

2018 ANNUAL REPORTS EDMONTON STROLL OF POETS PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Greetings Strollers;

Thank you for your support this year. Whether you were involved as a board or committee member, mic or door host, or an engaged Haven audience member, your investment was of immeasurable value to our community. I'm pleased to report that it was another successful season in what has become an enduring tradition of excellence for the Edmonton Stroll of Poets.

As I reflect on the completion of our twenty-sixth year of operation I am gratefully reminded that what made us still sustains us. We were born to serve poetry and poets in and around Edmonton and we continue to do so.

The Poets' Haven continues to grow in popularity providing new and experienced poets an opportunity to express themselves in a democratic and supportive atmosphere. I am also grateful for the efforts of Janis, Susana, Anne, and Marco for their contributions that keep our regular poetry gig running. I'm also thankful for their contributions on the board along with Alice, Naomi, and David. I'd like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude for Naomi McIlwraith's incredible long service to our board (12 years!) and to David for his contributions this past year. We wish them both the best.

I've always been impressed with how we've been able to hold true to our values and continue to seek ways to innovate and grow. Maintaining relevance and imagining progress, in an evermoreconnective world, is a challenge we embrace. As always, it is the strength of our membership that keeps us vital. You're the heart, you're the beat, and you're the thump that keeps us jumping!

Yours in verse, John Leppard

2019 ANNUAL REPORTS EDMONTON STROLL OF POETS PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Well, my friends, another successful Stroll of Poets year is over and as I reflect on the season a number of feelings present themselves. I am so grateful for the contributions of our many volunteers. We are powered by your energy, thank you,. I am also thankful to our supportive membership, whose financial donations allow us to continue to keep membership costs and Haven fees at an accessible level. We truly are the best ticket in town. I shared the sadness we all felt, as we bid farewell to three long-time members of our community, Vanna Tessier, Max Foster, and Melle Huizinga. Their unique voices in our choir will be missed. I felt tremendous pride in the Stroll many times this past season and I'd like to share a highlight.

While testing the sound system for a Sunday Haven at Audrey's Books, a stranger asked me

what was happening. "Poetry Reading?" he asked, "I write poetry!" That fellow stayed, and although extremely nervous, shared a lovely poem he'd just written, at the open mic. When finished, he was met with applause and smiles that carried him back to his chair. He had just received the overwhelming support typical of a Stroll welcome. It is my hope that he will accept the invitation to join our community, but if he doesn't he will always have that moment of validation; that moment when he was heard. I've never felt more proud of our family.

One more feeling, simply one of joy. We welcomed over twenty first-time readers at the Poet's Haven open mic this year. That's a lot of affirmation for new poets regardless of age or ability. What we do, we do well my friends, and I can't wait to see what the next year brings us!

Yours in verse, John Leppard

2020 ANNUAL REPORTS EDMONTON STROLL OF POETS PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Another wonderful poetry season is coming to a close and as we stand at the threshold of our 30th year of operation I marvel anew at the power of poetry and poets. Certainly, that power would not manifest without the strength and determination of our many volunteers who sustain its governance and manage our highly successful Poet's Haven Reading Series. It has been my absolute to work with an amazing group of people including the Stroll board and associates, our administrative assistant Ellen Kartz and anthology editor Deborah Lawson. Their unwavering support and commitment to the health and welfare of the Stroll and its membership are the heart and soul of our organization.

This year the board bids farewell to our friend Marco Melfi, who has served as vice-president for six years. In that capacity he has acted as my sounding board on many occasions. His honesty and support have been of such immense value to the Stroll. Marco has also served in the capacity of Haven coordinator all of those six years and under his guidance we modernized the sign-up process, altered the floor plan at the Upper Crust to accommodate more seating, and have seen our average nightly attendance go from 38 to 50. But that wasn't all that he did. He also served as website manager and communications coordinator, developing our presence on social media. When the board decided that the Stroll should further extend its arms to the community, Marco took the lead on our exciting Outreach and Development Committee. We are so grateful for Marco's dedication and commitment to the Stroll of Poets and wish him all the very best in his new leadership and poetic pursuits.

To all who volunteered their time this past season to support the Stroll and the Poet's Haven Thank You, so very much. Every contribution is of value and tremendously appreciated!

Yours in verse,
John Leppard

2021 ANNUAL REPORTS EDMONTON STROLL OF POETS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Greetings friends,

Recently, I witnessed the return of a pair of Canada geese to my neighbourhood. Their distinctive, joyful call and majestic presence filled my heart with hope. This winter has certainly been a dark one in so many ways. Last spring, circumstances required that we examine innovative ways to keep our community informed and engaged. Our leadership group and membership recognized the growth opportunities inherent in these challenges. Your commitment to sustaining the heartbeat of poetry has not wavered and I am proud of your courage and contributions.

Our Poet's Haven reading series found a new home online. Thanks to Janis Dow and the Haven team, we have been able to provide a space for poets from across North America to share their verse in a respectful and supportive virtual atmosphere. We dearly miss the friendly confines of the Upper Crust Café, but are well situated to continue with this format until safe to do so. A huge note of thanks to Lisa Mulrooney for her patient instruction in the finer points of Zoom Management.

