, our student intern in the role of Social Media Manager, is designing and implementing our social media strategy, and writing articles for the newsletter.

Looking Ahead to 2021

The Nanaimo Arts Council sees its main tasks for 2021/2022 as follows:

- To deliver the planned programming in a professional, effective manner, documenting the delivery of those programs so they can be repeated more easily, and designing evaluation and feedback mechanisms so we can improve them in future.
- To diversify and develop funding for programming and to hire professional staff.

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- To continue developing our strategic planning, governance framework, policies, and other organizational goals.
- To continue to develop and refine our communications with our members, our community, and the world.

We are also aware how important it will be to have a physical space to carry out our activities in, and this remains one of our priorities. Nonetheless, we realize the NAC's main purpose is to provide programming, and in this phase of rebuilding that must remain our primary concern.

Current developments

As mentioned, recent funding success has guaranteed our ability to deliver this year's planned programming. We had hoped to receive a BCAC Pivot Grant to hire staff, but unfortunately were not successful in this application. An important upcoming grant application is BC Gaming, although we may not qualify this year due to last year's interruption of programming.

We have applied for a Canada Summer Jobs grant, and if successful, will be hiring for the position of Communications and Operations Coordinator over the summer.

As also mentioned, our Night Market project, NAC At Night, will likely fall victim to the Night Market's cancellation this summer. To replace this programming we are planning a series of short films in collaboration with local filmmakers. Shaw Cable has offered to air any content we produce. This will allow us to present the work of some of the same performers and artists who would have participated in the NAC At Night program. By paying them for their appearance, we will also help ease any COVID-related economic hardships these local cultural producers may be experiencing.

We are also in discussion with two Nanaimo institutions regarding locations for physical shows, once COVID permits, and we will keep you updated on our progress.

Conclusion

Despite an existential crisis at the beginning of 2020, the Nanaimo Arts Council is once again a vibrant organization, enlivening Nanaimo's arts and culture scene. We provide programming to enrich people's lives and support cultural producers of every level, from beginner to professional. With the help of so many, we have built a strong and stable foundation for future growth, and look to the future with optimism and enthusiasm. We extend our thanks to all of you, and look forward to serving you in the future.

Respectfully submitted,
Sean Gallagher