

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 Audreys Books, a stranger asked me what was happening. "Poetry reading?" he said, "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 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

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Another Stroll of Poet's season flying by! I was again honoured to serve the membership as Vice President and work with the Board and Associates. I appreciated the conversation and collaboration around the Board table. Thank you John, Alice, Lisa, Janis, Susana, Markus and Anne. This year we benefited from the participation of Board Associates as well—thank you Stefanie, Ilara, Matthew and Josh. Thank you to Ellen Kartz for all her work from the Writers' Guild of Alberta's office to support the Stroll.

A special thank you as always to John Leppard for his leadership, consideration and attention. The individual and collective member experience, especially at Haven events, is an ongoing focus for him. This in turn helps us as Board and Associate members to channel our energy to serve and foster an inviting, positive and supportive community.

Lastly, thank you to the all the members, poets and friends that come to read, listen and volunteer! Looking forward to 2019-2020!

Marco Melfi

SECRETARY'S REPORT

It has been a genuine privilege for me serve as Secretary for the Stroll this year. It was my first year on the Board of Directors and it has been an invaluable learning experience for me. I am particularly excited about the direction the board has been taking with Outreach and Development and I look forward to seeing the goals of the initiative coming to fruition.

Following each board meeting, I distributed the minutes and made any necessary corrections so that an accurate record of all proceedings could be retained for historical purposes. Members can access these records through the Writers' Guild of Alberta. Over the past few months, I worked on drafting and revising a clear Discrimination and Harassment Policy for the Stroll, to help maintain the level of respect and consideration that we have all come to expect from and within the organization. I am pleased to report that the document was ratified and became official policy as of February 19th, 2019. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the members of the Stroll (and to the Board) for having given me this opportunity to serve. It has been my honor and I look forward to continuing to provide assistance wherever I can.

Lisa Mulrooney

TREASURER'S REPORT

I am very pleased to report that the Stroll's revenues more than covered our expenses this past year – our year-end financial statement shows a surplus of just over \$200, compared with last year's deficit of more than \$1600.

Our total revenues for 2018-19 were just over \$15,500. The main areas of change are:

- Grant revenue was down slightly, because the AFA's operating grant pool is continually being spread thinner. We are very grateful for grant support from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Edmonton Arts Council, which keeps us going.
- Event revenue decreased by about \$1100. That's because the previous year's revenue was pumped up by ticket sales for our Season of Silver gala. However,

our revenue from Haven admissions actually increased. We wrote a cheque to the Upper Crust in January for \$4850, representing what we collect at the door for the previous year. This directly reflects the continually increasing attendance at the weekly series; by comparison, our returns to the Upper Crust in 2014 were only \$3500, and we have not increased the admission charge per person.

- Our cash donations increased significantly, by more than \$700. This is due to members' generosity in supporting the donation box at events, and also thanks to specific donations from individual members. For instance, we thank Gerald St. Maur for donating books on a 'give what you can' basis at his reading.
- Publication sales increased by approximately \$450, thanks to the Magpie chapbook project organized by Markus Eymann.

Our expenses are fairly consistent with previous years: our administration costs and anthology production costs went down modestly. There was a big reduction in our 'venue rental and expense' line item; once again, this was due to the costs for the anniversary gala paid in the previous year.

The net result is that our accumulated surplus—aka 'the cushion'—is now just under \$4200. This is pretty much the target we aim for as of January 31 each year; maintaining it enables us pay the bills through the lower-revenue period of spring/summer.

Clearly, we need to continue raising revenue at the same levels as we brought in during this past year in order to cover the costs. The increased donations have enabled us to maintain the annual membership fee and the Haven admission charge at \$25 and \$5 respectively – levels that make the Stroll as accessible as possible to everyone. We really appreciate the fact that members who *can* contribute have stepped up over the past year, and we will need to continue to do so. Our costs are not going to go down.

