

# ALEXANDRA WRITER'S CENTRE SOCIETY

## 2018/2019 ANNUAL REPORT



# AWCS ANNUAL REPORT

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## Message from the President

In the 2018 strategic planning meeting held by the Board at that time, we identified several key areas for attention by the AWCS in the 2018-2019 operational year. Our key objectives focused on the idea of sustainability for the AWCS, to ensure both the financial resilience of the organization and the long-term health and commitment of the AWCS to its core mandate of assisting Calgary writers with the help they need to develop their writing.

Our first full year of dwelling in the cSPACE facility has been a remarkable success. Our membership enrollment as a percentage has increased in the high single digits and, following our 2017-2018 focus on the growth of youth programming, we have seen double digit growth in youth membership. The enrollment level in workshops courses is at an all-time high, and program cancellations due to low enrollment are at what may well be an all-time low. We can say with confidence that AWCS programming is thus hitting the mark with writers at an unprecedented rate. Unsurprisingly, growth presents its own challenges and, though we are bringing in more revenue from programming than ever before, we also have corresponding expenses to our budget and the workload of our staff.

Thus, we have invested in the sustainability of the AWCS in several key ways: one of those was to put a portion of our monthly budget into a reserve fund. Doing so will ensure that any potential shortfalls in revenue can be absorbed, with the goal of saving enough in the coming two budget cycles to cover costs for a minimum three-month period, expanding to six months in the coming five budget cycles. Part of the reason we need to do this comes down to a major overhaul in how we manage our core staff resources.

Previously, staff worked for the AWCS on contract, without benefits, EI, or pension. This model lowered costs for the organization, and also gave greater flexibility to our staff. However, the increased workload for core staff the past year has meant that we've grown to a size that demands more person-hours on a more systematic schedule on-site, particularly in terms of programming and administration. Thus, we have moved from a contractor model to an employee model and recruited an administrative position to work alongside Robin, Ali and Kim. Doing so ensures that we remain compliant with the Canada Revenue Agency's (CRA) requirements of staff remuneration and taxation regarding employees, rewards our core staff with the continuity and stability they need, and pay a fair market rate for the excellent work they do. In terms of our sustainability, having a structured employee payroll model and dedicated staff means consistent administration and a greater partnership with the people who serve our members so well.

The AWCS has also expanded its outreach and partnership with other organizations. We have taken advantage of programming from the Rosza Foundation in which Ali Bryan completed a program designed to help her develop a new marketing strategy that has already generated significant results in our enrollment rates and revenue generated from programming. Our youth programs have expanded their tutoring services, and we partnered with the Alberta Writers Guild and Loft 112 to run the Borderlines program in Calgary; a program that we're excited to be reinventing for the coming year, bringing further exposure and access to program grants to the AWCS.

Going forward, we will build upon the base that we have created to focus on improving our services and to grow what we can offer to members – and to all of Calgary's writing communities as we increasingly become THE place for Calgary writers and writing. No other organization in the country does what the AWCS does to foster writing in its community, and Calgary is the envy of other cities for this reason. We are part of something truly special here, and have taken significant steps towards ensuring that, nearly 40 years after its inception, the AWCS becomes the beating heart of Calgary writing for decades to come.

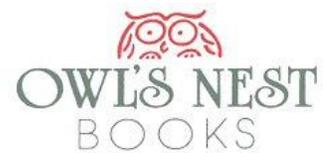
Colin Martin  
President of the Board  
Alexandra Writers' Centre Society

# AWCS ANNUAL REPORT

## 2018/2019 Board of Directors

President	Colin Martin
Vice President	Natalie Vacha
Treasurer	Vicki Lockwood
Secretary	Lexie Angelo
Director-at-Large	Darren Flach
Director-at-Large	Connie Donoghue
Director-at-Large	Laurie Fuhr
Director-at-Large	Dwayne Clayden

## Sponsors



Amber Webb-Bowerman Foundation

## Programming Update

### PROGRAMMING

Programming was streamlined for the back half of the fiscal year in an effort to fill classes. By decreasing the number of Saturday workshops, we filled single day workshops, resulting in higher margins and fewer class cancellations.

