



## Jim Niedermayer – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #69

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Bill C

**January 2018**



For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council highlights a previously featured artist, chainsaw carver Jim Niedermayer. Born and raised in Powerview-Pine Falls, he currently resides in Silver Falls.

Niedermayer learned how to carve on his own. His father, a talented knife-maker and woodcarver, gave him a book on the subject and he worked at it for about six months. But he already knew how to handle a chainsaw. For years, he harvested wild rice from remote lakes. Any lumber he needed at his camp had to be made on the spot so he learned how to rip logs into boards freehand.



When he makes a carving, he uses full safety gear: pants, glasses, ear protection, steel toe boots, gloves, and respirator mask. Contrary to what some folks may feel when they pick up a chainsaw, Niedermayer said, “It’s actually calming for me, making something new out of a log, giving something a second chance, beyond the tree’s life.”

During the past few years, he has earned a growing profile in the chainsaw carving community. His work is scattered across most provinces, either from competing or being hired to create a work of art out of a tree stump in someone’s yard. He has even carved trees in a city park.

Wherever he goes, he serves as a mentor for new chainsaw artists and enjoys meeting carvers. He said, “They are like family. Even though we are competing, we help each other.”

Niedermayer has done demonstrations at many schools and festivals. This February, he will be appearing at the Festival du Voyageur in Winnipeg, alongside some of the top carvers from across Canada. Over the past eight years, he has participated in numerous competitions. One of the more memorable events was the Canadian Chainsaw Competition, held in London, Ontario. He won a fifth place, out of twelve of Canada’s top carvers.

His advice to anyone interested in getting into this kind of art – “Do not quit. There will be times when you think you reached your limits but just hang on and things get better. Chainsaw carving has it all, sport, art, and entertainment. The best thing is to go out and watch an event and you will learn a lot.”







## Daryl Woodbeck – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #70

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Bill C

### February 2018

For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features actor Daryl Woodbeck from Pinawa. By day, he works at Canadian Nuclear Laboratories as an Emergency Preparedness Officer, writing and reviewing policies and training personnel on emergency procedures.

After work, he brings his engaging personality to the Pinawa Players. An actor of long standing, he has honed his skills in plays as diverse as “Lend me A Tanner” (singing opera), “Lafferty’s Wake” (posing as an Irish performer), and, most recently, “Sadie Flynn Comes to Big Oak” (showcasing his comic timing alongside Myles Drynan, his long-term “partner in mime”).



Daryl Woodbeck

Woodbeck said, “I love the thrill of being on stage, hearing the reaction of the audience, and knowing the cast has given the audience a new experience.”

