

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

for NVCAC November 16, 2022 AGM

This has been a year of incredible growth for the NVCAC. We survived the 2 years of Covid and then saw the heat dome, fires and floods of 2021. These natural disasters, while devastating to many, brought the community together in a myriad of ways. It also forced us to look at how Art was delivered to the community and outlying areas and how we could improve the delivery of activities to a wider audience.

Recruiting and keeping volunteers is proving to be a problem for all organizations but I give much credit to our hard working volunteers, directors and staff who continue to work hard and push the envelope to grow our Arts community.

Susan Parkinson and Denise Kearney had to leave the organization for personal and health reasons, while other volunteers stepped in to fill the gap. Susan had really got the Studio Space organized and had set the bar high for the many programs she was able to organize. We value Susan as a volunteer and appreciate her artistic and happy spirit. We hope to see Denise back, when her health is restored, helping with the Bio/Promo project and Open Mic.

Lynn Cox, one of the new directors, took on the challenging position of Vice President in charge of grants and quickly got to work bringing money into our organization. Lynn has a strong government and municipal background, so her insights and ability to think outside the box are a real bonus. Her husband Bernie is a true handyman and has helped us out of a facility jam more than once.

Sharon Pawliuk continued as our volunteer coordinator, wrangling volunteers for the Arts Council and the gift shop in her determination to get things done in fashion.

The Real Estate market boom in Merritt really limited Melody Simon's ability to participate fully in Arts Council activities, but we appreciate the assistance Melody has given us in regards to our lease and in dealings with our landlord.

Our Treasurer Barb Sayles is finishing up a 4 yr term and the growth that she has witnessed in the budget of the Arts Council has truly been mind boggling, going from a \$70,000.00 budget to close to \$200,000.00. She continues to maintain a great set of financial statements. We have money in the bank and everyone is paid on time.

Sarah Molnar stepped in as our Communications director and along with her great posts on Facebook and Instagram, she has put out one of our famous Newsletters and arranged a weekly gig for Jano on Q101. Sarah also has a very helpful husband Greg, who has helped with Art Centre projects, too.

Kathy Kanda continues to be a Godsend to our organization, organizing our Google platform and teaching us 'not so computer savvy' people how to navigate the process. Kathy has assisted with many projects but has been instrumental on the Program Committee, ensuring that programs are posted on our website, making posters and managing registrations.

Angela Ho took over memberships this year and has been busy keeping our records straight while also lending her expertise in assisting with Square when needed. She has added her beautiful floral arrangements to many of our events.

Amanda Pryzner Dunn is one of our Art instructors and was an important member of our program committee. She made the move to shop manager when Jennifer Artibse stepped down. Jen had set things up in the gift shop such that Amanda was able to step in, put her own spin on the things and continue the process relatively easily. We thank Amanda for her attention to detail and her commitment to seeing our Gift Shop continue to flourish.

Our slogan "*Building Community Through The Arts*" sees us continue great working relationships with The City of Merritt, Merritt Literacy, The Chamber of Commerce, The Farmers Market, The Museum and Archives, Canadian Mental Health, United Way, Merritt Public Library, The Love to Dance Society and the TNRD.

As an 'Umbrella for the Arts' in Merritt, we continue to offer support and assistance to The Community Choir, Merritt Drum Connection, Merritt Ukulele Circle, Nicola Valley Fibre Lovers, The Library Painters and our newest program, Music Maestro. We offer a space to meet for these groups and help in promoting their activities.

We once again enjoyed partnering with Canadian Mental Health to offer the Forging Connections Program. This is a 12 week Art program featuring six of our Artists who shared their talents with members of the Canadian Mental Health Clubhouse Program, who rents the Clubhouse space weekly from us. We offered classes in pottery, papermaking, drumming, printmaking, eco-dyeing and stain glass stepping stones. These are the types of programs that I would like to continue to facilitate as we see the mental health struggles in our community .

We continue to receive financial support from The BC Arts Council, The City of Merritt, The TNRD, United Way and the BC Lottery Foundation. All of these funding programs require very lengthy grant applications to be filled out and I thank Lynn Cox and Jean Kiegrel for their assistance with these.

A program entitled *Downtown Beautification*, which began in 2020 in conjunction with the City of Merritt, was finally able to get some legs and really grew this summer as small murals and other paint projects were completed to beautify and add colorful interest to our downtown. Our talented summer students, Brooklyn Harris and Kariann Kroeker, were able to paint sunflowers on the back building in the Credit Union parking lot. They each did an interactive mural, which are now hung inside the bandshell at Rotary Park, adding some great color. With the design and help from Kathleen Kinasewich, a large 8ft Mandala was created, showing the resilience of the community, which we hope to hang in the gardens of the CPO office. Leonard George, one of our amazing Indigenous Artists, created stencils that were used to paint an incredible salmon mural on the bridge at Lions Park, attracting the attention of locals and tourists alike. We have murals planned with Joel Reid for The Empty Keg, Kariann has a design for Breathe Bikes, and we have an exciting project painting sunflowers on satellite dishes to be hung in a back alley in Merritt as part of the Sunflower Project. A mini mural project, brought to us by member Sandy Labermayer, had visitors to our Art in Motion trailer paint hexagon pieces that will be put together into a large mural that we hope will be displayed at the Library.

Kathleen Kinasewich, who is a mural/mandala creator, was contracted to design a large 8ft Mandala that would show the resilience of the community after the fires and floods of 2022. Kathleen attended two festivals in Spirit Square to assist the community in painting the design. It was finished by Kathleen and a few of our Artists in time for the Mandala show and we hope to have this mural displayed at the CPO gardens.

In early spring, when applying for a grant from The BC Arts Council, Lynn, our grants director, thought it would be a good idea to apply for money to get a trailer that would be outfitted as a mobile outreach Art Studio. We said "*Sounds like a good idea, let's see what happens.*" Well, low and behold, we got the grant, bought a trailer and *Art in Motion* was born. We outfitted it with tables, chairs, decor, art supplies, and Artisans wares. The *Art in Motion* trailer attended Farmers Markets, Street Markets, the Garlic Festival, Shulus Family Fun Day, the Community Engagement Fair and three festivals in Spirit Square. The trailer has been incredibly successful in creating more awareness of the Arts Council in the community and we had great fun interacting with locals and visitors. Our summer students, Kari and Brooklyn, did an amazing job each weekend setting it up and engaging kids and adults with Art Activities. We have many more plans for the trailer and expanding our reach to outlying areas. I think this is a major project that could be very successful but requires a full time coordinator. I want to give special thanks here to Jano Howarth, who was instrumental in supervising our students on these excursions, and to my husband Bill, who did the majority of the trailer moving.

Hosting a festival was always on my radar, but Covid limited those opportunities. We decided to try hosting mini festivals in the very beautiful Spirit Square. The Square is really a little-used gem in the heart of our city. We brought Olivia Schmidt on as festival coordinator and hosted mini festivals in July and August with plans to hold one in the Fall and Winter. The July festival entitled *Summertime in the Square* featured the Steve Atlas band, one of our talented young musicians, and a variety of activities for families, including the *Art in Motion* trailer and our Mandala painting.

The festival in August featured several local musicians including Marilyn Christensen, who had just taken a position with the city. We once again offered a variety of activities for families with the Mandala painting and the *Art in Motion* trailer.

These mini festivals have been fun to plan and a wonderful way to showcase not only local artists and musicians but also the beauty of Spirit Square and the enthusiasm of our community.

I would once again like to thank all of the Directors, volunteers and staff who continue to reach new heights as we strive to further the Arts in Merritt. We have really done so much in a few short years and the possibilities are endless.