



Ginette McMullen – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #57

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Bill C

January 2017

For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features writer Ginette McMullen.

At present, she lives in St. Georges, and she has lived there most of her life. She attended elementary school in St. Georges and went to high school in Powerview. She is employed by Interlake-Eastman Regional Health Authority, working in Support Services.



Ginette McMullen

McMullen writes mostly short stories: creative nonfiction and fiction. She is also working on a book. She is intrigued by people's stories, present or past. Their courage inspires and motivates her to sit down and put pen to paper. She likes to record their struggles and trauma, and reflect on the ways humans of all ages overcome injustice.

Living in St. George, near the shores of the Winnipeg River, she is surrounded by nature. This love of the outdoors also feeds her passion for creating prose. Her grandsons are another inspiration. She said, "Their honesty, love and laughter give me energy for life."

For as long as she can remember, she has been interested in writing and telling stories. From an early age, she had plenty of access to books. Her mother encouraged everyone in her family to read and made books a big part of her life. In high school, she had teachers who were passionate about writing. She said, "They fueled me to learn all I could."

McMullen has attended writing classes and workshops instructed by local author Donna Besel. Although she sometimes struggles to identify herself as a "serious writer," she has shared and read her stories to fellow students in these classes and workshop settings. She has also submitted short stories the CBC Creative Nonfiction Contest.

She likes to remind herself that her experiences and her commitment to writing are closely connected. One of her favourite quotes is: “Don’t shelf your passion for life, it is life.”



Pam Habing – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #58

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Bill C

February 2017

For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features Pam Habing.

Habing likes to experiment with different types of art so calls herself a mixed media artist. Right now, she really loves tile mosaics and alcohol inks. She grew up in Beausejour but lived in Winnipeg for twenty years. In the fall of 2014, she moved to Lac du Bonnet to be closer to family and she now works at Community Futures Winnipeg River.



Pam Habing

While in Winnipeg, Habing lived for eight years in a loft above MAWA (Mentoring Artists for Women's Art) and she often got together with fellow artists for art parties. From them, she learned techniques and explored new methods.

She said, "Working with different mediums and colors is therapy, particularly during the winter, dealing with seasonal depression. Also, nature inspires me every day."



She has many close artist-friends, including Annie Bergen and Stacy Hildebrand. Another artist who inspired her was Marcus Bauer, a former roommate. Habing worked with Bergen on a mosaic mural project on a wall of the old Occidental Hotel, at the corner of Main and Logan. She said, “It took four years and I’m really proud to have been a part of it.”

Although she’s mostly self-taught, Habing attended Red River College in 2004 and graduated from the two year Digital Multimedia Technology Program, which included graphic design, drawing and illustration classes, animation, web design, and video/audio production. While taking these courses, she drew every day.



Habing hasn’t done any formal art instructing but has developed and taught web development courses, geared towards female artists. While involved with MAWA, she designed and maintained their website, created a workshop in partnership with Reva Stone, and taught a DIY workshop on building websites, using online resources.

She has sold a handful of pieces, but mostly makes art because she loves it. Her work has been exhibited in two shows, both at MAWA. One was a fundraiser called “Healing Hands, Healing Art” and another was a show she curated called “Tree Stories.”

Habing said, “I hope that my art sparks curiosity in others to explore, create and have fun! I’ve never considered myself a serious artist but I’ve realized over the years that everyone has the ability to create.”



Lac du Bonnet Historical Society – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #59

winnipegriverarts.com/lac-du-bonnet-and-district-historical-society-focus-on-local-artists-issue-59/

Bill C

March 2017

For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features the Lac du Bonnet and District Historical Society. Incorporated on January 18, 1988, this organization received charitable designation status effective January 1, 1991.

Local residents established the Society to assemble and preserve the history of the Lac du Bonnet area. Their goals also include: planning ways to make sure future generations learn about the past, developing programs and facilities, seeking input from community. Because of limited resources, they have learned to be innovative and prudent to achieve these goals.