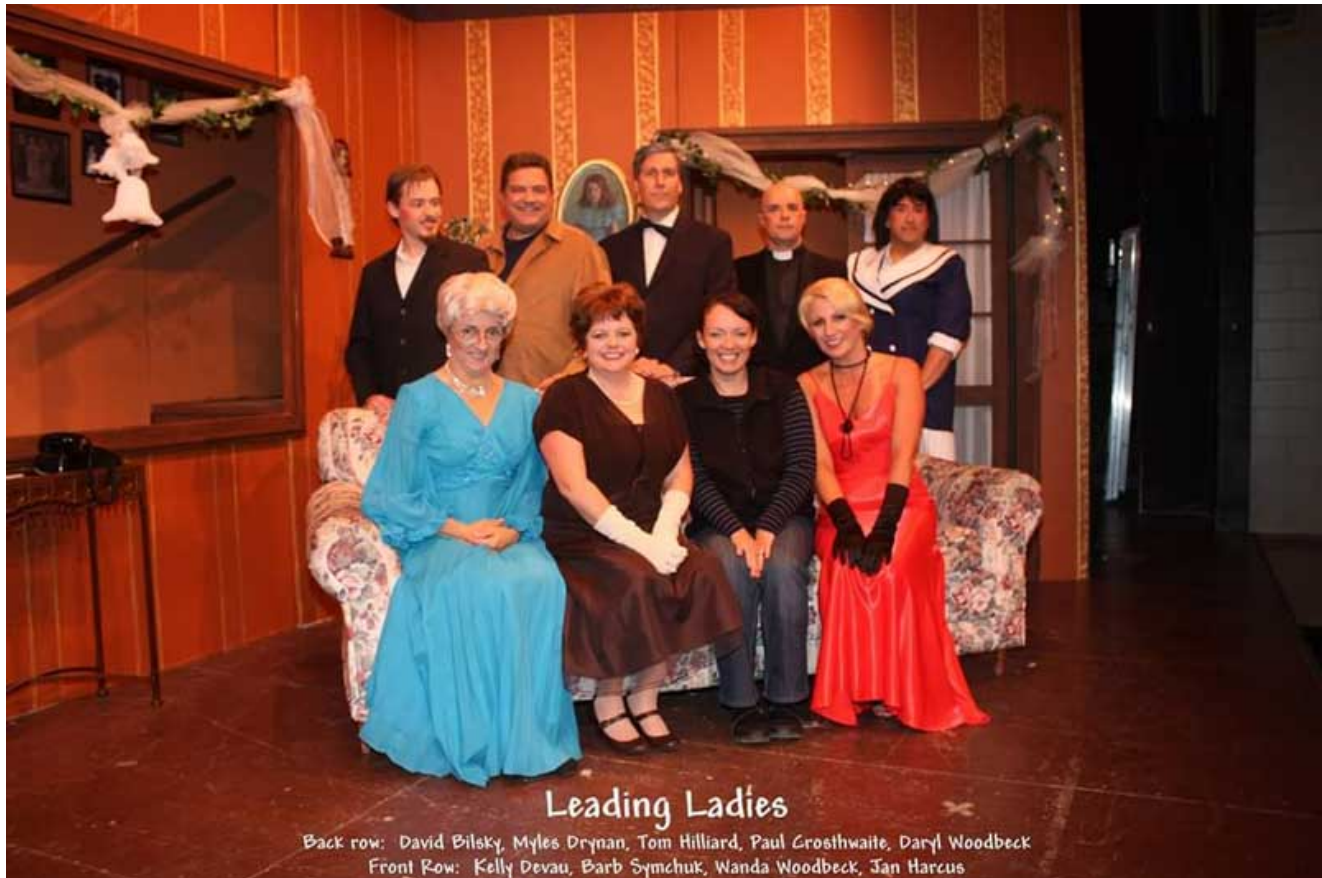
His passion for live theatre began in the 1980’s as a backstage worker helping with props, set design, lighting, and sound management in Pinawa. After all this valuable experience, he ventured onto the stage with his first role in “The Nerd” and he has acted in plenty of plays ever since. Both Beausejour’s Haystack Productions and Gillam’s Live Wire Productions have benefitted from his work.

Offstage, Daryl has directed such works as “I Take This Man,” “Done to Death,” and “Leading Ladies.” In this last play, presented in 2009, a publicity photo showed him wearing a wig and a smartly tailored dress.



In "Moon over Buffalo," he worked with his wife, Wanda. She will be directing this April's production of "Calendar Girls" and Woodbeck will be the prompter for the women in the cast.

The Pinawa Players is now Manitoba's longest running amateur company. Woodbeck encourages anyone interested in theatre to come and join this incredible group of people. His philosophy to acting is simple – "It has to be fun because the pay is lousy!"





## Roberta Laliberte – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #71

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Bill C

### March 2018

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council revisits previously featured visual artist **Roberta Laliberte**, who grew up Pine Falls and still lives there.

When she was young, Laliberte learned by copying. In a small community, before the internet, it was all she had. She said, “I thought my art had to look super realistic. Later on, I wanted to show viewers how I saw the world, and not replicate it perfectly.”

She began studying artists online, learning techniques and finding new mediums to interpret in her own way. In 1993, she attended fine arts at Mount Allison University in Sackville, New Brunswick, but did not complete a degree. She said, “At the time, I didn’t see the value. Now I see it.”



Artist Roberta Laliberte

Recently, she has developed her application process, influenced by every-day experiences. She prefers paper as a surface but likes mixed media, adding more of them to her repertoire, such as chalk pastels and different charcoals. Also, texture, shape and colour inspire her.

She said, “I now lean towards semi-abstract or abstract landscapes and still life, with loose, spontaneous passages and thick impasto sections.”

