





Common Weal
Community Arts Incorporated

A hand in a grey sleeve holds a paintbrush, applying white paint to a canvas. The canvas depicts a colorful, abstract scene with houses, trees, and a dog. The background is a dark, textured green and brown.

Annual Report 2011

Our Vision

Saskatchewan communities engaged in participatory art for social change.

Our Mission

Common Weal Community Arts Inc. is a provincial arts organization that collaboratively engages professional artists with communities to promote social change and cultural identity through creative expression.

Our Values and Guiding Principles

- Empowerment and creating opportunities for empowerment
- Community Engagement
- Creativity and flexibility
- Integrity and ethics
- Social justice
- Revolutionary practices and making a difference
- Art of high artistic merit and socially-engaged aesthetics
- Accountability



Our Goals

1. Participatory, community based art has a positive social impact in Saskatchewan.

We will build sustainable relationships with communities and artists throughout Saskatchewan to encourage participation in arts for social change and ensure our work is responsive and collaborative.

We will engage with communities in participatory art that raises, explores and expresses relevant issues and results in positive social change. Our work in work in participatory arts values and engages alternative and traditional voices and world views and supports innovation, diversity and inclusion.

Our work in participatory arts affirms and develops creative consciousness by challenging the status quo with honesty and integrity. It will foster personal growth, social development, and/or increased awareness for those involved (participants, community-members, artists, staff, stakeholders, society at large).

2. Artists and communities are engaged in collaborative art of high artistic merit.

We will utilize approaches and processes that truly engage our professional staff, professional artists, and communities in empowering, collaborative and collectivist projects.

We support community goals and build the capacity of participants by working with professional artists and staff who are committed to the process and product of collaborative art of high artistic merit.

We offer a multi-disciplinary approach to the arts and support professional artists who are innovative, exploring new technologies, and engaged in art-making practices recognized by their peers.

3. Common Weal is recognized as a leader in participatory arts for social change.

We are a learning organization. We encourage creativity and self-reflection in all areas of our work. We document and evaluate our projects using original and diverse methodologies.

We will actively engage the public to increase awareness of and promote participatory arts for social change.

We build capacity of our communities by sharing our documentation and supporting research and practices that investigate the field of participatory arts for social change.





Board of Directors

Chairperson: Mirtha Rivera
Past Chairperson: Rick Kotowich
Vice-Chairperson: Dianne Strilaeff
Treasurer: Cory Oxelgren
Directors:
Jessica Leavens
John Dufort
Chelsa Lynn Reil
Dominga Robinson

Staff

Executive Director: Joanne Shannon
Southern Artistic Director: Gerry Ruecker
Northern Artistic Director: Judy McNaughton
Artist in Residence: Traci Foster
Administrative Support: Terri-Lynn McDonald
Communications Assistant: Leah Mazur

Committees

Nominations: D. Strilaeff – R. Kotowich
Communications: D. Robinson – C. Oxelgren – J. Shannon
Personnel: R. Kotowich – D. Robinson
Finance: C. Oxelgren – J. Dufort – J. Shannon
Executive: M. Rivera – C. Oxelgren – D. Strilaeff
Policy: J. Leavens – D. Strilaeff – J. Shannon

M. Rivera is a member of all committees as Chairperson.

Chairperson Report

by Mirtha Rivera

This year gave me a chance to look from a different angle at the work of Common Weal. Even though I have been involved on the board for a few years (as a participant in a community play in the early 90s, a video project and as audience also), it is a big responsibility to be able to represent our organization because we have a good image in many circles in the community. There are lots of questions that need answers in order to define and execute our role in the community, with the artists, funding agencies, government and community partners. This is a good opportunity to reflect on the work done and what needs to be done. We also need to reach those who are potential partners and could be part of our organization. We work towards making a difference in our society and therefore we need to be flexible and constantly check if we are reflecting in our collective the reality of the voices we hear from our participants.

Common Weal is working at implementing how to measure our impact in the communities. After the strategic thinking session in November we know that every project, every decision we make has to match our mission and vision. Thanks to Jessica Leavens we have a tool that facilitates the process.

