

Vernon Community Arts Centre Managers Report – ACNO AGM 2021

The 2019/2020 fiscal year was challenging at the Vernon Community Arts Centre. We entered the fall of 2019 with much optimism and many plans for the Arts Centre. The emergence of Covid-19 and the two-month shut down of the facility in April and May hit us hard financially. Staff hours were reduced temporarily, but despite the challenges presented by Covid-19 we continued to operate successfully and by the end of 2020 we were back on a firm footing and all staff had returned to work.

The long awaited renovations to the washrooms at VCAC began in the fall of 2019 and were completed just before the shutdown in April. In addition to the renovation of the existing washrooms on the main floor, a washroom was added upstairs next to the children's art studio. At the same time the laundry tub style sinks in all the studios were replaced with new stainless steel sinks.

A back to work plan was developed that followed, or exceeded, the provincial health guidelines and we were able re-open in June with protocols in place to keep everyone using our facility safe. Class sizes were reduced to ensure six-foot distancing between students and limits to the number of people allowed in each studio were put in place. Sanitizing procedures were implemented and plexiglass barriers installed at the reception desk. To limit contact in shared office spaces staff started working from home on alternate days.

Upon reopening in June, we found that people were eager to take art classes and the number of people expressing an interest in art as a way to cope with the challenges of Covid-19, increased dramatically. Classes are typically full, with waiting lists. Sales of local art in our Art Shop increased which helped artists whose other venues for the sale of their work were cancelled or closed. The sale of student grade materials to students and drop in users at the VCAC proved so popular the selection was expanded to include a wider variety of items.

Fine art classes and workshops for youth and adults are the core of the VCAC and we offered 226 classes this fiscal year. Students from the Okanagan/Shuswap area came to take classes in clay, glass, fibre arts, painting, drawing, printmaking, music and more. Over 23,000 people came through our doors in the 2019/2020 fiscal year.

Several of our programs and fundraisers including Ceramic Artist-In-Residence, Youth Artist-In-Residence and Spring into Art were cancelled due to Covid-19 restrictions.

With approval from Interior Health, we were able to go ahead with Artsolutely in December. Artsolutely is a juried sale held at the VCAC every year from December 1-24. It is our biggest fundraiser to date and is eagerly anticipated by the community. Artsolutely operates like a retail store with a central cash and does not require each participating artist to be present at their booth. Directional arrow kept shoppers flowing in one direction and a maximum of 50 people, including staff, are allowed in the building at one time. There were sanitizing stations in each room and a system in place for contact tracing and to track the number of shoppers at any given time. For the first time the sale took place in three studios instead of two. Expanding into an additional studio allowed for more distancing between artist booths.

This year the Vernon Community Arts Centre continued to offer:

- Drop-in sessions in the clay, glass, printmaking and painting studios; open to ACNO members
- Joining Hands, an art based program for persons with different abilities; free for participants
- A Centre Gallery, non-juried, open to all ACNO members wishing to exhibit and sell their art
- The 'Art Shop' gift shop located in the arts centre entrance offers visitors the opportunity to purchase local artwork made by ACNO members
- Request-A-Class, a program in which we design classes and workshops for groups or individuals that offer a creative, fun and educational art experience

Terry Dunstan
Vernon Community Arts Centre Manager