



au courant

Newsletter of the Canadian Federation of Friends of Museums

CFFM is proud to have His Excellency, the Right Honourable David Johnston, C.C., C.M.M., C.O.M., C.D., Governor General of Canada, as its Patron

ISSN 1915-0229

Winter 2012

Cultural Transformations/Transformations culturelles

Every conference, symposium or meeting has some positive results – that’s what they are for, after all. On October 19th, Cultural Transformations panel discussion is a good example. Initiated by the CFFM, it brought together volunteers from many cultural centres in Ottawa to support the evening debate on what the needs of our growing diversified population are and what our public institutions need to do to assure new Canadians that they have a place in the country’s culture.

On that rainy fall night we met in the white, almost dream-like headquarters of Aga Khan Foundation Canada, the Delegation of the Ismaili Imam, on Ottawa’s Sussex Drive. Within Canada, the Foundation acts as a catalyst for the discussion and understanding of critical global issues, and links Canadian institutions and expertise with counterparts in the developing world.



Sylvie Morel and the Panelists Photo credit: Frank H. Scheme

Khalil Z. Shariff, the Chief Executive Officer of the Foundation, reinforced the theme of the panel discussion in his welcoming remarks: “Volunteerism is very important in the work of the Aga Khan Foundation and thus very much in line with that of the Friends of the cultural organizations spearheading the event this evening. It is good to work with those who have similar objectives:

- Communities coming together, powered by civic interests;
- This building is a cultural space, one that is to be used to further conversation and dialogue;
- Culture is very important in the Foundation’s work in international development. Even in poverty-ridden contexts where local culture has been degraded, one must not give up on cultural traditions, heritage, and values that are indeed critical for sustainability.”

Sylvie Morel, our National Director, introduced the moderator and the participants: Moderator David A. Walden, Secretary-General, Canadian Commission for UNESCO; Charles C. Smith, lecturer on Cultural Pluralism in the Arts, University of Toronto, Scarborough; Alejandro Gomez, board member, Coalition of New Canadians for Arts and Culture and Body NGoy, Director-General, Café Franco-Présence.

David Walden reminded us that the theme of the panel resonates very much with the aims and work of UNESCO, which is celebrating this year the 10th Anniversary of the Declaration of Cultural Diversity. Each culture has dignity that has to be respected, celebrated as a strength and seen as fundamental to peace.

Charles Smith raised several points posed by the challenge to change implied by the theme of the discussion:

- A lot of activity has been generated by artists from diverse cultural communities BUT institutions are not changing readily in terms of accommodating and reflecting the work of these artists. Change does not come easy.
- Aboriginal artists came to the fore in the 1980s but their work is still not readily integrated into mainstream venues.
- Artists of Colour and Aboriginal Artists make far less money (20% less) than “white” artists.
- The Ontario Arts Council has been looking into the issues. It has been found that Aboriginal communities and other communities of visible minorities are more interested in the arts than “white” communities.
- One needs to examine how venues operate, the curatorial competence needed and what the criteria should be in choosing and presenting work from diverse cultural communities.

Alejandro Gomez described how the Coalition (a relatively new organization) supports newly arrived artists and cultural workers to “find a nail to hang their work, to rediscover oneself in a new environment”. In this respect the Coalition is involved in capacity building.

Body NGoy focused in part on a brief snapshot of the history of Canada, built by immigrants, of which there is both a cultural minority and a growing racial minority. With respect to the latter, most come from very poor and underdeveloped countries and this adds to the particular challenges that the immigrants must face here.

With the Café Franco-Présence, he is providing an inter-cultural space that facilitates and promotes gatherings, presentations, etc. of artists with diverse cultural backgrounds. He has found that there is also solitude amongst different ethnic groups – this also needs to be addressed by providing different forms of support and encouragement.

Volunteer organizations participating in the Oct. 19th event had information desks lined up at the rear of the meeting area. While some people browsed through the information they offered, the main feeling among the volunteers was that they benefited most from the interchange of ideas they had with each other and the networking with the almost 200 people who attended the event.

