



Stroll of Poets Society
Annual General Meeting
Sunday March 16, 2025
Stanley Milner Library

In Attendance: Clint McElwaine, Kayleigh Cline, Max Vandersteen, Alice Major, Andrew Thompson, Trevor Hughes, Saraswoti Lamichhane, Jean-Jacques Chateaufeuf, Markus Eymann, Anne Gerard Marshall, Gina Varty, Don Perkins, Trudy Grienauer, David Crone, Kathie Sutherland, Christyn Carter, Deborah Lawson, Lois Hammond, Gary Garrison, Janis Dow-Durin.

Call to Order: 2:10

Gary Garrison read a land acknowledgment from the preface to Poets Re-Imagine Canada: A Primer for a Land Beyond Acknowledgments.

Motion to Approve Agenda: M/S/C Gina Varty/Andrew Thompson

Motion to Approve Minutes: with changes M/S/C Clint McElwaine/Andrew Thompson

Business Arising:

- 1) Changes to Bylaws: There was an intention to alter the protocol for keeping records of members of the Stroll to include phone numbers. However it was learned that phone numbers are not required under the Society Act, so this project was abandoned. The bylaws mention a seal of the Stroll of Poets. Despite extensive research, neither such a seal nor any memory of such a seal could be found. Consequently, mention of a seal was removed from the bylaws.

Director's Reports:

A consensus was reached that the full reports need not be read, instead a summary of the reports should be presented orally, by each director.

The following reports were presented:

President – Max Vandersteen
Vice President – Kayleigh Cline
Secretary – Markus Eymann
Haven – Max Vandersteen
Haven Host – Anne Gerard Marshall
Anthology – Deborah Lawson
Communications – Kayleigh Cline
Reaching Out – Kayleigh Cline

Motion to Accept Reports: M/S/C Don Perkins/Clint McElwaine

Comments by Jean-Jacques regarding Fresh Verse: The problems with the mic made the Stroll look bad, he heard several unhappy comments regarding this. Fresh Verse is not a good name. The event needs a younger MC. The open mic should be 5 minutes, not 3 to allow for longer poems.

Nomination of Board Members:

Saraswoti Lamichhane and Trevor Hughes acted as returning officers. Twenty one voting members were present.

Nominee	Nominated by	Seconded
Kayleigh Cline	Max Vandersteen	Alice Major (nominated for president, acclaimed)
Markus Eymann	Trudy Grienauer	Janice Dow-Durin
Anne Gerard Marshall	Janise Dow-Durin	Clint McElwaine
Alice Major	Trudy Grienauer	Deborah Lawson
David Fraser	Max Vandersteen	Jean-Jacque
Naomi McIlwraith	Alice Major	Max Vandersteen
Audrey Brooks	Kayleigh Cline	Gena Vartey
Dorothy	Alice Major	Kayleigh Cline

Because there were 8 nominees and 8 positions on the board, all were declared winners by acclamation.

Financial Report (Alice Major):

- 1) This season has seen an increase of about \$ 1000 in both revenues and expenses.
- 2) Poets Re-Imagine Canada: A Primer for a Land beyond Acknowledgements. This project looks like it will break even, perhaps even have a profit.
- 3) Expenses exceed revenue, this is not catastrophic, but should be kept in mind as we continue. The cushion in the bank account should be used to cover expenses incurred during the off season.
- 4) The Stroll will change from using cheques to electronic banking during the following year.
- 5) Questions from members:
Will it still be possible to make a payment to the Stroll with a cheque? Yes, the Stroll will stop making payments with cheques, but it will still accept them.
Will the Stroll increase the price of attending the Haven? No, but this makes soliciting donations all the more important.
How about T-shirts as a fund raiser? This will be considered.
Can we ask for a donation from the Poetry Festival? No, they do not have the funds for this.
- 6) **Motion to accept the financial report:** M/S/C Alice Major/Kayleigh Cline

Financial Auditors for 2026: Gary Garrison and Emanuel (Manny) Blosser were nominated as the auditors for 2026.

Other Business

Poets Reimagine Re-Imagine Canada (Gary Garrison):

- 1) As of March 14, \$ 2272 in income has been generated by this book, 172 books have been sold and 56 free copies have been distributed.
- 2) A second print run of about 50 copies was recommended.
- 3) The University of Alberta may sell some. An interview with CBC radio is being planned, and CKUA radio's Arts and Culture program has been contacted.

