

# ALEXANDRA WRITER'S CENTRE SOCIETY

2016/2017 ANNUAL REPORT



*Prepared by Lexie Angelo, Secretary, Board of Directors August 20, 2017*

Alexandra Writer's Centre Society / 460, 1721 29 Ave SW, Calgary, AB T2T 6T7

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## Message from the President

Where to start? This year has been full of change and growth for AWCS. As president, this year, and the past four years has been rewarding to see many projects completed. Our biggest adventure was the move to cSpace in the historic King Edward School. Renovations were completed, agreements negotiated, granting, meetings upon meetings with architects, other tenants, cSpace, and our board. We also completed new projects, a new director contract, defined new roles, and the ability to grow and provide many more programs and events for our members. Not that the hard hats weren't fun but I am glad to walk in with open toed shoes and no dust. We have a Grand Opening that will take place this fall in partnership with cSpace and all the other tenants. Planning is currently underway.

In the midst of all the changes we managed to do another strategic planning meeting allowing us to understand our members' needs and come up with new and improved Executive board roles and Director-at-large roles that will better serve our members. We discussed and came up with several strategies that will be implemented in coming months and years. A large focus was on specific needs of current members, what they receive as members, and how to improve on the AWCS experience. We have a broad range of writers with multiple levels of experience and we want to ensure that members continue to grow and feel supported as they progress. We have also been more inclusive with our youth members. We now have paid instructors and a youth director, rather than volunteer. This has increased our ability to provide better programs and enhance the youth programming to what the adult members all receive.

We now have an intern helping Robin in the office, and volunteers that have been donating countless hours with our open write times, Free Fall evenings and day classes, moving, and even putting IKEA furniture together.

Our membership is growing and so is our bank account which allows us to put those funds back into our writing community. Stay tuned for some great programs and changes. With a vastly larger budget, financial needs, program changes, new locations and collaborations, our current business plan no longer suits our needs. Myself and Colin (nominated for president this coming term) will be developing a business plan that better suits our goals as an organization. We will have that completed this fall and available to you. Please feel free to give us your input on your needs. This organization is yours and we are making the best educated guesses we can to improve things but we want to know more. You are equal partners in this so it matters. Please email us to give us feedback and fill out the feedback forms that are now in place after course completion. Your feedback is not thrown away; in fact, we develop many new programs based on your requests.

On a personal note:

After many years at AWCS (six of those on our board) to walk into our new space and see the light pouring in from the windows, smell the freshly cleaned floors and hear the conversations and fingers tapping on keyboards, I feel like all the work from everyone involved has been worth it. My hope is that you all continue to volunteer, discuss your work and support each other in your writing goals. We all got together and built this new space, from buying a raffle ticket, to logistics, to granting, to websites, to branding, to advertising and of course Robin and her hard work and dedication to make AWCS thrive. I will stay on as past president to support our next president and all board members. I feel good about where we are at, where we are going,

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and your future leadership. I will also volunteer for committees and take many more classes with all of you. I am letting go of something that has become part of my every day and that is hard to do but I am so proud of everyone. Thank you. We are a community. We are writers. See you all soon.

Sarah Johnson

President, Board of Directors

## 2016/2017 Board of Directors

President	Sarah Johnson
Vice President	Miranda Botto
Treasurer	Lindsay Bilkoski
Secretary	Lexie Angelo
Director-at-Large	Margaret Brick
Director-at-Large	Colin Martin
Director-at-Large	Kate Baxter

## Sponsors



Amber Webb-Bowerman Foundation

## Program Director Update

As you can imagine, this past year has been busy with the transition from our old facility in Inglewood to the new facility at cSpace King Edward. At the beginning of the fiscal year, we kept programming to a minimum, focusing solely on our core programming and not adding any additional events so our attention could be spent on preparing for the move. Thanks to a number of volunteers, we were able to make the transition smoothly and began operations at cSpace King Edward by the end of January 2017 and business has grown since the move.

Now with the new open writing salon, we see people coming in and out of our facility all day—some coming to write, or meeting with friends to discuss writing—and so many volunteers have stepped up to help us keep the facility open. For that we are eternally grateful.

