



## Shelley Street – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #117

January 2022

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features knitter and crochet artist Shelley Street, whose other artistic interests include writing and visual art. Street grew up in Portage la Prairie and lived most of her adult life in Winnipeg. Almost fourteen years ago, she and her husband moved to the St. Georges area, between Great Falls and Silver Falls.

Over the years, Street has crocheted a number of afghans, both full-size and for babies. Recently, she branched out into crocheted animals and other small items, and made a few doilies for her home. She said, with a laugh, "A person can only use so many afghans."

When Street was ten years old, her grandmother taught her how to crochet. Prior to that, when she was only four, she insisted that her mother teach her how to knit. She said, "Imagine the patience it took a right-handed person to teach a four-year old lefty to knit! I remember a few tears and temper-tantrums on my part, but I never gave up and I have never forgotten how to knit."



Shelley Street



Since she was a child, she hadn't done much knitting. But, when she recently came across a shawl pattern she had previously wanted to knit, she decided she had to first finish a Fair Isle sweater she started many years ago. She said, "The sweater was only about half done, so that got me back to knitting."

During the past few years, Street has also participated in sketching and painting sessions with the Sketchcrawlers. This group, organized by Leah Boulet, meets weekly during the summer at different locations, where they sit down in front of a view they like, and make

some art. Sketchcrawlers travel all the way from Powerview-Pine Falls to Pinawa for the sketch nights, and they have visited many scenic spots along the Winnipeg River corridor and The Beaches area. Street said, "I get inspired by looking at what others are creating; and talking with them about their projects gets my creative juices flowing."



She is also interested in creative writing. Although she admits she hasn't done much lately, prior to COVID restrictions she attended classes led by Donna Besel, a local creative writing instructor, and joined a facilitated writing group, based in Lac du Bonnet.

She said, "Both drawing and writing have long been on my wish list of things to try, so I have dabbled in them over the last few years, just for fun. So far, I'm only dipping my toe in those two activities. It doesn't matter whether I'm good at them or not. The main thing is that I'm doing them. I'm doing them for me. If there's something you've always wanted to do, give it a try. Do it for you."

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# Deborah Lee Giesbrecht – New Administrator – Issue #118

February 2022

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council would like to introduce Deborah Lee Giesbrecht, our new administrator. Although she was hired in the fall, restrictions associated with COVID limited in person access. She's now available for conversations and consultations at the WRAC office, located in Community Futures Winnipeg River building, 4 Park Avenue, Lac du Bonnet. Hours remain the same – Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:00 to 12:00.

Aside from a few years in Calgary, Giesbrecht has spent most of her life in Winnipeg. For the past two years, she has been living in RM of Lac du Bonnet, south of town. When asked why she chose to work for the arts council, she said, "I wanted to find a job in the area and get more involved in the community. Also, I'm really interested in meeting local artists. I've been phoning them, a few at a time, to introduce myself."

Although she insists she's not an artist, she loves the arts. This passion included volunteering at Warehouse Theatre and Winnipeg Fringe Festivals, attending dance and RMTC performances, and enjoying the unique sights and sounds of Winnipeg Folk Festival and Folkorama. She also loves art galleries, movies, reading, gardening, crafts, decorating, baking, woodworking, travelling, and concerts (especially country music).

Giesbrecht has over 20 years combined experience in executive administration and management, with a special interest in coordinating events and conferences. She said, "I'm a self-starter and team builder. I like to streamline, plan, market, network, problem solve, develop procedures and programs, and create a positive team environment."

Her work experience includes: St. Norbert Arts Centre's executive director, executive assistant to Sunrise School Division's secretary-treasurer, manager and franchise owner of The UPS Store. She also worked for Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, Frontier School Division, and City of Calgary. Given her experiences with Sunrise and Frontier School Divisions, she has first-hand knowledge of the challenges and rewards of working in rural communities.



Deborah Lee Giesbrecht



Jennifer Hudson Stewart

WRAC bids a fond farewell to Jennifer Hudson Stewart, our previous administrator. During the past eight years, she increased the arts council's profile, grew the membership, and organized dozens of events. Here are some of the major projects she coordinated: Truck Stop Circus, seven Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre touring productions, Paddle the River Auction (fundraiser with paddles painted by local artists).

She organized multiple workshops, raffles, art exhibits, fundraisers, grant applications, and AGM's (with great snacks). She maintained WRAC's social media presence, shared her talent for making people feel valued, and bailed out the board when needed. Also, she hauled grids, visual art, and paddles around the region, created the monthly newsletter, and made sure all details at every event were not overlooked. Despite changes in board membership and the pandemic challenges, she always had a joke and a willing attitude.

