

Culture in the County

FREE
ISSUE
NOV '23

ARTS AND CULTURE IN STRATHCONA COUNTY
A DIGITAL MAGAZINE



STRATHCONA
COUNTY



ACCSC
ARTS & CULTURE COUNCIL
OF STRATHCONA COUNTY

CONTENTS

ARTICLES

- 03 *PRESIDENT'S NOTES*

- 04 *ARDROSSAN HOSTS THE RCMP MUSICAL RIDE*

- 08 *TRACY CHILDS REACHES FOR THE STARS*

- 12 *HELPING YOUTH PURSUE THEIR DREAMS*

- 13 *CELEBRATING CULTURE DAYS*

- 15 *RAISING AWARENESS OF MULTICULTURALISM IN STRATHCONA COUNTY*

- 18 *WHAT THE HECK IS THIS PECHA KUCHA THING ANYWAY?*

- 20 *EXPLORING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE*

- 24 *IS CREATIVITY IMPORTANT?*

- 27 *CURIOSITY DRIVES THIS ARTIST'S CREATIVITY*



SPOTLIGHT

TRACY CHILDS REACHES FOR THE STARS

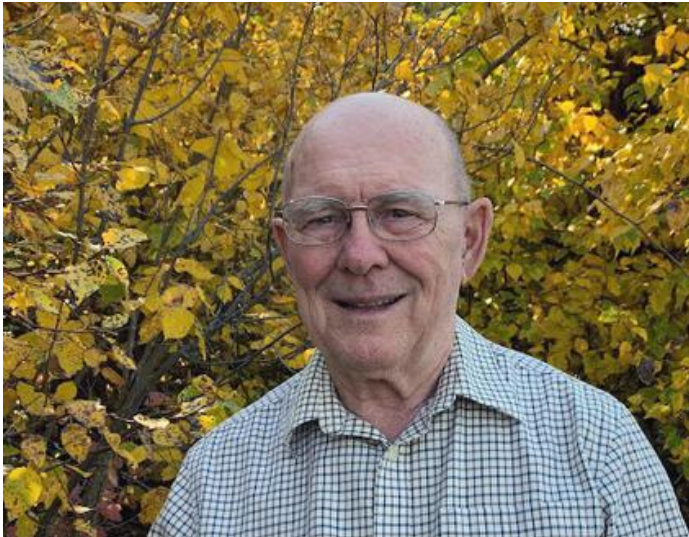
iMaGiNaTioN Engraving



PROFILE

CURIOSITY DRIVES THIS ARTIST'S CREATIVITY

Local Artist
Gloria Van Schaik



PRESIDENT'S NOTES

I hope you have been having a great year exploring all that our County has to offer! It's been a busy year both in the Duncan household and for the Arts and Culture Council.

I have attended, and been a part of, many different activities throughout Strathcona County over the past few months.

I've had the opportunity to enjoy a myriad of different experiences throughout our county, from Sherwood Park to Ardrossan; from Josephburg to Cooking Lake, and many great places in between - which got me thinking (it doesn't take much to get me thinking 😊) how important culture is to a community like ours that is both urban and rural.

I believe culture helps to create a sense of identity and belonging.

In an urban setting, culture can bring people together and foster a sense of community in a diverse and fast-paced environment. It can provide opportunities for people to connect, share their experiences, and celebrate their heritage.

In a rural setting, culture can help preserve traditions and customs that are unique to the area. It can also promote local arts and crafts, traditional music and dance, and local cuisine, which can attract tourists and contribute to the local economy.

Overall, culture plays a vital role in both urban and rural communities by promoting social cohesion, preserving heritage, and enhancing the quality of life for all residents. So, why not take the time and get out and enjoy all the events, exhibits, shows and more that ALL our communities have to offer? You'll be glad you did.

Enjoy!

KEN DUNCAN
ACCSC PRESIDENT

ARDROSSAN HOSTS THE RCMP MUSICAL RIDE



On June 17 pageantry and the pounding of hooves came to Strathcona County as Ardrossan hosted the RCMP Musical Ride. “The Musical Ride spans more than a century across the history of the Royal Mounted Police, and it remains true to the traditions of the force,” explained Strathcona County RCMP Cpl Brent Dobinson. “Hosting the Musical Ride was an exclusive opportunity for our community providing a unique window into the past.”

The Musical Ride is comprised of 28 riders and their horses, who perform precise cavalry drills — consisting of intricate figures that demand control, timing and coordination — choreographed to a musical arrangement by a Canadian artist.

Riders include both regular serving RCMP members some of which for this tour were local or area members, as well as a dedicated yearly rotation of members from across Canada.

A symbol of tradition, honour, and pride, the Musical Ride is recognized at home and abroad. The Musical Ride supports front-line

police operations by building positive relationships, supporting recruiting efforts and promoting the RCMP's image in communities in Canada and around the world.

From its inception in 1873, the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) relied on skilled riders to carry out police duties across the Prairies. Patrolling the vast and sparsely inhabited area, NWMP members were frequently the only government officials new settlers would encounter and were essential to preventing prairie fires.

To break the monotony of endless riding drills, members of the Force commonly competed amongst themselves and performed tricks on horseback. In 1876, some of these tricks and exercises were performed at Fort Macleod, Alta. This is believed to be the first public performance of what would eventually evolve into the Musical Ride.

“Patrolling the vast and sparsely inhabited area, NWMP members were frequently the only government officials new settlers would encounter and were essential to preventing prairie fires.”

In 1886, the NWMP's first riding school was established in Regina. During the winter of 1887, there were five public performances at the Regina barracks. The Ride was performed only in the winter because many of the policemen resided in Regina until they could resume their summer patrols.