I spend the bulk of my time researching new and exciting programs for AWCS. Some of the new events/programs you may have seen over the last several months include:

<b>The Writer's Circle</b>	Sunday (a.m.)	An open discussion on a different topic of interest to writers
<b>The Poetry Café</b>	Sunday (p.m.)	An opportunity for poets to meet and write and talk about poetry
<b>The Little Book Club for Writers</b>	Every 2 months	Discuss shorter works from a writer's perspective at Owl's Nest Books
<b>Member Social Events</b>	Once per semester	We offered two events this year, Tequila Mockingbird and the Adult Spelling Bee. Both events saw 12-15 members get together, unwind, have fun.
<b>WO Mitchell Writer's Retreat</b>	Annual	We held our first writer's retreat out near Cochrane with great success

We attempted to bring back a prose and poetry critique group however, attendance and interest was low. The poetry group was cancelled and now we have the Poetry Café in its place. The prose group is under review. The Friday morning Free Fall Writing sessions are going great with anywhere from 10-16 people attending. We are re-evaluating Free Fall evening sessions and will decide if we will continue.

Beginning in September 2017 we are launching a new program: Mentor in the Loop, where we bring in a knowledgeable, experienced writer with ties to the local literary community. The mentor will be onsite one week per month to offer guidance, advise, commiserate, or whatever you need at any time. There will also be fun writing events and workshops hosted by the mentor. Details are on our website.

Robin van Eck  
Program Director

## Volunteers

We are pleased to say we have seen a huge increase in volunteerism in the past year.

Thanks so much to everyone who came out to help in one capacity or another, from the move, putting together furniture, cleaning, host/hostessing, leading committees, casino volunteers or taking on larger roles. We could not have done it without all your help.

### SPECIAL THANKS

Bob & Carol Laws	Kim Firmston	Shaun Dubyts	Sue McLarty
Dean McRorie	Alex Rettie	Amber van Dyk	Rich Orlesky
Tracy Lowe	Vivian Hansen	Sarah Johnson	Olyn Ozbick
Anne Metikosh	Marilyn Letts	Sally Hatcher	Carolyn Pogue
Alexis Kelly	Teresa Kelly	Kathy Seifert	Michael Cranley
Rea Tarvydas	Judy Paterson	Ashley Rohmer	James Hutchison
Howie Erickson	Lorraine Erickson	Paulina Geary	Ingrid Littmann-Tai
Madelaine Wong	Connie Donoghue	Julia Donoghue	Sue LeBreton
Maraya Loza Koxahn	Patricia Patterson	Peter O'Brien	Sandy Smart
Alexandria Inkster	Kyle Mori	Coreen Kat	Cliff Johnson
Minkee Robinson	Judi MacEachen	Carmen Seigers	Joy Norstrom
Nicole Brooks	Nicholas Friesen	Cindy Derwores	Diane Volk
Drew Henn	Ron Carter	Lori Marquardson	Lorraine Thibodeau
Rebeka Albahari	Jenny Wong	Laurie Fuhr	Josephine LoRe

Thank you to all of our volunteers. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

## Financial Summary

### FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

This report contains a summary of AWCS's financial position and results for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2017. AWCS was in a net loss position for the fiscal year, as expected, of \$78K. As AWCS operates on a cash accounting basis, the society expects to be in a net loss position in the years that casino funding is not received and reserve funds are used over the planned 18-month cycle.

Excluding casino and the community facility enhancement program ("CFEP") net income, the Society net income was slightly higher than in prior years. This is as a result of AWCS's priority to increase funding through strategic initiatives including:

- Recouping \$1,632 of GST previously uncollected for four fiscal years. GST will continue to be claimed on a bi-annual cycle.
- Introduction of the Writers Retreat.
- Push to collect outstanding accounts payable.

Gross profit margins on Courses & Workshops is slightly depressed as compared to prior years at 13% as a result of AWCS introducing honorariums for new low cost programming for members and the requirement to continue to pay instructors competitively.

The majority of the fiscal year's expenses were related to the King Edward move and renovation, and the renegotiation of the Program Directors' contract. The King Edward move and renovation was within budget, and at this time it is expected minimal to no funds will be returned to CFEP. Reconciliation reports will be submitted to CFEP in the fall of 2017.

AWCS ended the year with a healthy bank account balance and was materially within budget expectations for the fiscal year.

### SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

Subsequent to the preparation of the fiscal year 2016/2017 statements the following events are of note:

- Receipt of the casino funds of just under \$65K for the casino conducted in May 2017.
- Hiring of an intern, reporting directly to the Program Manager. This position is for a limited term until approximately February 2018 and has been largely off-set by specialized grant funding.