Laliberte instructs artist in schools, private classes, and online groups with students from all over the world. She helps teachers with professional development and has earned a Community Collaborative Arts Coordinator Certificate, awarded by Creative Manitoba, a

Winnipeg organization dedicated to professional artists' development. She spent a week at the Lincoln Center in New York, taking their International Educator Workshop, which uses inquiry-based approaches to learning.

She encourages students to explore and learn, just as children do. She said, "We decide at some point what we are good at and leave it at that. People tell me I'm talented. I have some skills but the one that serves me best is my tenacity."

She has produced public art installations such as the one commissioned by a jury from Heritage Canada/La Maison Des Artistes for Library Allard in St. Georges, and created videos, such as the ones with Canada's first Youth Walking Theatre Company. Her work has also been exhibited in shows throughout Manitoba. Supported by Manitoba Arts Council's ArtsSmarts program, she has helped students create large installations. In 2000, Dateline Arts Magazine named her as one of their Artists of the Year.

Her favourite quote: "We were all born to create. What you make speaks to who you are and where you are in that moment, and it is good."



Ballerina



Before They Migrate





## Cohen Sieg – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #72

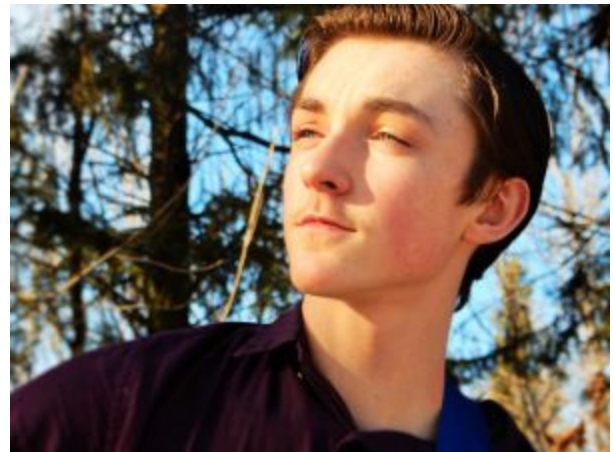
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Bill C

**April 2018**

For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features Cohen Sieg. A life-long resident of Sieg's Corner, he's a sixteen-year old singer/songwriter and musician. When he was six, he took some beginner guitar lessons which kindled his interest in music. At the age of ten, he decided to commit and take some real lessons. And the rest, as they say, is history. Since then, he has been mainly self-taught.



Singer-Song Writer Cohen Sieg

His musical style is pop/folk but he also likes country, rock and a bit of blues. The guitar is his main instrument, but he has been known to pick up and play bass guitar, piano, drums, saxophone, clarinet, mandolin, ukulele, banjo, harmonica, trumpet, accordion, and an assortment of percussion instruments.

He also makes films, including music videos and similar creative projects. Working with Winnipeg Film Group, he made a music video and hopes to further explore this medium.

Sieg has always wanted to be an entertainer and strives to be the best musician he can be. He said, "I feel most confident when I'm on stage. I want to put on the best show for my audience. I try to write songs that spark an emotional response. I pour my heart out and strive to capture people's souls."

He has performed at gigs all over Manitoba such as Lac du Bonnet's Fire & Water Music Festival (3 times), Selkirk events, and Red River Exhibition. He's also played at venues all across Canada from Charlottetown, P.E.I. to Vancouver, B.C. He posts his work on social media sites such as Instagram and YouTube, and currently has a single out on iTunes, Spotify and Google Play.

Sieg is always working on new projects and he hopes to have an album out soon. He likes contests and has entered Canadian Music Class Challenge and CBC's Searchlight (along with a video he made). One of his tunes placed second in a Steinbach song writing contest.



Cohen Seig

He said, "Every person interprets a song differently. I hope my work affects each individual in a unique way. As long as someone connects to my material, I did my job right."



## T. Thomas and C. Quesnel – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #73

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Bill C

### May 2018

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features ***Tanis Thomas and Carl Quesnel***, a Pinawa couple who own and operate a family business called Boreal Workshop, which creates stunning handcrafted jewellery. In addition to jewellery and personal goods, they produce art objects, and vessels and containers suitable for personal and ceremonial use.