Our Board members are individuals who contribute their skills, volunteering their time in sometimes very long meetings. We take our work very seriously and I see lot of real passion and commitment with Common Weal. It is with regret we say goodbye to John Dufort who was our treasurer. Thanks John for all your contributions and most of all making those financial reports easy to understand even for me. Have fun in Mexico. Marie Karner joined us for a short time and had to leave due to her health. We welcome Dominga Robinson to the Board. She was a youth participant with Common Weal before, and she brings her knowledge of communications and marketing and her First Nations perspective as well. At Common Weal once again we have a long distance board member. This is Jessica Leavens, who is contributing from BC where she is attending school. Talk about dedication! I would like to recognize all the support and contribution of the past chair Rick Kotowich, who is still standing after 10 long years of tireless work with us on the board as the Chairperson. a big heartfelt "THANK YOU!"

Cory Oxelgren is our treasurer. With his business background, he has brought a different perspective to the job. He can see our work in a material, concrete form. It's probably not easy when he is dealing with the creativity and abstract thinking of the other board members! Chelsa Lynn Reil is a young woman who is really active in the community, raising awareness on the issue of violence against women. Dianne Strilaeff, now in her role of Vice Chair, has contributed countless hours to Common Weal and is also a fantastic artist.

Our funders include: The Saskatchewan Arts Board, The Canada Council for the Arts, SaskCulture, The City of Regina, Great West Life, The City of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan Lotteries, The Government of Saskatchewan. Our funders are the fuel

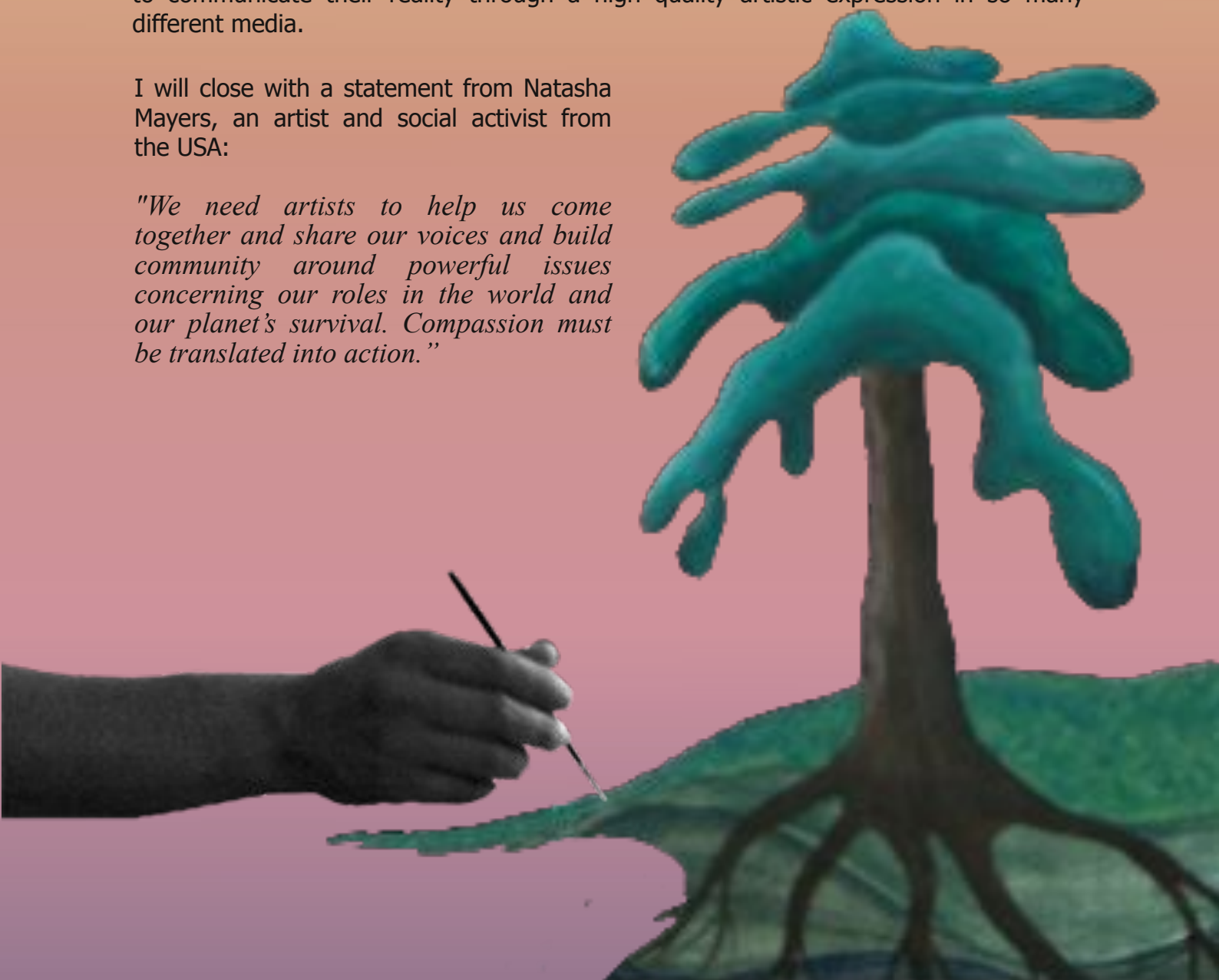
that we use to develop and deliver the many projects during 2010-2011.