## Membership

In 2017 we had an increase of 50 members joining the AWCS.

As a result of moving to the cSpace King Edward in Marda Loop we have eliminated the Tri-Area Resident membership.

### 2017 MEMBERSHIP RATES

<b>Regular Membership</b>	\$60.00 per year
<b>Youth Membership</b>	\$40.00 per year

### CURRENT MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS (AS OF JUNE 30, 2017)

<b>Regular Members</b>	392
<b>Honourary Members</b>	5
<b>Youth Members</b>	38
<b>Total</b>	435

## Annual Highlights

### CASINO

We held our third casino at Elbow River Casino in May of 2017. We received \$64719.72 in August from the Casino fundraiser. Thanks to all the volunteers who came out to help over the two days.

Our next casino has been slated for the first quarter of 2019 at Cowboys Casino. Unfortunately Elbow River was already booked. We will know the exact dates the middle of next year.

### WRITER'S RETREAT

In June we held our first ever Writer's Retreat at the W.O. Mitchell Retreat Centre just north of Cochrane. Twenty participants and 4 facilitators joined us for a weekend of writing, workshops and camaraderie. Overall the weekend was a great success and we look forward to doing it again next year.

### WRITER IN RESIDENCE 2017

This year we welcomed Micheline Maylor as our Writer in Residence. From March to May of this year, Micheline presented three workshops and completed 45 manuscript consultations. Thanks to Micheline for all her work. The next Writer in Residence will be announced at the AGM in September.

A big thank you to Vivian Hansen who took on the role of Writer in Residence Coordinator and worked together with Micheline to arrange consultations and events for the residency.

### ADULT PROGRAMMING

We offered four semesters of classes from July 2016 to June 2017. Courses and workshops registrations were at an all-time high in the latter half of the year, due in part to the move to the new facility. Even summer course registrations were higher than they've ever been.

We invited Thomas Wharton to host our Feature Workshop at Fort Calgary. We had about 25 people in attendance and it was a wonderful day.

We continued our partnership with Owl's Nest Books and held several events at the local bookstore. Our open mics continue to be well attended and have become a regular event that members and the public look forward to.

Free Fall Writing Sessions continue to be a popular drop in Friday mornings with 10-20 people showing up weekly. We attempted some evening sessions again, but unfortunately those have not been well-attended.

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

We continue our community collaborations by sponsoring the Robin Herrington Memorial Short Story Contest for When Words Collide. We continue to try and foster and grow this relationship with the conference each year and in August of 2016 we had a booth set up in the Merchant's Room for the weekend.

We have continued to work with Prospect PDD Services and The Loft 112 to promote literacy and arts to the community through Prospect's initiatives.

In the new facility, we have already been fostering relationships with other tenants. We have worked with Metrographics, Alliance Francaise, Assemble Workshop and Paula Timm. This is a great facility with so many talented artists and we can't wait to see what more we can do to work with them on future projects.

## Youth Programming

The Alexandra Writers' Centre youth programs which encourage exploration and education in the writing arts. And build a home for young writers to explore and share their craft, gain leadership skills, and have fun with others who love words as much as they do.

### SPECIAL THANKS

Kim Firmston	Emily Firmston	Em Williamson
Alexis Kelly	Sebastien Ringuette	John Williamson
Adam Hildebrandt	Brett Morrison	

### MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

We are changing the format of our programming so to better adjust to the expansion of cSpace including the ability to easily add more programming. The youth membership will now include the RIO writing club, Rogue Poets, Random Movie Night, and Dungeons & Dragons. All other programs will be available at a reduced fee for members or a stand-alone fee for non-members.

### PROGRAMMING

<b>RIO Writing Club</b>	Bi-weekly	Up to 10 participants per meeting
<b>Pen &amp; Panel</b>	Bi-weekly	Up to 15 participants per meeting
<b>Rogue Poets</b>	Monthly	7 participants
<b>Novelmancers</b>	Monthly	10 participants
<b>Media Club</b>	Monthly	Up to 10 participants
<b>Random Movie Night</b>	Monthly	Up to 8 participants per meeting
<b>Dungeons and Dragons</b>	Monthly	Up to 16 participants per meeting
<b>Homeschool</b>	Weekly (8 weeks)	5 participants

### REALITY IS OPTIONAL (RIO) KIDS' WRITING CLUB

*Led by: Kim Firmston*

*Volunteers: Emily Firmston, Alexis Kelly*

We explored character building in three intensive workshops, and also explored to genres such as anime, historical fiction/altered history, poetry, and fantasy. Kids practiced skills in world building, map making, script writing, and building mythology. We hosted Dead Author Night (Terry Pratchett), Creating Evil Villains, Apocalyptic Genre, Genre Mashup, and two in house open mics as well as LARPing. We focused on both individual writing but also collaborative writing and projects.

