



2025 Executive Director Report by Janna Smith

I would like to begin by thanking you all for being in attendance today, and for the many ways you engage with us throughout the year. At last year's AGM, I announced that our Municipal funding had been cut from \$25,000 in 2022 to \$15,000 in 2023, and without notice, was cut entirely in 2024. You were as shocked as we were. And then you rallied to help us get through a very destabilizing moment by renewing your membership, attending our events, buying art, taking courses and workshops at the Lab, buying raffle tickets, making donations, volunteering your time, and helping us with our arts advocacy efforts by writing letters to government representatives and responding to surveys where you expressed how important the arts are to your lives. Thank you!

1. Fund Development Report

We wish to express our deepest gratitude to the McLean Smits Foundation who immediately filled the municipal funding gap in June 2024, which allowed us to cover operational expenses like rent and salaries through the summer months. We are also extremely grateful to have the Elderberry Fund (Sarah & David) by our side, who not only increased their multi-year gift in 2024, but also hosted a key moment for us to connect with new friends and potential County Arts champions. At the end of last summer, we also received a significant, unsolicited donation from a community member who learned about our programming from a local paper. Ralph Johnston has since become a major patron whose monthly gift allows us to continue delivering essential programming without raising the cost for users.

In an era of stagnant, or decreased public sector arts funding, donor support is the only way we can fulfill our mission of ensuring that the arts and artists are an essential part of life in Prince Edward County. Our staff and board work tirelessly to build and steward new donor relationships, cross-sector partnerships, and other funding opportunities so that we can offer community members subsidized

access to professional-level services, including to our **membership program**, which in 2024 unlocked \$295,780 of earned revenue for hundreds of artists, and to our **sliding-scale fee structure**, which removes financial barriers for hundreds of residents who connect with the arts through the County Arts Lab programming. In 2024, the total subsidized amount that we were able to offer to the community thanks to donor support was worth \$299,000.

Even with these subsidies in place, registration for our paid programming stream was down this winter and spring, while our free programming stream - Art for Wellness - was oversubscribed by 60%. We know the drop in paid registration is due to current economic uncertainties. This has left us with a \$5,000 shortfall in earned revenue compared to the same period last year. We hope that registrations will pick-up in the fall, and that folks will attend our events and buy artwork at Art in the County, but we have no way to predict what will happen over the next few months.

If you believe that the arts should be subsidized to maximize arts engagement for all community members and that artists deserve to be paid industry standard fees, and are able to help us establish a bit more predictability in our funding, please consider making a monthly or annual recurring commitment of any amount by clicking the **donate button** found on the top right corner of our homepage at countyarts.ca.

This support will help us to cover the gap between paying artists a living wage while offering free or subsidized access to our programs.

And thank you for maintaining your membership, which is an essential revenue stream that allows us to retain staff and to rent this incredible space on behalf of the community.

2. Membership Report

Our membership continued to grow in 2024, with 336 members in good standing as of December 31st. This was a 10% increase from 312 members in 2023. Included in last year's membership were 32 galleries and arts organizations, 75 supporters of the arts and non-professional artist members, and 232 artists who self-identified as professional using the Ontario Arts Council definition, which includes having a history of public presentation or publication, and seeking payment for one's work. In 2024, 60% of professional artists identified as mid-career or established, which was consistent with 2023.

3. Signature Programs Report

I'm pleased to report that 2024 was a successful year for all three of our signature events, with an increase in artist participation, visitor attendance, and art sales.

Thank you to **PEC Studio Tour** Co-chairs Dale Wainwright and Heather Kerr for increasing the Studio Tour's profile in recent years, helping to attract a record number of visitors in 2024 - just shy of 6,000 people - as well as a record number of applicants in 2025. The 32nd edition of the PEC Studio Tour will take place on September 19-21, 2025 and will feature 62 artists at 39 studios across the County. Incredible!!

In 2024, **Art in the County** showcased 125 artworks by 86 artists at the County Arts Lab, and for the first time, toured to the Muskoka region. Thanks to our Main Street location, we saw a 20% increase in attendance last year with art sales surpassing pre-Covid records. We hope to repeat that success this year when Art in the County returns June 27-July 13.

Thank you to the 2024 Organizing Committee volunteers Leslie Stewart, Jean Faulkner, Rachel Middleton, Natalie Piper, and Sarah Burtscher.

I would also like to recognize the support of the **John M and Bernice Parrott Foundation** for awarding us a grant in 2024 to purchase and install gallery lighting and to build new moveable display walls to help us elevate the display of artwork. Their support allowed us to work with local artist Leanne Rhem who designed and built the 5 structures that you see at the back of the space. Leanne will finish painting them this weekend so they can be unveiled at Art in the County. This particular project would not have been possible without the support of **Adam Busscher of Picton Home Hardware** who donated all of the building materials. Our sincere thanks to the Busscher family.

The gallery lighting and moveable walls will also be used by 3 artists who have rented the Lab to self-produce their own solo shows this summer - Viktoria Brave, Howard Goldberg and Eva Ennist, as well as the PEC Studio Tour will also present their annual Summer Preview Show. Following **The Maker's Hand**, which we are moving to Picton November 7-9, 2025, the Department of Illumination will make use of the Lab to present their annual 10 x 10 Fundraiser.