Gordon Emberley, who also served as chair of the local Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee, helped establish the Society. From the start, they realized that no such organization had ever existed in Lac du Bonnet.

The project off to a slow start and stalled during in the early 1990's. Society member Gus Wruck said, "However, in the mid-2000's, the donation of a log cabin called the Erickson dwelling revived interest."

The moving and restoration of the Erickson cabin proved to be a truly creative project. It ended with the pioneer home being reinvented as a museum at Halliday Park, located along PR 502, near Lac du Bonnet. It is open primarily during summer months and other times by appointment. Visitors can visit the Society's website for more detailed information.

The Society serves Town of Lac du Bonnet, RM of Lac du Bonnet, and Ward 4 of the RM of Alexander. It also attracts visitors from the summer population. Membership is open to the public and they always welcome individuals and families who support their activities and want to help out.

Every year, they host several fundraisers, a Heritage Day, a cultural awareness event, and other activities to recognise and celebrate the past. Fundraising events help folks learn more about the history of the area. Operations are supported by donations, municipal, provincial and federal grants.

There are no employees except for the summer student who is hired annually on a casual basis. Board members often volunteer for programs and projects. They hold monthly meetings and have worked hard to develop an updated Strategic Plan.





Grace Kost – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #60

winnipegriverarts.com/grace-kost-focus-on-local-artists-issue-60/

Bill C

April 2017

For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features quilter **Grace Kost**. Originally from Milner Ridge, Kost moved to Lac du Bonnet for her grade nine. She has lived there ever since, including fifty-one years in the same house.

In the 1980's, Kost discovered her passion for quilting. Although she's mostly self-taught, she has attended workshops in Winnipeg, Minneapolis, and various nearby American cities. After years of getting together with local quilters and learning complicated sewing methods, she started to design her own patterns. In collaboration with Anne Longston, Kost created "Sugar Maple Quilts" and soon various outlets began to sell their original motifs across Canada. Examples of their design projects include "Canadian Kids at Play" and another one called "Provincial Floral Emblems," donated to raise money for breast cancer.



Grace Kost

Kost says, "I like playing with colour. I love trying new techniques and styles."

Her deceased husband, the acclaimed visual artist Robert Kost, influenced her a great deal. She says, "I learned about composition and colour. He constantly studied famous artists and read books about art. We shared many hours talking about art and design."

Now retired, Kost previously worked as a realtor for Century 21. She wanted a career with a flexible schedule so she could accompany Robert on his travels to locate new scenery and subjects. On August 19 and 20, she will welcome the public to her Lac du Bonnet home, as part of the Boreal Shores Art Tour. She will be showing and selling selected items from her

collection of Robert's paintings and silk screen prints. Also, Pinawa's Stu Iverson plans to use his photography skills and ink-jet printer to create giclee fine art prints from specially chosen examples of Robert's work.

Kost has taken creative writing sessions with local author Donna Besel, enjoys musical gatherings, looks forward to classes with talented wood carvers Cathy and Rick Brereton, and loves "making messes and planning concerts" with her grandchildren.

She says, "Here's my advice. Jump in. Expect surprises. As the old saying goes – your hand will please your eye."





Wings of Power – Focus on Local Organization – Issue #61

winnipegriverarts.com/wings-of-power-focus-on-local-organization-issue-61/

Bill C

May 2017

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features ***Wings of Power***, a social services organization, located in Powerview-Pine Falls, where it provides support for family and children, and adults with disabilities. It also serves people in adjacent communities, including Sagkeeng, the Beaches, St- Georges, Great Falls, Broadlands, Black River, and Hollow Water.

Wings of Power originated when Powerview School staff recognized that local preschool-aged children needed access to school readiness programs. Founded in 1997, it was recognized as an official organization in June of 1998. Paul Magnan and Paul Barnard, in cooperation with Sunrise School Division, initiated the concept.