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## PEN & PANEL

*Led by: Sebastien Ringuette*

*Volunteers: Em Williamson*

Kids learned collaborative creation, individual creation, and studying a theme. Students produced a group comic book that went up for sale as a fundraiser in November, using skills in panel design, character creation, colour theory, emotional writing, art design, and dialogue. Additionally, we hosted Sam Hester, a guest speaker.

## ROGUE POETS

*Led by: Em Williamson*

*Volunteers: John Williamson, Kim Firmston*

Students worked on both individual poems as well as group poems. All members presented at various 'Can You Hear Me Now?' open mic and slam events throughout the year. The slam team competed at the Provincial School Slam Competition and won the Spirit of the Slam award. They were also asked to perform at the Single Onion Youth Night and did very well.

## NOVELMANCERS

Ten student finished their word count goals for NaNoWriMo. Our youngest competitor was in grade five and finished her novel with a couple days to spare. Students covered topics such as character development, writing antagonists, world building, publishing, description, plotting, editing, and more. We allowed extra time for three students to have their work critiqued by the group. Often the youth bring in passages they are having troubles with and get help from the other writers on how to fix the issues. We did help publish (no ISBN) a chapbook of poetry by Alexis Kelly this year.

## MEDIA CLUB

Media club was new this year, and we experimented with various formats to make the course successful. Media club is a mesh between writing and technology and we worked on a video game, short movie, and a TV show. At the moment, work is produced with low budget technology, however, the goal is to invest in a microphone to record sound.

## RIO LIBRARY PODS

We have two Library pods located at the Crowfoot and Central Libraries. Both are starting to get a core group going and are well attended. We play similar games to what we play in RIO with input by the kids in the groups. The games are slightly altered to fit the kids we get in the groups, especially at the Central location where we get both writers and kids who are just curious – both junior and senior high school students as well as youth at risk. This program is paid for by the Calgary Public Library but is run by RIO.

## RANDOM MOVIE NIGHT AND DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

Random Movie Night attendance dropped slightly following the move to cSpace. D&D was very popular as usual we had 11-16 kids at any given meeting, often needing two Game Leaders (DMs). The kids learn important story building skills, as well as character motivation, action scene development, and cooperative storytelling. This team-building game also increases their self-esteem and confidence.

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## HOMESCHOOL OPEN HOUSE

Homeschool programming is new this year. We had seven families attend the open house, and had five student registrations. Based on interest, if we are able to build an audience for this program, we will keep it the following year. Registration will be ongoing on the website until September. We did a survey of our youth members and received very positive feedback that shows we are on the right track.

## WORKSHOPS

We hosted one workshop this year on Horror Makeup led by Emily Firmston. The move to cSpace impacted our workshop offerings as we adjusted to the new space. In 2018, we would like to have more guest speakers open to the public and more workshops.

## SPECIAL PROJECTS

This year, the AWCS youth programs took part in:

### **Beakerhead**

Pen & Panel students went on field trip to view art installations.

### **Beakerhead/Ramsay Robots**

Students did playwriting, acting, and created games. The Steam Powered Press Corps created a documentary on the event and after party. We also had a cereal party of our own afterwards.

### **Art in the Hood**

Students in Pen & Panel created a comic for this art show and sale in Ramsay as a fundraiser. We also sold our Pen & Panel Christmas cards, and some students had art or writing projects for sale. Kids selling their own work also volunteered in order to keep 100% of their profits.

### **Central Library**

During January, we set up our meetings at the Central library where we invited the public to join us.

## Contact Information

General Inquiries:	<a href="mailto:info@alexandrawriters.org">info@alexandrawriters.org</a>
Program Director:	Robin van Eck <a href="mailto:rvaneck@alexandrawriters.org">rvaneck@alexandrawriters.org</a>
Youth Program Director:	Kim Firmston <a href="mailto:firmstonwriting@gmail.com">firmstonwriting@gmail.com</a>
Board of Directors:	<a href="mailto:awcsboard@alexandrawriters.org">awcsboard@alexandrawriters.org</a>

## Company Information

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

