

The Prince Edward Island Council of the Arts
CHAIR'S REPORT
October 25, 2011

As always, it was a busy year for the Council. However, unlike some previous years, we have much to be pleased about this year. Despite some ongoing financial issues, such as being undefended, the Council is running well.

The last time I wrote my report, we had just gone through a Cabinet shuffle of the Provincial Government. In the end, the merger of the Tourism and Culture Department has been problematic. Specifically, there was an imbalance in attention given to the two departments. In the end, Culture was seriously neglected. However, I believe that the problem is not systemic. I think that it is logistical; therefore, I believe that it will not be as big a hindrance in the future. As I write this report, it has been announced that Robert Henderson has been appointed as the new Minister of Culture and Tourism. On behalf of the Council, I look forward to working with Minister Henderson to raise the profile of the Arts on PEI.

As always, the Council continued to promote and support Island artists. Through our grant programs, we were able to fund many exciting and interesting projects, submitted by a variety of Island artists. In addition, we partnered with the City of Summerside to launch the PACE program, which is an artist residency program. Again, we had a wonderful Newcomers Art Show, highlighting some amazing work by a variety of artists. As well, we have been, and continue to be, involved in the City of Charlottetown's Cultural Capitals activities. The Council has provided a vital link between the City and the Island's artistic community. It continues to be a beneficial relationship. Finally, and with much credit to Darrin, the Council's web presence has been greatly enhanced. While I prefer to be a luddite, Darrin has ensured that the Council is wired into future, and we are seeing lots of "hits" and "likes" on social media.

As usual, unfortunately, the Council had its share of member-related problems during the year. The largest in this last year was a public complaint about the Council's process for vetting grant requests. While the situation called the Council's integrity into question unfairly, it also offered us an opportunity to be more responsive to the Membership. As a result of the situation, Council Members now have greater, and easier, access to clear information about the process and procedures involved in our grant programs than ever before. Following in that vein, the Council also enjoyed a tremendous public discussion about the future of the Guild. While I still believe that the Council's ownership of the facility is a mistake, the Membership overwhelmingly felt differently, and I am responsible to the Membership. Moreover, the Membership not only provided vocal opposition to the idea but also concrete and viable solutions. In the end, the Board's decision on this important issue was directly guided by the expressed interests of the Membership. This process worked as I hoped that it would, for it highlighted the fact that the Board is not a closed shop: it works transparently and for the Membership. Therefore, The Council and Ars Longa are in the process of finalizing a lease agreement, which addresses many of the concerns voiced at the public meeting. In the end, I was really pleased with the constructive contributions by the Membership. I believe that this process showed what the artistic community can accomplish if we work together for the betterment of everyone.

As seen through the discussions around the Guild, the Council continues to benefit greatly from its staff. Last year, at the time of my report, Heather Idt had just joined the staff. A year later, I am left to wonder how we operated without her. Coming into a new arena, she has exceeded our expectations and proven herself to be a valuable asset. In addition, Annette Campbell, whose term with the Council ended recently, was a great addition to the Council offices. She brought a wealth of expertise, gained from years with the Canada Council, to the position of Program Officer. While the Council has had to eliminate the position to meet its budgetary obligations and maintain the support levels for its programs, it is not reflection on Annette. Given the lack of an increase to the Council's funding, we could no longer maintain the position. On a personal note, I am sad to see Annette go, and I want to wish her well in her future endeavours. Finally, the Council continues to benefit from the efforts of Darrin White. He continues to manage the Council's affairs efficiently, and I greatly appreciate the work he has put in this year, which has often been above and beyond his job description.

During the AGM, the Membership will vote on a motion to put a tender for a new auditor for the Council. This call was suggested to the Board by the current auditor as a "best practice." Should the Council chose the services of a new auditing firm, I want to thank Blair and Kevin, for Corkum and Associates, for all their hard work over the years.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge and thank my fellow Board members for all of their hard work. Some of them will be leaving the Board at the end of the AGM. I want to thank them for their dedication and hard work. I will be making more personal expressions of thanks in the near future, but I wanted to acknowledge them here. For those who are staying on, I look forward to working with you as we continue to promote the Council's efforts to make the arts an essential part of the fabric of Prince Edward Island.

In conclusion, I have enjoyed my latest term as Chair. While much has been accomplished, I believe that there is much more to do. In addition to the end of my term as Chair, my current term on the Board is also coming to an end. I have, however, decided to let my name stand for a final term on the Board. If the Membership wishes me to continue on the Board, I am happy to do it. In the end, it has been a good year for the Council. As the Council moves forward, and with the addition of new Board members, I believe that it will continue to provide a strong voice for all Island artists.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Greg Doran
Chair