

# arts

saskatchewan

Issue 1, Volume 1

Cataloguing  
Saskatchewan Arts  
Stories for Canada  
and Beyond





## Contents

- |    |   |    |  |    |                                    |
|----|---|----|--|----|------------------------------------|
| 4  | Tilting the World of Dance                                  | 18 | Packaging Loss and Hope  | 34 | RISING the Theatre Stage           |
| 8  | Nige B Snags International Music Nominations                | 20 | Andrew Robertson Paints Parallels between Saskatchewan and Iceland | 36 | Minding the Wellness Powers of Art |
| 10 | Power and Access: The Hallmark of ASL Poetry                | 24 | A Relentless Pursuit and Collection of Passion                     | 37 | Arts of Celebration 2024           |
| 12 | Fiddlin' Around with Mary Liv                               | 26 | Diversity in Music: Jeanny Jung Aspires to Make Musical Waves      | 38 | In Memorium                        |
| 13 | La Marre Shares Neurodivergence Coping Tools and Techniques | 28 | Miguel Fenrich: Truth-Teller                                       |    |                                    |
| 14 | 50 Years of Theatre   | 30 | Black and Petit Unearth Untold Seniors' Stories                    |    |                                    |
| 16 | Connecting Indigenous Generations and Ancestry              |    |  |    |                                    |



# Greetings!

**Welcome to the first issue of *ARTS Saskatchewan*.**

**S**ince SK Arts changed our annual report format in 2023 to focus more directly on the statutory requirements for that document, we have been playing with different ways of telling the stories of Saskatchewan artists and arts companies. We published the beautiful 75th anniversary book last fall, and we're delighted to bring this new magazine to you this year.

As I review the articles in this magazine and experience the arts across this province, I'm struck by the wide diversity of people who are engaged and by the incredible wealth of talent and experience that we have across Saskatchewan. SK Arts is proud to have supported this work and so much more, and we look forward to sharing these stories across Canada and helping other people learn about the amazing things that go on here.

I want to express my gratitude to the Government of Saskatchewan for their regular support of SK Arts through the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. They continue to demonstrate their confidence in our work and their belief in the arts community of this province. I also want to acknowledge the ongoing funding that SK Arts receives from Sask Lotteries and the importance of our partnerships with sister agencies SaskCulture and Creative Saskatchewan.

Please enjoy these stories and, when you finish, pass your copy along to someone else. Let's all help to share the riches of *ARTS Saskatchewan*.

**Ian Rea**  
**Chair, SK Arts**

# Tilting

the World  
of Dance

**D**istinguished Saskatchewan contemporary dance artist and certified Yoga teacher Connie Moker Wernikowski has been in dance for over 45 years, gracing national and international stages. Spurred by a need to create, the dance artist is steadfast in her desire to do her best, treat dancers with the utmost kindness, provide opportunities for them to contribute creatively, and deliver projects that will bring value to audiences blessed enough to witness them.

Connie was among SK Arts' 2024 Arts of Celebration honourees. She holds a BA in dance from York University and an MEd from the University of Regina. Between 1994 and 2009,

she was the Artistic Director of Youth Ballet and Contemporary Dance of Saskatchewan (YBCS). Wernikowski's work at YBCS has left a significant legacy in ballet and contemporary dance training, providing performance opportunities and development for young dancers. Although she looks back on those years fondly, Connie's dedication to building that company also produced a yearning to focus on her own work.

Throughout her career, Connie has transitioned from dancer, through dancer and choreographer, to practicing exclusively as a choreographer. Connie's four decades in dance have been made possible by consistently learning and evolving.

## SHAPING A VISIONARY

She recalls significant experiences as a dancer that shaped her approach to her work as a choreographer. Working with Maria Formolo of the former Regina professional dance company Regina Modern Dance Works, Connie saw the kindness that she received as a young dancer and wanted to emulate that throughout her career.

"[Maria] treated us with such respect. I always felt that I wasn't just a body but a full person and an artist," says Connie. **"I wanted to keep that because her approach really helped me grow my confidence as an artist."**

Dancer Katrina Currie performing *Kudro* from *Full Tilt*, choreography by Connie Moker Wernikowski.



Similarly, Connie also danced in a quartet choreographed by Marie-Josée Chartier. Marie-Josée's clarity inspired Connie to emphasize the importance of communicating her vision with more descriptive language. Through her interaction with Chartier, Wernikowski says she was inspired to dedicate herself to developing a capacity to speak with clarity as a choreographer. She believes that communicating her ideas effectively improved the dancers' experiences, as well as her own experience, as she watched her work come alive.

**Jayden Pfeiffer and Johanna Bundon performing *J & J* in *Full Tilt Two*, choreography by Wernikowski.**

"It's been much more satisfying for me because it feels like I have got it out."

#### **FULL TILT**

More recently, Connie choreographed the show *Full Tilt* (2020), which premiered a few weeks before the pandemic. After the intense "before-and-after" sensation created by the pandemic, Connie had a burning desire to create again, choreographing several shows, including *Full Tilt Two* in 2023, and finding a synergy between her earlier and her more recent pieces.

*Full Tilt* was a mixed program that featured four works: *Whatever They Sing* (2018), inspired by Connie's love of songbirds and her concern about their declining numbers; *Salute to the Early*

*Rocking Women* (2019), to celebrate the music of contemporary musicians Grace Slick (Jefferson Airplane) and Janis Joplin for their bold contributions to the world of rock in the 1960s; *Kudro* (2020), a collaboration with media and sound artist Garry Wasyliw and dancer Katrina Currie for which Connie received funding from SK Arts and the Canada Council for the Arts; and a short guest piece by pre-professional dancers from the YBCS.

Similarly, *Full Tilt Two* featured four collaborative dance performances, choreographed by Connie, that included live



Photo credit: Daniel Paquet

music and poetry. The show presented themes of spiritual and physical connection and the transcendental power of dance and featured 12 dancers and two exceptional Ukrainian guest artists.

### **LIFETIME OF PASSION**

The experienced dancer and choreographer characterizes her work as an opportunity to bless her audiences in some way.

Connie's body of work celebrates her resilience and passion. In this way, her practice has been a pilgrimage, where the beauty of her work represents both personal triumph and joy shared with

the world. Realizing that most dance careers do not lend themselves to longevity, Connie shared that she is surprised that her career is ongoing at this stage. She sees it as a gift and is thankful to have experienced a career that has advanced through various cycles.

***"I am grateful that artists, SK Arts, other funding agencies and audiences have come to my shows and supported my work,"*** Connie shares. ***"I am so grateful that I have continued to this age."***

Connie, who was a short-listed nominee for a Saskatchewan Arts Award for Arts and

Learning in both 2018 and 2019, remains motivated to keep going and to create dance works and a space for dancers to share messages through their bodies.

Connie's new work, to be presented by New Dance Horizons, will premiere in the 2024/25 season.

**Dancers Krista Solheim and Katrina Currie performing *Letter to a Galaxy* in *Full Tilt Two*, choreography by Wernikowski.**



Photo credit: Daniel Paquet



NIGEB SNAGS  
INTERNATIONAL  
MUSIC  
NOMINATIONS



**I**ndigenous artist and music teacher Nigel Bell, known on stage as Nige B, has been engulfed in the music world since 2003.

Nige shares that he has always loved the sound of a guitar. Initially taught to play the guitar by Sam, his best friend in the eighth grade, Nige practiced up to eight hours a day, teaching himself complicated songs and dreaming about performing and touring as an artist.

“I always loved the guitar, how it sounded. I would always pretend to play when the solos came up. I just went crazy about music!” Nige laughs.

Later, he joined several bands. Currently, Nige plays bass for a punk band in Saskatoon that toured across 21 cities in Canada in 2019. During the pandemic, Nige dived into learning music production. His genre included hip-hop, jazz, indie and post-rock, creating a fusion of global influences.

**“I have been lucky to have a few mentors like Brad Bellegarde and Erik Mehlsen, who helped me learn and to navigate how to do some of the things I was learning.”**

Bell released his debut EP, *Circa 1990*, in April 2021 and a follow-up EP, *In Retrospect*, in September 2022 – a project that he worked on for only two weeks and won a Saskatchewan Music Award for Instrumental Artist of the Year. When describing his indie-shoegaze record for which he played all the instrumentals, the La Ronge native shared that his decision to record in this genre was spontaneous and that he was psyched to have won an award for it.