Last but not least are the staff at Common Weal. Joanne Shannon, Executive Director, provides support to the board at the meetings and committee meetings. Her administrative skills are a gift sent to us. The reporting is timely done, responding to our requests. Sometimes she is ahead of us, giving us a very clear picture of activities, projects and what's coming in the near future. Joanne advises and oversees the work of the two Artistic Directors: Judy McNaughton in the North at the PA office, and Gerry Ruecker in the South at the Regina office. Both artistic directors are in direct contact with artists, participants and are responsible for designing and implementing the work and the outcomes --not an easy job. A regular day for them is doing consultations with interested groups, finding a place to hold events, and reporting on the progress of projects. Terri-lynn McDonald continues to assist Judy McNaughton in the Prince Albert Office. Also this year we have Leah Mazur, a summer student who has worked as communications support and contributes her skills on the website and design, including a new logo.

We have a lot of challenges ahead of us. It is encouraging to see that we have a group of individuals in the staff and board who believe in the work of Common Weal "to make a difference in our society", through the voices of those who need to be able to communicate their reality through a high quality artistic expression in so many different media.

I will close with a statement from Natasha Mayers, an artist and social activist from the USA:

"We need artists to help us come together and share our voices and build community around powerful issues concerning our roles in the world and our planet's survival. Compassion must be translated into action."



Executive Director Report

by Joanne Shannon


If I had to sum up the year in one sentence it would be "dipping into our past - soaring into our future".

Common Weal looked to its past this year with the development of a video A North Side Story or Two Revisited with Birdsong Communications and the assistance of Rachael Van Fossen. This video explored the impact of the Community Play from 15 years ago. Common Weal also completed the history book highlighting the first 15 years of our existence. A special thank you to summer students Kirsten Butler (2010) and Leah Mazur (2011) for their work on this project and to all who contributed.

The organization also looked to the future with a very productive strategic thinking meeting held in the fall of 2010, facilitated by Peter Neufeldt. From this meeting, Common Weal has been working towards developing strategies for the coming years and how we can work effectively as a team. With the guidance of Board Member, Jessica Leavens, Common Weal has implemented a method of policy monitoring which has strengthened the organization and our evaluation methods.

Common Weal continued to work with a variety of partners and friends to deliver high quality programming. This included our participation in the very successful SHIFT Conference and MAS Conference held in Saskatoon.

Communications was at the forefront this year, with revision of the Communications Manual, the addition of a Communications Committee, and the hiring of summer student Leah Mazur to work in this area. Leah developed a new logo for the organization, designed the history book, a photojournalism book for the Open Door project, redesigned our website, developed a new brochure, and designed the Annual Report. Her talents and hard work are most appreciated.