It offers a variety of programs, services, and events. All are free and open to everyone. They host two summer barbeques, a fall harvest dinner, and breakfast with Santa. In their main building, they offer prenatal/postnatal education, Mothers and Daughters in Touch program, and Circle of Security parenting. They host a free lending library and run a drop-in centre with free internet, phone, and fax service. The thrift store sells clothing items for \$1.00 each.

Many of the children's programs involve arts activities. In Grand Marais, Pine Falls, and Hollow Water, they offer "Lil Giggles" – weekly parent/child play groups for kids



Wings of Power

from birth to five years old. In summer, they host eight weeks of activities for boys and girls. In partnership with Powerview School, they operate Little Wings Preschool for three and four year-olds, provide the breakfast program food, and run cooking classes for kids, twice a year.

They own a Pine Falls home where two youth with disabilities live, and run a Helping Hands program for eight young people with disabilities. All of them volunteer at the hospital, local businesses, organizations, and personal care homes.

The organization employs four managers, twelve full-time, and six part-time employees. A six member board supervises overall operations. In 2016/17 fiscal year, more than 6000 people accessed their building, programs, and events. Department of Families and Healthy Child fund 82% of programs and the other 18% is financed by grants and private donations. IERHA is a major partner.

With these ongoing partnerships and programs, Wings of Power shows their strong belief in their stated mission – “Building a better community one person at a time.”



A. Armstrong – Employee



The Thrift Shop



Winnipeg River Arts Council – Local Organization – Issue #62

winnipegriverarts.com/winnipeg-river-arts-council-focus-on-local-organization-issue-62/

Bill C

June 2017

For this month, WRAC highlights itself. Even though this organization has been around for a while, people still have questions. To help explain the arts council, here's a brief overview of its origin, function, and goals.

In March of 2009, a group met to figure out how to develop a regional arts council and promote local visual, performing, and literary arts. After many meetings and lots of help from Winnipeg River Community Futures, the group made presentations to local communities. As a result, the towns of Powerview/Pine Falls and Lac du Bonnet, rural municipalities of Lac du Bonnet and Alexander, and local government district of Pinawa agreed to provide funding.



Art Gallery in Pinawa

In 2011, WRAC incorporated as a non-profit and formed a ten-member board, with two individuals from each of the participating municipalities. Their first tasks: work on constitution and organizational structures, conduct an arts inventory. At present, board members attend monthly meetings, provide direction to the council, fundraise, and help out at events. Additional volunteers are recruited, as needed.

WRAC'S administrator, Jennifer Hudson Stewart, works in the Winnipeg River Community Futures Office in Lac du Bonnet (Tuesday and Thursday, from 9:00 until 12:00). She creates monthly newsletters, updates the Facebook page, and meets with local groups to promote the arts. She keeps track of finances, attends province-wide and Winnipeg workshops that support rural councils, and does the logistical groundwork to bring large events to the region.

She also organizes the rural youth mentorship program, which had paid six local artists to mentor local youth. If artists or organizations need assistance, she can answer questions, and help them write grants to support their projects. As many people know, funders are much more willing to provide financial assistance through an existing arts council.

WRAC's main goal is to support local artists and arts organizations. Here's a list of just some events it has partnered with or supported: 4P Festival, Fire & Water, Eastman Judged Arts Shows, Pinawa Art Gallery, Pinawa Players, Eastern Manitoba Concert Association, Boreal Shores Art Tour, photo exhibits, library events/displays, workshops, author readings, youth mentorships. Every month, WRAC highlights an artist or arts organizations via local media, newsletter, and website. Also, WRAC has brought four well-received Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre touring plays to Great Falls, Pinawa, and Lac du Bonnet.

On July 27, at 7:00 p.m., WRAC will host a national touring production called "Dreamcatchers" at Pinawa Community Centre. It is a free, family-friendly musical celebration of Canada 150 and features dozens of lively young performers. On December 9, a special seasonal show, the much-loved "Christmas Carol" will be presented at the Lac du Bonnet Community Centre, as a finale to the year-long 100th anniversary celebration.