Micro-workshops (2-3 hours) and shorter weekly classes were added to the current programming mix. We saw an increase in revenue and registrations as a result. Our members seem to enjoy the shorter commitment and specific/micro topics these classes deliver. It also allowed administration to be more reactive and adaptive to the needs of the Centre and the members. Shorter classes and micro-workshops are a convenient way to fill in programming gaps or substitute for longer classes that don't fill and must be cancelled. They can generate/replace revenue from cancelled multi-week programming ensuring our course offering and fiscal obligations aren't compromised.

Multi-buy discounts have been successful from a pricing standpoint for Series-related programming and core programming such as the Poetry Café.

The Short Story Salon replaced the Sunday Writers' Circles and has resulted in an increase in revenue (the Writers Circles were consistently running a deficit). The program's focus on short fiction is also a better service to our members as it is an important entry point into fiction and many of our multi-week programming focuses on long form or novel-length fiction.

Lit Lunches were introduced as a "value-added" service to members (they are free to attend), but also as a low-cost way for non-members to "try AWCS out" (the lunches were \$5 for non-members). They also served as an opportunity for AWCS and instructors to test potential programming in an interactive, low-commitment setting.

### MARKETING & SOCIAL MEDIA

Marketing and social media continues to be refined with more consistent branding and branding standards. We continue to see an influx in non-member registrations as a direct result of our social media activity, resulting in higher revenue. It is also confirmation that we are reaching new markets.

Social engagement has seen an increase (likes, shares, comments) and this will remain a priority moving forward to foster community and connection.

We invested in Calgary's Child print advertising and seem to be experiencing an increase in youth program registrations and revenue despite concrete evidence (no one used the coupon code attached to the ad, though it was mentioned).

Staff continue to track where/how our customers have "heard about us" through registration.

Ali Bryan  
Programming and Marketing Coordinator

## Volunteers

We had two wonderful film student interns from SAIT, Josh Dayomi and Abhinav Goyal. They worked together to create a wonderful promotional video for the AWCS.

AWCS Board of Directors: Colin Martin, Natalie Vacha, Lexie Angelo, Vicki Lockwood, Darren Flach, Laurie Fuhr, Connie Donoghue and Dwayne Clayden.

### SPECIAL THANKS

Connie Donoghue	Em Williamson	Laurie Fuhr
Shaun Dubyts	Natalie Vacha	Frank Pratt
Sarah Johnson	Vicki Lockwood	Colin Martin
Rob Bose	Debra Chesley	Justine Cooke
Kim Firmston	Madelaine Wong	Olyn Ozbick
Elena Schacherl	James Wong	Youth Council
Jennifer Keane McKinnon	Ali Bryan	Andrea Dosne
Darlene Gatus	Peter O'Brien	Sue McLarty
Vivian Hansen	Coreen Kat	Sarah E. Johnson
Dwayne Clayden	Sandy Smart	Philip Vernon
Margaret Brick	John Williamson	Anne Metikosh
Laura Nicol	Pam Medland	Karen Lee
Sandy Navrady	Paul Swift	Nicola Dahlin
Hermine Robinson	Bryan Houlihan	Tracy Fox

Thank you to all of our volunteers (and anyone we may have missed). Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

# AWCS ANNUAL REPORT

## Membership

### 2019 MEMBERSHIP RATES

<b>Adult Membership</b>	\$70.00 per year
<b>Senior Membership (60+)</b>	\$60.00 per year
<b>Student Membership (Post-Secondary)</b>	\$50.00 per year
<b>Youth Membership (Under 18)</b>	\$50.00 per year

### CURRENT MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS (AS OF JUNE 30, 2019)

<b>Regular</b>	358
<b>Senior</b>	71
<b>Student</b>	16
<b>Youth</b>	97
<b>Honourary</b>	5
<b>Total</b>	547

## Executive Director Report and Highlights

The 2018/19 fiscal year saw the AWCS making some great strides in many areas, developed some new programs and grew our partnerships within the community while continuing to offer the same great programming that our members have come to know and love.

### AUTHOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The author development program was designed and modeled from a traditional mentorship program but added the flair that AWCS is known for. Not only did Story Makers get to choose their own Story Coaches, they were given the opportunities to connect with one another and take additional classes as needed to help support their journey and growth to becoming a published author.

In the inaugural year, we had seven Story Makers working with five Story Coaches.

### WRITER IN RESIDENCE PROGRAM

The 2018/19 Writer in Residence was Bradley Somer and turned out to be one of our best Writer in Residence Programs to date. All consultations were filled, workshops were at capacity and the events the additional events provided were well attended.

### WRITER'S RETREAT

We held our annual writers retreat for the third year in a row at the URSA Retreat Centre outside Cochrane. This was a wonderful weekend to really get some words down and socialize with other writers.

### SPRING FEATURE WORKSHOP

In April 2019 we welcomed Stephen Leacock Medal for Humour Winner, Terry Fallis, as our feature workshop presenter. The workshop saw almost 30 participants in attendance and was a fun and informative day writing humour.

### WRITERS UNPLUGGED - OPEN MICS

Our open mics continue to be well attended. We have grown the attendance at this event from a modest 10-12 to an astounding 25+ on some nights over the last seven years. Thanks to Sarah Johnson for her continued dedication to the AWCS and for hosting this event on a monthly basis.

### CASINO

Our last casino was held in January 2019, with funds of over \$67,000 received in May 2019. Our next casino is scheduled for the third quarter of 2020, with funds to be received by mid-November.

### COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

We continue to grow and develop our relationships within the literary community, seeing additional support from Owl's Nest Books, the Writers Guild of Alberta, the Loft 112 and Wordfest.

With the support of the Writer's Guild of Alberta and The Calgary Foundation, we brought the Borderlines Writers Circle to Calgary. This program paired six immigrant writers with six mentors from within our community.

The Loft 112 and Wordfest also supported this program by offering event tickets, event space and workshops to the writers in the program.

# AWCS ANNUAL REPORT

We are making strides to develop a stronger relationship with the Writers Guild of Alberta to continue to foster the literary arts province-wide. One of the biggest developments for the coming year will be the AWCS partnering with the WGA on their annual conference in Calgary in 2020.

## GRANTS & FUNDRAISING

We were successful in obtaining our operating grants from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and Calgary Arts Development. In addition, we received funds from The Calgary Foundation for the Borderlines Writers Circle Calgary and the Amber Webb Bowerman Foundation for a new youth program, the Young Journalist Program.

We continue to seek out new granting opportunities and develop a fundraising strategy.

Overall, our programs have seen significant growth and I am extremely proud of our team. Ali Bryan has made a significant impact on our programming and marketing throughout the year. Kim Firmston has been instrumental in growing our youth programs to what they are, and we have seen huge growth in our Tutoring program. Shaun Dubyts provided us with some much-needed administrative support in the early part of the year. And of course, we couldn't have done any of it without the support of all of our instructors and members and volunteers.

Robin Van Eck  
Executive Director

## Youth Director Update

The AWCS Youth Program has grown exponentially this year.

In 2018, we increased our offerings, our reach, and as a result, our member has grown to over 80 youth members. This year, we extended the age range of three programs (Novelmancers, D&D, and Pen & Panel) to include 19-year-olds. By increasing our age range, we can help youth members retain the programs they love and provide a way to transition into adult programming.

Nine youth members graduated from our program this year (members ending grade 12) and we celebrated their achievements by providing commemorative dog tags engraved with AWCS Youth Program Graduate and our mission: Reality Is Optional – Take over the world!