Maintaining a theme of surprise nominations, Nige has since snagged several others, including two Saskatchewan Indigenous Music

Awards for Rock / Heavy Metal / Rap Person of the Year and Instrumentalist of the Year. The inaugural Indigenous Music Awards were held at the EA Rawlinson Centre for the Arts in Prince Albert in 2023. Donny Parenteau, singer-songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and the Saskatchewan Indigenous Music Association Board President, conceived the event.

Bell shares that he was honoured to be among the artists selected and that the Saskatchewan Indigenous Music Awards were long overdue.

**“I was very grateful for that nomination... very happy to be part of it.”**

In 2024, Nige was nominated in multiple categories for the International Singer-Songwriter Association (ISSA) awards: Songwriter of the Year, Male Rising Star, Album of the Year, Single of the Year, Male Emerging Artist of the Year and Sound Engineer of the Year. He was also nominated for a Josie Music Award for Song of the Year for *Hold Your Heart* (ft. Olawale and Tareek remix). He secured a nomination for a Hollywood Independent Music Award for Rap / Hip Hop.

He released a hip-hop album, *U R What U R*, in June 2023. The album features collaborations with artists from South Africa, Nigeria, and across Turtle Island from Seattle to Delaware and New York. Most recently, Nige released *U R Instrumental* in August 2024.

Nige B was featured as an emerging artist in SK Arts’ 75th anniversary *We.Celebrate.You.* campaign in 2023.

**Nige B in album photography for *U R WHAT U R, Vol 2*.**

# Power and Access: The Hallmark

**F**atima Tun Nafisa, a d/Deaf Bangladeshi-Canadian female visual artist and ASL poet, is passionate about the expressive and unique art form that is ASL poetry.

ASL poetry is an advanced form of sign-language storytelling. It extends the use of space, hand shapes, body language and facial expressions, augmenting the framework of its literary parent form. For Fatima, ASL poetry represents her ability to express herself in her own language, something that she did not always have access to as a Deaf person. The visual representations allow her to explore metaphors, feelings and commonalities.

In ASL poetry – at least as Fatima practices it – there are several things required to transfer the results of a Deaf art form by a Deaf individual to a broader audience, while maintaining its authenticity for Deaf people. Fatima begins with written English ideas and drawings, which need to be clarified and developed more wholly as she works. One of the most significant challenges is that nuances of the work may easily be lost in translation, since ASL signs are only sometimes equal to their written or verbal counterparts. ASL poetry utilizes the signing space around the poet to create meaning and emphasis.

***“I perform in ASL, but [I] always need to think about how and what I’ll be signing and how an ASL interpreter will interpret that because English doesn’t always align with ASL,”*** says Fatima. ***“I start by writing ideas in English and drawing visual ideas.”***

ASL poetry is deeply embedded within Deaf culture and often draws on cultural references, norms and shared experiences within the Deaf community. It provides a powerful cultural context that enriches poetry and offers a unique perspective that may translate differently from purely written or spoken forms.

To make accessibility for Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals more mainstream in performance arts and culture, Fatima believes that community consultation, providing access to on-stage captions or stage interpreters recommended or vetted by the community, incorporating deaf characters and perspectives, and having Deaf consultants/teachers are all good places to start.

In 2023, Fatima was among the first batch of recipients of SK Arts’ Building Arts Equity: BPOC Program. Her two-part project focuses on developing and creating visual art and ASL poetry about the lack of access she has experienced to

cultural, family and immigrant material from her personal perspective as a d/Deaf person, immigrant and middle child.

“I often am told, ‘You’re special,’ but I don’t feel special because people have ignored (and continue to ignore) me. I want to use art to explore that more deeply,” she shares.

In the project’s second phase, Fatima will work with a Deaf ASL consultant to develop her poetry further and create an ASL poetry video, incorporating the work produced during the project’s first phase.

For people who want to learn and appreciate ASL poetry, Fatima recommends connecting with Deaf artists. She says the knowledge and mentorship that many talented Deaf Canadian artists can offer is an essential first step. She also suggests connecting with Deaf individuals and culture, writing down or signing your thoughts (however small) to build comfort with ASL, and attending art festivals – both Deaf and hearing.

# of ASL Poetry

**“I often am told, ‘You’re special,’ but I don’t feel special because people have ignored (and continue to ignore) me. I want to use art to explore that more deeply.”**

Photo credit: Andrea Norberg



## Fiddlin' Around with Mary Liv

**M**ary Liv's love for fiddle and banjo blossomed at music camps like Fiddlyness in northern Saskatchewan. Born and raised in La Ronge, the old-time music lover and teacher now lives in Saskatoon and teaches at several music camps in Saskatchewan.

Her mom had wanted to play the fiddle as a child but could not. As a consolation, she ensured her daughters took classical violin lessons and visited a Métis fiddle camp each summer. Over the years, Mary discovered a love for fiddle music and played the banjo at the camps, leading to her transition from classical music.

Mary was exposed to bluegrass tunes at The Northern Lights Bluegrass and Old-Tyme Music Camp and Festival and worked with instructors like John Arcand, Gordon Stobbe and Shamma Sabir. This exposure cemented Mary's decision to pursue a career as a musician. She's played with 5 Guys Named Dave, a Saskatoon-based old-time string band, for several years, and she has taught at several children's summer camps across the province – a nod to the beginning of her love for music.

Released in 2023, Liv's 12-track debut fiddle album, *Fiddlin' Around*, is a testament to her eclectic music tastes rooted in storytelling. The album combines Canadian old-time classics, bluegrass favourites and original compositions, showcasing her musical prowess and creativity. Creating new music – something she does constantly – is a fun and interesting endeavour for the young musician.

"On the fiddle, it is note-based, so I just try out a new key or something I want to play. Songwriting is trickier. I think of an idea and let it sit for a little while. Then, I will sit down with the guitar, add a melody and some more words, and take it from there."

Her music is fun, with quirky storytelling for comedic relief and enjoyment. Mary says that, while her music is not produced for a specific audience, she hopes people who listen to her music feel connected and happy.

***"Music is for everybody. I play more for jamming, for different people, and for people to come together for an experience," she says. "I'm working on a new album for this fall. I love writing sad and love songs, but I love funny songs the most."***

Mary was pleased to be among the honorees at SK Arts' 2024 Arts of Celebration event in spring 2024. As her career advances, she hopes to explore more fiddle styles and pursue album collaborations that showcase traditional music styles in more contemporary formats.



Photo courtesy of the artist.

Print artwork created from youth workshop.

# La Marre Shares **Neurodivergence** Coping Tools and Techniques

**V**isual artist Rebecca La Marre was diagnosed with Adult Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) in 2020. Upon her diagnosis, Rebecca, who had moved to Saskatoon in 2018, recognized that the tools and coping mechanisms she had used for years in her art practice were essential to maintaining her thriving lifestyle.

La Marre dove head-first into research materials about her condition and decided to share what she learned with the public. She found that the techniques and tools she uses to generate writing could also double as coping mechanisms for the disorders. This corresponded with what she learned in recent medical studies, since those tools facilitated self-soothing, helped a person experience empathy, and mirrored internal experience.

La Marre said her recognition of the overlaps between coping mechanisms and her art practice became the catalyst for a unique project offered in collaboration with The Ability Hub YXE.

***“It was this incredible experience where I had this weird idea that was central to who I am and how I move through the world,”*** Rebecca said. ***“I wanted to see if other people also found these strategies helpful.”***

Rebecca developed a series of workshops, designed to help others with cognitive and physical limitations. She connected her research, known techniques and her experience accessing resources in a program offered through the Ability Hub’s Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program.

The Ability Hub is the Saskatoon branch of a 24-center agency established

across Canada to empower people with disabilities by providing the resources and information they require to live independently.

Funded through SK Arts’ Artist in Communities program, Rebecca partnered with Chelsea Wisser, Executive Director at The Ability Hub YXE, to deliver virtual workshops that share the information and coping strategies she uses in her art practice.

Following the success of the initial workshops, La Marre later partnered with OUTSaskatoon to deliver similar workshops to the youth housed through Pride Home – a place of refuge for 2SLGBTQ+ youth who need shelter away from their biological families.

Rebecca believes that the Artist in Communities program is uniquely structured to assist

with providing similar projects to those undertaken at The Ability Hub YXE and OUTSaskatoon.

***“The Artist in Communities program is unique in that there is no funding in Canada to do projects like this – to be an artist-in-residence at Independent Living branches,”*** said La Marre.

La Marre also shared that working closely with retired SK Arts Policy and Planning Advisor Carol Greyeyes was instrumental in extrapolating her vision into a successful Artist in Communities grant. She hopes that similar types of grants with appropriate application support become more widespread, so that more neurodiverse artists can bring their work into the community, ideally moving into other Independent Living branches across Canada.