The following groups (as well as the CFFM and Aga Khan Foundation Canada) took part in planning and managing the event: Volunteers’ Circle of the National Gallery of Canada, Friends of Library and Archives Canada, Friends of the National Arts Centre Orchestra, the Great Canadian Theatre Company and the Ottawa Art Gallery. In addition, the Ottawa Public Library and Friends of a National Portrait Gallery of Canada handed out information about their organizations.

The City of Ottawa provided free simultaneous translation, the Canadian Museums Association gave us free publicity, the Ottawa Art Gallery covered printing costs, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO and the Community Foundation of Ottawa provided financial assistance and the Aga Khan Foundation Canada was a most generous host, covering much of the cost of staging such an event.

The panel discussion was the second time that Ottawa’s cultural volunteer organizations came together in this type of meeting initiated by CFFM. Last year, they participated in Simon Brault’s lecture on “No Culture, No Future” held at the Canadian Museum of Nature. A survey taken at last month’s event showed very positive reaction by the public. Twenty-four suggestions were received for topics that CFFM should address at their next event!



Photo credit: Frank H. Scheme

Succession Planning

Every organization, regardless of the scope of its operation, must have a Board of Directors. The role of the Board should be clearly defined in the bylaws, but in summary, its ultimate responsibility is to oversee the direction of the organization including financial, human resource and program matters. These responsibilities determine its viability and future, making them key to its survival, and must not to be taken lightly.

Yet, for such important roles, filling the positions on the board is often left to chance, ignored or treated lightly. A Nominating Committee should be elected at the Annual Meeting by the membership since it is a committee of the membership (not of the board as are the other committees). This committee has the challenge of filling board positions according to the requirements outlined in the bylaws; it will have its own terms of reference and guidelines.

The criteria for membership on a board should be described in the bylaws and will serve as guidelines for the deliberations of the Nominating Committee. These may include such items as: what is the length of a term for a director: two years? three years? How many terms can a director remain a board member: two terms or three terms? Once a board member moves to an executive position, do these years count as part of the term? What is the term of the President: one year? two years? Can terms be renewed once or more often? These are important considerations for the Nominating Committee as it seeks board members. A position for President-elect ensures that the successor to the current President is in place.

The Nominating Committee must consider other factors in its search for new board members: Do the new recruit(s) show any potential to serve in an executive position, eventually becoming President? Do the bylaws require representatives from stakeholder groups? These are only two of many potential factors to think about.

Once the Nominating Committee is established at the AGM, it must begin its work at once. In far too many organizations, the search begins when the notice of the next AGM is circulated; by that time, its work should be completed. With a too-late start on this vital task, no new board members are recruited, or a warm body who becomes a place-holder accepts with reluctance, or some other inappropriate (with no interest or for the wrong reasons) individual is recruited so the Nominating Committee can say its task has been completed.

Such a process does not give the Committee the opportunity to have regular frank discussions with board members about their intentions and aspirations as board members; these conversations may uncover an excellent prospect for an executive role and perhaps provide the potential candidate with

some advice about how to best prepare for such an eventuality. The same conversation may uncover some circumstances that would preclude the director from becoming a suitable President. This process will allow the Nominating Committee to complete its work thoroughly and well in advance of the AGM.

Succession **must** be planned for several reasons:

- The organization needs a capable President to provide leadership to its work;
- The President is the chief spokesperson for the organization so must be knowledgeable; this comes from serving for several years on the board and being involved in its activities;
- The President can give a year or two of intense involvement, knowing he/she can move on when the term is over;
- New leadership can and will bring new freshness, new ideas and new energy to the whole organization. In an interview with a person who stayed for 23 years as President because he thought there was no one else who could do the job, he admitted in hindsight he stayed far too long: “energy and enthusiasm will get you farther on a board than dogged determination” ;
- A new President provides the opportunity to both access and provide new skills from which all other board members and the organization itself can benefit.