In the future, WRAC hopes to add more communities, including First Nations, adjacent rural municipalities, and provincial parks east of Highway 11 and north of Highway 317. WRAC brochures are available throughout the region and membership is open to artists, citizens, arts organizations, and businesses. Members pay fees and have voting privileges at Annual General Meeting. Privileges include newsletter subscription and reduced rates for programs. Membership forms, with all the fees and categories listed, are available on WRAC website.

Local artists create quilts, books, paintings, fibre art, theatre, plays, videos, music, concerts, crafts, photography, wood carvings, sculpture, needlework, pottery, and much, much more. WRAC's motto is "connecting people through art" and this organization is working hard to find, promote, and support all of these artists in as many ways as possible.



Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre



Art by Bernice Phillips



Celebrating Stories at Lac du Bonnet Library – Karen David, Shawn Keith, Mary Louise Chown



Art by Bernice Phillips exhibit at Library Allard in St.Georges





St-Georges Historical Society – Local Organization – Issue #63

winnipegriverarts.com/st-georges-historical-society-local-organization-issue-63/

Bill C

July 2017

For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features St-Georges Historical Society. This organization started out early in 1968, shortly after Canada's hundredth anniversary, when the community of St-Georges, participated in many centennial events. The Women's Catholic League (Ligue des femmes catholiques) was primarily responsible for its creation, after they met in the local church basement and formed the first committee.

In 1970, the society incorporated, just in time for Manitoba's centennial celebrations, and the St-Georges Museum soon opened its doors to the public. Since then, board members and volunteers have run the museum and its programs, with Jean Dupont acting as the curator. After his demise, the society created a foundation in his name and his estate donated the first funds.

Created as a regional museum, one of the first in the area, the St-George facility was also a founding member of the Association of Manitoba Museums. In October of 2012, it received a plaque from the association to commemorate this distinction. In May of 2014, fire destroyed a large part of the building, damaging exhibits and artifacts, but volunteers worked hard to preserve items that could be salvaged.

At present, the society operates out of a temporary location at Place McDougall in St-Georges, and partners with Allard Library, where most of their events are held. Every year, it organizes its schedule in advance and their regular program includes art shows, Crèche Festival, summer camp, travelling exhibits, and temporary exhibits.



Reception at Lalour Art Exhibit

Since 2014, Diane Dubé has served as volunteer director-curator. Once the new museum is open, she will be replaced by a director and a part-time assistant. In the summer, two students will help with seasonal activities, as well as working on the archives.





Donna Besel – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #64

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Bill C

August 2017

For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council updates the profile of a previously featured artist, **Donna Besel**. This award-winning author loves writing of all kinds. For almost ten years, she has taught creative writing workshops in schools from Gillam to Sprague, through the Manitoba Arts Council's province-wide "Artists in the Schools" program. Her message to writers, young and old: "You have something to say, and the right to say it."



Donna Besel

Besel knows Eastman well. She grew up in Whiteshell Provincial Park, went to high school in Whitemouth, and lived in the Riverland area of Lac du Bonnet for almost thirty-five years. She is now located further north on the shores of the Winnipeg River, in St-Georges.

She likes to paint and draw, plays guitar, writes songs, and has taught visual art, music, and drama. Since its inception in 2009, she has served on the WRAC board and strongly believes in its motto: "Connecting people through art."

Besel's work has appeared in various national publications and on CBC radio, and she has presented at forums, conferences, workshops, libraries, and universities. Her writing has won prizes from publications such as *Prairie Fire* and *This Magazine*, and reached finalist level in CBC's Literary Awards three times.

In 2012, she spoke about life as a rural writer at the Manitoba Writers' Guild national symposium. For seven years, she served on the MWG board, a province-wide organization, supporting writers and writing.

In 2016, the Manitoba Book Awards nominated Besel as one of Manitoba's most promising writers and nominated her collection of short stories, *Lessons from a Nude Man*, for the Margaret Laurence Award for Fiction. This book also earned a fourth place spot on McNally Robinson Bookstore's 2015 bestsellers list. In the same year, she received a Canada Council grant and a two-week residency at the Deep Bay cabin in Riding Mountain National Park from Manitoba Arts Council.