Other staff remained stable, with Gerry Ruecker as Southern Artistic Director, Judy McNaughton as Northern Artistic Director, and Terri-Lynn McDonald as Northern Office Assistant. We are fortunate to have had Traci Foster as Artist in Residence in partnership with the South Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre. Her work will be continuing on next year for a second term with the support of a grant from the Saskatchewan Arts Board. Thanks to all staff for their artistic vision, commitment and constant striving to make Common Weal the best it can be.

The Board has had a major change, with long-serving board member Mirtha Rivera, taking the lead role as chairperson. A special thank-you to past chairperson, Rick Kotowich for his guidance over the years and to all board members for their significant contributions to the development of the organization.

A Capacity Grant through SaskCulture helped the board and staff in the areas of outreach, networking and professional development. All of the work that Common Weal has been involved in over the past year would not be possible without the support of our funders. We would like to acknowledge the Saskatchewan Arts Board, Canada Council for the Arts, City of Regina, Great West Life, SaskCulture, SaskLotteries, Government of Canada, Government of Saskatchewan, and City of Prince Albert.

Common Weal continues to move forward with a sense of purpose and vision. Thank you to all of our staff, volunteers, artists, funders, and partners who contribute to make our work socially meaningful with a high level of artistic merit. Together we are "soaring into the future".