Later that year, the Riding School at Depot burned down, and by the time it was rebuilt, key personnel needed to organize the Ride had been transferred or had left the Force. There is no record of another Musical Ride until 1901.

In 1901, the Ride performed in Brandon, Manitoba and Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan. After this time, Rides were performed occasionally at agricultural exhibitions, fairs and horse shows.

On July 28, 1908, a Musical Ride was performed in Quebec City as part of that municipality's 300th anniversary celebrations. The Prince of Wales attended, becoming the first member of the Royal Family to witness the Ride. This was also the first time a Musical Ride was performed outside of Western Canada. Musical Rides continued to be performed for the public until the start of the First World War in 1914.



Musical Rides were cancelled in 1914 at the outbreak of the First World War and were not held again until 1920. In that year, the now-Royal NWMP absorbed the Dominion Police, the federal police force for Eastern Canada, and became the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). The RCMP headquarters were then moved to Ottawa, Ontario, and "N" Division was established in nearby Rockcliffe.

"N" Division immediately organized a Musical Ride and performed at Lansdowne Park in Ottawa on May 24, 1920 and in Brockville on July 1, 1920. There were performances almost every year from both "N" Division and Regina. In the 1930s, a third Ride was organized in Vancouver, B.C., (known as "E" Division), with five performances in Vancouver.

The Ride began performing in the United States and overseas: in 1930, the Ride made its first trip to England to perform at the Wembley Exhibition in London; in 1934, the Ride performed for the first time in the United States, with "N" Division in New York City and "E" Division in Portland, Oregon.



By this time, the Ride had become an established attraction, and in 1939, new stables were built in Ottawa: a one-story brick-veneer structure designed by local architect W.C. Sylvester. The horses had previously been lodged at Lansdowne Park and then in a wooden building in Rockcliffe. In 1939, the Ride was a great success at the World Fair in New York. However, any plans for the future were shelved when the Second World War broke out; there would be no further performances until 1948.

Musical Rides were once again organized in 1948, but mostly from N Division. The show was performed at a number of locations in Canada and the United States. However, the Rides were not held every year; for instance, there were none in 1950-1951, 1954-1955 and Today, the RCMP Musical Ride consists of 28-32 riders plus the member in charge. It executes a variety of cavalry drills choreographed to music. The Ride tours throughout Canada and internationally between May and October, performing at approximately 40 venues each year. The present stables in Ottawa were built in 1993; the original stables built in 1939 now house the Visitor's Centre.

The iconic RCMP ride in Canada serves as a symbol of national pride and identity. The RCMP is a uniquely Canadian institution, known for its distinctive red serge uniforms and Stetson hats. The annual RCMP ride showcases the rich history and traditions of the force, reminding Canadians of their shared heritage. The ride is a way to honour and pay tribute to the men and women who serve in the RCMP. It is a celebration of their dedication, bravery, and commitment to keeping communities safe. The ride allows the public to show their appreciation and support for the RCMP and the important work they do.

“The iconic RCMP ride in Canada serves as a symbol of national pride and identity.”



Where cultural visions
and energies come alive



- 100's of music, dance, and theatre presentations
- performing arts programs • facility rentals



*New ticketing
system!*

festivalplace.ca



STRATHCONA
COUNTY

TRACY CHILDS REACHES FOR THE STARS

From the outside, iMaGiNaTioN Engraving and Creative Studios, just over the County border in Lamont, looks just like a converted whiteboard clad auto repair and body shop.

Which is exactly what it is.

Walk through the door, however, and you walk into an emporium of creativity, funky-looking trophies and a myriad of artistic visual concepts. Oh yes. Then there are the strips of paper with meaningful, motivational messages stuck everywhere on the ceilings.

Huh?..... Yep, you read correctly?

“It’s all about reaching for the stars and the philosophy of each individual looking up in life and pushing themselves higher,” says owner Tracy Childs.

Brought up in Strathcona County, Tracy grew up just outside of Partridge Hill, south of Josephberg, where her parents and the rest of her family still farm.

“I sort of have one foot in Lamont and one foot in Strathcona,” she chuckles. Her business is based in Lamont but her roots, communities and entrepreneurial endeavors are still firmly attached to Strathcona County.

In her studio and shop, Tracy designs and creates custom awards and trophies to help corporations and organizations celebrate excellence. The studio also hosts different events and workshops to inspire to heal and help people better themselves through their creativity!

I asked Tracy how she arrived at where she is today from her childhood days near Josephberg.

“I kinda came full circle,” she responded. “I was pretty creative when I was growing up as a teen, influenced I guess by my Mom and Dad. My Mom was really big into crafting and I somehow got into woodworking, maybe through Dad, and some of the things I made really appealed to people.”

“I was pretty creative when I was growing up as a teen, influenced I guess by my Mom and Dad.”



“Then one day a rancher asked me if I could make some trophies that looked like dog bones, and so at the age of 16, I made these trophies which, to my surprise, went over really well. I went off to college, got into all kinds of other things then after I had my kids I thought ‘I want to make trophies’ and things just sort of grew from there.”

Grew from there is probably her key phrase because now, not only is Tracy’s mainstream business still creating custom-made trophies but she’s turned her creative thinking into so many more activities. She also exhibits at festivals and fairs or helps others do so.

“Trophies are still my passion and I do like to get creative with the awards. You don’t just need a plastic trophy, it can be something you use in your sport or area of expertise. If we can customize it, fit it into the laser machine, and add a name to it so it becomes something you can use or cherish instead of something that just sits on a wall, then that’s what I want to be known for. I want to add a creative, artistic flair to all I do.”