In January of this year, Canada's ReLit Awards nominated Besel's book for their national shortlist. In May, the University of Manitoba featured her in their alumni magazine, *UM Today*, in an article about overcoming adversity.

When asked what motivates her writing, Besel quotes from Anne Lamott, a famous writing teacher: "You own everything that has happened to you. Tell your stories."



Leah Boulet – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #65

winnipegriverarts.com/leah-boulet-focus-on-local-artists-issue-65/

Bill C

September 2017

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council revisits a previously featured artist, *Leah Boulet*. Born and raised in Pine Falls, she moved to Silver Falls in 1987, and then moved to St-Georges in 1995. Boulet has many artistic talents but, right now, she is focused on pen and water colour illustration. She says, "I like illustrating better than fine art."

To enhance her skills, she has taken courses from well-known rural artists: Pinawa's Brenda McKenzie, Pine Falls' Roberta Laliberte, and Winnipeg Beach's Heidi Hunter. She reads books about illustration, has completed online courses such as "Sketchbook Skool," and follows internet artists, including Jonathan Twingley from United States, Felix Scheinberger from Germany, and Prashan Miranda from Canada/East India.



Leah Boulet



Boulet completed a Human Ecology Degree, where she studied design and fashion illustration, with clothing/textile major and business minor, and did her practicum with a magazine. Presently, she puts her business skills to use, working as an accounting clerk for

Rural Municipality of Alexander. Last spring, she co-instructed an art course with Roberta Laliberte. She did four weeks on drawing and Roberta did four weeks on water colours. Prior to that, she taught a year of high school art.

Last year, the editor Wayne Chan asked to include her story and two of her illustrations in his collection of short stories, *Manitoba at Christmas*. Her photography has been exhibited at St-Georges Museum and her art has also been shown at the school. At this point, she's not interested in prizes, but she'd like to enter arts shows, such as Eastman Judged Art Exhibition in the future.



A few years ago, Boulet discovered "Sketchcrawlers," the concept of getting artists together to sketch outside. This idea started in United States and has since spread across the world. She says, "I wanted to try it. So I invited one friend. It felt scary to sketch in public, like I was pretending to be something I wasn't. But it got me outside to enjoy the summer."

After that, she kept inviting people of all skill levels to join her, and created a Facebook group called "River Sketchcrawlers." Anyone interested in sketching can check out this page, sign up for notifications, and join the fun. The artists meet in the summer, on Monday nights, at a location that it is announced a couple of days earlier. If it is raining, they move into a shelter.

Boulet says, "I love the creative process, making something where nothing existed. I also love the stories that you find in art."



Heather Westdal – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #66

winnipegriverarts.com/heather-westdal-focus-on-local-artists-issue-66/

Bill C

October 2017

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features artist Heather Westdal. A long-time Pinawa resident, she recently retired from her position as Home Economics teacher at Pinawa Senior School.

In 2013, a friend challenged Westdal to discover her “inner visual artist.” Both of them already shared a strong background in music. They played in Pinawa’s Community Band and Heather often performed with the school’s jazz band and the musical ensemble, Satin Dolls. But they wanted to try something new and different in their lives. Westdal decided to try visual art for her challenge.



Heather Westdal

In January of that same year, Winnipeg River Arts Council partnered with Pinawa Art 211 to offer drawing lessons, taught by Mary Louise Chown. Westdal signed up for the classes and was immediately captivated by Chown’s quiet, supportive instructional style. When asked to draw a piece with a repetitive design, Westdal focused on a philodendron plant. This exercise later became her first acrylic painting.

These classes sparked Westdal’s connection to canvas and paints. She joined the group of artists who run the Pinawa Art Gallery, known as Pinawa Art 211. With encouragement and support from these artists, her work progressed quickly. Although early creations were landscaped-based, she has since developed her painting skills and now incorporates textural concepts. She used this technique in “The Buddha,” an image which she entered in the recent Eastman Judged Art Exhibition hosted by Whitemouth. In 2015, she entered her work in the previous EJAE, held in Lac du Bonnet.