# 50 Years

25<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre recently celebrated over 50 years in operation. A group of young artists started the company to provide opportunities for Canadian work, different from the European fare that was more prominent in theatres in the 1970s. 25<sup>th</sup> Street uplifts Canadian culture, particularly Saskatchewan theatre works, by featuring Canadian voices and stories, highlighting the value of Canada's multicultural social fabric and sharing it with audiences. The theatre embodies sustainability, engagement, community and art as its ideals.

The Saskatoon Fringe Festival, presented annually by 25<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre, is a 10-day event showcasing theatrical performances and outdoor acts from across Canada and around the world. It also includes a vibrant street festival with artisan and food vendors, carnival games and interactive art experiences. In 2023, approximately 45,000 people attended the festival, which featured 21 theatre companies, over 200 performances and more than 500 participants in free workshops.

As its name suggests, the Fringe Festival features work from society's "fringe." Like the rest of the fringe theatre circuit, it operates through a lottery system designed to benefit artists who don't colour inside the lines. The festival showcases work that may not find a place in traditional theatre settings, pushing the boundaries of social limitations. The Fringe is a launching pad for many theatre artists' pieces and performances.

As the company moves into its next 50 years, it is hyper-focused – in addition to art – on three distinct pillars: sustainability, community and engagement.

Theatre has a reputation for being unsustainable since sets and props are often used for only one production. At 25<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre, "we actively look at ways to reduce our consumption and increase the longevity of the items we create," said Philippa Williams, Community Relations Manager and Outdoor Festival Manager.

25<sup>th</sup> Street strives to be sustainable by building props and sets that can be reused for multiple projects and by installing solar-powered refillable water stations. Sustainability, however, is not just limited to the environment. The theatre operates with the idea that the people are at the forefront of its work.

***"When we think sustainability, we always think about the environment, but there are so many other types of sustainability as well,"*** said Williams. ***"This is the first place I have worked where we know that the people matter more than the work that we do."***

Fluctuation of income and project funding is challenging for many practicing artists. 25<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre cares for its people, creating consistent paid opportunities for artists. The theatre funds the production of plays through its SaskFestivals grant and other revenue streams. It passes on ticket sales revenue to artists, allowing them to focus on creativity.

Williams said that the company's Executive Director, Anita Smith, has adopted a consciousness of financial sustainability, for all people involved with the company, during her tenure with the organization, which is evident throughout their operations.

Williams said, ***"It is obvious that our community [in theatre] includes artists. We often forget that we are a full living ecosystem that also includes administrators, technicians, volunteers, sponsors, donors and front-of-house staff. We strive to appreciate each of those groups and to keep them engaged."***

The company also wants theatre to be accessible for audiences facing financial barriers and to increase artists' reach, giving them a platform and allowing them to be creative. Consequently, 25<sup>th</sup> Street provides extensive interaction and opportunities to grow Saskatchewan's theatre audience. The theatre's youth play *Luna* was presented by a travelling troupe that visited several schools across Saskatchewan and addressed onerous topics like grief, depression and loss. Fringe Goes North is a program that brings art to the northern part of the province, to engage people who often don't get this type of opportunity.

With their varied slate of activities that goes well beyond the annual Fringe, 25<sup>th</sup> Street is well-positioned to move forward in a deeply engaged and sustainable manner with their community.

# of Theatre



Abdullah Wasfi and Delaney Gilmour, in *Breaking Bard* by The Spontaneous Shakespeare Company, performing at the 2023 Saskatoon Fringe Festival.

Photo credit: Nicole Stevenson Photography



**“The women’s groups that were established in the 1970s are no longer. The teachings are lost,” said Ledoux. “The children can’t relate to the older peoples with our shared histories, and they have no understanding of the struggles that occurred in the past and that now shape their future.”**

Photo: courtesy of the artist



# Connecting Indigenous Generations and Ancestry

**M**occasins. They are a type of footwear traditionally made of animal hide, created and worn by several Indigenous peoples in Canada. Independent artist and teacher Maureen Ledoux says that the moccasin represents a common thread among Saskatchewan Indigenous people as a connection to their ancestors.

“The thing that is similar to all First Nations people is moccasin, their connection to their ancestors,” said Ledoux. “Everyone has that connection and wants to connect with their culture.”

Despite being a significant part of Indigenous culture, she shares that moccasin-making is rarely taught in Saskatchewan, owing to the high costs of purchasing authentic animal hide needed for the traditional garment. She also identified a gap in the transfer of skills to the younger generation, a “recipe for lost skills and pieces of culture” that resulted from COVID-19 and intergenerational trauma – combined, these and other factors account for the lack of teaching. She stressed that it is essential for Indigenous people to participate in cultural activities in which they can learn from each other.

***“The women’s groups that were established in the 1970s are no longer. The teachings are lost,”*** said Ledoux. ***“The children can’t relate to the older peoples with our shared histories, and they have no understanding of the struggles that occurred in the past and that now shape their future.”***

Maureen’s first interaction with SK Arts several years ago was while becoming a traditional powwow dancer. Through that experience, she learned that she could apply for grants from agencies like SK Arts and SaskCulture to support cultural programs. She has since organized several classes to help people reconnect with their First Nations culture, mainly to help Sixties Scoop and Residential Schools survivors and descendants learn lost skills like making ribbon skirts and powwow regalia.

Recently, Maureen, who is from the Mistawasis Nēhiyawak reserve, teamed up with her sister Barb to organize and lead a three-day moccasin-making workshop at Wanuskewin – a way to bridge the generational divide. Registration for the class was full, and a waiting list was already in place before it was fully advertised. In the class, 15 participants ranging from 30 to 80 years old were supplied with a kit containing

moose hide, beads, sinew, beading thread and beading needles. They also created their own designs, learned how to make a pattern of their feet and used moose hide to make the moccasins. The workshop also fostered the sharing of Cree languages among participants.

Ledoux aims to host more workshops focusing on women’s and men’s wellness, and she wants to make more of her workshops open to the general public so that even people without Indigenous heritage have an opportunity to learn about Indigenous culture and activities.

**Moccasins made by participant in Maureen Ledoux’s class.**

# TD

## Packaging Loss and Hope



Photo credit: Shannon Berard-Gardiner

Chris Campbell Gardiner's *Tonglen* was accessioned into SK Arts' Permanent Collection in 2023. The work, consisting of three embroidered panels, showcases letters that Gardiner received from the Saskatchewan Arts Board, now operating as SK Arts, informing him that his grant applications for varied projects had not been funded.

**“Tonglen” is a Tibetan practice of sending and receiving. “Tong” means sending out or letting go; “len” means receiving or accepting. It is practiced in sitting meditation, using breathing to channel the flow of psychic energies.**

The hand-stitched work's history is more profound than meets the eye. In 1992, Gardiner retired from painting as a practice by sewing his last painting into a “package.” The painting had been created as a revelation to his grandfather that he had chosen to attend art school rather than architecture school, contrary to his grandfather's wishes. Chris' grandfather died before he could reveal his truth. The act of sewing the painting away was his way of dealing with his grief.

Similarly, *Tonglen*, created over ten years, evolved through determination

alongside numerous life events, many of which were traumatic for Gardiner. Inside each panel are undisclosed items representative of those challenges being packed away. “This work is a confrontation of very traumatic and difficult things,” he says.

Chris shared that he and his wife had endured three miscarriages during the time he spent creating *Tonglen*. The panels represent a symbolic burial and a reconciliation of failure, grief, trauma and doubt. Gardiner characterizes *Tonglen* as deeply personal canvases and threads, marrying the three miscarriages with the three grant rejections.

“It is personal and dedicated to my wife Shannon Moira Marie, my dad Roderick William, Jeremy Morgan and every artist who meets their day with resilience and some new daydream to change the world,” says Gardiner. “[The creation of] *Tonglen* also required practice and patience, much like arts grant processes and the lives of artists.”

According to Gardiner, “former SK Arts' Executive Director Jeremy Morgan's tender crossing out the machined font display of his name is a poignant example of how humans care for one another.”

He also said, “It's not lost on me either that these are historical works in that the dates, the process, the people, the letterhead, logo and even fonts have changed since the source material was born.”

***The artist shared that having the work included in the Permanent Collection and displayed in the arts funding agency's Regina office is “unmistakably profound.” Since its completion, Chris has been diagnosed with retinal detachment. Consequently, he cannot create another piece mimicking the stunning precision hand-stitching in Tonglen, which is made to look like machine work.***

*Tonglen* is installed in SK Arts' Regina office boardroom, where it will remain a physical reminder to the Board and staff of the human impact and the importance of the agency's work.