In 2016, Boreal Workshop moved from Winnipeg to Pinawa. The couple felt drawn by the beauty of the Canadian Shield. The scenic surroundings played a major role in their decision to live and work in this community.

Tanis Thomas is a member of Ochekwi-Sipi Cree Nation (Fisher River), with Cree and Metis ancestors from the Interlake and Grand Beach regions of Manitoba. Her education in art began at an early age. Her uncle, Don LaForte, was an accomplished visual artist and bon vivant.



Tanis Thomas

Thomas said. "He passed on a belief that art is intrinsic to our nature."

Carl Quesnel, the head jeweller and lapidary-gemologist is Canadian, of English and French ancestry, with roots in Winnipeg, and the Manigatogan-Long Lake area of Manitoba. For those who may not know, a lapidary is a person who cuts, polishes or engraves stones. Quesnel was introduced to lapidary at a young age by parents and grandparents, and he has studied gemology with the Gemological Institute of America. He is also an accomplished gold, silver, and copper smith.

The couple has lived and worked in diverse regions of Canada, from the Arctic to the Prairies. Boreal Workshop's classical, minimalist aesthetic is reflected in each piece they design and hand make. As well, their work is informed by Indigenous and European cultures, the traditions of art and craft, and the environment.

Thomas said, "The influences of cultures, traditions, and the beauty of the natural world are intrinsic to our art."

All of their creations are hand made in Canada and ethically produced. They cut and facet gemstones using select rough sourced from around the world. The metalwork they produce is also all handmade, typically in copper, silver, and gold. Where possible, they use local sources and distributors, and consider sustainability and the environment.

Their work is available on their website, [www.borealworkshop.com](http://www.borealworkshop.com), as well as at select retail locations in Manitoba. Pieces have been donated to the art and ceremonial exhibit, "Walking with Our Sisters," and they support Manitoba-based arts organizations and exhibits with donations of jewellery and vessels for fundraising events.

Their motto: "We make beautiful things for all people."











## Andreas Oertel – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #74

[winnipegriverarts.com/andreas-oertel-focus-on-local-artists-issue-74/](http://winnipegriverarts.com/andreas-oertel-focus-on-local-artists-issue-74/)

Bill C

### June 2018

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council revisits previously featured writer Andreas Oertel. Born in Germany, Oertel spent most of his life in Manitoba. For the past sixteen years, he's lived in the Lac du Bonnet area. By day, he works for the Manitoba Government. In spare hours, he finds time to follow his passion – writing action-adventure novels for middle grade readers (grades 4 to 7).

Oertel went to the University of Winnipeg and British Columbia Institute of Technology but he doesn't think those classes really helped him with his fiction projects. He said, "In fact, if I could travel back in time, I'd go for a degree in English or diploma in journalism."



Author Andreas Oertel

Instead, he taught himself to write through trial and error – lots and lots of errors. He wrote, submitted to publishers, and was rejected over and over. With each rejection letter, he became more determined to learn the craft. He continued to write, revise and re-submit, and eventually his stories began getting published.

When asked what inspires him, he said, "I like to think that a young, reluctant reader somewhere might finish one of my books and think – Hey, that was a pretty cool story!"

Not surprising, given his motivation to inspire kids to love books, he makes lots of visits to schools and libraries, including the ones in the area.

Although he's never taught a formal writing class, he's had six books professionally published and they have been nominated for several awards (Silver Birch Award, Manitoba Young Readers Choice Award, and the McNally Robinson Book for Young People Award). In 2017, he won The Very Best Award! (Young Adult Category) for Prisoner of Warren.

This spring has been especially exciting for Oertel. In April, *In Too Deep* – the fifth book in The Shenanigans Series – was officially launched in Winnipeg at McNally Robinson Bookstore. In May, the 2018 TD Canada Book Tour, Canada's single largest book event for young people, offered him a spot on their national circuit. Selected authors spread out across Canada, doing presentations and readings. Oertel's assignment: tour southern Ontario and speak to over 800 middle graders. He said, "I was thrilled to be one of 30 authors. It was an exhausting week, but a lot of fun."