She continues to expand her knowledge of acrylic painting through ongoing mentorship from the Pinawa Art Gallery artists, as well as the use of books and art magazine. When asked about her inspiration, Westdal said, “I find my muse using photos. They provide a back story and this narrative informs my interpretation.”

The use of photos also applies to her commissioned paintings. She said, “These works involve many discussions with the owner of the photos. These conversations help create the final painting.”



Art by Heather Westdal



Art by Heather Westdal



Fay Campbell – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #67

winnipegriverarts.com/fay-campbell-focus-on-local-artists-issue-67/

Bill C

November 2017



For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features one of Pinawa's "pioneers," Fay Campbell. In 1963, she moved from Chalk River and fell in love with the lively spirit of the town and its wilderness surroundings. After her arrival, she met Joyce Hampton, a landscape specialist, who was already finding success as an artist. Campbell signed up as Hampton's pupil and immediately started to develop her own artistic skills. In subsequent years, Rose Drynan and Vivian Thomson have also mentored her.

In the town's growing art community, Campbell found further support and encouragement, especially after the formation of the artists' collective, Pinawa Art 211, and later, the Pinawa Art Gallery.

She is now a "snowbird" and lives part of the year in Texas with her husband Wilf. During her time away from Pinawa, she takes art classes, and teaches and mentors other aspiring artists, completing the circle of instruction.

When Pinawa friends and neighbours move to new jobs, her art often show up in their luggage, as reminders of their former homeland's beauty.

She said, “My paintings have gone international. They are now hanging in Indonesia, Jakarta, and England, to name a few countries.”

Campbell has found another outlet to display her work, with the many recent Eastman Judged Art Exhibitions in our region. In 2013, she won a third place prize in water colour for her painting “Poppies,” and an Honourable Mention for her acrylic painting of still life hydrangeas. In the 2017, the EJAЕ judges awarded a first place to her acrylic painting, “Winter Trail.” After a short viewing interlude at the Pinawa Art gallery, this piece found a home in a private collection.

Campbell said, “I regret that there is not enough time for all the paintings I’d like to create but I definitely plan to continue my journey as an artist in Eastern Manitoba.”



Richard Cline – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #68

winnipegriverarts.com/richard-cline-focus-on-local-artists-issue-67/

Bill C

December 2017

For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features visual artist, Richard Cline. Throughout his life, Cline has had a working relationship with the natural environment. Now retired in Seven Sisters, he worked for thirty years as a Conservation Officer (Game Warden) in Virden, Lynn Lake, Gillam, and Riverton. His knowledge of the animals and landscape is now expressed in his photo-realistic oil paintings.



Richard Cline

Born in Glenboro, Cline learned basic drawing and painting skills from his mother. Initially expressing himself in cartooning and line drawing, he came to love the results achieved by a close examination of both line and colour in the animals and plants he found around his home. Researching master classical painters such as Rembrandt and modern masters such as Terry Isaac and Robert Bateman, Cline has worked to hone his talent in presenting accurate images for the viewer.

Recently he had the opportunity to work with Robert Bateman for a weekend Master Artists' class on Cortez Island. Cline continues to take classes with other artists in the Pinawa Art Gallery, Steinbach Arts Centre, or with his mentor and friend, Gary Holden.

Cline has participated in the Eastman Judged Art Exhibitions including the Pinawa event (2013), Lac du Bonnet (2015) and Whitemouth (2017). In the latter, he was awarded first and third prize for his entries. He has also applied to be one of the artists in the second annual Boreal Shores Art Tour 2018.

His paintings display his respect and love of the world around him. Now he is challenging himself in a series of portraits as well as doing commissions for clients. He wants nothing more than to continually improve his skills.

To inspire himself and other artists, he quotes this simple assertion from renowned Canadian artist, Robert Bateman, "If you truly love art, JUST DO IT!"