

Church Street School Cultural Centre – operating as the Aurora Cultural Centre

Executive Director's Managerial Commentary Last Quarter **2013** and Year-in-Review

Intended to Accompany the Centre's 2013 Audited Financial Statements.

Highlights – 2013

- 59 Instructional Programs Delivered
- 24 Exhibitions of Art Presented
- 10 Heritage Artifact Displays Presented
- 12 Musical Concerts Presented
- 35 Community Events Delivered
- 3 Heritage Lectures Presented
- 25,324 Visits Achieved
- 4,893.5 Volunteer Hours Donated to Centre
- Increased Community Facility Rentals
- Hosted Town of Aurora – 150th Display of The Aurora Collection
- Imagine Canada Standards Accreditation Achieved
- 15 Year Provision of Cultural Services Agreement Signed with Town of Aurora
- Awarded second Ontario Trillium Foundation Grant
- Finalist & Recipient of Honourable Mention awards for Transparency and Accountability in Financial Reporting; Voluntary Sector Reporting Awards 2013
- Designated a Community Partner for *Ignite*, TO 2015 Pan Am/Parapan Am games
- Active participation in Town of Aurora Cultural Master Plan
- Impressive 2013 KPI results
- Increased Earned Revenues
- Decreased Expenses



April 30, 2014

1. PROGRAMMING Q4 2013

Our programs are enjoying the support of a large number of participants. We are committed to presenting the best in cultural programming for our community. In 2013 the Centre experienced its first year of four-season programming when we added six, week-long half day children's **Summer** art programs to our regular Spring, Fall and Winter programs with great success.

The Centre provides a mix of free, by donation and registered/ticketed events.

Art Exhibitions

The Art Gallery program forms a major part of our operational plan to make the Cultural Centre accessible to everyone. All four galleries are open for the public to explore, be inspired and learn from – at no charge, although we always welcome donations in our school desk donation “jar” located in our reception area. The exhibitions are changed regularly with great variety of medium and content.

During Q4 [24 total in 2014]

Sept 3- Oct 19 Michelle Van Nie & Robin Burnett: <i>A Sense of Place</i>	Great Hall Gallery Encaustic and oils
Oct 23 – Dec 15 Olexander Wlasenko: <i>Somewhere in Time</i>	Great Hall Gallery Large drawings
Oct 18 – Nov 16 Sheila Davis, Jean Kallmeyer & Tracey Lee Green: <i>Borderlines</i>	Meridian & Blue Galleries Oils, Iron Sculpture, Poetry
Oct 18 – Nov 16 Ellen Cameron: <i>Freedom</i>	Reception Gallery Equine Photography
Nov 20 – Nov 30 Dorothy Clark McClure: <i>bene acta vita</i>	Meridian, Blue & Reception Galleries Retrospective exhibition and sale

Heritage Artifacts on Display

Up until 2014, The Aurora Historical Society has had a glass case for the display of artifacts from *The Aurora Collection* located at the front reception desk area. Beginning 2014 the new managers of The Aurora Collection will continue displaying artifacts in this case. As well, the Centre has developed our own “Community as Curator” program where Aurora citizens, organizations and businesses are invited to display their artifacts and collections throughout the year, also at the front reception area.

In 2013 the Centre partnered with the Town of Aurora to present its 150th Sesquicentennial birthday celebrations. The Aurora Room housed the 150th display of artifacts from The Aurora Collection (“Aurora Collects”) from June 19 to November 8th.

Beginning January 2014 the Aurora Room will be available to the Town of Aurora for the future display of artifacts from The Aurora Collection.

During Q4 [10 displays total in 2013]

September – December Caruso & Company: <i>Celebrating 100 years in Aurora</i>	<i>Community as Curator</i> Reception Display Case
November – to date Aurora Historical Society – <i>The Trains and Rails of Aurora</i>	<i>Aurora Historical Society</i> Reception Display Case
January – to date Church Street School Artifacts	<i>Aurora Historical Society</i> Library Room Display
June 19 – November 8 <i>Aurora Collects: Revealing 150 Years of our Shared History</i>	<i>Town of Aurora & Aurora Historical Society</i> Aurora Room Gallery

Musical Concerts

We are receiving feedback that audiences love live music presented in our up-close and intimate venue, and right downtown close to the restaurants. There is a strong appetite for live music in Aurora and we are working to serve that.

During Q4 [12 total in 2013]

October 4 John Sheard's Great Union Series: with Russell deCarle (of Prairie Oyster)
November 1 Leisa Way in Sweet Dreams: A Tribute to Patsy Cline --- <i>Featuring the Wayward Wind Band</i>
November 28 The Reid Jamieson Trio

Community Events

Community events are initiated by the Centre, partnered by the Centre with other groups, or the Centre provides the location for a community event facility rental. However it comes about, a community event always welcomes the community into the facility for a special activity; often at no charge.