**(Left) Chris Campbell Gardiner hand-stitching *Tonglen*. (Below) The full work on display at SK Arts' Regina office.**

**Chris Campbell Gardiner  
*Tonglen*, 2010–2014, 2023  
SK Arts Permanent Collection.  
Photo credit: Don Hall**



# And

## Robertson

### Paints Parallels between Saskatchewan and Iceland

**S**erenity. Chaos.

Emerging visual artist Andrew Robertson has a knack for finding both in the same place and using them to harvest art. The native of Shaunavon – a town that reported just over 1,700 residents in 2021 – believes that one of Saskatchewan’s finer qualities is the opportunity to find beauty in places one least expects to. This belief is at the apex of his pride in being from a small town and practicing full-time as an artist. Robertson is proud not just of his rural Saskatchewan roots, but that he has been able to jumpstart a flourishing full-time art practice while rooted in his small community.

**Andrew Robertson, visual artist, painting *stöðugt* on Icelandic glacier.**

A few short years ago, Robertson was a youth centre worker, doodling to pass the time and as an outlet for grief, navigating the pandemic. It was then that the young artist inadvertently discovered his talent for drawing, which he has since nurtured through constant learning and experimentation. He began practicing as a full-time artist in 2022, working from a cozy studio above a coffee shop in Shaunavon. The studio fosters art talks with strangers, which can lead to commissioning and the artistic magic that goes into his work.

***“Being from a small town in Saskatchewan where not that many people live and being able to practice as a fine artist***

***full-time,”*** Robertson mused. ***“It doesn’t seem like it should be possible.”***

Since then, Robertson has had several group and solo exhibitions. He’s sold his work across Canada and the United States, including in Boston, Massachusetts; Bozeman, Montana; and Winter Haven, Florida. One of his pieces even graced a travelling digital group exhibition in New York City.

#### **TRAVEL INSPIRES ART**

While his work maintains a solid connection to his home, Andrew considers travel integral to his creativity. He delights in the opportunity to highlight his rural Saskatchewan



# rew

Photo credit: Adler Irwin



Photo credit: Anna Morin



Photo courtesy of the artist.

**Adler Irwin, photographer, and visual artist Andrew Robertson standing on a glacier in Iceland.**

**Raccolto, 2024  
Andrew Robertson  
Mural Location: Trattoria  
Raccolto, Swift Current**

origins through his adventures. Robertson, always eager to learn and find inspiration to elevate his work, shared that the landscape and people of a recent trip to Iceland immediately reminded him of home. He describes Icelanders as “hearty people, much like Saskatchewanians.”

***“The first thing I noticed was that it was so flat and had heavy winds, just like Saskatchewan,”*** he laughed. ***“The people are also very warm, friendly and hearty. It had that small-town charm we love so much and cherish. I felt right at home.”***

Since childhood, Robertson has dreamed of visiting Iceland, inspired by the film *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty*. Challenging himself with a daring venture that boosted his confidence, creativity and

artistic profile, he took off to the East of the Great White North to visit and paint in the Icelandic countryside, fulfilling the dream with friend, filmmaker and videographer Adler Irwin of Swift Current in tow.

The pair travelled to a small town, Vik, in southern Iceland to expand their artistic horizons. The pair timed their visit (or rather, attempted to) with the eruptions on the Reykjanes peninsula in southwestern Iceland near Grindavík. Robertson and Irwin hoped to create paintings and media around the eruption. Two days following Robertson and Irwin’s departure, the volcano erupted over 24 days. While the volcano didn’t erupt during their visit, the two found plenty to connect to their roots and inspire them, including the exciting and

unique experience of creating art on a soot-covered mountain of ice.

Chatting with SK Arts from a ladder in Eastend, where he was painting a mural, Robertson shares that the experience made him feel alive.

“The opportunity to paint on a natural structure that changes its landscape every few weeks is a rush.”

**ARTISTIC INGENUITY**  
The venture to Iceland and painting on unstable grounds with high winds challenged Andrew’s creativity in more ways than one. He shared that painting on a volcano required some ingenuity in building a travel-worthy canvas. When accounting for the wind, hiking with an open canvas would have been a dubious undertaking, “much like hiking with a kite,” said the artist.

So, ever resourceful, he created a portable, collapsible canvas structure bar and placed it in a tube strapped on his back to transport the canvas up and his finished work down.

The thrilling experience of painting while the ground shifted beneath his feet took three hours and resulted in the piece *stöðugt*, named from an Icelandic word for “steady.” A second work, *Dust and Ice*, was created near the mossy Vífilsfell Mountain between Reykjavík and Selfoss. Robertson shared that both hikes took approximately an hour each way.

*stöðugt* reflects a person that Robertson imagined has lived a full, hearty life, like those of the people native to the tiny Icelandic town he was visiting

and the farming town where he grew up. Robertson shared how the connections between the Icelandic people and the land reminded him of Saskatchewan.

He says “travel painting” shows you can create beauty wherever you go and make an impact. **“I want to paint all over the world. I want to take those things I have seen around the world, bring them back home, and bring some Saskatchewan to the world.”**

#### ART MARKETING 101

Robertson enjoys marketing his work as much as he does making it. He capitalizes on the digital age to present and sell his work, which includes paintings, murals, photographs and films, with behind-the-scenes processes as part of his

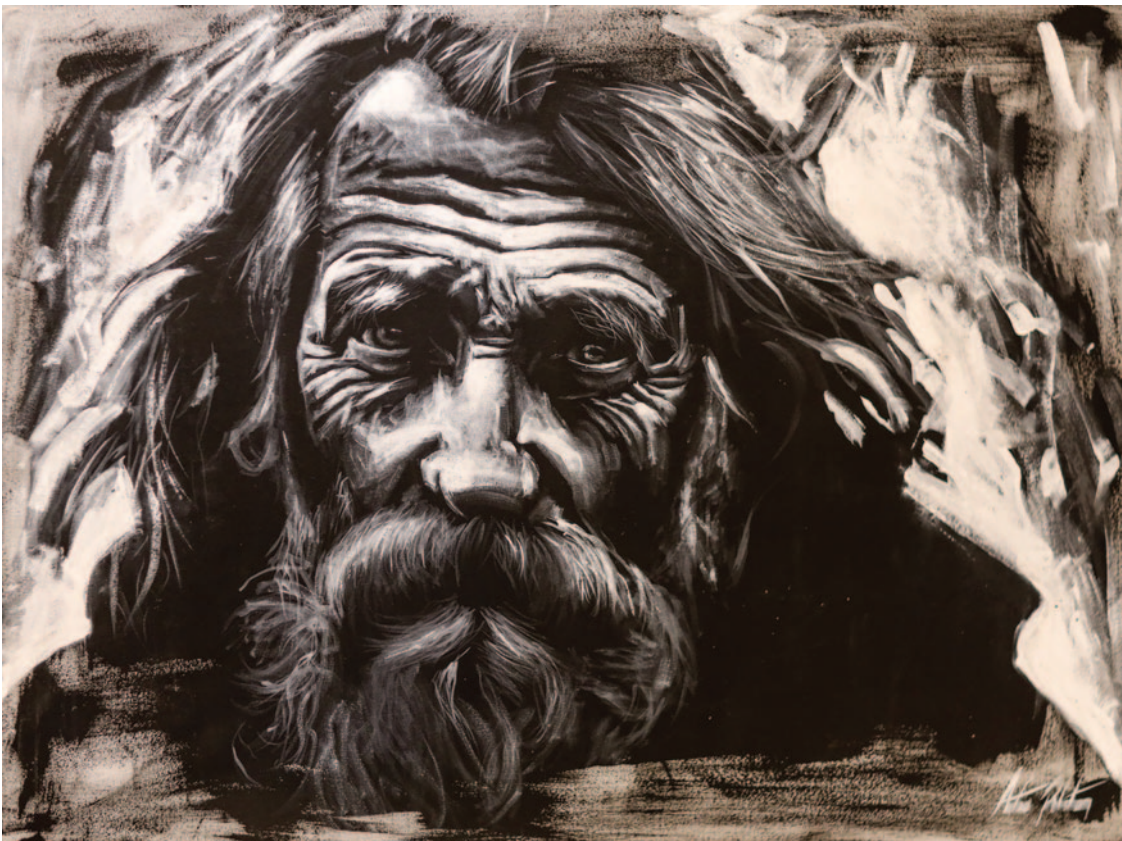
style. His social media – Instagram, Facebook, TikTok and his website’s digital portfolio – shows his style, with stunning media depictions of him creating art.

