

Arts Circle Report for 2018 AGM

Written & presented by Gloria Shoebridge

The Arts Circle continues to flourish, with new members and a wide range of painting experiences for the members. We currently have about 15 members who turn up on a regular basis.

Each week we encourage people to work on their own projects, along with opportunities to try out new materials and media. The group has displayed an adventuresome nature and there is obvious individual growth of the members.

Over the year, the members shared their training or experience in acrylics, watercolour, shadow boxes and other interesting techniques.

In June, the Arts Circle hosted its third annual art show, with creations from almost every member. It was an impressive show and a number of paintings were purchased. All in all, a real success which we hope to duplicate and exceed this year.

As before, in the fall we created a number of greeting cards with original paintings on them. They were sold at the MERA Christmas show as our fund-raising donation to MERA and continue to sell whenever we display them.

We finished off the year with a pot luck lunch and agreed to continue playing and learning in 2018. If there is anyone who is interested in joining our group please feel free to contact me for details.

REPORT FROM THE BOARD

Written & presented by Judy Watts

Good afternoon! I am pleased to report on MERA's activities for 2017.

Our year started out last January with the Wassail Party, an event that appears to have become an annual event. This was followed by the annual winter-time dinners with Canadian themes, reflecting Canada's 150th, which netted MERA over \$1,900.

Helen Mogford lead a committee to plan events celebrating MERA's 20 years. These events included the fun community Dinner, Dance and Lantern Parade in August supported by a grant of \$2000 from the Perth and District Community Foundation and, in the fall, the unveiling of the plaque for our fine new labyrinth. Donations for labyrinth stones have so far covered the cost of the labyrinth and provided a small profit. There are still stones available to donate. Earlier in the winter, a very informative Founders and Directors Dinner was held to honour those who made MERA what it is today. Many participants spoke about their positive experiences at MERA and some founding members and their grown children spoke about the hard work that went into establishing MERA and the fun, family activities they enjoyed.

The strong family orientation of MERA's early years plus the fact that there have been more families moving into the area recently stimulated interest in connecting with these families. With support from the board, a working group of the Program Committee organized 2 parties for families in the fall: a Hallowe'en Party and Christmas Party with dinner provided and craft activities for children. The board funded these two dinners but in the meantime a proposal written by Lyndal Neelin was sent in to the Perth and District Community Foundation asking for a grant to pay for monthly community, family oriented dinners for the rest of the year. Our proposal was accepted! These dinners and activities require a lot of volunteer work and we are very happy that Jan Griffith has agreed to coordinate planning for these dinners. Anyone willing to help will be very welcome. As for the work done so far, many thanks to Hilary Barrett for organizing the Hallowe'en and Christmas events, and a Valentines party that was weathered

out, to Lyndal and Michael Neelin for making the meals, and to Ankaret Dean, PJ Wilson, Rosie Kotze and Trina Conboy for running the craft activities.

A major task for the board this year came with the resignation of our long standing, very competent administrator, Marilyn Barnett. Wayne Stryde, Lyndal Neelin and myself organized a competition, and were very pleased when Trina Conboy accepted the position. With major help from Marilyn, her orientation has progressed well and Trina has already contributed to MERA's operations, especially with her financial and computer skills.

This leads me to the next major task the board has taken on. The MERA web page was in major need of upgrading and being made more user friendly. The board decided this job was important enough to warrant the cost of an expert and has contracted with Tracey Fawcett to guide us through this process. Peter Cochrane is coordinating the information gathering for the new web page. Some of you will have had his request for updated information on the many MERA groups and activities.

The MERA Award of Excellence in Fine Arts and Fine Crafts was awarded this year to Bridget O'Flaherty for her beautiful thread painted art. Honourable Mention went to Sarah Wright. David and Chris Dodge presented the award.