The next phase of the County Arts Lab transformation will be in support of the **performing arts**. We have submitted several grants to equip the space with a 12' x 8' stage, blackout curtains, sound baffles, and AV equipment. We are currently seeking funding, and have submitted several grant applications to equip the space. If any of you have ideas or connections to funding opportunities, please get in touch and stay tuned!

4. Impact Report

As our programming grows, and tracking and reporting become more complex and lengthy, we have synthesized the Member Services Report into a chart, which was shared with you by email.

To summarize, in 2024 we delivered 20 programs or activities engaged with 11,300 residents and visitors of all ages, placing \$316,655 into the hands of artists. Add to that staff salaries, and County Arts facilitated \$500,000 in earnings for arts and culture workers last year. According to the Culture, Arts, Sports, and Heritage Economic Index Model (CASHEIM) our direct and indirect economic impact (including GDP, labour and employment) was \$2 million.

Last year, at this point in my report, I turned the floor over to some of the artists who participated in these programs to hear first-hand about their experiences. This year, I am inviting staff and Board members to stand up and read various testimonials that artists, participants, and community partners shared with us in 2024.

[SPEAKERS]

1. **Andrea Dawes - Community Living** - funding thanks to 100 People Who Care and Sarah Crawford who championed our project
2. **Talitha Tolles - Indigenous Voices Fund grant recipient** - funding thanks to the Elderberry Fund (Sarah & David), Rotary Indigenous Peoples Partnerships Cluster, The Meeting House - Sandbanks chapter, and to several individual donors
3. **Catelyn Thornton - Art Together participant** - funding thanks to Huff Family Fund, Sage Design & Construction and Elizabeth Crombie Real Estate Team
4. **Andrea Piller - Youth Craft Academy** patron - funding thanks to Isabelle Fish, Rue Pigalle members, and the Lewitt Foundation
5. **Stacey Sproule- Sparkbox Studio** (grant recipients, Studio Tour participants, and Lab facilitators) - funding thanks to the Ontario Arts Council and the Government of Ontario

We could not be more proud to be in service of this incredible community!

5. Looking Ahead to 2025

And because of community support, we are able to continually develop and deliver new services and programs.

This month, we are excited to unveil **Art at the Heart of Picton**, a new program that uses the arts to attract and keep visitors in downtown Picton for the benefit of all businesses. We worked with Northern Branding Studio who designed a brand package, including a map of all 20 downtown Picton locations that offer an artistic experience or sell products made by local artists. This project is focused on supporting Picton, as it was funded through FedDev Ontario's **My Main Street** program, which is related to an organization's physical address. The Picton Placemaking Strategy that was also developed as part of the project, could be adopted by other towns or wards throughout the County. It can be found on our [Engage](#) page.

As many of you know, we have entered into a service agreement with the municipality to develop and implement the County's new **Public Art Program** - we hit a major milestone with the adoption of the County's first Public Art Policy by Council on Tuesday (June 10th) thanks to an incredible proposal prepared by Andrea Dawes and Stacey Sproule. Congratulations to you both. Up next is the development and delivery of the **Public Art Program** that will be informed by the Public Art Plan's vision and community members who make up the newly formed **Public Art Committee** - Kamee Abrahamian, Golshan Abdmoulaie, Shyanne Brant, Paul Epp, Jamie Janx, and Victoria Taylor. Their bios can be found on the [Public Art](#) page of our website.

I'm pleased to announce that our own public art grant, which is part of the Artist Fund, has just received a much-needed boost from an anonymous donor. This is the first donation that the Artist Fund has received since it was established in 2017. Since that time, we have awarded over \$40,000 in professional development grants to local artists. This incredible gift of \$39,000 will allow us to double the amount of funding we can award to local artists over the next three years! This funding is thanks to **The County Foundation's Donor Advised Fund Expression of Interest** program. A special thanks to Gillian Armstrong for guiding us through this process.

And, finally, I am pleased to announce that we will firmly step into **arts and tourism advocacy** this year, building on the collaborative relationship we have been developing with Visit The County. I am honoured to have been invited by the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario to be a panelist, alongside VTC's Executive Director Sarah Fox, at the 2025 **Ontario Tourism Summit** taking place in October. This will be an opportunity to share details about our vibrant

arts community with 600 delegates from across the province. I am also honoured to have been nominated to **Visit The County's Board of Directors** where I plan to effectively advocate for the arts. Pending approval at VTC's AGM taking place on June 16th, I look forward to the opportunity to champion the arts in a sector that is still quite new to me.

6. Final Thanks

I feel so fortunate to be continually learning in order to better serve our arts community, including from community partners, members, my industry peers and experts, but mostly from County Arts staff. I wish to acknowledge and thank my extraordinary team of collaborators for sharing their knowledge, talent, passion, and skills with me and the community we serve. Thank you Andrea Dawes, Stacey Sproule, and Heather McCorquodale. I wish to also thank two new team members for diving into their new roles with so much heart and enthusiasm - Programs Manager Sarah Burtscher and Youth Craft Academy Program Lead Kartrina Tompkins.

I am so grateful for the opportunity to collaborate alongside you each and every day.

A big thank you to our incredible Board- Julia, Catelyn, Paul, Erin, Talitha, Andrea, and Christine. Not only are you all exceptionally skilled, you are a joy to work with.

And a heartfelt thanks to our membership, especially those who have joined us today. Your presence means a lot.

Thank you.