As part of our graduation, one of the founding members of the youth program, Emily Firmston (then 9 years-old when she helped conceive the program) graduated this year. It was special to see her move from a youth leader to adult leader. She plans on starting a group next year for older high school students and past graduates (as well as the public) in the 16 to 25 range to help them transition from youth programming into adult programming. It's lovely that many of our graduates (like Em Williamson who leads our Rogue Poets and Alexis Kelly who helps whenever she is in town) continue to be part of our program and the AWCS.

Speaking of our graduates – we checked in with some of our past graduates and found them in the field of mental health care, historic re-enactments, journalism courses in Indonesia, and social issues projects. They tell me that they are still using the skills the program instilled in them from AWCS. At our year-end event, we collected impact statements from our youth members which reflected a range of experiences. Younger members told us how they have fun in our programs, whereas the older ones explained how they went from a place of isolation to a community of friends where they fit in and could share their creativity, thoughts and work. Mental health, self-esteem, and skill building seemed to be where our programs shine the most.

Youth members continued work on their book, *The Reality Is Optional Optional Guide to Reality and Writing* is nearing completion. There are a team of six working diligently on the story and collectively have invested over 50 hours, and individually more. They have just completed their second draft and are really enjoying the process. Not only does this project strengthen their writing skills but it is educating them on the process of self-publishing, team work, and collaboration. Members will be working on the “how to write” part of the book this coming year.

The Youth Council was reinstated in 2018/2019 after being on hiatus since we moved from the old AWCS location in Inglewood to cSpace. As a result, the youth council took the opportunity to run things from the back end, problem solve, and coordinated events including the AWCS Christmas party, the Japanese Spring Party, Super Smash Bros. Tournament and the Halloween Party among others.

In our education department, homeschool classes continue to attract students and our tutoring program grew from seven sessions in our 2017-18 year to 33 sessions in our 2018-19 year. We ran one all-ages workshop with a good deal of success, and our PD day Workshops has grown in awareness Calgary families. Previously our summer camp programs were at risk of cancellation due to last-minute registrations, however this year both teen and youth camps are near capacity a full month before the start. We have also increased our Summer Fun single day camps from two to four. Starting in September we are introducing the Young Journalist Program – an elite program for teens who wish to enter the field of journalism, which we have managed to get a grant for from the Amber Bowerman Foundation.

Our Youth Clubs continue to attract participants and grow, each in their own way. The Rogue Poets had a 7-person team attend the Can You Hear Me Now Provincial School Poetry Slam. While they didn't make the finals, they did have an awful lot of fun and spread the word about the AWCS and its programs. We have started a #AWCSyouthcrew Instagram account to help the youth create with each other and share their fun, and plan on adding to our RIO TV YouTube channel over the summer and in the coming year.

# AWCS ANNUAL REPORT

We continue to build on our partnerships in Calgary. This year we partnered with the Calgary Public Library, Beakerhead/Ramsay Robots, Inspire Homeschool Conference, The Writers' Guild of Alberta – WordsWorth writing residency and Can You Hear Me Now? Through these partnerships we continue to build the youth writing community, promote our programs, and create relationships which benefit both parties. These often give the youth a chance to volunteer, network, and gain new skills as well as engage with the larger writing community.

We are looking forward to a vibrant new year in 2019-20. We are entering our ninth year as the AWCS Youth Program, with our 10-year anniversary happening in September 2020. I think this is going to be a spectacular year and we're all looking forward to it. I want to thank all of our volunteers, youth council, members and instructors on making this an incredible program for the youth writers in Calgary.

