

Mary Louise Chown – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #9

January 2013

For January, Winnipeg River Arts Council features member Mary Louise Chown, a visual artist, storyteller, and musician who recently moved with her husband to a farm just outside River Hills. Delighted to discover a large arts community in the North Eastman area, she has already participated in a successful storytelling concert held in Pinawa last November and sponsored by WRAC.



Mary Louise Chown

Although born in Toronto, Chown considers herself a prairie chicken, having lived most of her life in Winnipeg. She heard many stories in her own extended family, and is most familiar with the folktales of the British Isles and Northern Europe. Chown also plays hammered dulcimer, guitar and percussion with "The Fine Companions" folk music band. She often includes music and song in her stories, inviting audiences of all ages to participate.

Chown has performed at storytelling festivals in Toronto, Ottawa, Whitehorse, Edmonton, Vancouver, the Winnipeg Folk Festival, and the Winnipeg International Children's Festivals. She also has worked with the Manitoba Arts Council as a visiting artist in schools across Manitoba. Her week-long residencies paired storytelling with art making for students of all ages. She designed a storytelling and music concert series called "The Magic of One", which had a successful six year run in Winnipeg.

Her video installation "The Skin of This Planet" was recently exhibited at the University of Winnipeg Art Gallery and at St. Boniface Hospital and won an award from ArtWorks in Edmonton, Alberta. Her paintings and prints have been exhibited at group and juried shows in

Winnipeg, Ottawa, the Internet, and Barcelona, Spain.

Gathering people together to share their stories is an important part of her work and has taken her into group homes for young offenders, adult survivor groups, classes for seniors and more recently, as a visiting artist in Winnipeg hospitals, telling stories, listening to stories and playing music. She has been invited to talk about this work so often that she finally wrote and published her first book about her experiences in healthcare. The book, titled NOW I KNOW THE WORLD IS ROUND: Stories At the End of Life, has gone into second printing, and is available at McNally Robinson Booksellers, or from Chown directly.

Anita Schewe Drabyk - Focus on Local Artists - Issue #10

February 2013

For February, Winnipeg River Arts Council features Anita Schewe Drabyk, who lives in Pinawa but grew up on a farm near Beausejour where her interest in art, nature and agriculture was nurtured and where making your own art cards was the norm. A great aunt treated her and her sister with various art supplies and encouraged their love of art. Drabyk's interests, education and career in biology influence her art; flowers, plants, mammals, birds and the natural landscape are dominant themes in her work.

Drabyk enjoys photography, watercolours and various other painting media. Her art has incorporated the advice and expertise of photographers and painters from across Canada.

Her work was particularly influenced by Courtney Milne, a photographer from Saskatchewan. Drabyk was chair of two artistic groups, Pinawa Art 211 and of Pinawa Association for Photographic Art, for many years. Here she enjoyed the company and peer review of many talented artists and photographers.

Drabyk lived in China for two years and visited the country a few more times and these sojourns have modified how she looks at art and photography. Here again she enjoyed viewing and interpreting rural life, gardens, birds and the physical landscape. In China, she also taught art for the local Canadian students.

In the 2012 Art in the Forest project at Sandilands Provincial Forest, her work, "A Walk in the Forest", depicted different aspects of forests: the small, the large, the real, and the spiritual. She has participated in various local art shows and has won first place in photography for an Eastman Juried Art Show and has won other awards for her art. Her work has been published in *Manitoba Naturally* by Bill Stilwell, a Manitoba Model Forest Annual Report, Pinawa marketing brochures, *Eastern Manitoba Travel Guide*, and *The Manitoba Co-operator*. She is currently working for ACI Manitoba as a mentor in a Rural Mentorship program, mentoring three Pinawa students in photography.



Anita Schewe Drabyk

Lac du Bonnet Regional Library - Focus on Local Artists/Orinizations - Issue #11

March 2013

In 1977, a group of dedicated supporters campaigned for a library in the area. In 1980, after three years as a volunteer-run organization with materials donated or block borrowed from travelling libraries, it was designated "Provincial Regional." At first, it moved around, from the former Northern Store to a room in the old Park Avenue School. On April 1, 1981, it opened its doors at 70 Park Street in Suite #1, with its first paid librarian, Barbara Steed. As time passed and holdings increased, it expanded into a second suite, under the direction of Maureen Flemming.