The 2020 anthology made its way into our hands thanks to the tireless efforts of our stalwart editor Deborah Lawson and her team of volunteers. She offered time, energy, and lovely front yard to insure that we had a safe and friendly way to acquire our copies. We are so fortunate to have someone as passionate and dedicated managing this worthy publication.

We are in a sound position financially, due in large part to your generosity as members. You truly understand the value of what the Stroll seeks to do and your contributions help significantly in this regard. Many thanks to our fiscal wizard, Alice Major, for keeping us solvent and secure. The year ahead will be an interesting one. We will be celebrating our 30th anniversary with some special events. The pandemic continues to create uncertainty as to how and where we may be able to commune, yet one thing remains certain. We will continue to find ways to celebrate poetry and poets in the same spirit that started our community flame burning thirty years ago.

In closing, I would like to say that it has been an honour to serve as your president. I think I fell in love with the Stroll the first time I attended an event. It was definitely love at first mic. Having the opportunity to work with other dedicated leaders these past few years has been very rewarding. Thank you for placing your trust in me and thank you for being the amazing supportive community you will always be.

Yours in verse,
John Leppard

2024 ANNUAL REPORTS EDMONTON STROLL OF POETS
PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This past year the Stroll of Poets has continued to fulfill and expand upon traditional goals and activities valued by our society members. At the same time, I am pleased to say that our board has adapted to ongoing progress and changes as well, even starting with a new president and vice president. In so doing we have managed to increase our presence in the Edmonton community and therefore widen our audience as well as increase participation in the Stroll of Poets.

While we have continued this year with in person Haven Reading events at The Upper Crust Café and Audrey's Bookstore and, in fact, have already surpassed attendance levels of the last several years, we have also held one Haven at Home Reading event and have another scheduled at the end of the season! So, via the zoom platform, we have re-established connections with several poets whom we have been unable to see or hear since the restrictions of Covid limited us to utilizing the zoom gatherings in the first place. The occasion, near the end of 2023, was an opportunity welcomed by everyone to reconnect with each other. We continue to see ever increasing numbers of new visitors and first-time readers at our Haven events which is a testament to the efforts of our communications committee and the welcoming atmosphere developed by our members.

Thanks to our outreach endeavors, and in part to our communications team, over this past year the Stroll has successfully engaged with and collaborated with other organizations to stage poetry reading events throughout Edmonton. Poets from the Stroll have read to audiences in Spirit of Hope United Church, Age-Friendly Edmonton events and several senior residences, and Allendale Community. A return to the Edmonton Poetry Festival was also celebrated with a thoroughly enjoyable and successful Blinks event at the Aviary (thanks go to the hard-working Blinks committee).

Our communications team has evolved the Facebook page and grown its membership, created an Instagram account, and reached out through press articles and online event calendars with CKUA Radio and Taproot Edmonton. The accomplishments of our Land Acknowledgement Committee have been significant over the past year and its goals continue to increase in scope and the results within our Haven and board meetings are also welcomed.

The wonderfully documented journey of the Stroll of Poets was loaded into the history archives on our Stroll website and is now available for all members to view. The project was part of the 30th anniversary of the Stroll and officially launched with a fundraising event last June. Many thanks to Ellen Kartz for helping the Stroll with this project.

Moving from history to future directions grew from that archive launch to now include the survey being distributed via our Newsletter and during this AGM. Many thanks to Kayleigh and Alice for believing in this project and wholeheartedly driving it in an attempt to define our desires for future Stroll initiatives. Our board hopes that you will be as excited as we are about the possibilities for involvement and leadership. Another developing project our board is proud of is the evolvment

of the Land Acknowledgement chapbook collection into an endorsed published book complete with illustrations.

As for another change you are all most likely aware of now, our long time WGA assistant, Ellen Kartz, has decided to seek other opportunities. We thank her for her varied and significant contributions and wish her well. Our board is very pleased to be developing a working relationship with Christyn Carter, who was hired as her successor. Along with Christyn the board is creating a new domain for the Stroll complete with a Google Workspace account which makes all of the features of Google mail, Forms, Docs, Meet available for our use. This will create a common location, with easier access, to store all of our mail, and documents, etc. To keep up with these changes, many procedures and documents have been updated accordingly. I wish to thank Trudy Grienaur and Dan Knauss for their efforts in leading the 30 – 30 challenge and Gary Garrison and Don Perkins for their roles in bringing us the Prime 23 and Pure Gold poetry prompt activities and all Stroll members for their loyalty and participation. Thanks go also to Deborah Lawson for her continued fine work in producing our yearly anthology and to our financial team over this past season: Alice Major, Ivan Sundal, Trudy Grienauer, and Manny Blosser.

I also want to express a very sincere thank you to John Leppard and Janis Dow Durnin for the mentorship and ongoing guidance they have provided me and to the members of our board of directors, who have divested much time and energy in serving our poetic community and supporting me this past year.

Max Vandersteen
President