Delivered in Q4 [35 total in 2013]

October 26 <i>Synchronicities in Art & Cinema</i> - Illustrated Curatorial Talk - Olexander Wlasenko
October 26 Artists' Receptions (everyone welcome) – <i>Borderlines / Freedom / Somewhere in Time</i>
Oct 30 Artists' Art & Poetry Reading – Sheila Davis & Jean Kallmeyer
Nov 14 Artist Walk & Talk – Ellen Cameron
Nov 25 Holland View Trail Retirement Community – tour of Dorothy Clark McClure exhibition
November 30 <i>Free Family Arts & Crafts drop in at the Centre</i> – holiday themed projects
December 11 Aurora Cultural Centre Public Meeting
December 14 <i>A Victorian Christmas Afternoon</i> – featuring Humber River Shakespeare Company & Carrying Place (live music)

Heritage Lectures

In 2013 the Centre presented the following Heritage Lectures:

<i>A virtual Tour of the Aurora Cemetery</i> - with Jacqueline Stuart
<i>Hidden Gems in Plain Sight</i> - with Fred Flood
<i>Making of a Centre: Adapting our Heritage for Relevancy Tomorrow</i> - with Mary Ellen Lynch-Comisso

Instructional Arts Programs

We continue to offer the traditional slate of instructional programs that one would expect in an arts environment; however we always add something new to the mix. Our adult programs are especially well received by the community. The list below shows programs that had sufficient registrations to run, but other programs were also offered.

Delivered in Q4 [59 in total 2013]

Mixed Media Fun	Ages 7 - 10
Drawing & Painting	Ages 11 - 14
Cartoon & Anime	Ages 6 - 12
Beginning Small Group Guitar	Ages 16+
Fingerpicking Guitar: An Introduction	Ages 16+
Alternate Tunings for Guitar	Ages 16+
Drawing, Sketching and More	Ages 16+
Pen & Ink Techniques: An Introduction	Ages 16+
Ukulele for Beginners	Ages 16+
Ukulele Level 2: The Songwriter Series	Ages 16+
Printmaking for the First Time	Ages 16+
Creating Impact Photography: Level 2	Ages 16+
Expressive Acrylics: Level 1	Ages 16+
Expand Your Horizons in Acrylics: Level 2	Ages 16+
Fall Watercolours: Afternoons	Ages 16+
Fall Watercolours: Evenings	Ages 16+
Wood Carving	Ages 16+
Painting in Oils	Ages 16+

2. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION 2013

Community participation flows through everything that happens at the Centre. For the second year in a row the Centre received over 25,000 visits.

Q4	6,950 visits
2013	25,324 visits

2.1 Our Volunteers

Volunteers are another important measure of community participation at the Centre. Our volunteers donate thousands of hours of their time. All ages volunteer at the Centre in operations and on our Board of Directors and on committees.

The **previous** year in 2012, the Board of Directors were faced with unprecedented governance work as we spent the year in negotiations with the Town of Aurora and in planning meetings etc. In 2013, while still donating a HUGE amount of volunteer hours, the cumulative hours donated by the Directors was able to be reduced to a still herculean 3,309 hours. At the same time, our operational volunteers increased their volunteer hours to 1,584.5.

It is hoped that in 2014 the governance hours required to operate the Centre will continue to decrease to a more sustainable and realistic level and that we will continue to gain volunteer help in the area of operations.

Our volunteer hours in 2013 were 32% of the hours required to operate the Centre. We simply could not operate the Centre without our dedicated volunteer force.

VOLUNTEERS donated a total of 1,275 hours in Q4 [4,893.5 total volunteer hours donated 2013]

Operational Volunteers TOTAL hours donated 2013	1584.5 hours donated
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Governance Volunteers Board of Directors (12 members + Mayor Dawe) TOTAL hours donated 2013	3,309 hours donated
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2.2 Facility Rentals – An Indicator of Community Participation

Facility Rentals bring large numbers of diverse community groups and organizations to the Centre where we are able to further engage them with culture. The community and corporate groups enjoy viewing the gallery exhibitions during breaks, while our cultural groups are especially inspired working surrounded by expressions of creativity. We are seeing more and more return bookings from happy users.

In 2013 we continued to enjoy long term, rental relationships with the following organizations:

- Quilters of York Region
- Society of York Region Artists (SOYRA)
- York Region Arts Council (YRAC)
- Aurora Community Band
- Pine Tree Potters
- Theatre Starts
- Aurora Farmers' Market
- Spotlight Theatre
- Aurora Performing Arts (Wave Theatre)
- York Region Children's Chorus
- Kerry's Place Autism Services
- Yellow Brick House
- The Region of York

Some interesting bookings of note in Q4 were:

- Southlake LIPS – *volunteer recognition event*
- York Region District School Board - *in-service*
- Blues Hills Family Centre – *in-service*
- Eating Disorders York Region – *Justin Hines benefit concert*
- Dr. G. W. Williams Grade 12 art class – *one day showing*
- Canadian Mental Health Association – *annual holiday party for staff and the community they serve*