As I looked around her studio it’s obvious that she likes to add an artistic flair to everything and I said this to her.

She laughed. “I never really thought of myself as a creative nut, but I do tend to look at things a little differently for sure since I’ve been spending more time in artistic circles.”

Tracy also runs all kinds of activities out of her studio, including workshops, and classes for different age groups on different artistic and crafting subjects.

I asked her if she was trying to build a cultural and creative hub.



“I hope so,” she answered, “Part of my original thinking when opening the studio was that it becomes a creative community hub where people can come together and create and share things together instead of everybody sitting at home playing on a computer or whatever.”

“I ride horses and have a lot of contacts in the horse world and one of the first workshops I did was mohair cinch making - participants got to choose their colours etc. and they made it themselves. I think you’re more proud of something if you made it yourself. So that’s the kind of opportunity I want to provide.”

“I run activities for kids in the studio as well. For example, one of the days when kids in town had no pool, I had a bunch of them drawing and sharing pictures of cats. We had colourful cats, sad cats, happy cats, big and small cats but most importantly, they were cats that were created by the kids. They were all creative cats.”

“Most of the workshops I’ve done so far have been open to kids as well. We ran one on felting where you take all the wool fibres and press them together then roll and roll them. All the kids made their own felt first and then turned the felt into baskets. It was great fun with some crazy creative results and the kids had a blast.”

What turns Tracy’s crank?

“I’m really into painting and I particularly enjoy splatter painting because you never really know how it’s going to end up before it’s done.” She laughs. “I do have some other local artists who come in and run paint afternoons and nights along with teaching more of the art theory.”

“I got a lot of my confidence back during Covid when I was experimenting with pour painting and was just in wonder at some of the outcomes. To me, that was, and is, simply creative expression at its finest. It’s when you fail and fail until you get it right that brings confidence for me anyway. The beauty of pour painting is that you’re not always sure of what you want in the first place so every painting is a success.”

I get the impression that your mind is always going a mile a minute, thinking up new ideas, and new initiatives for the community.

(Laughs) “Yes, it’s distracting sometimes for sure.”

You mentioned before that you see this place as one where the community can come to express their creativity, would you like to expand on that?

“Sure. I think as much as people talk about self-care there also needs to be community care and a creative outlet, so if this is a place where people can do that then that’s great. I see this as a safe place where people can come and experiment, and be creative without fear or critique, without worrying about failing.”

One of the things about crafting is that there is no wrong way to do it. Maybe some of the more knowledgeable artists would be critical of that comment, but for me, if it’s an individual’s creative expression then there is no wrong way to do it. You can try a million times and fail a million times, but you’re still creating something.



“Would you describe yourself as an entrepreneur?”

“Well yes, I guess. As an artist and small business owner, I do all the things that an entrepreneur does. I’m still not super comfortable with calling myself that but I am having a good time doing what I’m doing right now and am very pleased that I’m having a positive impact on the community. What other people want to call me is none of my business.

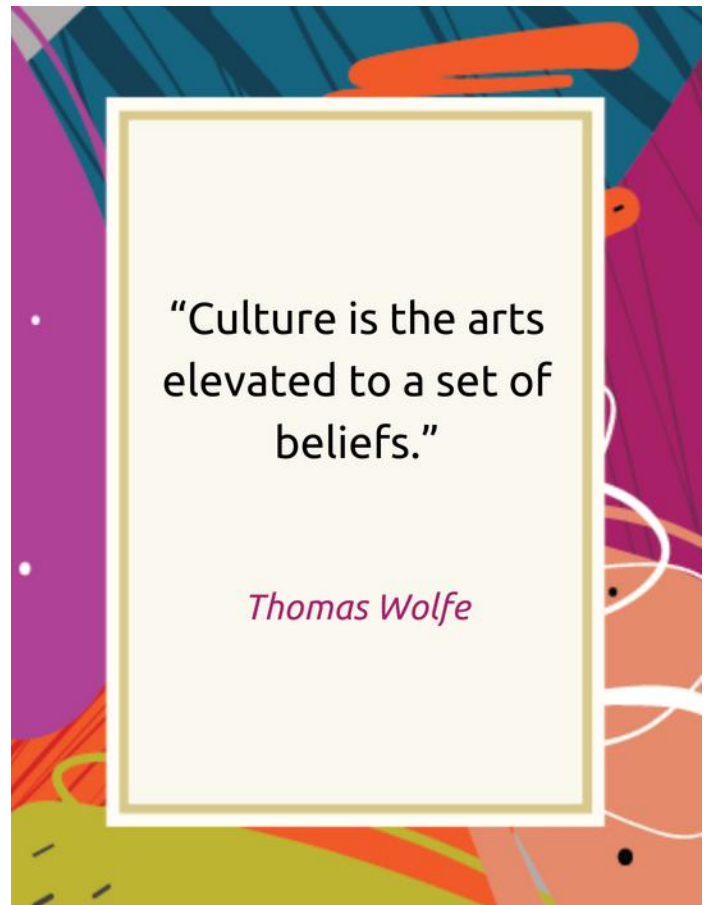
If you were speaking with a 12-year-old helping at craft shows today, the way that you did when you were a kid, and they had this vision of what you’re doing today, what advice would you give them?

“Don’t feel obligated to follow other people's advice! I spent a lot of time doing what other people thought I should be doing but it wasn’t until I learned to trust myself, that my ideas worked, that they were good.”

“That’s when life began to feel more positive and when things started to happen. In the beginning, there are very fragile times, you need to be positive within yourself and then surround yourself with positive-thinking people and never forget to reach for the stars.”