In October of 1989, after the board decided to build a custom designed facility, volunteers spearheaded fundraising and building plans. The next January, on a bitterly cold day, they packed up and moved everything to the current location at 84 Third Street.



Vickie Short & Deb Woodfine

In 1997, the next librarian, Roz Burt, introduced automated software. After her departure, Kathy Derksen and Lynn Carter took as Head Librarians and current Head Librarian, Vickie Short, took over in 2007. As technology moves forward so does the library, incorporating online membership account access, downloadable eBooks/audiobooks, travel databases, online Consumer Reports and EDSCOhost, an online access database.

For twenty-one years now, the library has catered to young and old, providing favorite books, movies, reference material, audios, large print, magazines and numerous other items. Also, it has hosted guest authors, held pajama and game nights, and run the ever successful kids' Summer Reading programs.

During the last five years, the library has

replaced shingles, repaired and painted the ceiling, and integrated ongoing computer upgrades.

On April 2, the Lac du Bonnet Library will host a special event with two guest authors, two musicians and lots of treats, so the staff invite you to head on down to Third Street. Or go online to www.lacdubonnetlibrary.ca and catch up on all their services.

Jim Niedemayer – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #12

April 2013

Jim Niedemayer, from the Powerview area, loves to create art from logs. He took up chainsaw carving in 2009, after the Pine Falls paper mill shut down. When he won first place in a 2013 winter competition in The Pas, the *Opasquia Times* interviewed him. He noted, “I had the opportunity to buy all the big wood that was available. Instead of having that wood destined to make paper, I decided to try and make something out of it.”

Niedemayer learned how to carve on his own and still has his first bear to remind himself of progress. His father, a knifemaker and woodcarver, had given him a book on the subject so he worked at it for about six months. But Niedemayer already knew how to handle a chainsaw. He harvests wild rice from remote lakes.

Any lumber he needs to build or repair at his camp has to be made on the spot so he learned how to rip logs into boards freehand. In 2010, Niedemayer travelled to a Pennsylvania rendezvous. Despite his apprehensions about not being “good enough,” the other participants were surprised he had just started.

Niedemayer explains that his carvings look like caricatures. Although he works hard to get them to look more realistic and even studies anatomy, chainsaws tear into wood quickly, requiring great control to avoid slip-ups. Before he starts, he traces a rough design on the block of wood with chalk or felt marker. In competitions, carvers work non-stop. As Niedemayer said in his Pas interview, manipulating a chainsaw for four hours “is not an easy thing to do.” He uses full safety gear – pants, glasses, ear protection, steel toe boots, gloves, and respirator mask.

All wood is salvaged and he prefers birch, highland spruce, cottonwood, and pine. He especially likes pine that has been submerged in water and he often drags big logs out of lakes. He uses three saws, ranging in size from 24” bar to 16” bar for fine details and paints his carvings with Sikens Oil to protect them. He creates bears, eagles, herons, otters, and other wild animals but also gets many requests for tiki bar creatures. Although he sells his carving mostly through word of mouth, he has a website: chainsawsculpture.ca where customers can view his work.



Jim Niedemayer – Chainsaw Carver

Claudia Chomichuk – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #13

May 2013

For the month of May, Winnipeg River Arts Council features an artist who works with glass, Claudia Chomichuk. Her fascination started as a casual hobby more than thirty years ago. After taking a stained glass evening course one winter, she decided to create a large leaded window panel for her house. She set up a small studio space in her basement and continued to experiment with stained glass whenever she had spare time. When she retired from teaching, she and her husband moved from Winnipeg to their cottage at Hillside Beach in the Rural Municipality of Alexander. The cottage required extensive renovations to convert it to a full-time residence, which created a unique opportunity for Claudia to design her own studio space and spend more time on her designs. Her studio, Purple Pelican Art Glass Studio, occupies the second level of their home. It is here that she hosts a public Open House every two years – and opens her studio to visitors by appointment at other times.

Chomichuk never passes up an opportunity to take classes to upgrade her skills – both in Winnipeg and in Arizona where she spends her winters. Her repertoire now includes fused glass as well. Her work incorporates a full range of styles and techniques: traditional stained glass, three-dimensional leaded glass, fused glass bowls and panels, glass mosaics and creations that contain combinations of these techniques.