The media marketing of his work typically includes vast prairie landscapes and the vivid skies of his home province – something that turns his visual pieces, capable of standing on their own, into multidisciplinary works showcasing the art of creating. The ambitious young artist views his work as a twist on street art and values his ability to bring art to people in public spaces for them to share and enjoy.

He advises artists and people to step out of the ordinary, go on adventures and take

chances that stretch the imagination. With these principles at the forefront of his practice, Robertson hopes to one day be represented in galleries and become a recognized Canadian artist.

**Andrew Robertson**  
*stöðugt*, 2024



# A Relentless Pursuit and **COLLECTION** of **PASSION**



Joe Fafard, 2016 © Joseph Hartman, courtesy Peter Robertson Gallery and Stephen Bulger Gallery



**D**onors are the lifeblood of SK Arts' Permanent Collection. The donation program allows the agency to collect artwork representing the rich fabric of Saskatchewan's arts community and history.

Since so many of the agency's purchases focus on new bodies of work, donations often allow SK Arts to "fill gaps" in its catalogue of specific artists or time periods. Donors are frequently artists or art collectors who believe that great art is meant to be shared among people; this belief leads them to contribute work to SK Arts' collection, emphasizing public access.

Kim Jones and Alyce Hamon are two such donors.

Kim Jones didn't always love art; he was "bit by the art bug." The retired Crown prosecutor and art collector visited the Czech Republic in the 1970s, where he began to appreciate artifacts and developed an interest in viewing things on display. A few years later, he went to law school in Ottawa, and on one of his return trips to Regina during the summer break, he accompanied a friend to a benefit at the [now] Art Gallery of Regina.

Jones recalls that he and his friend liked a print by Joe Fafard and that the piece unexpectedly "made him feel good." When the piece went home with his friend, much to his surprise, a jealous Jones made a trip to the art gallery the following morning to source one for himself. That began a collecting journey of more than 45 years.

With a passion for art that he characterizes as an addiction, Jones typically buys work that invokes some positive emotion. **"It is a very personal thing. When you like a piece, it is likely because it struck a chord. Sometimes you know why, and sometimes you**

**don't. It's like music,"** Kim said. **"You may like a song for the beat, the words or the vibe. Sometimes, you don't even know why you like it. You just do."**

Jones has amassed an extensive catalogue of art from Saskatchewan artists. He says friends were frequently critical of how much he spent on artwork. Though its monetary value is undeniable, a point on which some of his peers relented, Jones does not purchase art as an investment strategy. Instead, he says buying works from local artists is his way of contributing to the local economy.

**"Some people like to spend their money on cars, vacations and travel,"** Jones revealed. **"Me? I prefer being surrounded by art. It makes me feel good."**

Jones housed 60% of his collection in his office, on display like an informal art gallery for people to enjoy. Believing that art should be displayed and appreciated instead of locked away, Jones works intermittently with SK Arts' staff to identify gaps in the Permanent Collection that he could fill with a donation.

**"I just love what SK Arts' program does, getting the art out there and seen – as it should be."**

Alyce Hamon grew up in Gravelbourg, where her introduction to art was through the community at Our Lady of Assumption Co-Cathedral. Later, Alyce and her sister Éveline were active in amateur theatre. At one of their plays, Alyce met and became friends with her late partner, renowned Canadian sculptor Joe Fafard. The pair lost contact but reconnected several years later.

Alyce was thrust into and enthralled by the world of Saskatchewan art. Attending openings and meeting artists, she became friends with other artists like Wilf Perreault, Vic Cicansky, Victor Teed and Karen Holden.

Alyce learned and continues to learn as much as possible about artists, their history and work. Passionate about art, Alyce remains in awe of Fafard as an artist and of the talent of other Saskatchewan artists.

**"There are so many amazing artists in this province,"** Alyce said. **"Art is the most important thing in my life. Life is art. Art is life."**

Nowhere more apparent is Hamon's passion than in the home she shared with Fafard for over 20 years until his passing in 2019. It was designed to meet their artistic preferences and showcases an impressive collection, from sculptures to paintings, drawings, installations, functional furniture and memories. Each piece, some global but most local, contains a story Alyce is all too willing to share with visitors and friends. Inside and out, the property, chosen by the pair after a long search, is littered with life-size animal sculptures. It is also home to his studio – the birthplace of a significant portion of the artist's extensive body of work.

Alyce values sharing art with as many people as possible and does so through donations and opening her home and its history to others. She had the collection inventoried and decided, from that list, which pieces of work needed to be out for public enjoyment.

**"It's why I love SK Arts,"** conveyed Hamon. **"Because the art becomes public, and other people and various institutions see it – it is appreciated."**

**Saskatchewan artist Joe Fafard at work in his studio.**



**J**  
**DIVERSITY IN MUSIC:  
JEANNY JUNG  
ASPIRES TO  
DECOLONIZE THE  
DISCIPLINE**



**J**eanny Jung's early introduction to classical music at four years old sparked a life-defining passion for the art form. Hailing from North Battleford, an early start in her music career gave her intimate knowledge of the unique challenges of music for children in rural Saskatchewan, challenges she hopes to reduce and eventually eliminate in her home province.

In 2023, Jeanny received a Prince Edward Arts Scholarship, which funded her attendance to the Young Artist Program at the Scotia Festival of Music – an intensive two-week program for pre-professional musicians to build performance skills, network with top industry professionals and receive career-readiness training. The program included workshops on making concerts and performances accessible to neuro-diverse populations. The festival heightened Jeanny's desire to bridge the gap between theory and practice in performing arts and music education.

***“I have this really big goal to take what I have learned and the resources and connections I have made in Ontario to bring it back [to Saskatchewan]. I want to expand genres within music, but also in accessibility, in representation in performers and composers as well...”***

Jung's experiences in student governance while studying, including a presidential term on student council, elevated her ability to apply advocacy to her work and explore ways to diversify the experience of music education, in order to share her love and passion with as many people as possible and give them the opportunity to experience music. She also wants to “stray away from the western classical music lens that encapsulates most institutions.”

***“I want a big part of my life to be about providing access to music for children who would not otherwise be able to experience it due to financial and other barriers.”***

A recent graduate of London, Ontario's Western University with a BMus in violin performance and a minor in psychology, Jeanny is a student at the University of Toronto's MMus program in violin performance. She intends to continue her learning following her program. ***“I still have so much to learn before I can do what I want to do.”***

Jung has been training in several cities across Canada: North Battleford, Saskatoon, London (ON), Toronto, Victoria, Niagara Falls and Halifax. Jung won several awards in 2019 to embark on her undergraduate degree, including the University of Western Ontario Gordon Jeffery Endowment for Strings and Chamber Music Award and one from the Saskatoon Youth Orchestra.

She is intentional in collaborating with under-represented musicians to uplift and share their artistry – expanding her repertoire to reflect a higher standard and a wide range of genres and time periods to show the dynamics of music over time. Jung performs work from student composers and pre-professionals, giving them the opportunity to have their music played.

Jeanny plans to take her work and experiences back home, to provide music to children who face barriers, whether financial, location-based or otherwise. She is proud to be from Saskatchewan, and she is grateful for her upbringing in North Battleford and its impact: the outstanding caliber of teachers, values and culture.

# Miguel Fenrich:

## Challenging **Literary** Boundaries

**S**udanese-Canadian author Miguel Fenrich's burning passion for history led to his desire to bring history to the present and preserve its truth for future generations. He is a writer, award-winning journalist, poet, Vice President of the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild and Communications Coordinator at the Multicultural Council of Saskatchewan.

Miguel's truth-telling approach to history contextualizes prejudices into digestible segments. His first novel, *Blue*, published in 2022, saves and records contemporary issues for future societies, digs into our history and brings past pieces into the present. The novel is about challenges faced by a blue-eyed worker who lives in a cruel, autocratic, brown-eyed supremacy that has convinced society that blue-eyed people are lazy, weak and inferior to the brown-eyed majority.

Inspired by the tragic stories of Americans George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, the book's title and cover reference Jane Elliot's 1968 "blue eyes brown eyes," psychological experiment. In the anti-racism experiment, Jane, a white teacher in a small town (Riceville, Iowa), split her all-white class into two, blue and brown eyes, and pitted the children against each other to show how prejudices manifest, however small. The experiment was eventually deemed unethical as a trauma-inducing

endeavour for the children, which is ironic considering that minority groups encounter similar prejudices daily.