You can reach Tracy Childs at:
iMaGiNaTioN Engraving and Creative Studios
4820-51 Street, Lamont, AB
780-719-0597
Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/iMaGiNaTioN363/>

By: Martin Povey



Thomas Wolfe

ADVENTURE



EVENTS

UR



Looking for the best local adventures? Sherwood Park and Strathcona County are home to incredible art galleries, festivals, museum, live theatre, and more!

Start your adventure at strathcona.ca/adventure





CELEBRATING CULTURE DAYS

Alberta Culture Days began in 2008 as Alberta Arts Day, a one-day event to recognize the value of Alberta's arts and culture communities. There were 100 events held in 30 communities across the province and a flagship celebration at the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium in Calgary.

Since then, it has expanded into a vibrant, month-long, province-wide celebration that has helped inspire the creation of Culture Days—a cross-Canadian event that aims to raise awareness, accessibility, participation, and engagement of all Canadians in the artistic and cultural life of their communities.

In 2022, thousands of Albertans discovered and celebrated our arts, heritage and cultural diversity through hundreds of events that took place across the province. Alberta Culture Days is an opportunity to discover, experience and celebrate arts and culture through local events and activities, in person and online across the province. Last year, more than 500 communities from coast to coast participated in National Culture Days to increase awareness, accessibility, participation and engagement of Canadians in the arts and cultural life of their communities.

Alberta Culture Days, September 1 to 30, will continue to encourage all Albertans to experience how culture contributes to a prosperous, vibrant society, either through online or in-person events.

Anyone can organize an event and participate in Culture Days! Hosting events during Culture Days can serve as an opportunity to connect with community members, encourage collaboration and build new or existing audiences.

A Force of Nature



Darren Emenau and Twyla Exner

October 20 to December 1, 2023

gallery@501



RAISING AWARENESS OF MULTICULTURALISM IN STRATHCONA COUNTY

Multiculturalism is a social philosophy that recognizes and values the diversity of different cultural and ethnic groups within a society. It promotes the coexistence and mutual respect of different cultures and emphasizes the importance of valuing and celebrating the contributions of all cultural groups.

Here are 8 good reasons why it's important.

Promotes diversity: Multiculturalism celebrates the diversity of cultures, languages, and traditions within a society. It recognizes that no one culture is superior to another and encourages individuals to appreciate and respect different cultures.

Preservation of cultural heritage: Multiculturalism encourages the preservation and sharing of cultural heritage. By recognizing and valuing the different cultures within a society, it promotes the continuation of cultural traditions, languages, and customs that may be at risk of being lost.

Fosters inclusivity: When a society embraces multiculturalism, it creates an inclusive environment where people from different backgrounds feel valued and included. This promotes social cohesion and reduces the potential for social division and conflict.

Enhances creativity and innovation: Multiculturalism encourages the sharing of ideas and perspectives from different cultural backgrounds, which can lead to innovative and creative solutions to problems.

Greater understanding and appreciation: Exposure to different cultures through multiculturalism can foster greater understanding and appreciation of the values, beliefs, and practices of different cultures. This can lead to a more tolerant and harmonious society.

Economic benefits: Multiculturalism can contribute to the economic growth of a society by creating new business opportunities, promoting trade, and attracting foreign investment.

Personal growth and development: Exposure to different cultures can broaden an individual's understanding of the world, increase their empathy and tolerance, and enhance their personal growth and development.

Interconnectedness: Multiculturalism acknowledges the interconnectedness of cultures and their histories. It recognizes that cultures are not isolated entities but are influenced by and have an impact on one another.

[ACCSC, Strathcona County Museum and Archives, Strathcona County Diversity Committee, Volunteer Strathcona, the Community Adult Learning Literacy Society Fort Saskatchewan and Strathcona County](#) have joined forces to form a Coalition to host three events during 2023 to

showcase, celebrate and raise awareness of multiculturalism within our County.

The first gathering was during Indigenous Month when we hosted a workshop in June for local Indigenous artists and artisans to gather, connect, and share knowledge.

We welcomed artists to a collaborative space on Treaty Six Territory and the homeland of the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region Two and Four. They came together to paint and craft for the day and to share and exchange ideas, knowledge and traditions inherent in their art, share stories and meet and engage with visitors. Our community can learn much from Indigenous Artists - how skills were learned, age-old traditions, and knowledge protected and handed forward.

With learning and education, we foster respect. That was a primary objective of our gathering for Indigenous Month and we were honoured to have the opportunity to host and welcome Artists and guests alike.



In September, building on these community connections, there was an event held during Culture Days to continue to bring awareness and education around multiculturalism and anti-racism to communities within the County. Nurturing Strathconas Multicultural Ecosystem was an exploration of our Roots, Common Ground and New Growth. A panel of experts explored these threads and this was followed up with the attendees holding table discussions. All who participated agreed it was a wise investment of their time.