Her original designs are inspired by her love of her natural world. Lake Winnipeg is prominent in her life and its influence can be seen in many of her works. She spent her childhood on the west shore of the lake and now resides on the east shore. The aspen and pine forests that surround her residence and the flower gardens that she nurtures also influence her work. Her work is sold from her own studio, a local gift shop (Carol's on Leon) and three galleries in Winnipeg (Pulse, Glitz, and Fleet). She does commission work as well. Her work can be viewed on her website:

www.purplepelicanartglass.com



Claudia Chomichuk

Valerie Ross – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #14

June 2013

For June, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features Pinawa visual artist, Valerie Ross. In September 2005, Ross stood on a dock in Pinawa looking out at the river. In that moment she knew where she was meant to be. Eventually her husband, Alex, was drawn into the possibility of one last adventure. In May of 2006, they left sixty-three years of living in Southern Ontario to immerse themselves in Pinawa's pristine beauty.

Local residents often spotted Ross, with camera in hand, taking pictures of the nature and wildlife. She sent many e-mails and photos to family and friends describing excitedly all there was to see. Ross wished she could convey what she saw and felt so passionately about into something tangible, something that was personal in and of her.

In 2008, Ross's sister, who is also a visual artist, encouraged her to paint what she saw. Although Ross had never painted before, except for a few flowers on sweatshirts, and had taken no art courses, she bought a few brushes and then ... five years later she hasn't looked back. Her work has been displayed at Green Water Art Show in 2012 and at the recent Eastman Juried Art Exhibit. It can be seen and purchased at the new Pinawa Art 211 Gallery at Lewis Centre.



Valerie Ross

Ross uses vibrant acrylics. They suit her well as she paints with bold, strong strokes. She loves there immediacy as they dry quickly and challenge her to stay in the moment and "just do." Ross likes to say that when she paints she becomes the birch leaf blowing in the wind, a gentle ripple on the river and the grass matted by a sleeping doe. She has become known as the "Birch Lady" with many of her birch paintings in homes throughout the region. Ross's husband passed away last November. She recalls him saying, "Valerie, the painting is done, it's beautiful, now step away." Ross has a hard time knowing when a painting is finished. "It's like reading a book, you never want it to end."

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Janice Charko - Focus on Local Artists - Issue #15

July 2013

For July, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features Janice Charko from Lac du Bonnet, an artist who works with fibre. During her professional career, "creative" was not a word Charko would have used to define herself. She has a Bachelor of Commerce Degree and a CMA. With her husband, John Angus, she owned and managed a medical software company for 16 years, work which she has described as "very logical and inside the box!"

Then in 2008, at age 57, Charko was diagnosed with breast cancer. That year, rather than the usual winter in Florida, she and her husband spent the winter at their cottage while she received chemotherapy and radiation treatments. She lost her hair and hated wearing wigs so she started making hats that were fun - varied and colourful. When it was all over and her hair was finally making an appearance, she said she was done with cancer and done with hats.



Janice Charko



"Starry Starry Night"

This elegant clutch is made from silk fibre which causes a lovely sheen.

Working with colours and various materials had resonated with Charko so she began to make things just for the prettiness of them. She moved from sea shell mirrors to beaded jewellery, needle felting, silk fusion and finally wet felting. She quickly realized that wool felting was her passion.

She loves to start with a soft mound of fluffy wool fleece and work it into felt. It takes hours of manipulating the hot soapy wool with her hands, rubbing and rolling, tossing and beating, all the while working it into the shape she wants. This year Charko began nuno felting wool onto silk chiffon scarves and shawls. Also, her silk fusion clutch purses have been popular,

with the Starry Starry Night clutch winning first place in the fibre category at the 2013 Eastman Judged Art Exhibition.

Each work is a creation from wool and her hands, her vision and her passion. She is finally learning to colour outside the lines!! Charko is a member of Pinawa Art 211 and shows her work in the new Pinawa Art Gallery. Her website is www.FlightsofFibre.com.

Don MacLellan – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #16

August 2013

For August, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features Pine Falls musician, **Don MacLellan**. He has been playing guitar since the age of fourteen, for forty-five years.