Rooted in past truths, *Blue* explores systemic racism, colonialism, classism and prejudice, similar to the "blue eyes, brown eyes" experiment. One of the more powerful pieces of feedback Fenrich has received following an author reading and book club discussion of the novel is that its eye-opening and powerful storyline changes audience perspectives and lives – something he cherishes as an intentional earmark of his work.

***"During that discussion, emotions ran really high. People would tell me that brown-eyed people would stand up and fight for blue-eyed people,"*** shares Fenrich. ***"Everything that happens in Blue has happened to a minority group at some point. They [the audience] told me my book made them feel something, which is amazing."***

Miguel started his publishing company, Supernova Press, when traditional publishing companies and agents were reluctant to publish the novel, fearing it would sell poorly due to its controversial nature.

"When I finished the book and was sending it out, the feedback was 'Great book! I love it, but I am not sure how well it will sell.' That was a common theme in

Saskatchewan and across Canada," Miguel says. "So, I decided I would do it myself."

The company also published his 2023 novel, *What Lies in the Valley*. Making its mark through publishing *Blue*, Supernova Press aims to fill a gap by being more accessible in publishing literary works that do not fit the constraints of more digestible works. For his work with Supernova Press and his writing, Miguel received a Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal from the Province of Saskatchewan.

Owing to its unique direction, Supernova Press invites manuscripts from everyone and will recommend other companies if the work is more compatible with different publishers. It aims to work alongside other companies rather than to compete with them.

Miguel is working on a new novel that explores photography to uncover his relationship with settler Saskatchewan, his heritage and the Canadian Prairies.

# Truth-Teller

A close-up portrait of a man with dark, curly hair, a beard, and glasses. He is wearing a white sweater with a blue and red geometric pattern at the bottom. The background is a blurred bookshelf.

Photo credit: Brianne Hager

**“During that discussion, emotions ran really high. People would tell me that brown-eyed people would stand up and fight for blue-eyed people,” shares Fenrich. “Everything that happens in *Blue* has happened to a minority group at some point. They [the audience] told me my book made them feel something, which is amazing.”**

# Black and Petit Uneat



Photo credit: Marcel Petit

# Birth Untold Seniors' Stories

P

Psychology lecturer and research associate Samantha Black partnered with the Western Development Museum (WDM) to create an archive of 2SLGBTQ+ history in Saskatchewan. She spent two years gathering archival photographs, portraiture and video interviews, which included a small sample of queer senior citizens and are now archived at the WDM.

Samantha wanted to turn the video interviews into a movie or documentary. She was referred to Métis filmmaker Marcel Petit. Petit was immediately on board, sharing that his interest in the project aligned with his more significant interests – history

and storytelling. Black believed that Marcel's involvement would bring added value to the project, so the two took it on together.

Throughout his career, Marcel has interviewed hundreds of Indigenous Elders and believes the documentary's arc is centered around unearthing the trials and triumphs of queer senior citizens living in the Prairies.

The queer senior documentary project is now in production, and it has evolved into an endeavor separate from its WDM origins with Samantha and Marcel at its helm. The documentary includes stories from six Indigenous 2SLGBTQ+

and six settler 2SLGBTQ+ senior citizens and is shot in conversational-style interviews. Samantha and Marcel shared their amazement at the stories from the project. Their journey, meeting the seniors and hearing their stories, has been fun and eye-opening for both. The complex layers in the stories highlight the origins of resources for queer individuals, such as the Friendship Centre in Regina and OUTSaskatoon.

Noting that some of the seniors with disturbing stories of their experiences as 2SLGBTQ+ people were in their 60s, Samantha shared that as a woman in her 50s,

**Jan and Erin sharing their stories, photo screenshot from the Queer seniors documentary.**



Photo credit: Neil Richards. Photo courtesy of the University Archives and Special Collections (University of Saskatchewan.)

**Gay rights protest in Regina, 1979.**

such a small age gap between herself and the subjects of the documentary proved to be a cathartic experience, considering she had recently come out herself, sharing her identity publicly with her employer.

***“One of the things I learned through this process is that I am an older queer person too,”*** Black shared, amused. ***“I had to hide my identity for most of my life. I thought ‘Oh my God, a lot of the oppressions these people faced, we are on the cusp of experiencing them, too.’”***

Petit and Black said that, while there are positive stories highlighted in the documentary, a significant number of them are rooted in the complexities of Saskatchewan’s history as a homophobic and racist province. The documentary shares how the seniors have navigated their lives and surrendered pieces of themselves to make the way better for generations that

followed and how many of the subjects reclaimed those identities in their later years.

“I wish we could get the stories of some people who have passed away,” Marcel said. “To see what their stories would have been like about their time.”

The project highlights that society loses a significant portion of history as seniors die without sharing their experiences, including stories about the unification of settler and Indigenous queer people, who may have initially been at odds.

**HOUSING, SPIRITUALITY, CULTURAL CONTEXT AND FAMILY SUPPORT**

Throughout the seniors’ stories, the importance of cultural context and family support as it concerns their queerness is also highlighted. A significant number of the seniors recall that their families exiled them, kicking them out of their homes during their teen or young

adult years for being queer. Samantha affirmed that her experience as a social worker corroborates 2017 statistics, which showed that approximately 45% of homeless youth are queer. The interviewees also shared a desire for queer housing for elders.

***“Every person we talked to talked about how they want queer-dedicated elder housing,”*** said Black. ***“That was very surprising.”***

The documentary established that, among the seniors, the acme for forming a positive self-identity relies on having just one person who provides support. Many 2SLGBTQ+ people did not have that kind of support as young adults, which often proved to be debilitating.

Black tells the stories of Charlotte Nolin and Edward LaVallee, two of the Indigenous elders with whom they spoke, who believe that “Two-Spirit youth [who]





Photo credit: Neil Richards. Photo courtesy of the University Archives and Special Collections (University of Saskatchewan.)

receive a lot of cultural support reiterating that “You are normal,” in comparison with those who “do not have that or can’t find it very easily, the result is likely to be homelessness [for those] queer youth.”

The stories also have a strong tie to spirituality in several ways. Although many of the queer seniors interviewed told how they were trounced by the Church, both from a faith-based and residential school perspective, many of those seniors remained within the church and value their ability to be part of that community.

The seniors shared the importance of having a place to reclaim Indigenous spirituality, acknowledging that an important way to heal is to have spaces where they can express their cultural identity. Although queer people in the past eventually found community with other people like themselves in the province’s 2SLGBTQ+ community, the inconsistency

with which they could come together was also a challenge.

#### **TYING IT ALL TOGETHER**

Acknowledging how support at an earlier age could have improved their own experiences, Marcel and Samantha expounded on the history of diagnosing homosexuality as pedophilia and the fact that people were incarcerated for being homosexual. The openness of the seniors regarding their experiences, even the most private ones, encouraged the team to charge forward in hopes of revelation and reconciliation.

The team’s vision for the final documentary is a number of short stories as well as a feature-length film. They are also sourcing additional funding, and Marcel and Samantha envision their finished films as a widely disseminated resource for learning about queer history and to inform better decision-making in the future that might avoid mistakes of the past.

“There is a lot of work to be done and relationships to build,” said Black. “We also want to be part of the group that brings attention to this issue.”

Research for the project led Samantha and Marcel to books such as *Prairie Fairies: A History of Queer Communities and People in Western Canada* by Valerie Korinek and the work of Neil Richards, a former librarian who curated an extensive archive of queer history at the University of Saskatchewan. Black says that the caretakers of this archive are openly available and encourage people to use the archives for research and creative projects.

**“I just want people to hear the stories. I am excited for the release so that people see and hear the stories,”** noted Marcel.

#### **Gay rights protest in Regina, 1979.**

# RISING

## the Theatre Stage

Ibukun-Olawu Fasunhan's introduction to Canadian theatre in Saskatchewan was dramatically different from his previous experiences. The Nigerian newcomer is a producer, stage manager, playwright and researcher. He established a career as a highly sought-after stage manager whose work graced theatres worldwide, including in London, the United Arab Emirates and South Africa.

Fasunhan feared he couldn't continue his creative career in Canada. These fears were compounded by apparent differences in theatre culture and the lack of diversity in Saskatchewan theatre, noticeable both in the audience and on the stage.

However, his concerns proved unnecessary when he was introduced to On Cue Performance Hub, a Regina-based, artist-run performing arts organization that provides a wealth of resources to theatre artists. A beneficiary of SK Arts' Professional Arts Organizations Program (PAOP), On Cue provides assistance with grant writing, planning, production, publicity and marketing support.