Northern Artistic Director Report

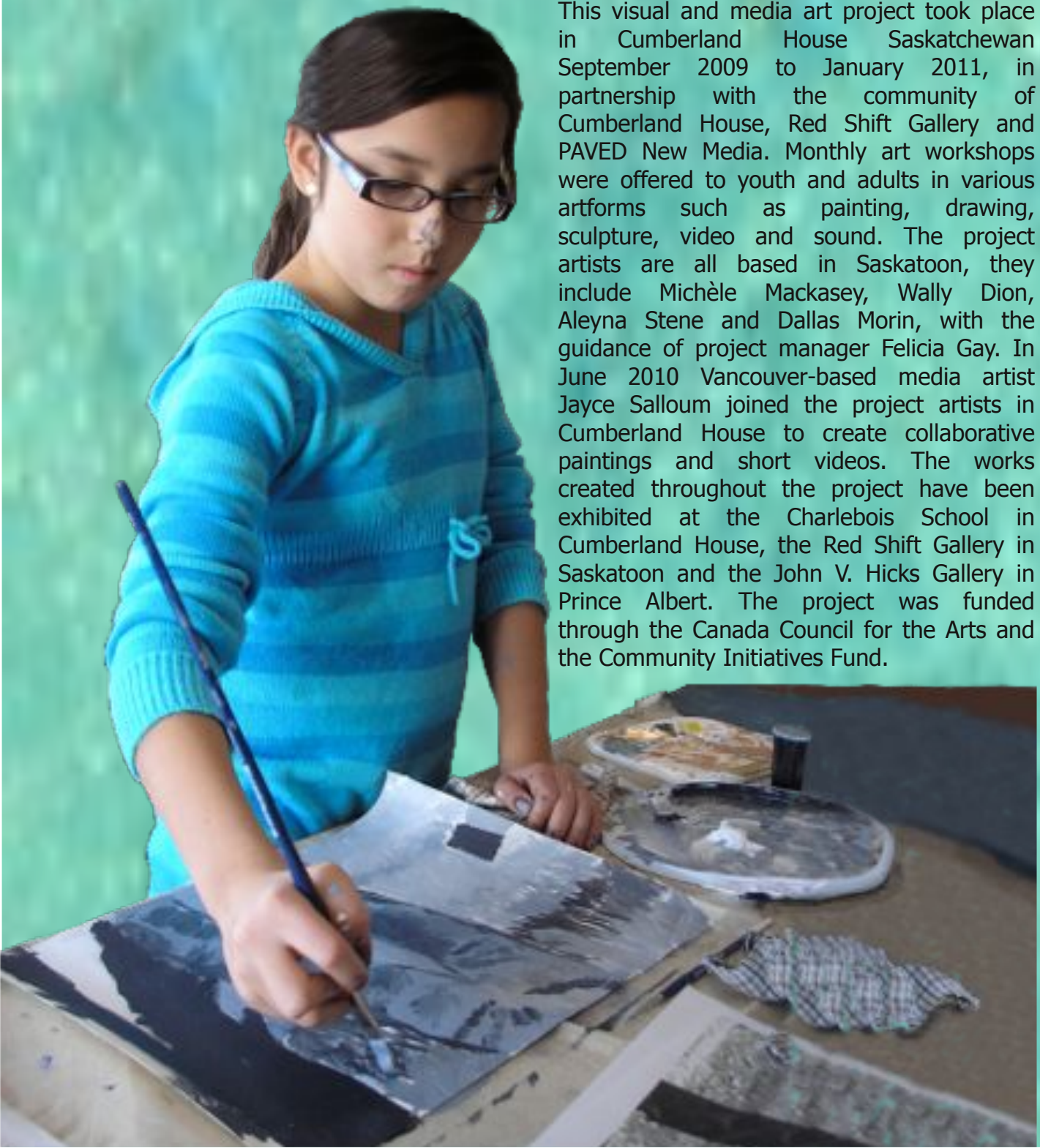
by Judy McNaughton

Res Artis Conference

Northern Artistic Director, Judy McNaughton was in Montreal October 5 to 10, 2010 for the Res Artis international conference on artist residencies. An opportunity for developing contacts and drawing inspiration from residency models around the world.

Northern Artists Initiative in Cumberland House

This visual and media art project took place in Cumberland House Saskatchewan September 2009 to January 2011, in partnership with the community of Cumberland House, Red Shift Gallery and PAVED New Media. Monthly art workshops were offered to youth and adults in various artforms such as painting, drawing, sculpture, video and sound. The project artists are all based in Saskatoon, they include Michèle Mackasey, Wally Dion, Aleyna Stene and Dallas Morin, with the guidance of project manager Felicia Gay. In June 2010 Vancouver-based media artist Jayce Salloum joined the project artists in Cumberland House to create collaborative paintings and short videos. The works created throughout the project have been exhibited at the Charlebois School in Cumberland House, the Red Shift Gallery in Saskatoon and the John V. Hicks Gallery in Prince Albert. The project was funded through the Canada Council for the Arts and the Community Initiatives Fund.



Michele Sereda Monologue Workshop

The creating your own monologue workshop with Michelle Sereda was offered in Prince Albert's Carlton High School March 28 & 29, 2011. Michele guided grade 11 and 12 drama students through exploration of their immediate circumstances, in order to create personal monologues that could lead to solo performances. She met with about 30 students over two days of workshops.

Common Weal Conference Publication

Common Weal is working with writers Rachael Van Fossen and Brenda Niskala on a publication responding to Common Weal's conference Connect: toward a socially engaged aesthetic which was held May 2010. The publication will include editorial context from the two principle writers and contributions by selected conference presenters. This initiative has been supported through the Canada Council for the Arts.

Shelter Project

In this partnership with the Prince Albert YWCA Aboriginal Youth Support Services, teen participants use ceramic sculpture to explore their relationship to 'home' under the mentorship of Saskatoon artist Carole Epp. The work created in the project is intended for exhibition during Homelessness Action Week in Prince Albert September 2011. The project is generously supported through the SaskLotteries Community Grants.

PROJECTS IN DEVELOPMENT

The Pine Grove Creative Circles Program

Common Weal has been working with the Pine Grove Women's Correctional Centre for about 6 years. The Pine Grove Creative Circles Program originated in a project with renown Metis writer Maria Campbell in 2004. Since that time the program has included artists of various disciplines. In 2008 and 2009 singer, songwriter Cheryl L'Hirondelle spent a week with Teacher/ Therapist Carla Johnson and her Literacy Program group at Pine Grove. Cheryl immersed the women in intensive songwriting workshops that produced two collaboratively written songs, The Beauty Within and The Journey Home, recorded with the women themselves singing. These experiences with Cheryl were life-altering for the inmates. Because of the impact of that project, Common Weal will bring Cheryl L'Hirondelle and musician Gregory Hoskins back to Pine Grove in 2011 /12 to lead four week-long songwriting intensives with the women. The songs written and recorded during these intensives, along with the two previous songs, will be professionally mastered and produced as a CD. This project is possible through the support of the SaskCulture Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Leadership Grant.