Kim Firmston  
Youth Director

## YOUTH COUNCIL

Jamie Yawnie	Emily Firmston	Eli Smart
Kat Davenport	Peter Doerksen	

## GUEST INSTRUCTORS

Jamie Yawnie	Emily Firmston	Eli Smart
George Doerksen	Kryisia Denys	Dania Idriss
John Williamson		

## VOLUNTEERS

Sandy Smart	Adam Hildebrandt	Sophie Smart
Coreen Kat	Die	Emily Firmston
Tracy Lowe	Eli Smart	John Williamson
Em Williamson	Kat Davenport	Jamie Yawnie
George Doerksen	Rayann Kelly	Ronan Tierney
Peter Doerksen	Tom Moritz-Friesen	Julianne van Eck
Emily Cook		

## Financial Summary

### FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

This report contains a summary of AWCS's financial position and results for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2019. AWCS was in a net income position of \$64K, as expected, since 2018-19 was a casino year. The casino funds received in May totalled \$67,704. Since AWCS operates on a cash accounting basis, and since casinos happen approximately every 18 months, the society has budgeted to be in a net loss position in 2019-20 which is a year without a casino.

Grants were also over budget and youth programs grew substantially over the prior year. Excellent performance in courses and workshops showed a 30% increase over budget. Due to these increases, bank fees, office supplies and telephone costs were overall higher as well. Events generated more income, with their expenses increasing along with the revenue, however were within net budget for the year.

Overall, the Society is in a good position going into next year, funds in the bank are enough to carry the projected budget for 2019-20.

Vickie Lockwood  
Treasurer

## Financial Statements

The financial statement included are:

BALANCE SHEET

INCOME STATEMENT

PROFIT AND LOSS

**Alexandra Writers Centre Society**  
**Balance Sheet**  
As of June 30, 2019

		Total
<b>Assets</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash and Cash Equivalent	\$	70,351.10
Accounts Receivable (A/R)	\$	310.00
GST Receivable		6,024.54
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	\$	76,685.64
<b>Total Assets</b>	\$	76,685.64
<b>Liabilities and Equity</b>		
<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
Accounts Payable (A/P)	\$	0.00
Customer Credits	\$	3,920.00
Gift Certificates	\$	136.25
Deferred Revenue	\$	0.00
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	\$	4,056.25
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	\$	4,056.25
<b>Equity</b>		
Retained Earnings	\$	7,870.40
Profit for the year	\$	64,758.99
<b>Total Equity</b>	\$	72,629.39
<b>Total Liabilities and Equity</b>	\$	76,685.64

**Alexandra Writers Centre Society**  
**Profit and Loss**  
 July 2018 - June 2019

	<b>Total</b>
<b>INCOME</b>	
Casino Funds	70,055.01
Courses & Workshops	120,618.00
Donations	2,212.83
Grants	57,512.24
Manuscript Review	3,965.00
Academic Tutoring	270.00
Blue Pencil Session	725.00
Memberships	28,390.00
Event Revenue	7,885.00
Writers Retreat (net)	1,019.66
Room Rental	964.00
Youth Programs	26,751.80
Other Revenue	3,793.58
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 324,162.12</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Course & Workshop Expenses	91,951.81
Community Sponsorships	500.00
Youth Program Expenses	16,966.43
Event Expense	12,141.28
Casino Advisors	2,350.95
Member Services	9,329.82
Manuscript Editor Fees	3,051.00
Academic Tutoring Fees	200.00
Office/Operation Expenses	118,998.95
Promotional Expenses	3,931.10
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 259,421.34</b>
<b>Other Income</b>	<b>\$ 18.21</b>
<b>NET REVENUE OVER EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 64,758.99</b>

## Staff and Contact Information

General Inquiries	<a href="mailto:info@alexandrawriters.org">info@alexandrawriters.org</a>
Executive Director	Robin van Eck <a href="mailto:rvaneck@alexandrawriters.org">rvaneck@alexandrawriters.org</a>
Youth Program Director	Kim Firmston <a href="mailto:kfirmston@alexandrawriters.org">kfirmston@alexandrawriters.org</a>
Programming and Marketing	Ali Bryan <a href="mailto:abryan@alexandrawriters.org">abryan@alexandrawriters.org</a>
Office Administrator	Heidi Klaassen

## Company Information

Alexandra Writer's Centre Society  
cSpace King Edward Building  
460, 1721 29 Ave SW, Calgary, AB T2T 6T7  
Tel (403) 264-4730