Of course, MERA continued to bring regular activities and periodic workshops to the community in 2017 including: - the Children's Summer Arts Camp, the Book Club, the weekly fiber arts groups including weavers, knitter and quilters, the Arts Circle, two dance groups, recorder classes, fiber arts workshops, basketry workshops, stained glass workshops, and of course the annual Christmas Fair which made \$2,457 despite dreadful weather! Tom Shoebridge and Danny Sullivan have continued to coordinate some fine concerts and Michael Barnett ran Wizard's Café for them – thank you all!

The popular choir lead by Jennifer Noxon met last spring but unfortunately, Jennifer was unable to lead the group this fall. She is offering a session starting later on March, if numbers are sufficient.

This was a busy year and undoubtedly 2018 will be fun and challenging also. This year's board does hand a financial challenge to the next board. As you will hear from our Treasurer, Bob Minge, we ran a small deficit this past year. Also, we are considering a deficit budget for 2018 with financial commitments for the web page and administrative demands. Consequently, fundraising will likely be on the agenda for 2018.

This ends my term as chair of the MERA board. It has been a privilege to work for this fine organization. I want to thank the present board members for all their support and hard work, and Ankaret Dean for continuing as MERA's artistic director. Special mention also to Helen Mogford who has been our faithful scribe. Finally, my thanks to Trina Conboy for coming on board and joining our crazy crew, and to Marilyn for making the transition successful.

Children's Programming Report

Written & presented by Hilary Barrett

During 2017, The MERA Program Committee initiated two family suppers with crafts and recreational activities for children and families in the area. When MERA was first founded many members were part of young families, but the children have grown up and, for a time, there were very few young people in McDonalds Corners and Elphin. In recent years there has been a resurgence in the number of young families, whereas the members of MERA have tended to be middle aged or retired.

When the Program Committee canvassed the community, there was much enthusiasm for a Halloween Party. An ad hoc committee was formed. The time and date were set, communications, decorations, menu, crafts, costume judging, games and loot bags organized. We approached the Board with a budget,

which they agreed to, along with a draw for a free family membership. Debbie and Milton Dennie donated prizes for the costumes and the draw. Ankaret, Rosie Kotze, Trina and Lyndal provided crafts and Linda Grenier music. The Neelins organized the food and John Parks and JP made pizzas. Jean Dunning was the Costume Judge. We advertised the party by posters, on the MERA website and Facebook Page, and in a letter to MERA members. We hoped a few people might show up! We asked them to indicate if they planned to come. Trina reports that all the respondents used the MERA Facebook page. The Schoolhouse was suitably, scarily decorated.

Halloween Party, Sunday, October 29, 4-7 pm

The day was wet, but families started arriving at 4 pm. In total, over sixty people attended the party. The children were directed to the crafts as they arrived and, just before supper, costumes were judged and prizes awarded. There was enough food for all -- pizza, a raw veggie plate, hot dogs and dessert of Halloween cookies and cakes.

After supper there was musical chairs, apple bobbing and eating marsh mallows hanging on strings. All proved popular and fun. Children were given loot bags.

Christmas Party, Friday, December 15, 5 – 7 pm

The Christmas Party followed a similar format, with a couple of planning meetings and more volunteers, including Emily Czan and her husband Kevin who provided a barbecued ham, while the Neelins coordinated the rest of the meal. About 48 adults and children attended. Emily Czan and her husband Kevin donated a barbecued ham and the Neelins provided mac and cheese and coordinated the dinner. Ankaret, Aynsley Buchanan, PJ and Linda Grenier provided activities at the beginning of the evening – Linda leading the older children in the composition of a song, which they sang to us all. Santa Claus (aka David Wilson) arrived with candies for the children. A draw for a basket of cookies, donated by MERA members, took place. With somewhat fewer people attending, the atmosphere was more mellow, but very enjoyable.