Northern Artist Initiative in Patuanak

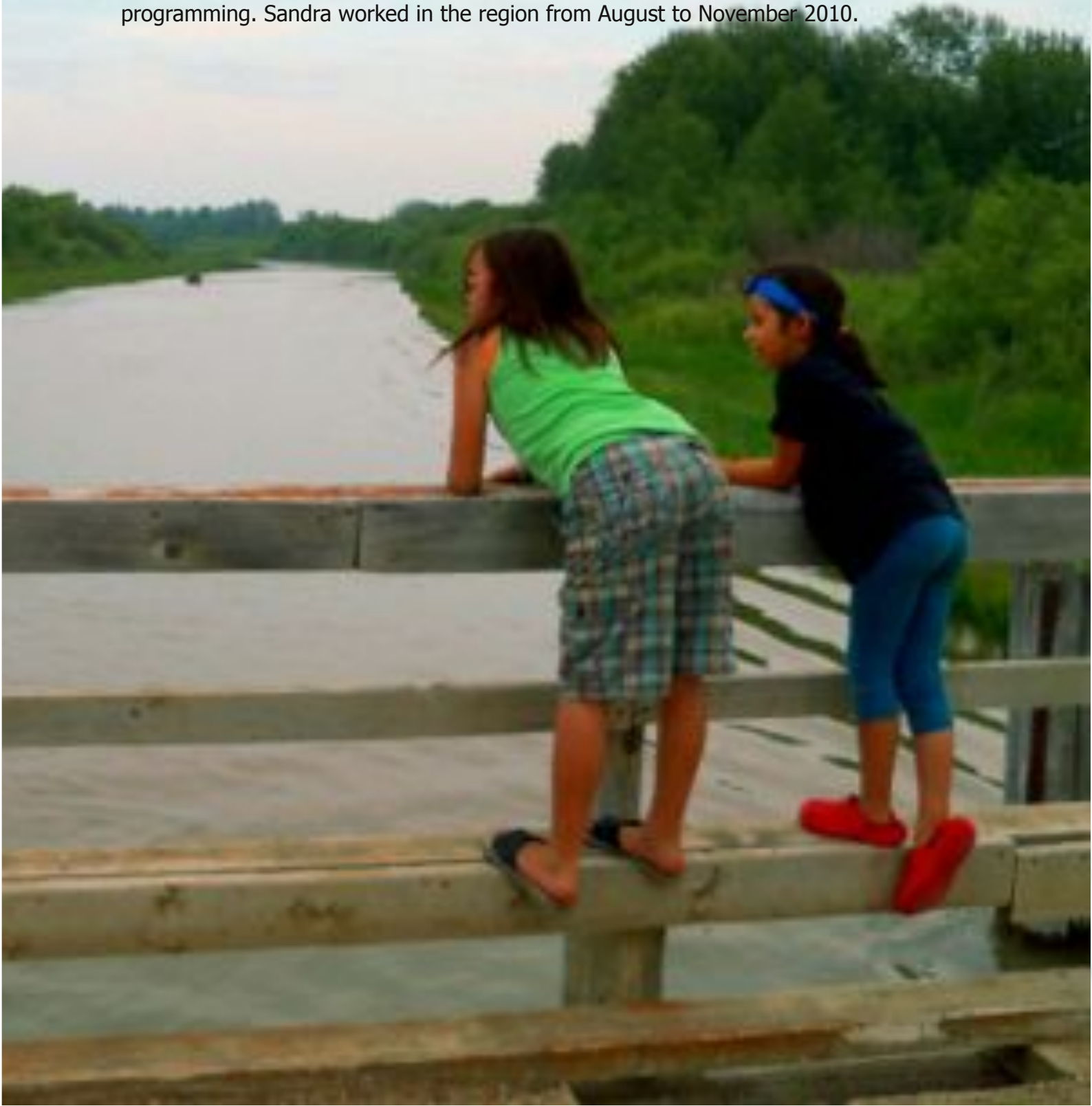
Visual artist Michèle Mackasey will lead a series week-long art camps in Patuanak, a Dene community in the northwestern part of Saskatchewan between August 2011 and July 2012. This project is based on the successful model of the Cumberland House project, with individual and collaborative visual art projects being offered to both youth and adults in Patuanak. This program receives support from SaskCulture and the Community Initiative Fund.