Member Announcements

Trudy announced that the 30/30 poetry month starts on March 31. Both participants and volunteers are needed.

Kayleigh announced that the KinSpeak project will assemble the chapbooks at a sewing bee tomorrow, after this the chapbooks will be available for purchase. The poems will also be performed at the Bonnie Doon Mall on April 4.

Max reminded everyone of the Blinks which will be held at the Aviary on April 14. People are encouraged to register at the Stroll website. Admission will no longer be free, the cost will be \$5 to cover the higher cost of venue rental.

Motion to hold the next AGM on March 15, 2026: M/S/C Andrew Thompson/Alice Major.

Motion to adjourn: Alice Major 3:30

2025 ANNUAL REPORTS
EDMONTON STROLL OF POETS SOCIETY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Once again over the past year the Stroll of Poets Society has continued to grow in membership, Haven attendance, outreach involvement, and scope of development. It has been wonderful to witness the crowds and many new faces at the Haven, the participation in and turnout to our Fresh Verse production this year, and the input of Stroll members in our committees and events over the season.

The members of the Board of Directors have participated in numerous endeavours over this past season and accomplished a great deal. The achievements include administrative upgrades improving our online mail services, social media platforms, and restructuring of our board committees. The advice and direction of our WGA Administrative Assistant, Christyn Carter, was instrumental in completing these enhancements.

It has been a very rewarding experience to be a part of the Stroll of Poets Society Board of Directors this year. The members of this year's board have continually responded to all of these changes by evolving the roles and methods of creating and promoting opportunities to participate in activities within the Stroll and also in community events. Growing from the input of ideas from the "Looking Ahead" workshops of the previous year, there has been a significant effort to promote and accept more involvement of Stroll members in committee involvement, planning, promotion, and participation in events, as well as input into direction of the board and the future of the society. Not as obvious has been the updating of documents and procedures outlining the change in roles, methods of operation, and calendar of events. Many thanks to Kayleigh Cline and Alice Major in assisting me in this ongoing process. It is my hope that these efforts and changes have improved the experience of being a member of the Stroll for everyone.

A reflection of this cooperative work between board members and members at large has been the successful production of Poets Re-Imagine Canada, A Primer for a Land beyond Acknowledgements. With support of the Board of Directors, board members Naomi McIlwraith and Leslie Dawson, along with Stroll members Gary Garrison and Janis Dow Durnin, collaborated and put in many hours to produce this instructive and evocative anthology which is now available to the public for perusal and education. Sincere thanks to the hard work of everybody involved in this project which is a milestone for the Stroll.

The participation of the Stroll board ,along with other members, in the collaborative Stroll of Poets retro event staged by the WGA in Calgary last fall was also a great accomplishment that was terrific for the board to witness and also for all to take part in. Another example of this outward reach is the planning taking place to produce a community event, besides the traditional Blinks, complete with an associated chapbook to take place during the 2025 Edmonton Poetry Festival.

I would also like to express thanks to Stroll members Trudy Griener, Gary Garrison, and Don Perkins for their diligence in continuing to organize and deliver poetic prompts for our members participating in the 30-30, Pure Gold, and Lab 25 writing workshops. Further appreciation goes to Deborah Lawson for continuing to compile, edit, and produce our yearly Anthology. To all other new and returning members of the Stroll of Poets, thank you for your continued loyalty and hopefully your engagement with the organization has been fruitful and rewarding.

Respectfully submitted by Max Vandersteen

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This has been an eventful year. Last year, I shared how our “looking ahead” project had established fertile ground for our potential growth – and, indeed, this year was a time of growth. Several new initiatives and events took place for the Stroll, including the publication of *Poets Re-Imagine Canada*. More details about these events and initiatives are shared in the other reports.

I enjoyed being both a part of the Reaching Out and Communications Committees this year. I am so appreciative of the efforts of both committees, as well as my fellow board members, for showing so much enthusiasm and support for the activities of the Stroll. I would especially like to thank our President, Max Vandersteen, for his humble, supportive leadership: his behind-the-scenes work keeps the Stroll strolling.