Fibre Arts Program Report for 2017

Written by Cathie Huffam & presented by Hilary Barrett

Fibre artists meet at MERA on Thursdays during the fall, winter and spring. In the morning, weavers meet in Dean Hall and spinners and knitters meet in the kitchen to work on their own projects.

Knitters are always willing to assist members with their projects and last winter Susan Berlin offered knitting classes *Going Beyond Knit and Purl*. This proved popular, and we all learned something new.

A core group of knitters donate knitted items to the MERA Christmas Fair.

The afternoon fibre arts workshops were offered occasionally during the winter and spring. Rosie Kotze held felting classes at the request of members who wished to improve their skills. During the fall, there were weekly afternoon workshops to prepare crafted items for the Christmas Fair:

- Felted acorn tree decorations with Leslie Manley
- "Trees" made of felt scraps and buttons to hang on a Christmas tree with Cathie Huffman
- Soap trays made of colourful reeds with Ankaret -- the trays were sold with soap made by Wendy Dodds.
- Beeswax food wrappers with Guest Artist Debbie Seddon
- Needle-felted owls with Rosie Kotze
- Spruce cone penguins with Wendy Dodds and Donna Catchpaw

All these items were donated to the Christmas Fair – 100% profit for MERA.

A small group of 6 – 10 people keep this afternoon program going. Hopefully, more MERA members will come to the Schoolhouse on Thursdays to share their expertise or have support in learning a new craft. And we have great potluck lunches from time to time!

The fibre arts program is organized as a collective which includes, but is not limited to:

Cathie Huffman (program organizer), Susan Berlin (web content) and Hilary Barrett (communications). We would like to thank Marilyn Barnett for maintaining the Fibre Arts e-mail list, and for sending out messages to our members.

Music Report

Written & presented by Peter Cochrane

For several years now music concerts at MERA have been a tag team affair between Tom Shoebridge organizing the Blue Jeans Classical Series and Danny Sullivan organizing the Sunday Schoolhouse Series. This last year Danny was unable to participate as much as usual owing to poor health. Fortunately for us at MERA, Tom came through with a mix of fine classical, Celtic and jazz performances during 2017 to continue the MERA tradition of high quality music entertainment in an intimate setting. Thank you Tom.

2017 MERA Sanctioned Music Concerts

Michael Costello – Classical Pianist – May 14, 2017

Rankin & Robertson – Celtic Fiddle & Harp – June 4, 2017

Paul Marleyn & Frederic Lacroix – Classical Cello & Piano – September 10, 2017

Harmonious Pigs – Classical Oboe, Bassoon, Clarinet – October 15, 2017

Frederic Lacroix – Classical Piano – November 12, 2017

Brian MacMillan – Singer Songwriter – November 19, 2017 – Cancelled due to weather & rescheduled

Tritones – Jazz/Funk /Jam – December 3, 2017

While not all concerts were able to cover their costs, most were well attended and able to contribute a modest profit. The total income from all concerts was \$5073 against total expenses of \$4311 resulting in a net profit of \$762 for 2017.

Once again we are most grateful to the wizard of Wizard' Café, Michael Barnett, for supplying and serving treats and beverages at all the concerts. The café has become an essential part of the experience and a significant attraction in itself.

Things are looking very positive for 2018. So far Danny Sullivan has put together a 3 concert Sunday Schoolhouse series for the spring (items 1, 3 & 5 below) plus re-scheduled Brian MacMillan, while Tom Shoebridge has 2 Blue Jeans Classical concerts booked to date (items 4 & 6 below).

Planned MERA Concerts for 2018 to date

1. Clan Hannigan – Celtic – March 11
2. Brian MacMillan – Singer Songwriter – March 25
3. Anni Sumi – Singer Songwriter – April 8
4. Maire Ni Chathasaigh & Chris Newman – Celtic Harp & Guitar – Wednesday May 2
5. Ken Whitely – Singer Songwriter & Folk Icon – May 27
6. Paul Marleyn & Frederic Lacroix – Classical Cello & Piano – September 9

Pottery Studio Report

Written & presented by Lyndal Neelin

The MERA potters are doing well. We have two active groups at present. As many as 8 of us gather on Monday evenings, filling the studio with laughter and enjoying each other's company. It has become tradition that we help prepare bowls for the Empty Bowls fundraiser at Food Smiths at this time of year, giving us an excuse to make and try out new glazes, and providing a buzz of purpose and industry in the studio. Collective projects are always fun.