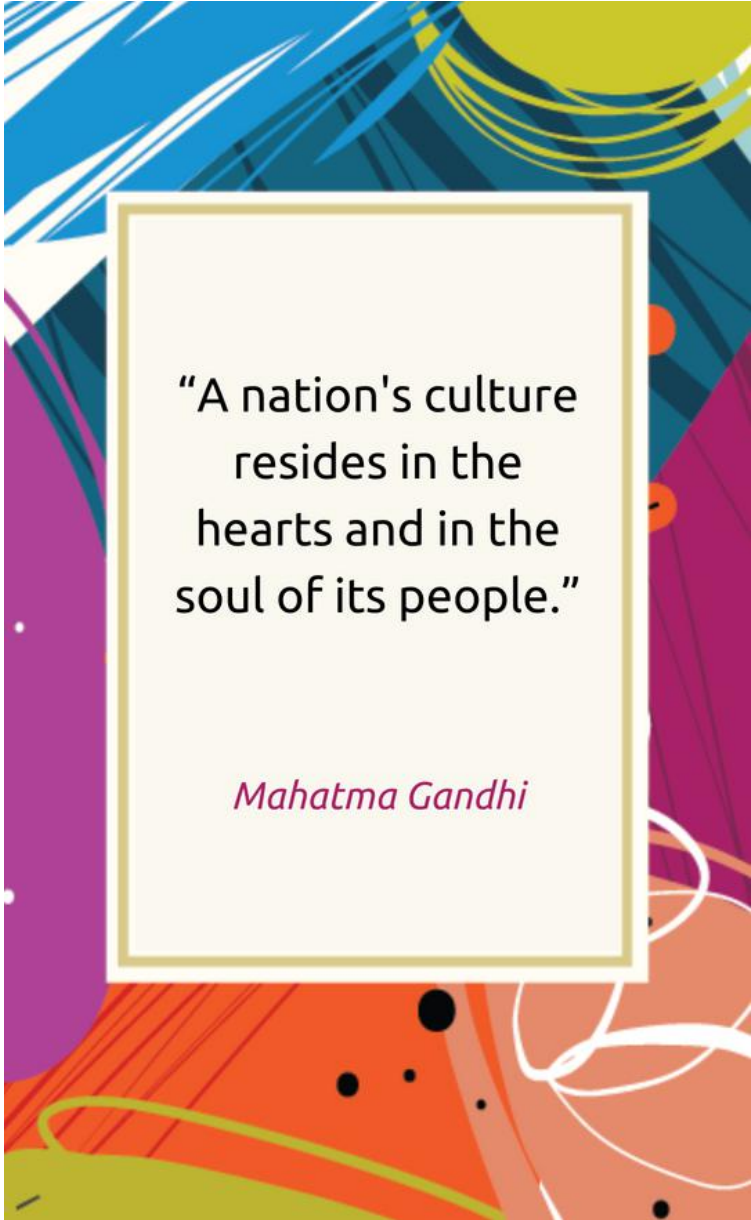
Finally, in October, for the 3rd event of the year, we hosted an event to showcase a celebration of multiculturalism through food. This event was called Bread Planet and we engaged with local restaurants who provided breads and other delicious samples from their varying cultures. This event drew a number of residents of the county who sampled the foods and learned from community members by engaging, conversing, and reflecting together as we entered the winter months. We can all expect some delicious examples of multiculturalism within our county!

The Coalition is now compiling their report about the exploration of multiculturalism in the County, key learnings and next steps ingrowing multicultural engagement, appreciation and education moving forward.

Want to learn more? Feel free to reach out to any member of the participating organizations !

Written by: Aimee Elise Shaw

"Multiculturalism can contribute to the economic growth of a society by creating new business opportunities, promoting trade, and attracting foreign investment."



"A nation's culture resides in the hearts and in the soul of its people."

Mahatma Gandhi

18

ART SOCIETY OF
STRATHCONA COUNTY
ArtStrathcona.com
PRESENTS

Christmas
**MARKET
PLACE**

THE BIGGEST SHOPPING EVENT OF THE YEAR!

STRATHCONA COUNTY
Alberta Foundation for the Arts

Come by for Unique Gifts, Stocking Stuffers and so much more!

NOV. 18TH 10-4 P.M. & NOV. 19TH 10-4 P.M.

**AT: A.J. Ottewell Centre (Red Barn)
590 Broadmoor Blvd. Sherwood Park**

What The Heck Is This Pecha Kucha Thing Anyway?

It's a "best-kept secret" by more than 3 million people in over 1500 cities around the world!

Pecha Kucha has flourished in popularity over the last few decades and late last year the concept came to our community when ACCSC acquired the exclusive license for Strathcona County.

Since then, ACCSC has hosted 3 successful Pecha Kucha events with members of our community coming together for an evening of good times, learning, entertainment and socialization; delighting, entertaining and informing hundreds of members of our community.

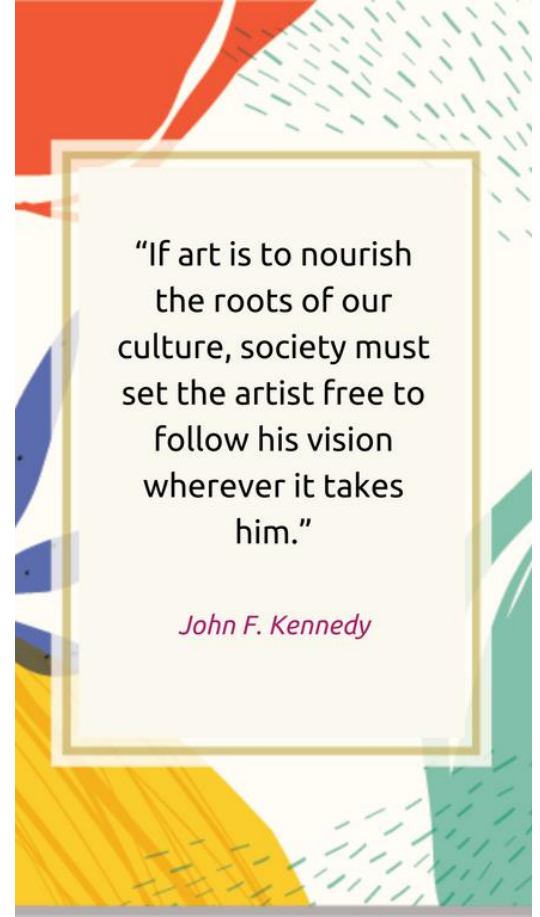
"My first Pecha Kucha and WOW what an amazing evening"

The PechaKucha 20x20 presentation format is a slide show of 20 images, each auto-advancing after 20 seconds. It's non-stop and presenters have 400 seconds to tell their story, with visuals guiding the way.