Ibukun interned as a production coordinator with On Cue and successfully submitted his play *Rites of Passage*—a play depicting frustration

faced by immigrants—to RISER Regina. It was produced as one of four plays with RISER's opening season in 2023. In recent years, several theatre artists have received SK Arts funding to support their work with or through On Cue.

RISER is a collaborative producing model developed by Why Not Theatre in Toronto to assist performing artists and companies in creating and presenting new work. Specifically, RISER Regina connects senior leadership from the performing arts community with underserved artists to maximize existing infrastructures, share resources and risk, help build new audiences, and support a commitment to create and innovate.

***"I count myself lucky to have known On Cue when I came to Canada,"*** Ibukun expressed. ***"They assisted me in writing my first grant application for the Canada Council for the Arts, which also aided in paying actors and set design for Rites of Passage."***

*Rites of Passage* resonated with the immigrant community, and numerous audience members described it as entertaining and a "much-needed work of representation." Ibukun shared, ***"Theatre needs to reflect the diversity of people and culture here."***

Through his work with On Cue, Ibukun has been able to create space for Black theatre artists and creators and diversify the cultural fabric of the local theatre scene. His work is focused on representing immigrant artists in Saskatchewan theatre.

To achieve this goal, he was instrumental in developing ART YQR, a monthly open mic series hosted to discover new talent and provide a platform for artists to connect and network. One recent successful collaboration resulting from ART YQR is the development of duo performances between Eric "Arch Angel" Gabriel and Karley Parovsky. The inspiring collaboration triggered an invitation to perform at SK Arts' Arts of Celebration event in spring 2024, which the community lauded as a remarkable and memorable performance.

In addition to his theatre work, Ibukun is the southern Artistic Director of Common Weal Community Arts and a doctoral student in media and artistic research at the University of Regina.

***Rites of Passage*** team members from left to right: Babatunde Onikoyi (actor), Mike O'Shaughnessy (technician) and Shelby Lyn Lowe (production manager) with Ibukun-Oluwa Fasunhan.



Photo credit: Don Hall

# Minding the Wellness Powers of Art

The transformative power of art is a refreshing antidote for the increasingly stress-inducing, fast-paced life of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, where productivity and efficiency often overshadow personal fulfillment. Beyond aesthetic appeal, art, in all its forms, is a profound catalyst for enhancing well-being, nurturing creativity, and fostering deeper connections in ourselves and others in myriad ways.

Creative activities allow individuals to process and manage complex feelings and stress and to gain insight into their emotional landscapes. The cathartic release through art is therapeutic and empowers individuals to navigate challenges with greater resilience and clarity.

In a recent SK Arts interview, Ron Ewenin Wapemoose, a Saulteaux-Cree artist, shared that his art practice provided solace, relief and focus for him as a person in recovery. Wapemoose also credits his independence to art. "I survived because of art. Art saved my life. I will always give it back to art."

Numerous studies highlight positive connections between art and mental health maintenance and recovery. Art therapy, a creative, psychotherapeutic intervention, improves cognitive functioning and emotional regulation. A research study published in a 2023 publication by the *Journal of Mental Health*

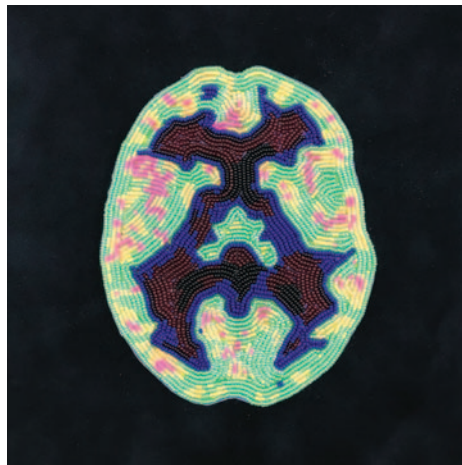


Photo credit: The Gallery / Art Placement Inc.

entitled "Art therapy is associated with a reduction in restrictive practices on an in-patient child and adolescent mental health unit," gave evidence-based findings that support the value of art therapy interventions in mental health treatment practices with children and adolescents in in-patient mental health care.

Though art can be treatment-based, its wellness effects apply at all life stages. It stimulates psychological development and enhances problem-solving skills. Art creation requires imagination, critical thinking and innovation; these activities exercise the brain in ways dissimilar to traditional learning methods. Art also remarkably bridges cultural divides and fosters community. It supports social interactions crucial for combating isolation and promoting a sense of belonging.

JingLu Zhao, an immigrant and Saskatoon-based visual artist, shows how art's universal language, transcending cultural and linguistic barriers, unites people through shared experiences, spaces and creativity. Her art, which often focuses on landscapes, is inspired by the intersection between her life in China and her new life in Saskatoon.

Creating or experiencing art encourages mindfulness, boosting confidence and contributing to overall mental well-being and relaxation. This newfound confidence often extends beyond art, positively influencing other areas of life and personal development.

Whether you're an artist or an arts supporter, embracing the power of art can lead to a more fulfilling, balanced and joyful life. With a brush, strumming a chord or dancing with abandon, your well-being might flourish in ways you never imagined.

Versitano, S., Shvetcov, A., Paton, J., and Perkes, I. (2024). "Art therapy is associated with a reduction in restrictive practices on an in-patient child and adolescent mental health unit." *Journal of Mental Health*, 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638237.2024.2332813>

**Ruth Cuthand**  
**PTSD, 2020**  
**SK Arts Permanent Collection.**

# Arts of Celebration 2024

As part of the Arts of Celebration 2024, SK Arts proudly honoured the following:

## Emerging Professional Artists

Peace Akintade, interdisciplinary poet  
Jordan Baraniecki, visual artist  
Cristian Barreno, painter  
Tommy John Ehman, singer-songwriter  
Miguel Fenrich, author and publisher  
Bruno Hernani, visual artist  
Katelyn Lehner, country singer-songwriter  
Frans Lotz, visual artist  
Alana Moore, artist, youth mentor and community organizer  
Morit Music, music artist  
Madison Pascal, visual artist  
Bailey Randell-Monsebroten, maker  
Andrew Robertson, fine artist  
Dara Schindelka, musician  
JingLu Zhao, visual artist

## Established Artists and Arts Leaders

Müveddet Al-Katib, visual artist, community-engaged artist  
Kris Alvarez, Treaty 4 theatre artist  
Dean Bauche, professional artist, curator and cultural consultant  
Jacky Berting, visual artist  
Darlene Briere, executive director, Saskatchewan Drama Association  
Patrick Bulas, artist, educator and printmaker  
Jesse Campbell, independent curator and arts administrator  
Leah Marie Dorion, visual artist  
Charley Farrero, visual artist  
Alyssa Fearon, director and curator, Dunlop Art Gallery  
Jennifer Fitzpatrick, director of cultural services, City of Humboldt  
Traci Foster, artist and founder, Listen to Dis' Community Arts Organization  
Margaret Pelletier Harrison, fibre artist  
Cindy Hoppe, visual artist and chair, Saskatchewan Craft Council  
Em Ironstar, executive director, Saskatchewan Arts Alliance  
Brandy Jones, Indigenous visual artist  
Jackie Kroczyński, artist and educator  
Rebecca La Marre, visual artist

Paul Lapointe, sculptor, painter and printmaker  
Monique Martin, artist and art educator  
Cathryn Miller, visual artist  
June Mitchell, poet  
Connie Moker Wernikowski, dance artist  
Sandee Moore, artist and curator of exhibitions and interim director, Art Gallery of Regina  
Jessica Morgun, visual artist  
Alexis Normand, singer-songwriter and filmmaker  
Marea Olafson, potter and educator  
Gordon Pepper, independent filmmaker  
Susan Robertson, potter  
Jillian Ross, master printer and print publisher  
Craig Salkeld, lover of music  
Vera Saltzman, photographer  
Zoë Schneider, visual artist  
Tara Semple, sound alchemist  
Leona Theis, literary artist  
Karen Pask-Thompson, artist and teacher  
Wayne Tunison, master bell ringer  
Lana Wilson, acting curator and manager, education programs, Mann Art Gallery

## Audience view of SK Arts 2024 Arts of Celebration event.

## Aspiring Youth Artists

Mary Liv, musician  
Lachlan Neville, rural songwriter  
Paulina Salisbury, singer, actor, dancer and musician  
Brooke Zarubin, vocalist

## Organizations, Festivals and Collectives

25<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre's Fringe Festival, theatre festival  
Art Gallery of Regina, art gallery  
Be Kind Rewind Productions, theatre company  
Black History Month Music Festival by the Black Professionals & Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan, music festival  
Chokecherry Studios, youth-founded arts organization  
Conseil culturel Fransaskois, francophone cultural council  
Free Flow Dance Theatre, dance company  
Moosomin Visual Arts Centre, arts centre  
Regina Bell Ringers, non-profit organization  
Saskatchewan Book Awards, awards  
SK Printmakers, printmaking organization  
Spud Publishing Inc., publishing company  
Weyburn Art Gallery, art gallery



Photo credit: Mark Gräschner

# In Memorium

August 2023 - July 2024

## **BROWNRIDGE, Bill**

William Roy Brownridge, “Bill” or even “Billy” to old friends, was a distinguished, award-winning, nationally exhibited painter and a best-selling author/illustrator. Brownridge moved to Calgary in 1953 to study at the Provincial Institute of Technology and Art (Alberta College of Art). Bill went on to exhibit across Canada and to write a children’s book. His paintings are found in galleries, homes, offices and corporate headquarters across North America. He was born October 14, 1932 in Rosetown and passed away peacefully on May 1, 2024.