This was also a year of changes for a few administrative-type aspects of the Stroll. With the help of Christyn Carter, our incredible Admin Assistant, we have set up Google Workspace to give us access to helpful digital tools, including the ability to have @strollofpoets.com email addresses and storage space. Alice Major, our Treasurer, also initiated a switch to online banking. These kinds of updates to our processes may not be glamorous but they are hugely influential on improving the day-to-day operations of the Stroll.

More recently, we have clarified the roles and responsibilities of the Board members and other volunteers by formally approving three committees: Haven, Communications, and Reaching Out. The hope is that this change will make volunteer positions more accessible for non-Board members; i.e., you can join a committee without committing to a full Board position (and please do so!). I know how poets feel about clichés ... but, honestly, many hands do make light work. We are so fortunate to have a membership that steps up for mic hosting and door hosting for each and every Poets’ Haven – please consider if there are any other small “between Haven” jobs you might be interested in as well.

Finally, thank you all for being part of this incredible community. I am grateful each and every time I step through the doors of the Upper Crust for the poetry each of you bring into a world that is greatly in need of it. Keep writing, keep reading, and keep strolling.

Respectfully submitted by Kayleigh Cline

TREASURER’S REPORT

In the financial year 2024-25, the Stroll saw increases to both our revenue and expenses of about \$1500. Our revenue from donations, membership and event revenue all increased slightly, as did our grant from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

The increase in our expenses was largely due to the cost of producing our land acknowledgement anthology, for which we were budgeting as we entered the year. Thanks to the energy of the committee members working on this important project, we earned almost \$1000 in sales of the book, which went a long way to offset the \$2000 cost of production.

In turn, this meant that we did not incur a deficit for the year that was quite as large as expected. At the beginning of the year, we had an accumulated surplus of \$6400—higher than usual, since we were holding on to some cash to cover the land acknowledgement project. (Historically we have had a ‘cushion’ at year end of approximately \$3500 that covers the upcoming months while expenses continue but revenue doesn’t.) We had expected the accumulated surplus for this year to shrink to about \$4000; in fact, we finish the year with almost \$5300.

Nevertheless, we spent nearly \$1100 more in 2024-25 than we took in. This would not be sustainable year-after-year for the longer term. Our revenue for admissions to the Poets Haven falls short of the

amount we have to pay the Upper Crust, although donations through our “translucent box” at each event have made a big difference. However, as has been mentioned in previous annual reports, we may have to look at increasing the Haven admission charge of \$5 unless we can successfully increase our revenue in other ways. This will remain a priority for the coming year. However, we are not yet at any kind of crisis point.

We remain reluctant to increase the admission charge (which has been in place for the past 15 years), since we want our program to remain as accessible as possible to all incomes. It is gratifying—and important—that attendance at the Haven continues to grow and bring in new participants to the Stroll.

We remain very grateful for grant support from the AFA and the Edmonton Arts Council, which makes it possible to contract with the Writers Guild of Alberta for administrative support. Without the continuity provided by this arrangement, it would be much harder for our busy volunteers to keep the Stroll operating smoothly.

Finally, I would like to reiterate thank-yous that I include in this report each year – but which are perennially heartfelt. Our coordinator, Christyn Carter, is invaluable in terms of making sure deposits are made and the PayPal account managed.

The financial statements do not reflect the large number of volunteer hours that go into keeping the Stroll’s programs going year-round. I would like to thank our auditors, Shirley Serviss and Manny Blosser, for their review of our financial records. I would also like to thank our bookkeeping poet, Ivan Sundal, for producing our annual statement. And as always, it has been a great pleasure to work with my fellow Board members – the greatest volunteers around.

Alice Major Treasurer

SECRETARY’S REPORT

It has been a pleasure working as secretary of the Stoll Board. My main job is to take minutes at the meetings, distribute them to the other board members, incorporate their comments into revised minutes, and then distribute a final copy to be voted on at the next meeting. The finalized minutes are then submitted to the Writer’s Guild of Alberta where they are archived for future reference.

I have enjoyed working with the other members of the board and the board associates. They all take their responsibilities very seriously. They work hard to ensure the Haven, the anthology, the Blinks and all the other Stoll activities run without a hitch or a hiccup. They make it possible for the Stroll membership and the public at large to go about the important activity of sharing their poems.