A typical PechaKucha Night includes 5 - 8 presentations. Volunteer presenters from our community share creative work or speak about passion topics such as travels, projects, creative ideas, hobbies, collections, social issues or other interests.



PechaKucha™



“If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him.”

John F. Kennedy

How Pecha Kucha Began

Inspired by their desire to "talk less, show more", Astrid Klein and Mark Dytham of Tokyo's Klein-Dytham Architecture (KDa) created PechaKucha in February 2003.

It was a way to attract people to SuperDeluxe, their experimental event space in Roppongi, and to enable young designers to meet, show their work, and exchange ideas in 6 minutes and 40 seconds. The word “Pecha Kucha” is Japanese for “chit chat.”

There's Always Something Amazing That Happens At A Pecha Kucha Night!

A Pecha Kucha Night is fun, affordable, informative, social, casual and very addictive!

There's nothing formal or stuffy about this night out!

Admission is by donation (suggested donation at the door is \$10+). Doors open at 6:30 pm, there's music, and presentations start at 7:20 pm. The evening wraps up by 9:30 p.m. at the latest. There's a bar (beer, wine, and soft drinks), free munchies and plenty of parking.

100% Of Attendees Told Us Our Pecha Kucha Events Met Or Exceeded Their Expectations

Here's what they said:

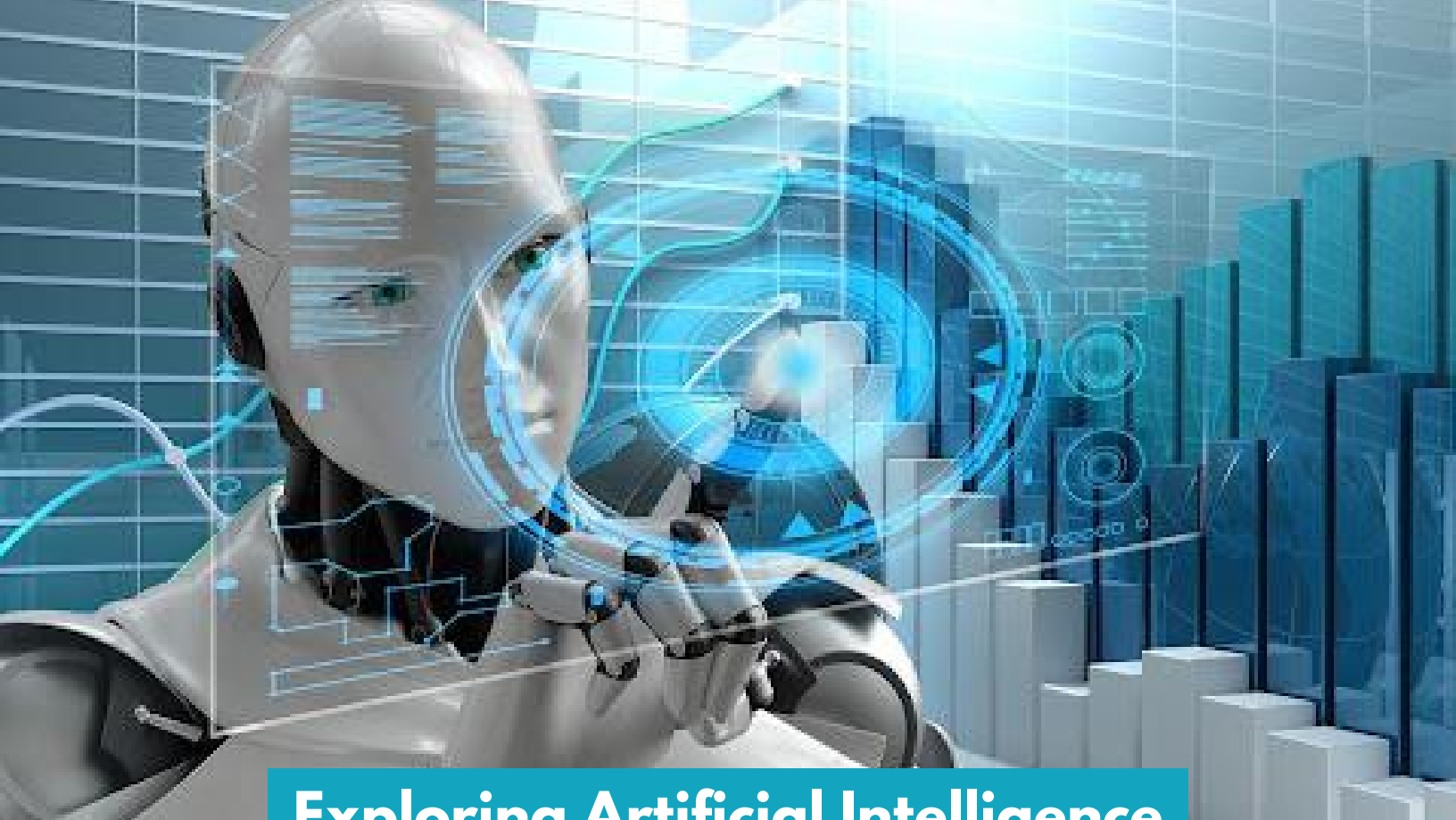
“Excellent evening - enjoyed it very much”

“Pleasantly pleased - wasn't sure what to expect - excellent presentations”

“All the presentations were great”

“I look forward to hearing more - and to bringing friends”

[Watch for details on our next Pecha Kucha Night coming soon!](#)



Exploring Artificial Intelligence

As President of the Arts & Culture Council of Strathcona County (ACCSC). I have an obligation to keep abreast of cultural developments that may impact our communities, society as a whole and, of course, this organization.