When he started, he liked folk and other roots styles of music. Several other genres have influenced his musical interests but lately he has been bitten by the bluegrass bug and he has been exploring this style of guitar playing.

MacLellan has always played acoustic guitars. He likes the open chord “C-A-G-E-D” system, using capos to navigate to desired keys and using familiar chord shapes.

He prefers to arrange the songs of his favourite songwriters and performers to suit his playing style as opposed to writing his own original material. He is self-taught and plays by ear, although he admits, “I’m not always sure what those phrases mean.”

MacLellan appreciates the opportunity to play with like-minded musicians. Although he insists “I don’t perform regularly enough,” he has entertained folks at weddings, benefit concerts, bars and events for seniors.

He likes to emulate performers such as JP Cormier, Joni Mitchell, Norman Blake, Gordon Lightfoot, Tony Rice, Nancy Griffith, Steve Goodman, and David Bromberg. He has taught his style of playing on the side, as well as on a volunteer basis at places such as Wings of Power. If asked, he will also repair and maintain guitars.

MacLellan is a councillor for Ward II with the town of Powerview-Pine Falls and, for the past three years, has helped establish and build the Winnipeg River Arts Council, serving as its President. He says, “I am proud of this rare opportunity to help entrench and promote the arts throughout our region, and it is an endeavour of which I am very proud.”

The Winnipeg River Arts Council encourages other local musicians to join WRAC as members. The arts council can promote your talents in the region, if you want to perform or give lessons.



Don MacLellan

Marcel Pitre – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #17

September 2013

This month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features member Marcel Pitre, a Pine Falls writer and musician. In 1999, the family of Joseph and Martha Pitre held a family reunion in Lac du Bonnet. It provided the stepping stone for Pitre to take up the challenge of recording great occasions.

Pitre lived in Lac du Bonnet for his first twenty years and, in 1947, his search for employment took him to Pine Falls. His need to write took another fifty-two years to develop and he still wonders whatever possessed him. Writing anything was the last thing on his mind, though he marveled at the mighty Winnipeg River and all things natural.

After that splendid event, the Reunion, he threw caution to the wind and purchased a computer. Pitre said, "The massive weight of being able to at least *half*-communicate with that "fiendish machine" was underway." In the past, he wrote monthly newspaper articles for the town paper along with short stories about local history which he distributed to family and friends. His five books, from thirty six pages to three hundred and eighty, have not yet been published but he is now working on self-publishing. A sixth local history book is near completion.



Marcel Pitre



Marcel Pitre & Rod Beaudry

Pitre also plays guitar and has performed throughout the area with his fellow musicians. Two long-time band mates were Fred Psoch and Rod Beaudry. He prefers big band music and still likes to perform whenever possible. His daughter, Leah Boulet, said, "I have memories of Dad coming home with his friends after a dance. Sometimes, they stayed up and played all night long."

Last April, Pitre read from his writing and shared his guitar skills, along with Rod Beaudry on the saxophone, at "Celebrating Stories" in Library Allard. After this event, Beaudry wrote to the Winnipeg River Arts Council and said, "It was great participating in a musical capacity along with my long-time friend, Marcel Pitre. It appeared that those in attendance

enjoyed both the authors' writings and the musical performance."

Irène Loire-Maillard - Focus on Local Artists - Issue #18

October 2013

For October, Winnipeg River Arts Council features Pinawa artist Irène Loire-Maillard, a member of both WRAC and Pinawa ART 211. Her work has been exhibited often in Eastman region and she has been a student and practitioner of fine arts for many years (oil, acrylic and watercolour, drawing, clay sculpting, stone carving and photography).

She has studied in various cities across Canada and of late, Southern Spain. She was also privately tutored in stone carving by an Inuit carver in Nunavut.

Her paintings reflect a blend of science and art. She has travelled extensively and uses memories of colour, sounds and smells of various cultures. Currently her passion has led her to create abstract landscapes, using various techniques to create texture, form, colour, composition, layering and clean lines. Fascinated with the origins of the universe, she is in awe of the beauty of naturally sculpted forms.

She states, "Abstract art evokes thinking, feeling and seeing with one's own interpretation." This is what she strives to accomplish with her art.