## **FREEMAN, Jean Margaret**

Jean Margaret Freeman (née Arnett) was an author and actress, receiving numerous honours for her work in both broadcasting and the arts. She was famous for roles such as Fitzzy’s grandma in the hit Saskatchewan sitcom, *Corner Gas* – just one achievement in a lengthy, storied career. Freeman was also involved in theatre productions, creating children’s books and co-authoring a brief which helped preserve Government House in Regina. Jean beautifully self-authored her obituary, sharing that she had a full and enjoyable life. She was born in Weyburn on August 11, 1934 and passed away January 17, 2024 in Regina.

## **KIRZINGER, Angeline Mary**

Angeline was an accomplished painter for over 50 years. She created a 13-piece collection during the COVID pandemic that was on display at Bethany Manor

at the time of her passing.

Reflected in her paintings was her love of gardening, nature and prairie landscapes. She enjoyed creating her pieces but found the joy that others experienced through them most rewarding. Angeline was born in Englefeld on February 16, 1932 and passed away in Saskatoon on October 2, 2023.

## **MACDONALD, Gladys**

Gladys was a teacher, a writer, an artist, a poet, an actor and an athlete. She taught for several years and was an avid supporter of the arts and sports. She was a member of the Moose Jaw Camera Club, the Moose Jaw Art Guild, the Moose Jaw Museum & Art Gallery, Prairie Pens writers, the Hilltop Curling Club and several bowling leagues. In the late 1980s, Gladys painted fire hydrants on South Hill in Moose Jaw, turning them into pieces of art. In 1990, she received the Provincial Recognition Award for her support and service in culture. Gladys passed away peacefully on January 6, 2024, in Moose Jaw.

## **MELANSON, John Ross**

Artist, philosopher and poet, John Ross Melanson’s career brought him to the Moose Jaw Museum & Art Gallery, where he spent 20 years in various administrative roles, including Gallery Greeter, Curatorial Assistant and Operations Manager. Ross’s final project with the gallery was research for a 1954 plane crash exhibit at the gallery. Ross passed away on March 2, 2024 following a battle with cancer.

## **NEWDIGATE MILLS, Ann**

South African-born Canadian tapestry artist Ann Newdigate received her BFA and MFA degrees from the University of Saskatchewan before pursuing graduate studies in Edinburgh. She returned to U of S to teach between 1982 and 1987 and was a former Director of SK Arts. In our Permanent Collection, SK Arts holds 54 pieces by Newdigate, many of which have Canadian Cultural Property status. She passed away peacefully in her sleep on December 13, 2023 following a cancer diagnosis.

## **PAUL ARMSTRONG, Gail**

Gail Paul Armstrong was an arts administrator who served the community through her work at SK Arts for over 30 years and several positions with the Government of Saskatchewan. She joined SK Arts as a Program Consultant, ending her career as the Director of Administration. She received the Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee Medal from Lieutenant Governor Russ Mirasty for her service to SK Arts in 2023. Gail passed away peacefully with her ever-present dignity and style on May 8, 2024, following a lengthy battle with cancer.

## **QUICK, Evan**

Self-described as a world traveller, trekker, athlete, gardener and reader, Evan Quick was also a Saskatchewan ceramicist. He graduated from the University of Saskatchewan with a BFA and began pursuing ceramic sculpture alongside his work with Air Canada. His art took a back seat until retirement; his position with

the airline allowed him to visit over 50 countries. He began practicing as an artist in 2012 and in Dimensions 2019 received the Les Potter Award for Excellence in Sculpture. Evan was born on December 2, 1950 in Regina and passed away peacefully at home on Wednesday, September 13, 2023, surrounded by family.

## **SAWA, Victor Norman**

Victor enjoyed a long, prolific career as a clarinetist, conductor and teacher. He performed as solo clarinet with the Canadian Chamber Ensemble and Principal Clarinet with the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. He also served as Music Director of the K-W Youth Orchestra and the Guelph Youth Orchestra. Sawa worked with the Regina Symphony Orchestra for almost 20 years and also music directed the Saskatoon Symphony Orchestra. Victor passed away peacefully at home on June 12, 2024 after a lengthy illness.

## **WALKER, Ronald Douglas**

Ronald Douglas Walker was a prolific landscape painter, who had been inspired to a career as an artist by a Vincent van Gogh’s biopic. Ron attended art school in Regina and Vancouver and eventually moved to Toronto, where he became heavily involved in the city’s art scene while earning a BA degree from the University of Toronto. Ron was born October 16th, 1937 in Saskatoon and passed peacefully and unexpectedly at Victoria Hospital in London, Ontario on March 7, 2024, with his daughters by his side.

## MISSION

To provide funding and support to the arts for the benefit of all people in Saskatchewan.

## VISION

Saskatchewan artists, their work, and their contribution to the province's quality of life are recognized and valued.

## ABOUT SK ARTS

The Saskatchewan Arts Board, now operating as SK Arts, is the oldest public arts funders in North America. Governed by *The Arts Board Act, 1997*, SK Arts provides grants, programs and services to individuals and groups whose activities have an impact on the arts in Saskatchewan and ensure that opportunities exist for Saskatchewan residents to experience at the arts.

SK Arts acknowledges that the land currently known as the Province of Saskatchewan is comprised of portions of lands from Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10, the territories of the Nêhiyawak, Anihšīnāpēk, Dene, Dakota, Lakota and Nakota nations and the homeland of the Métis. We give thanks to the host Indigenous communities in this province, as we bear the collective responsibility to honour and respect their protocols and homes and to engage meaningfully with their knowledges in our work.

SK Arts values an equitable, diverse and inclusive world, where all people have fair access to the tools and resources needed to realize creative and community endeavours.

## OUR GRANT PROGRAMS

- Professional Arts Organizations Program: operational funding for arts organizations in Saskatchewan
- SaskFestivals: operating and project grants for arts festivals in Saskatchewan communities
- Independent Arts: PD, research, creation and production funding for professional artists
- Indigenous Peoples Art and Artists: funding to support the development and continuation of Indigenous arts practices, including both traditional and contemporary work
- Share and Connect – Indigenous Community Arts: grants that empower Indigenous communities to control and develop their own arts and culture
- Building Arts Equity – BPOC Programs: special grant stream to support artists of colour who may have struggled to access funding from other SK Arts programs
- Artists in Communities – support for artist projects and residencies held in conjunction with community organizations and businesses
- Artists in Schools – support for artist projects and residencies held in traditional school settings
- Micro-Grant Program – small grants with quick turnaround designed to support emergent opportunities and artists and arts organizations that have not received prior SK Arts funding
- Prince Edward Arts Scholarships – scholarships for Saskatchewan students pursuing post-secondary studies in a specific arts discipline

## ABOUT ARTS SASKATCHEWAN

*ARTS Saskatchewan* is a collection of stories showcasing prairie artists' creativity, diversity and innovation. This publication is a vehicle packaging the history, present and future of Saskatchewan's artistic landscape for the province and Canada.

## CREDITS

Copyright © 2024 SK Arts, author Shandean Reid, artists and photographers.

All rights reserved.

Produced in Canada.

**Design:** Bradbury Brand + Design Experts

**Printer:** Impact Printers



Phone: 1-800-667-7526

Email: [info@sk-arts.ca](mailto:info@sk-arts.ca)

Regina Office: 1355 Broad Street · Regina, SK · S4R 7V1

Saskatoon Office: 201 Avenue B South · Saskatoon, SK · S7M 1M3



skartsboard



saskarts