I keep hearing more and more daily about Artificial Intelligence (AI). Curious to find out more, I decided to do a little test run. I downloaded a program to my iPad and I asked it to write a poem about arts, culture and heritage. This is what artificial intelligence came up with.

*Arts, culture, and heritage,
Treasures of our human race,
A reflection of our history,
A window to our inner space.*

*From ancient ruins to modern cities,
We explore our world's diversity,
The richness of its colours,
The power of its creativity.*

*Through music, dance, and painting,
We express our deepest selves,
Our joys, our sorrows, our struggles,
Our hopes, our dreams, our selves.*

*Arts, culture, and heritage,
Are the soul of our society,
A bond that unites us all,
A source of our identity.*

*In museums, galleries, and theatres,
We discover our shared past,
The stories of our ancestors,
The triumphs and the lasts.*

*So let us cherish and protect them,
And pass them on to the next generation,
For they are the legacy of our past,
And the inspiration for our future creation.*

WOW!

I then asked it to provide me with the key points that could be considered as being in favour of using artificial intelligence for writing instead of hiring a local writer. Here's the response I received:

1. **Speed and Efficiency:** An AI language model can produce content at a much faster rate than a human writer. This is because AI language models can analyze vast amounts of data within seconds and generate highly relevant content with minimal human intervention. This means that businesses can get their content produced quickly and efficiently, which can be a significant advantage in today's fast-paced business environment.

2. **Cost-Effective:** Hiring a local writer can be expensive, especially if you're looking for high-quality content. On the other hand, using an AI language model can be more cost-effective, as you only pay for the software, and there are no overhead costs to consider.

3. **Consistency:** AI language models can ensure consistency in tone, style, and messaging across all content produced. This is particularly important for businesses that need to maintain a consistent brand voice across all their marketing channels.

4. **Language Diversity:** AI language models can produce content in multiple languages, which can be a significant advantage for businesses looking to expand their reach globally.

5. **Data-Driven Insights:** AI language models can provide valuable data insights that can help businesses optimize their content for better engagement and conversion. This can help businesses make data-driven decisions and improve their overall marketing strategy. However, it is important to note that AI language models are not perfect and may not be able to capture the nuances of human language and emotion. Therefore, it is essential to use AI language models as a tool to support human writers, rather than a replacement for them."



"Fashion is part of
our culture, and it's
about more than
just a pretty dress."

Joan Smalls

“Overall, while AI language models can be a useful tool in creating content, they cannot replace the creativity, empathy, and adaptability of a skilled human writer. By working together, human writers and AI technology can create more effective and impactful content than either could achieve alone.”

This most interesting exercise has led me to the conclusion that artificial intelligence does have a place in writing, but it must be carefully considered by a human before it is used and if it is used, then it must be carefully edited to ensure accuracy.

NOTE: I do think artificial intelligence is here to stay, and that its use and abilities will expand as society moves forward. Inevitably, we will have no alternative but to participate in the increasing use of artificial intelligence. Just how, remains to be seen.

By Ken Duncan, President, ACCSC and by ChatGPT Artificial Intelligence



CULTURE PROGRAMS IN STRATHCONA COUNTY



PERFORMING ARTS

Get ready to act, dance and sing on the extravagant Festival Place stage. Our weekly classes include options for kids and teens and special programs occur for all ages seasonally. Spring, summer and fall camps immerse children in a fun, and supportive environment that develops their imagination and performance skills.



Scan to view
performing art programs

strathcona.ca/PerformingArts

VISUAL ARTS

Gallery@501

Kids, adults and seniors can get creative with watercolour and acrylic painting, needle felting, printmaking, cultural arts, and much more. Be inspired by contemporary art exhibits and engage in inspirational classes in our fully equipped studio.

Smeltzer House Visual Arts Centre

Pottery, fused glass, and mixed media classes take place within the Smeltzer House grounds where you'll refine your craft in an environment that inspires creativity.



Scan to view
visual art programs

strathcona.ca/VisualArts



Is Creativity Important?

Simply put – yes - creativity is as important to our health as physical activities. It gives us the opportunity to explore new ideas, gives us new ways of thinking and allows us to problem-solve.

Through self-expression, we can create our own ‘visual’ creation of our feelings, ideas and experiences. It may manifest in a painting, a piece of pottery or a story, no matter the medium we use, the act of creating gives us many benefits.

Firstly, we become better problem solvers. How do you ask? No ‘art’ form has a user manual so we have to learn new and resourceful ways to overcome a predicament in our creation, whether we are working with a physical object or a concept.

Secondly, we connect to other people creating in the same way, giving us an instant sense of belonging and community. This allows us to exchange ideas and provides feedback and a sense of connection.

Creativity also helps with stress relief. When we are using our hands, minds and energy to do something we enjoy and create something, daily life disappears as our concentration is on that particular endeavour.

When we 'create' something from scratch we get a real sense of accomplishment and the more we practice the better we become. Finding a group of people, who share our enthusiasm and support and help us when we are learning the 'ropes' expands our social circle, and gives us the ability to be innovative and imaginative.

There are many groups and organizations within Strathcona County that you can investigate for your particular creative interest. Here is a small selection.