There is a second group of potters meeting mid-day on Wednesday's. Again, there is plenty of activity and fun. Our youngest potter is 4. Several of that group operate the wheel by sitting on a lap and telling their borrowed legs to go faster or slower while they concentrate on their hands and the clay. It's messy work. Most of the Wednesday group do better with rolling pins and cookie cutters. Everything they make is great!

We had a table in Dean's Hall at this year's MERA Christmas Fair, and made \$90, all proceeds to MERA. As you will remember it was NOT a good day to encourage people out on the roads. The first vendors to arrive slid into the parking lot and declared themselves lucky to have arrived. It was a happy day, but not a profitable sale. It was great to be part of the doings upstairs.

Our kiln is out again, waiting for repair after some sort of electrical short. Nothing as complicated as last year's saga. We have been managing by sending work home with one another to be fired. Luckily, we have resources to share, but the kiln was and will be a terrific asset.

There are plans afoot to offer a summer residency - essentially providing studio space to a self-directed, experienced potter. Publicity is in the works.

The Pottery Studio continues to be a happy and happening place.

Programming Report

Written by Ankaret Dean and presented by Gloria Shoebridge

The arts are flourishing at MERA, many of us enjoy dance, music, singing, painting drawing, fibre arts, pottery, and quilting.

Our little school house is filled with useful equipment, the weavers on the porch, the potters in the basement. Spinning wheels and easels share the cupboard with sound equipment for concerts.

Our cupboards installed a few years ago are filled with glass for glass art, fleece for felting, wool and needles for knitting, fabric for quilting and a drawer for children's toys.

The walls in the hall display monthly exhibitions, and during the winter members show off their cooking skills at the Friday night suppers.

During last year we celebrated Canada 150 and MERA's 20th birthday, as well as the MERA Award of Excellence.

Thanks to a successful grant application from the Perth and District Community Fund, we are now holding family suppers at the school house and offering a short art or craft program.

So now we look to the future, new ideas are always welcome. Suggestions include a language club, a writers group and a photography group. Who knows what we will be doing in the following year!

Weavers Group Report for 2018 AGM

Written & presented by Lise Loader

All our weaving is done on community warps and it is a cooperative set up for the MERA members.

On the 4 harness looms we put warps for:

- 16 Tote Bags/plastic or fabric.
- 4 Yoga blankets/ size 54"X 90" each.
- 16 Placemats.

On the 8 harness loom we wove:

- 6 pillows or samples.

Our big project was the Raffle in 2017.

With some of the money, the weavers have purchased 2 looms. A 27" loom for \$250.00 from the Kingston Guild and a 36" Schadt loom for \$700.00 from Ellen Good. We have now 15 members weavers, so the new looms were a much-needed purchase.

Some of the weavers also participated in some guilds shows:

- Fibrefest in early September.
- Ottawa Valley Weavers & Spinners Guild Christmas Show the first week October.
- Kingston Weavers & Spinners Guild Christmas Show the second week October.
- MERA Christmas Fair at the end of November.

Upcoming Events:

You are invited to come by any Saturday in April, between 10 and 3 when weavers will be on hand to talk about the exhibit and demonstrate weaving. Or come by on a Thursday when the weavers regularly meet at the schoolhouse. We would be happy to talk to you about weaving and show you what we are working on.

In 2018, we are planning to study some new structure in Twill, Shadow Weave, more Tote bags and more blankets on the 60" loom in the main hall.