His advice for writers, young or old: "If you have a desire to write, don't give up. Also, your goal shouldn't be to be a writer, your goal should be to write great stories. You'll know you're a writer when other people call you a writer."



## Linda Bourrier – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #75

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Bill C

### July 2018

For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features visual artist Linda Bourrier. Two years ago, she was living and working in Calgary, as an executive assistant at a large oil company. After retiring, she moved to Pine Falls, where her husband had family.

When she was around ten, she watched a neighborhood girl sketching clothes models. This experience inspired her passion for art and it remained a favourite subject throughout her school years. In grade twelve, she won the art award and her love for creativity deepened.

Later in life, while busy working and raising three children, she treated herself to evening and weekend workshops, starting with beginner watercolor classes at North Mount Pleasant Arts Centre in Calgary, then sessions in various artists' studios, including Nancy-Lynne Hughes, Karin Richter, and a weekend workshop with Gordon MacKenzie from Ontario. While living in Pine Falls, she's taken workshops with local artist Roberta Laliberte. She hopes to learn more from Laliberte and other artists in the area.

Bourrier said, "I'm absolutely hungry to learn new techniques."

In her adult life, she prefers to depict flowers. Although watercolor painting is her first and favorite medium, she's dabbled with acrylics and wants to learn more. A while ago, she tried making 3-D stained glass creations. Mixed media sparks a lot of interest, as well as cartoon type characters. She has also experimented with resin on glass, simple mobiles, copic markers, watercolor pens, and various children's crafts. Right now, her special passion is creating homemade personal cards.



Linda Bourrier

She said, “I like a more realistic style, rather than abstract. And I look at objects and scenery with ‘watercolor eyes.’ Colors also play a big part in stimulating me.”

Bourrier admits she hasn’t settled on a single art practice or medium but hopes, in her retirement, to focus on one and get better at it. She has not exhibited any of her work, but thinks she might like to, at some point. But she enjoys sharing her talents with children in her church and with interested friends. She also likes the fun of “art dates” with fellow artists, such as the River Crawlers Sketch Club, organized by Leah Boulet from St-Georges.

Bourrier said, “While doing art, I’m in my ‘happy place.’ It shuts out the rest of the world and any worries.”







## Julie Lavoie – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #76

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Bill C

### August 2018

For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features visual artist Julie Lavoie, a life-long resident of St-Georges. After raising their two children, she and her husband now live by themselves in a comfortable house on the community's large rocky hill.

Lavoie loves trying new methods and finds it hard picking just one. Right now, she enjoys experimenting with different pencils. She said, "I gravitate toward graphite, pastels, and my new favourite, coloured pencils. They're versatile and can mimic other medium. And they've come a long way since our high school days."

Lavoie likes applying multiple layers with her pencils and then using a safe workable solvent, to achieve results that resemble oil paints. Even though the repeated applications take time, she has doesn't mind investing days or weeks to complete one painting. She is self-taught and has been working on her arts practice for years. Even as a child, she liked making art. She said, "If homework involved art, it was just fun."



Julie Lavoie

In high school, she took art classes, with many opportunities to experience different mediums, to complete projects that inspired and challenged her, and to work on her drawing skills, increasing her knowledge of composition and perspective. She said, "Every year, I learned something new, building on skills from the previous year."



In her twenties, she discovered the joy of art books. She used them to improve her skills and mimicked the artists she saw in these books, such as Pencil Drawing by Gene Franks. Another influence was Claudia Nice, a well-known instructor. Lavoie said, “Her techniques are easy to follow; she breaks down all the steps. In her books, she teaches about watercolours, pen and ink drawing, sketching, and other techniques. She’s still one of my favourites.”

She also uses the internet to explore new medium. For example, she discovered Lisa Clough, from Lachri Fine Arts, who creates work in oils, acrylics, graphite, a medium called Inktense, and, most important, coloured pencils. Lavoie said, “Clough’s styles range from realism to surrealism, and even contemporary.”

She also found Alyona Nickelson, an artistic pioneer who creates new products that change the way how coloured pencils react on paper. Lavoie said, “They are like pastels, but no smudging. You get vibrant colours; you can finish a painting in half the time.”