Markus Eymann

REACHING OUT COMMITTEE REPORT

The purpose of the Reaching Out Committee (formerly: Outreach and Development Portfolio) is to support initiatives which expand members’ skills, knowledge, and sense of connection to the wider poetry community. The focus of the Reaching Out Committee emerged from the “Looking Ahead” project in 2023, where members identified an expansion of the Stroll’s activities as a primary focus for the organization.

This year, the Reaching Out Committee provided support to the following events:

- June 15, 2024: Pack of Wild Poets at Hopkins Conservation Area (Mary Campbell)

- July 14, 2024: Music and the Spoken Word (Audrey Brooks)
- September 8, 2024: Calgary Stroll of Poets Festival (Ashley Frerichs, WGA)
- October 25, 2024: Poetry Night at Spirit of Hope United Church (Judy Meintzer)
- January 5, 2025: Horns A'Plenty Epiphany Concert (Kayleigh Cline)
- February 3, 2025: Harmony Week "Songs of the Spirit" (Audrey Brooks)
- Ongoing: Chapbook Club (Vivian Zenari)
- Upcoming: Grade 5&6 poetry unit at École Our Lady of the Prairies (March 2025, Amélie Topolinsky), KinSpeak Chapbook project/performance (April 2025), Blinks (April 2025), joint event with the Edmonton Historical Society (fall 2025)

The Reaching Out Committee is intended to be a "hub" of support for member-led initiatives. If you have a project or workshop idea you would like to lead, please reach out – we would love to hear from you! Or, alternatively, if you are interested in organizing a one-off event or workshop, we have a whole list of ideas we would love to see happen for the Stroll – we just need the "people power" to make them happen.

Respectfully submitted by Kayleigh Cline, Max Vandersteen, Alice Major, Audrey Brooks, Dorothy Lowrie, Markus Eymann, and Naomi McIlwraith

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

The purpose of the Communications Committee is to ensure the clear and timely communication of Stroll activities to members and the general public for the purpose of cultivating a supportive poetry community. The Communications Committee coordinates the typical day-to-day communication tasks of the organization, including posting Haven notices and poetry prompts to social media, sending out press releases for special events, and cross-promoting other poetry events in the Edmonton poetry community. This year, the Communications team expanded its membership this year, which allowed us to branch out in new directions.

We continued to utilize social media (Facebook, Instagram, and X/Twitter) to promote the Haven. Like last year, there were increases in the number of followers on both Facebook and Instagram, while the number of followers on X/Twitter slightly decreased. We also post the Haven information to community calendars, such as those available on Taproot and CKUA.

Other highlights for this year include:

- Purchasing a vinyl stand-up banner for use at Stroll events. A huge thank you to Leslie Irvine, a local graphic designer who created the design, and to Ellen Kartz, for putting us in touch with her.
- Supporting the Haven Committee to promote Fresh Verse across a wider number of contacts and locations, which resulted in a number of new readers in attendance for the event.
- Working with the Land Acknowledgement Anthology Committee to promote the publication of the book. The Gateway (at the U of A) published an interview with President Max Vandersteen, which can be read online.
- Initiating a "new attendee" survey to collect information about how/why new people choose to come to the Haven, which will help us with future communications initiatives.

Respectfully submitted by Kayleigh Cline, Max Vandersteen, Lois Hammond, Lasith Witharana, David Fraser, and Leslie Dawson

ANTHOLOGY EDITOR'S REPORT

Report of the Managing Editor
Stroll of Poets' Anthology 2024

For the 10th year, I had the great pleasure of working with a dedicated group of board members and volunteers to compile the Stroll of Poets anthology. Many thanks to the Stroll's Board of Directors, and to my board liaison, Markus Eymann, for their continuing support and encouragement.

It has been a year of smooth transition as I was able to work with and get to know Christyn Carter, the Communications and Partnerships Coordinator of the Writers' Guild of Alberta and the Stroll's new Executive Assistant.

The Proofreading Bee for the 2024 anthology was held on Thursday February 15, 2024 at the Percy Page Building. In one of the most highly anticipated events on my annual editorial calendar, I was joined by 13 eager volunteers: Audrey Brooks, Markus Eymann, Cala Jorgensen, Dorothy Lowrie, Alison McBain, Clint McElwaine, Naomi McIlwraith, Diane Robitelle, Shirley Serviss, TDL Turner, Max Vandersteen, Katharine Weinmann, and Vivian Zenari. As well, I extend my thanks to M.A.F. Johnson, Anne Gerard Marshall, and Naomi McIlwraith, for their assistance with reviewing the galley proofs.