ADVISORY PROJECTS

Two Story Café event presenting musicians and performance artists took place September 23, 24 & 25, 2010. It was a great success. This project was initiated by Common Weal in partnership with IPAC in 2007. IPAC now runs the event annually with advisory assistance by Common Weal.

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PAC and the City of Prince Albert, with assistance from Common Weal, brought in Sandra Semchuk, a Saskatchewan born media artist living in Vancouver, for a four-month research project. She investigated the potential for indigenous and non-indigenous creative partnership, as well as the interest in local new media programming. Sandra worked in the region from August to November 2010.



Southern Artistic Director Report

by Gerry Ruecker

SSILC Artist in Residence

A partnership with South Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre (SSILC), utilizing voice, movement and theatre techniques, and under the direction of Project Artist Traci Foster. The greatest legacy of this program will be in cultural community development, and will manifest in the creation and development of new artistic voices, the development of new artists and leaders within the disability community, and the new understanding which will be created between people with disabilities and the community at large.

With funding from the Sask Arts Board Creative Partnerships Innovations Program, this majorly successful project has been extended into its second year.



Far From the Heart

Common Weal South has been working in partnership with Ontario-based SHEATRE with the interactive Date Rape Theatre Forum, FAR FROM THE HEART. This touring project, scheduled for September 2011 aims to help students recognize the different forms of pressure and violence in dating relationships, and explores the issues that lie beneath this behavior. Students act out solutions to problems presented in the play. A one-period discussion group with counselors immediately follows the show. Primarily geared toward teaching youth, it also trains teachers and social workers.



We Are All Treaty People

Common Weal undertook the role of Creative Consultant in this partnership with Thomson School. To increase student exposure to a professional artist and Arts Education the project enabled students to understand and value the Arts as well as enhance their knowledge of fundamental treaty concepts, utilizing the resource "We Are All Treaty People". In 2009, all grade 7 students were tested province wide on their knowledge of the six core treaty teachings; the average score across Saskatchewan was 48.5 percent. The project's intent was to improve upon this score with the implementation of the project.

A North Side Story or Two Revisited

In 2011, Common Weal completed the documentary film, 'A North Side Story or Two Revisited', which chronicled the positive and enduring impact that participating in the 1995 Common Weal community play, 'A North Side Story or Two' had on the lives of the individuals involved. A very successful screening of the film was presented at Albert Scott Community Centre in May.

Creative Collaborations Symposium

Southern Artistic Director Gerry Ruecker participated as a member of the planning committee for this symposium held in May. The two day conference had the intent of encouraging and assisting organizations with successful collaboration techniques.

1% Home Sweet Home

1% Home Sweet Home was an art installation organized by Common Weal Community Arts in partnership with numerous social agencies and concerned individuals, held on February 17th, in Victoria Park in Regina. This event celebrated World Community Arts Day as well as focused attention on the serious issue of housing/homelessness in the city.

Through Our Eyes Photobook

In partnership with Regina Open Door Society, Common Weal is creating a photo book documenting the 2010 photo project collaboration involving newcomer youth. The resultant product will not only be a record of the incredible success of the project, but will also be used as a resource for funding agencies, interested organizations and individuals, and will be a testament to the potential for social change presented through the photovoice method.



Before I Die

In partnership with the Regina Folk Festival, Before I Die was based on public artist Candy Chang's series of installations beginning in New Orleans in Feb 2011. The interactive project was intended to inspire, provoke and motivate participants and viewers, providing a space where we can learn the hopes and aspirations of the people around us. Over 1000 people contributed during the three day festival held August 5-7, 2011.