She has also learned a lot from local artists, taking watercolour classes with Nancy-Lou Ateah and Jo-Anne Thompson, watercolour and mixed media with Roberta Laliberte, and drawing with Leah Boulet. When asked for inspiring words, Lavoie said, “Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes. Art is knowing which one to keep.”







## Ray St. Hilaire – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #77

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Bill C

### September 2018

For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features musician, Ray St. Hilaire. Although WRAC previously featured St. Hilaire as an artist, he has continued to pursue his musical career with great enthusiasm. He said “I’ve been performing with my band almost every weekend this past summer.”

Prior to moving to Lac du Bonnet, St. Hilaire worked as an industrial mechanic in Winnipeg. Eight years ago, he retired from mechanics and now lives with his wife Barb on the eastern shores of the Winnipeg River.

St. Hilaire plays multiple instruments including acoustic guitar, electric guitar, electric bass, and his new favourites – upright bass or double bass. When he was around twelve years old, he took accordion lessons but, when he heard the Beatles, there was no turning back. He switched to guitar. Now, although he travels all over with his band, he gladly makes time to instruct young guitarists. “I get great satisfaction knowing I’ve given them a skill they will enjoy for the rest of their lives,” he said.



Ray St. Hilaire

For over forty years, St. Hilaire played in the local Winnipeg music scene. “It feels like I’ve gigged in just about every hotel or club in Manitoba, going as far north as The Pas and as far south as Emerson,” he said.

These days, he sticks closer to home and appears regularly at the Lac du Bonnet Personal Care Home. With his band, “Rice and Beans,” he also gets hired for much larger venues. They’ve played at

Festival du Voyageur, 4P Festival, charity events such as Children's Wish Benefit, and the anniversary gathering for Harley-Davidson Owners of Canada.

St. Hilaire loves motorcycles, especially Harleys, and loves visiting Mexico in the winter. While there, he often performs with his band. He also takes time to volunteer for local organizations and serves on the board of the Winnipeg River Arts Council. At big events, he shows up with a smile to help out and he even took a turn as its president.

This past summer, while he attended the Fire & Water Music Festival, he felt inspired to write six new songs, with original music and lyrics. When asked what motivates him to keep practicing and performing, he said, "Music is so invigorating and at the same time relaxing – great medicine for the human condition!"



Ray St. Hilaire





## Cliff Zarecki – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #78

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Bill C

**October 2018**

For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features wood carver, Cliff Zarecki, who grew up in the Lee River area on his parents' homestead and went to school in Lac du Bonnet.

Before the cottagers got there, the Lee River was a much quieter wilderness. Spending time close to nature made Zarecki passionate about it. When he was younger, he did a lot of hunting, gathering, and fishing, but soon grew more interested in creating birds and animals through wood carving. He uses basswood, a local wood, but also works with harder-to-find woods such as walnut, butternut, and a southern USA swamp wood called Tupelo.



Cliff Zarecki

During a caribou hunting trip in Northern Manitoba, his friend, Ron Jackson, got him started. "Ron gave classes which I took for years and enjoyed. He also encouraged everyone to enter the Prairie Canada Carvers competition held every spring in Winnipeg," Zarecki said.

At these lessons, Zarecki met world class carvers. One of them, Larry Vanderhyde, agreed to mentor him. Later, he took courses from many elite carvers throughout Canada and the United States. For several years, he has instructed six young people in Lac du Bonnet. He tells them he won't charge for materials but they must promise to enter the kids' competition at the Prairie Canada event. He said, "Several have won prizes. I sponsor the kids' section. They can win \$100 for first, \$50 for second and \$25 for third so I joke that I pay the kids to take my class."

As well as Prairie Canada, Zarecki has entered the Eastman Judged Art Exhibits and the Southwestern Florida Woodcarving competitions, which has more than 600 entries. In both Winnipeg and Florida, he has won “Best of Show” awards at novice, intermediate and advanced levels. Presently, he competes in the masters’ group, and has won several “Best of Division” awards. But “Best of Show” in this category still eludes him.

Before retirement, he worked as an engineer. He got interested in art because he thinks it is so much harder to learn. Although he still enjoys wildlife photography, he finds he doesn’t have enough time to get really good, so he focuses on his carving.