Writing – The Writers Foundation of Strathcona County www.wfscsherwoodpark.com

Singing – The Festival Singers <http://www.festivalsingers.ca/>

Dance - <http://www.dancefusionsp.com/>

Painting - <https://www.artstrathcona.com/>

Music - <http://www.wyestringensemble.com/index.php>

Written by: Mandy Eve-Barnett, Secretary, Writers Foundation of Strathcona County





CURIOSITY DRIVES THIS ARTIST'S CREATIVITY

Local artist Gloria Van Schaik and I met recently at the Remedy Cafe in Sherwood Park (Remedy is a great supporter of local artists) to talk about her love of art and life. We were surrounded by artwork hanging on the walls and the fragrance of very excellent, freshly ground coffee.

Gloria didn't turn her nose up at either.

"These artists," she said, her arms sweeping dramatically enveloping the room, "the creators of the many pieces on display here all had the courage to try. And for me, that's the important element in any endeavour. In life, in business, in relationships and especially when it comes to such subjective matters as creativity and the arts. They had the courage to try!" She speaks with energy, enthusiasm and emotion. I begin very quickly to learn that Gloria doesn't do anything half-heartedly.

Alberta born and bred, Gloria has made Sherwood Park her home for the past 12 years. "I actually skipped art classes at school," she confesses with a smile, "Who'd have thought that art would ever turn out to be such an important part of my life?"

I asked her how painting and the arts evolved into something about which she's so passionate today.



“Well my parents were always creative so I guess that was a big influence on me. But I think it was more because of my desire to spend more time with my growing daughter that started my whole art journey.

Her daughter?

Gloria’s successful career as a Professional Executive Recruiter - aka a “high-level headhunter” - kept her extremely busy and she was missing spending time with her artistically inclined daughter. That was 20-plus years ago.

Motivated to grow this relationship she began to spend time both with her daughter and on her own, learning the foundations of the myriad skills involved in creating different painting approaches and disciplines “It was a great way for us to spend time together enjoying a common interest. But then, I really got into it (art) independent of her.” she continued. “I sucked up all the learnings I could from some amazing art teachers along the way.

She welcomed the opportunity to escape from the day-to-day issues of life and to zone out and focus on creating art using many mediums. Gloria first experimented with pastels and learned quickly that there were no shortcuts to creating an authentic work.

“Practice Practice Practice,” was, and still is her mantra. “I’ve learned a lot from many teachers over the years, particularly Johannes Vloothuis. He’s a Master Painter and one of the leading art instructors in the world.”

“With the right people, culture, and values, you can accomplish great things.”

Tricia Griffith



Gloria continues to explore and satisfy her curiosity, expanding her usage of different mediums through various disciplines including working in pastels, oils, ink, and acrylics and has more recently been exploring the challenges of painting on glass. She shares with me that she loves the challenge of “new” both in the subject matter and techniques and tools. She still also thrives on exploring and constantly pushing the boundaries of her Art.

“Curiosity drives creativity.” she smiles somewhat enigmatically.

I asked her what advice she’d give to others just starting to pursue their passion in the arts.

“Practice practice practice,” she replied, leaning forward to emphasize her point.

“Be free and don’t get caught up in the details. In other words, relax, enjoy it, don’t take things so seriously. You sure as heck can’t create, or be creative, when you’re all tensed up! Get together with a friend or a group of friends to create, to paint. Join the Art Club here in the County.” she continues. It’s a hive where you can thrive.”

“Get involved with an art collective, take lessons in whatever medium turns you on. People say to me ‘Oh but I’m not good enough and feel shy about sharing with, or learning from others.’ That’s totally natural. I felt that way, everyone feels that way in the beginning, but everyone has to start somewhere. There’s also a nice social aspect to creating art with others, but if you’re truly very shy then there’s tons of resources and lessons that you can find online nowadays.”

“I love learning, sharing and getting involved, not only with my own art but also to support and promote the incredible artistically inclined community here in the County and it’s surrounding studios and galleries.”

Gloria certainly walks her talk. In addition to accepting orders and commissions for her work, (“Who would have ever thought that people would want to buy my art.” she chuckles.)

She also exhibits in various shows and galleries, is a lobbyist for her passion, and participates in shows with her cohort at the Salisbury Greenhouses and other venues around Edmonton and Strathcona County.

Gloria’s work was selected from around 100 applications to exhibit in “Art from the Unknown 2022” at the After Dark Gallery at the U of A and she is involved with Budding Art Collective is a group of over 50 artists that are actively growing the concept of collaboration between business and local artists.



“If we are to
preserve culture
we must continue
to create it.”

Johan Huizinga

As we finish our coffee, her mind is already racing ahead. Today is busy helping to market the Art Society, where she sits on various committees. Later in the week, as she was also heavily involved in spearheading the Artist Home Studio Tour in the County this Past Sept 16/17, there was a lot of work to do on that. The Studio Tour is now in its 7th year and is already a highlight on many calendars. In between times, there's a commission to finish, a few works that she wants to continue to work on, some seminars she wants to attend and an exhibit to organize. And, oh yes, she's found time to help the Arts and Culture Council of Strathcona County with some of their initiatives.

“I must have a big V on my forehead as I find myself volunteering a lot more than I originally planned.” She laughs.

As Gloria dashes off to her next appointment, I think to myself that our community is a better place for her passion and perfectionism.

You can connect with Gloria at:
IG@VS Fine Art Gallery
FB@Van Schaik Fine Art Gallery
gloriavanschaikgallery.com/

By Martin Povey

Strathcona County is located on Treaty Six Territory and the homeland of the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region Two and Four. Strathcona County honours the First Peoples of this land. We recognize that we stand upon land that carries the footsteps of Cree, Métis, and Blackfoot amongst many other Nations, who have been here for thousands of years. Therefore, Strathcona County has an inherent responsibility to foster healthier relationships with First Peoples and further the Calls to Action as outlined by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.