The financial statements do not reflect the large number of volunteer hours – approximately 1200 – that go into keeping the Stroll's programs going year round. Thanks to all of you who contribute to proofing bees, door hosting, organizing the Blinks and all the other activities that keep us running smoothly.

I would like to thank our auditors, Richard Davies and Manny Blosser, for their careful review of our financial records. I would also like to thank our bookkeeping poet, Ivan Sundal, for maintaining the records and producing our annual statement, Haven host Anne Gerard Marshall (and all our volunteer door hosts) for keeping track of the weekly admissions so scrupulously, and our administrative assistant Ellen Kartz for her careful, prompt attention to banking matters. And as always, it has been a great pleasure to work with my fellow Board members – the greatest volunteers around.

Alice Major
Treasurer.

POET'S HAVEN COORDINATORS' REPORT

Introduction

A huge thank you to all the readers and audience members who came out to the Stroll of Poets this past fall and then braved the frigid temperatures this winter! What a great season we had with 97 scheduled readers and 185 (+Audrey's) open mic readers in total. A big bouquet of gratitude to all the volunteers who helped out as door hosts, mic hosts, site managers, sound equipment, emailing and all other behind the scenes operations. Our success at the Stroll is dependent on everyone who takes part in this amazing community and together we make the Stroll happen!

Attendance

It's exciting to say that poetry is alive and well in Edmonton as we had some packed nights at the Stroll this season. Our average attendance on Monday nights this season was 49 people. Final numbers aren't in but already we're ahead of last years 959 people at this time with 1030 already (not including Mar. 11's attendance numbers).

	2018-2019		2017-2018	
	Upper Crust	Audreys	Upper Crust	Audreys
Readings	22	4	22	4
Attendance	1030**	45	1041	63
Scheduled Readers	84	13	81 (of 84)	11 (of 12)
Open Mic Readers	*180		186	29
Mic Hosts	21	4	22	4
Door Hosts	20 (of 21)	n/a	22	n/a

*Does not include 2018-2019 launch **not include Mar. 11 yet

Memberships

Our organization currently sits at about 186 members in total with 16 new members who joined this year.

Open Mic

Adding two spots to our open mic readers last year allows more opportunities for everyone to read, which is our goal! All eight spots usually get filled up on Monday nights. For those we asked to step out during overflow open mic slots thank you for

making room for the new readers. We'll continue to encourage first time readers and work to accommodate our general population as well.

Behind the Scenes

This year our Haven committee team worked to share the tasks that keep the Stroll running behind the scenes. Our team consists of John Leppard, Marco Melfi, Susana Chalut and myself. Susana is the lovely soul who sends out your reminder e-mails, John Leppard does site management (which is everything from liaising with the mic host to sound and chair/room set up, plus troubleshooting). Marco also teams up with John, and more recently, myself to site manage.

We're thankful for the additional support we get from Anne Gerard Marshall who does an excellent job of keeping track of head counts and money at the door. Alice is a key figure we see here frequently helping out and you may have noticed Marco Melfi, Josh Luukkonen and Jean-Jaques Chateauneuf direct traffic flow and chairs on Stroll nights. Marco and Josh also work to promote us on our website and social media.

The fabulous Ellen Kartz is a whiz at membership renewal (and all the other things she does to support us) We appreciate the constant support of the WGA and board members as well as the staff at the Upper Crust and Audreys Books. The continued use of these venues has been vital to our community. This year we said goodbye to Alejandro, our long standing Upper Crust waiter. Alejandro has served us with his hard work and grace for eight years and we both appreciate him and wish him well!

Audrey's Books

There were four Sundays at Audreys Books two of them had themes- an open mic Dead poets haven in October and Winterverse in January. John Leppard and Marco Melfi acted as hosts and site managers and other people hosted during regular readings.

Sunday attendance is a little bit down from last year but we continue to keep it going so people have an alternative place for the Stroll to attend and it's an intimate alternative for Stroll members to read who may not be able to attend Monday Havens. We're thankful to the owner of Audrey's books and the fine staff who work there!