“Making high quality work requires hard work and patience, and it sometimes drives my spouse nuts when I spend too much time on a project. The problem is – I’m totally hooked! To be successful one needs to focus on minute details, right from the initial planning stage.”



## Ward Wotton – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #79

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Bill C

### November 2018

For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features theatre, film, and broadcast technician, Ward Wotton. In October, he moved to the Leisure Falls area, in the RM of Alexander.

Wotton grew up in Deloraine, Manitoba. He attended Saskatchewan Technical College in Saskatoon and then worked as a recreation director in Creelman-Fillmore area in rural Saskatchewan, and as a tour guide and promotions specialist in British Columbia. After moving back to Manitoba, he worked for CKX television in Brandon, Valley Cable Vision in Morden, and CKY in Winnipeg.

In early 90's, he founded *Lucky Dog Network*, filming amateur football, soccer, dance, and figure skating events. He went on to create television commercials for Parker Jarvis ad agency in Winnipeg and Partners agency in Toronto, creating ads for clients such as MTS, Walmart, Manitoba Hydro, and tourism.

When asked, he says, "I like having different jobs and acquiring new skills. I've taken courses with Film Manitoba, from the industry and my union. I'm also self-taught, constantly learning on the job."

In 1997, he joined International Association of Theatre, Stage, and Film Employees – Local 63 Winnipeg, and worked in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Toronto on television series (*Tracker*, *Doc*, *Shirley Holmes*), movies (*Chicago*, *Shall We Dance*, *Harvest*, *Jesse James*), and the mini-series *Avro Arrow*. After that, he did technical stage work at various venues,



Ward Wotton

including Rainbow Stage, Pantages, MTC Concert Hall, ballets, operas, and touring shows including *War Horse*, *Wicked*, *Wizard of Oz*, *West Side Story*, *Phantom of the Opera*, and *Evita*.

Wotton says, “My proudest achievements: a video on the National Women’s Hockey Championship, now displayed in the Hockey Hall of Fame, and a video on the Royal Winnipeg Ballet dance school’s National Championships.”

Wotton has coached various sports, including hockey and baseball. These days, he wants to share the technical skills he has acquired over the years. He hopes to mentor young people in the area, through Creative Manitoba’s rural youth mentorship program, in partnership with Winnipeg River Arts Council.

Wotton’s motto: “*Try your best and enjoy life.*”



## Ron Neufeld – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #80

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Bill C

**December 2018**

For this month, the Winnipeg River Arts Council features writer Ron Neufeld. Born in Calgary, he has also lived in the United States and British Columbia. Neufeld's background is in the construction trades. After retiring in 2013, he moved to Vancouver Island where he began taking creative writing courses at the University of Victoria. In September of 2018, he moved to Pinawa, in order to be closer to family living in Winnipeg.

Since then, he has wasted no time jumping right into the lively arts scene in Manitoba. He has attended the Eastern Manitoba Concert Association's performances and author readings at McNally Robinson's Bookstore in Winnipeg. He also volunteered to help with set-up and takedown at Mary's Wedding (the Theatre Projects play in Great Falls), signed up for the memoir writing classes offered by Winnipeg River Arts Council at the Lac du Bonnet Library, and recently agreed to serve on WRAC's board of directors.

Neufeld grew up in a family of storytellers – refugees from the Ukraine who settled in Calgary after World War II. His earliest childhood memories are of Sunday evenings lying on the living room carpet listening to his parents, their friends, and especially his grandmother share stories of unbelievable hardship, suffering, and loss. But he also heard stories of resilience, hope, resourcefulness, and love.



Ron Neufeld

In 2007, together with his father, he wrote and self-published his memoirs. Neufeld says, "These tales told by immigrants were often infused with laughter and so I learned that tragedy and humour are not incompatible."



His constant companion is a Border Collie-Great Pyrenees cross named Magnus and he loves exploring his new community with his canine friend. He writes daily, both short stories and memoir, inspired by the beauty of the Whiteshell Provincial Park and the artists who live along the Winnipeg River. He cares deeply about nature and the environment, and wants to explore this topic in greater depth in his artistic work.

He says, "Landscape and how it shapes us is an important theme in my writing."