A total of 80 poets had the delight of seeing their work in print in the Stroll of Poets Anthology 2024. As well, this year we received 22 cover-art submissions from 14 people. Congratulations to second-time winner Katharine Weinmann, who wrote, of her winning entry, "In November 2023, I photographed Marianne Nicolson's installation, *Preparing to Cross the Sacred River*, which is situated within Edmonton's first Indigenous art park—*Áᑭᑦᑎᑦ (ÎNÎW) River Lot 11∞*—in Queen Elizabeth Park. Evoking the timeless power of pictorial and oral storytelling across cultures, I called my photo 'poetic traditions,' in acknowledgement of the intention and beauty created by the artist, the Indigenous land on which we make and speak our poems, and the traditions from which poetry emerges."

In the 2023–2024 poetry season we were saddened by the loss of three long-time members, Ruth Anderson Donovan, Robin Hunter, and Thomas Schuelke. Their commitment to and participation in the Stroll will long be remembered.

We continue our longstanding affiliation with College Copy, printers of the anthology. This year we extend our good wishes to the ever-accommodating manager, Aly Janmohamed upon his retirement.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Lawson
Managing Editor, Stroll of Poets' Anthology 2024

POETS' HAVEN REPORT

Greetings poets and friends! We are pleased to report that the Stroll of Poets' Haven reading series has been going very well this season. Amazingly, it seems that our audience numbers continue to grow and, as always, we are so grateful to our members, family and friends who come out to support the readings. The diversity of poetic voices continues to provide inspiration to those in attendance and we are so grateful to all of our featured and open mic readers. We are especially pleased to see many new faces in the audiences this year.

Thank you to our amazing Haven committee: Naomi McIlwraith, Dorothy Lowrie, David Fraser, Audrey Brooks, and Max Vandersteen. The passion and commitment of these individuals is the heartbeat of the Poets' Haven. Many tasks and responsibilities are performed behind the scene, as well as at the Haven

events, by these volunteers, ensuring that the Haven functions as intended. Even through the many inevitable cancellations the committee continues to present a full slate of readers at our reading events. Along with our WGA administration assistant this past year, Christyn Carter, and our communications committee the events have been well promoted and very successfully attended.

Respect and appreciation goes out to all of the volunteers who have volunteered to act as mic hosts and door hosts throughout the season. Thank you, as well, to our sponsors and the wonderful staff and management of the Upper Crust Café. And, of course, many, many thanks to our wonderful Haven Host, Anne Gerard Marshall, whose welcoming smile and steadfast support is invaluable to the Stroll.

Finally, the Haven Committee would like to announce that our yearly Fresh Verse reading was a very successful event this year. Along with the board of directors, we believe that moving this reading to January, relocating it to Audreys Books, and great promotion from our Communications Committee and Audreys Books were major reasons for a full slate of featured readers and a packed house of appreciative listeners.

POETS' HAVEN	2024-2025 *Up to February 24	2023-2024
HAVENS (Season Total including Launch)	17 (Upper Crust) 3 (Audreys Books) 2 Haven From Home	16 (Upper Crust) 2 (Audreys Books) 2 Haven From Home
ATTENDANCE	*654 (43/night)	856 (42/night)
FEATURED READERS (Total Scheduled including Fresh Verse)	88	78
OPEN MIC (including launch)	*150 (21 new)	199 (33 new)

Submitted respectfully by Max Vandersteen, Dorothy Lowrie, Naomi McIlwraith, David Fraser, Audrey Brooks

HAVEN HOST'S REPORT

I have been honoured once again to greet poets and poetry appreciators at the door on Monday night reading events. Thank you for being an important part of our poetry community.

The Upper Crust Café is very good to us, providing a warm and welcome space, delicious edibles and all for only \$5.00 each. We are very grateful.

My job is made easier by the volunteer door hosts. It is more efficient with one of you helping me. You are needed, appreciated, and enjoyed.

I invite you to bring a poem for your two minutes at the mic; bring friends; bring five bucks for the door and something for the donation box (optional, but, just know, I am watching you).

Respectfully submitted by Anne Gerard Marshal