- Special Olympics – *holiday market fundraiser*
- Aurora Community Band – *holiday market fundraiser*
- Empty Bowls: Pine Tree Potters - *annual community fundraiser*
- Stacy Kuniak – *Holiday Concert*
- Aurora Home Tour – *Designer Showcase*
- Sandgate Women’s Centre – *AGM*
- several private rentals – *music recitals*

3. PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships are an integral programming component for the Centre.

In 2013 we are proud to have worked in partnership with:

- Town of Aurora
- Aurora High School
- Aurora Farmers’ Market
- York Region Arts Council
- Aurora Community Band
- Aurora Historical Society
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Theatre Starts Inc
- artists, writers, performers, lecturers, instructors, volunteers
- Sacred Heart High School
- Society of York Region Artists (SOYRA)
- Pine Tree Potters
- Dr. G. W. Williams High School
- York Region District School Board
- Austrian Consulate
- Rickard Banjos
- Bonsai Hill Tea
- Priestly Demolition
- Aurora Cultural Roundtable
- Culture Days
- Caruso & Company
- Disal Contracting
- Apple Suites
- Backyard Pools & Spas
- Aurora Public Library
- Imagine Canada
- gb Wines
- Vandenbosche Jewellers
- fraktals
- Thursday Night Jam Band
- Gabriel’s Cafe
- Meridian
- ScotiabankToronto Waterfront Marathon
- Black Forest Garden Centre
- Stouffville Brewing Company
- Aurora Horticultural & Garden Club

4. FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

*The Fund Development Committee of the Board of Directors spent several months researching and preparing a detailed activity plan for the Centre’s Fund Development Program for 2013 and 2014. This multi-layered approach to fundraising is ambitious. Now that the Centre is operating in a more secure environment with a strong relationship with the Town of Aurora, we have been able to build a fund development plan **and** a strategy to activate it.*

Q4 Events 2 [7 total in 2013]

October 19 <i>“Fest in October”</i> – Dancing courtesy of the Thursday Night Jam band
November 22 <i>The Art of Wine</i> – tasting, talk and appetizers

- The Centre is in the midst of launching its *Friends of the Centre* program which includes levels of support from \$50 to \$1,000+ with corresponding benefits
- 100% of the Board of Directors has supported the Friends Program.
- Our *Business Partners* and *Event Sponsorship* programs are also newly underway.
- The Centre is the proud recipient of Ontario Trillium Foundation funding allowing us to hire a full time Fund Development Officer for three years beginning mid 2014.

ON GOING FUNDRAISING INITIATIVES:

- Friends of the Centre program
- Concert & Event Sponsorship opportunities
- Business Partner opportunities
- Fundraising events
- Pennies for the Piano
- 88 keys of Success

***We did it!* Aurora Cultural Centre Awarded Trustmark Distinction Through Imagine Canada**

The Centre was one of only 24 successful non-profit organizations (out of a field of over 75 applicants across Canada) granted approval to use the **Imagine Canada Trustmark** by achieving thorough compliance of a rigorous set of standards in five key areas:

- Financial Accountability & Transparency
- Board Governance
- Fundraising
- Staff Management
- Volunteer Involvement.

The Centre now proudly joins a select group of only 45 non-profit organizations nationwide working at this recognized level of excellence; organizations such as Save the Children Canada, The Canadian Diabetes Association and World Vision.

We are thrilled with this gold standard recognition of our practices and our ability to bear the coveted "Trustmark".



SUMMATION

By the close of 2013, the Centre had four years of existence under its belt lead by a creative and long term staff team and a dedicated volunteer Board of Directors. We were, and continue to be, supported by an army of loyal volunteers.

We successfully navigated unexpected political turmoil and learned much from it along the way. This resulted in the Centre working to secure a long-term understanding from our major funder: the Town of Aurora.

Behind the scenes the Directors and staff undertook major projects to re-evaluate and tweak the Centre's By-laws and its policies, and also developed a two year Fund Development Activity Plan.

We matured to the point of achieving the grants necessary to present a full slate of children's *summer* programming making us for the first time, a full all-season high activity cultural gathering point.

We achieved some successes that even long established organizations have yet to see: Imagine Canada accreditation, a second (in 4 years) substantial Ontario Trillium Foundation Grant. We were one of over 130 non profits from across Canada to seek a Voluntary Sector Reporting Award; were one of 16 named a Finalist and then were thrilled to be awarded Honourable Mention.

We conducted our first Customer Satisfaction Survey and were told that 95% rated the overall quality of the Centre's programs and events as Good, Very Good, or Extremely Good. In addition, 85% stated they were Satisfied or Extremely Satisfied with the Centre's mix of arts, music, heritage and special events programming.

All our KPI's yielded positive results.

We directed 75% of our spending directly to our programming; an excellent non profit cultural sector standard.

We worked hard to increase our earned revenues while at the same time reducing expenses. We maintained our reserves and were able to create a new reserve for upcoming special projects. This is reflected in the 2013 Audited Financial Statements.

Our 2013 Annual Report will provide further details of Centre activities for the year.

Laura Schembri

Executive Director
Aurora Cultural Centre

April 30, 2014