A useful tool for the Nominating Committee is a chart of skills, positions held and terms. Develop this in consultation with the full Board; what skills are currently available? What skills are needed for a newly defined or broader direction? Include the names of current board members, their years of board membership and positions held. Identify board experience in other organizations. Such a chart will ensure that not all board members will rotate off in one or two years; continuity provides useful corporate memory and experience. When this information is shared with the board, it becomes clear that the position of President is not for life. Good leaders know that the expectation is to get in, do the work and leave on an acceptable timetable. Only in the most extenuating circumstances should a term be extended. This chart, or gap analysis, prevents boards from being filled with members of an old boys or girls network.

In his book *When All You Have is Hope*, Frank O’Dea wrote: “My decision to resign from the XXX Board had nothing to do with either the board’s activities or my own participation and everything to do with my philosophy of public service. I believe each period of contribution by me and other board members carries a best-before date”.

My research for this article began with a search on Google for Succession Planning. Many sites focused on the corporate sector, for either management or corporate directors but I found suggestions in many of these references transferable to charitable organizations. Follow the links to HR (Human Resource) sites, and sort through the ideas to dig more deeply into this topic. One Canadian

site that focuses exclusively on the charitable sector is Charity Village (charityvillage.ca); it covers a multitude of topics of interest to charities and it is worth the investment of time to thoroughly search it.

Betsy Clarke, CFRE

Canadian Museums Hill Day 2011

Day 2011 will be taking place on Nov. 29th. "Ambassadors" representing Canadian Museum and Gallery Directors, as well as other authorized representatives of the Canadian Museums Association will bring CMA key strategies to ensure the sustainability of Canada's museums to decision makers on Parliament Hill. CFFM has again been invited to send representatives to join the CMA in these special meetings.

Changes to the *au courant* team

With this issue we say "thank you" and "good-bye" to Michel Cheff and Gerry Glavin, members of our

Editorial Advisory Board, who are retiring after many years of volunteering.

Also retiring is your Editor. I have enjoyed the challenge of putting together quarterly issues from my first one in the Summer of 2008. Times have changed since then, and ways of communication have evolved immeasurably. It is time for a new, more web-based and participatory approach to carry on the long tradition of keeping museum friends and volunteers in touch from coast to coast to coast.

Doris Smith

CONFERENCES and MEETINGS OF INTEREST

Canadian Museums Association

April 23 – 27, 2012 at the Hilton Lake-Leamy in Gatineau, QC.

The unifying theme of the conference is *On the Edge!*

At the conference, a volunteer or group of volunteers will be honoured by receiving the joint CMA/CFFM Museum Volunteer Award.

International Museum Day

On May 18th.

World Federation of Friends of Museums

WFFM Council and General Assembly

San Paolo, Brazil May 2012

Volunteer Committees of Art Museums

21st Triennial VCAM Conference "Valuing the Volunteer" from October 9 – 12, 2012 in Cleveland, Ohio. For information go to

www.vcam.org

If you have some news that you would like to share with our readers, do get in touch with the editor at info@cffm-fcam.ca. Deadline for submission of copy for the Spring 2012 issue is February 1st. Articles and news items for our web site can be submitted at any time for consideration. If you are a Facebook user, please access our Facebook page.

It is CFFM policy to respect and protect personal information and an individual's right to privacy in compliance with current legal requirements.

CFFM does not lend or sell its membership information.

CFFM is a charitable organization registered under # BN 11883 0876 RR 0001

au courant is the newsletter published by Canadian Federation of Friends of Museums

400 - 280 Metcalfe Street, Ottawa, ON K2P 1R7

Telephone: 613-567-0099 ext. 260; Fax 613-233-5438 Web site: www.cffm-fcam.ca

Editor: Doris M. Smith, e-mail: info@cffm-fcam.ca

Translation: Michel Joanis. Technical support: Alexander G.M. Smith

CE BULLETIN EST AUSSI DISPONIBLE EN FRANÇAIS