As the season draws to a close we want to say how much we enjoyed being part of the reading series in 2018/2019 and we look forward to seeing you next fall!

Janis Dow (for John, Marco and Susana)

POET'S HAVEN HOST REPORT

We've done it again, had another great year of poetry. All the ten-minute poets, two-minute poets, new members and old and supporters have made is so, not to mention the Board members.

I very much appreciate all the assistant door hosts who have been at my side throughout. You have made it most enjoyable. I couldn't have done it without you. You play an important role – never forget that. Please keep doing it. I, too, will keep doing it – into year eleven.

Anne Gerard Marshall

ANTHOLOGY EDITOR'S REPORT

First and foremost, my thanks to the Stroll's Board of Directors, in particular Markus Eymann, who acted as my board liaison this year. Thanks also to Marco Melfi for his support as webmaster.

I am grateful to Ellen Kartz, the Communications and Partnerships Coordinator of the Writers' Guild of Alberta and the Stroll's Executive Assistant. Her expertise and generous assistance not only made my job easier, but were essential to the success of the anthology. This year, with coordination from Ellen via the Writers' Guild, we switched over to using a WGA-connected email address, which vastly improved the management of anthology correspondence.

Our Proofreading Bee was held on Wednesday, February 13, 2019 at the Percy Page Building. In the middle of our February freeze, 14 volunteers ignored the cold spell to assist with this essential task. Warmest thanks to Audrey Brooks, Mary Campbell, Kayleigh Cline, Janis Dow, Elaine Elrod, Gary Garrison, Jo-Ann Godfrey, Gary Gully, Corinne Jackson, Randy Kohan, Naomi McIlwraith, Neil Meili, Lisa Mulrooney and Diane Robitelle. As well, thanks to Anne Gerard Marshall, who assisted with the meticulous process of reviewing the hard-copy proof before it went to press.

As per tradition, the Proofreading Bee volunteers chose the anthology cover in a "blind voting" process. Nine hopeful entrants sent in 24 submissions between them. The winner was Stroll member Trudy Grienauer, whose photograph "Journey" was taken at the labyrinth near Rivendell Retreat Centre on Bowen Island, BC.

College Copy went a step further this year in offering us several choices for the colour of the back cover, and then exercised its usual professionalism to produce a striking volume. I'm delighted to maintain our relationship with Aly Janmohamed, Sarah Woodcroft, and the College Copy staff.

Finally, to the poets—thank you for working so closely and willingly with me. I deeply appreciate your openness to my editorial queries and suggestions. Once again, you’ve made my job a joy. I hope you feel an equal joy and great satisfaction at having your work published in the anthology.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Lawson
Managing Editor, *Stroll of Poets Anthology 2019*

SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT

Social Media, including Twitter, Facebook and the Stroll’s website, remains an important tool to promote the Stroll, engage with poets and share events for and from the writing community.

Twitter has been a successful means to communicate with the larger Edmonton, Alberta, and Canadian poetry and literary communities online. It provides us a space to not only promote events, but also highlight others in our community who are involved in poetry-related events. Often this can be done quickly and with the use of re-tweets, we often share and get shares of posts from people such as the Parkland Poets, Writers’ Guild of Alberta, Edmonton Poetry Fest, and many “pillars” of the poetry community. We look forward to further engagement with the larger community as we utilize this important resource.

Facebook continues to serve our members as a group page to update them about Stroll events or share information. We appreciate all the interaction that currently happens (special shout out to Trudy!) and look forward to leveraging Facebook as a hub to support members and draw in new ones.

A large focus this season has been on the switch to a new online sign up for Haven events. The adoption of SignUp.com has been an overall success. We are very grateful for the patience of members and all the feedback received as we worked to ensure a smooth transition.

We wish to thank Doug Elves, who stepped down last spring as Webmaster, for his many many years of contribution and to Ellen Kartz for her ongoing assistance with web related matters!

Marco Melfi & Josh Luukkonen