PROJECTS IN DEVELOPMENT

ARTS 4 ALL ESSENTIALS - projected date of Feb 2012

This series of two or three workshops will be designed for people interested and experienced in art and other processes that engage the community; artists of all ages, disciplines and traditions, as well as others with a professional or special interest in community-engaged arts practices. The format will include presentations, discussions, guest presenters, hands-on workshops, creative explorations, take-home resources, and optional evening performances. Project partner is Toronto's Jumbliest Theatre, under the direction of Ruth Howard.

<http://www.jumbliestheatre.org/now/arts4allessentials.html>

STREET CULTURE MEDIA PROJECT - projected date Spring 2012

A year-long project in partnership with Street Culture Kidz, Saskatchewan Film Pool, Albert Library etc, this two part project will provide 'youth at risk' with the skills of creative photography and film-making. Photography and video are creative art forms with many avenues of departure. Photovoice methods have proven to be successful tools for giving voice to underserved minorities and advocacy on their behalf. The project objectives are numerous: the creation of a supportive environment and community based around photography; the assembling and presentation of an end of project exhibition and a resultant catalogue of the exhibition will advocate the rights of the marginalized community served, and educate the public at large in regard to their life circumstances and challenges.



SSILC Voice and Movement Project

by Traci Foster

The SSILC Voice and Movement Project, generously made possible through a Sask. Arts Board Partnership Innovations Grant is to date, the most inspiring and rewarding artistic endeavour I have been involved in. It has created a dynamic partnership between Common Weal Community Arts, the South Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre (SSILC), and myself, and has inspired many artistic opportunities beyond the project's original goals.

The enthusiasm for the Voice and Movement Project by people living with disabilities is remarkable. I feel privileged to be working with these folks as they challenge and overcome their personal limitations through the arts, increasingly using their bodies and voices to tell stories in creative ways. Week after week we have 12 to 16 participants arriving to explore and express their creativity through the many art forms presented by myself, and the seven scheduled Guest Artists. Participants are engaging fully in the mediums explored and are increasingly breaking down their internal barriers to performing their work in public. There are number of emerging artist's appearing who are exploring ways to expand their experience for performance and community involvement. Time and time again I have heard from these folks that the opportunity to embrace and be embraced in the artistic and cultural atmosphere provided by the program is the hi-light of their life. The personal, professional, and artistic development I have both witnessed and experienced is unprecedented.

The ability offered by the program to employ the talents of Project Kinesiologist Tanya Gallagher, has been crucial for the participants. Through her weekly attendance, each person is able to experience the invaluable physical work to the fullest. During our bi-weekly planning sessions, we build upon each participant's individual needs, for those with autism, in wheel chairs, vision impaired etc, to ensure the opportunity of full participation and benefit.

I have been immensely grateful for both the experience and personal development that has been afforded me by the Voice and Movement Artist in Residence Program. I have been researching and working toward the development of a new work: 'Dancing with the Shadow', incorporating shadow, movement, and sound, with the assistance and mentorship of local performance artist Tanya Dahms and guest artist Fides Krucker. It has been wonderful to have been afforded the time and space to explore where this new process may take me. Further, as a result of the opportunity to collaborate with guest artist Alan Shayne at the UN Day celebration: 'Celebrating Disability Through the Arts' in December, I have been motivated to develop more performance pieces in collaboration with persons of disability, and, in that regard, am in discussion with Alan regarding the creation of a new work.

Also, as a direct result of the Voice and Movement program, I have decided to develop a PLAR portfolio – Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition, a widely-respected process that helps people reflect on, identify, organize, and describe their lifelong and life-wide learning. This record of learning can then be presented in a way that others

can recognize and value; a crucial tool in the pursuit of new opportunities, and invaluable in working with the disabled through the arts.

In short, the Voice and Movement Artist in Residence Program has been of immense importance and benefit to me personally, from the rewarding and heart-opening experience gained in working with the disabled population, to the new directions it has inspired for my personal work. I am grateful for this opportunity, and it is my earnest hope that we will be able to continue to build upon the momentum we have achieved thus far through the program.