Irène Loire-Maillard

Loire-Maillard's acrylic painting, "Influenced by Caravaggio," won the first prize at the *Eastman Judged Art Exhibition*, held in Pinawa during June of 2013. This piece was displayed, along with other award winning works from rural and Northern Manitoba, at *The 11th Annual Rural and Northern Art Show* (September 9 to October 6) held in the Pavilion Gallery Museum in Assiniboine Park, Winnipeg

Loire-Maillard is interested in art forms of all kinds. She has lived and worked in Canada's Arctic where she collected many fine examples of local visual arts and carvings. For several years, she belonged to a creative writing group based in Pinawa. Also, her husband, Roger Dutton, is a long-time member and fervent supporter of the Pinawa Players so she sometimes gets persuaded to become involved in their ever-popular community theatre productions.

Brian Knockaert – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #19

November 2013

For the month of November, Winnipeg River Arts Council features artist Brian Knockaert, a self-taught wood turner. Born and raised in St. Boniface, Manitoba, he moved to his cabin in St. Georges in 1998. He spent most of his working life in the steel industry and also worked at Pine Falls Hospital before retiring in 2008.

Knockaert combines his creative artistry and woodworking knowledge to create unique pieces. Over the years, he practiced his art and used various resources to build his skills; books, YouTube videos and internet research have been the most helpful.

His love of woodworking started with refinishing old furniture. This led to restoring old clocks and building his own. He began to carve birds, caricatures and walking sticks for family and friends.

After someone gave him an old lathe, he started to create pieces from the trees around him. Then he bought a bigger lathe from his brother and started to “play with turning wood.” His wife, Donna-Rae, teases him that he has a lathe addiction. The larger lathe helps him craft more intricate creations, protecting the natural integrity of each piece.

Knockaert can look at the block of wood and see a finished piece. Local woods such as Manitoba maple, black and white ash, birch and willow are commonly used. Many friends and neighbours are always “on the lookout” for distinctive chunks of wood, which he crafts into works each with their own character, style and finish.

Selling his creations was never his plan; this was a simple hobby of love and creativity to share with those he chose. But when family and friends started to ask to buy his objects, he started to sell them. It still surprises Brian when someone wants to purchase one of his works. The most interesting part of selling is where the pieces have gone – throughout Canada, the United States, Mexico, Switzerland and Australia. Currently Brian’s works are sold locally at “Through the Arbour” in Pine Falls or by email ([click here](#)).



Brian Knockaert



Brian Knockaert Art



Brian Knockaert Art



Brian Knockaert Art

Ken Palmquist - Focus on Local Artists - Issue #20

December 2013

For the month of December, Winnipeg River Arts Council features musician Ken Palmquist who grew up on the north shore of Powerview in the Cheverfils District. When he was five, he got a plastic toy guitar for Christmas. And he has never stopped playing!

His desire to play was fueled at parties with local musicians, including many uncles and aunts. Soon he could play lead guitar. He had a natural ability to harmonize and honed his singing skill with the help of his mother Jean, who used to win many talent contests and even cut a 78 record in the 50's.

In high school, with his musical confidence firmly established, he started to play at talent shows all over Manitoba. Palmquist said, "I just enjoyed the thrill of entertaining and competing!"



At sixteen, he entered a competition with his Uncle Frank on the "Ray St. Germain Country Talent Caravan" and won. After that, he went on to perform with many bands, playing everything from Gospel, country and bluegrass to rock and roll and heavy metal. In his home studio, he recorded three original songs which made it onto the radio.

Presently, Palmquist plays all the different styles and categories of music he loved as a young man and also enjoys blues and jazz. He admitted, "I am now close to being a pensioner, but I still love to play anything pleasing to the ears."

He has performed at the 4P festival on three different occasions with different friends and family, and he hopes to do again. His dream is to play on cruise ships in warmer climes when he gives up his day job. His wife Jo has always supported his endeavors so it may happen.

Palmquist started building guitars and finished his first one this summer. He plans to continue construction and repair of guitars, and hopes to give lessons in the future.

His family has carried on the musical legacy. Daughter Tamara is an up-and-coming songwriter and grandson Chance loves guitar. Son Myles, accomplished guitarist and singer, is working on his second album. Palmquist said, "They all make me very proud!"