During COVID restrictions, Hudson Stewart shifted to email and Zoom to hold meetings, update board members, and continue the day-to-day operations. She also organized "Writers on the River," partnered with Manitoba Arts Network to administer Eastman Juried Arts Exhibition, and widely promoted "Momentum," a mentorship program and exhibition for rural artists.

Hudson Stewart has agreed to serve on WRAC board, but now works as head librarian at Lac du Bonnet Library, where her many skills will contribute a great deal to this organization.

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# Board Member Brenda McKenzie – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #119

March 2022

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council would like to feature one of its board members, Brenda McKenzie, a visual artist, writer, and photographer. One of her favourite art quotes comes from Pablo Picasso: “Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life.”

In September of 2014, she joined WRAC as the representative from Pinawa. At the Annual General meeting of 2019, McKenzie agreed to serve a three year term as president of WRAC. More recently, she is now finishing year one of a second term. Board members appreciate her unfailing reliability, easygoing manner, and insistence on keeping the meetings as close as possible to one hour long.

As one of the directors, she regularly attends board meetings. Along with this monthly commitment, she has shown a constant willingness to step up and assist with whatever project WRAC has planned. She helps with fundraising activities and sells tickets for events and raffles in Pinawa. Also, when the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre brings one of its annual touring productions to the region, she and husband Brian always volunteer to help with setup and takedown. As some know, this job can last for several hours and involves lots of physical activity.



Brenda McKenzie



In 1971, McKenzie moved to Pinawa from Winnipeg, to work as a substitute teacher for Whiteshell School District. She also joined with Vivian Thomson and other local artists to start an art club in the local high school, and later, the W.B. Lewis School. In 1998, she was hired as a full-time teacher and worked as an art instructor until her retirement in 2004.

For several years, McKenzie acted as Pinawa Art 211's gallery manager, arranging various displays and organizing the rotation of gallery volunteers who assisted customers. Currently, she continues to volunteer at the gallery, located in the W.B. Lewis Business Centre. In 2013, she coordinated a team of fellow artists who presented the Eastman Judged Art Exhibition (EJAE) at Pinawa Secondary school.



As a visual artist, she has won awards for both her photography and her paintings. The most recent was in the Whiteshell Winter Arts Festival's virtual art contest. In 2012, she published her novel, *Loving You*, about dealing with a relative's dementia. Her second book, *Commitments*, is currently being edited, following suggestions from ECW Press, Toronto.

She says, “Although COVID has curtailed my love of travel, my art and writing have kept me busy while at home.”

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# Lynn and Randy Greenly – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #120

June 2022

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council would like to feature stained glass artists Lynn and Randy Greenly, who moved to Pinawa after Lynn retired in 2013. When asked how they learned to create stained glass art, Lynn said, “In 2018, we took a class in Mesa, Arizona, at our park. It’s never too late to start something new and you’re only limited by your imagination.”

It appears these lessons really motivated both of them, as they’ve been making lots of pieces ever since. Apparently, other people also feel inspired by their art. A number of times, they’ve been asked to do some instructing, but they haven’t yet committed to running any classes.



Lynn and Randy Greenly

One thing Lynn and Randy Greenly have decided to do is share their work. In 2021, they entered two pieces they worked on together in the Eastman Judged Art Exhibition. They hope to submit individual pieces next year, when this regional art show rolls around again. Also, they will be selling their art at the Pinawa Night Market on July 29, 2022.

As well, they have shared their art in other generous and creative ways. On November 17, 2021, the Lac du Bonnet Clipper recognized their work partnering with the Pinawa Solo Store to sell stained glass poppies as a fundraiser for the Legion.

On October 22, 2020, the Clipper recognized them again for their Halloween Treasure Hunt, when they set out stained glass Halloween decorations around Pinawa for people to find and keep. As an added bonus, one lucky person who located a special piece won a black widow spider decoration. In 2020 and 2021, they did Halloween and Christmas Treasure Hunts. Recently, they organized a Canada Day Treasure Hunt with maple leafs as the treasure and a Canadian Flag as the prize.

The couple especially love creating work that includes flora and fauna. When asked about what inspires them, Lynn said, “I think the process of creating new designs drives our passion. We love talking to people and finding out what they are interested in then transforming their idea into a design and then into art.”

# Tanis Thomas – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #121

July 2022

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features previously profiled coppersmith Tanis Thomas. Born in Winnipeg, she first lived in the North End, until her family moved to the High Arctic. After several years there, her family shifted further south, settling in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, and then Lethbridge, Alberta. Thomas added, “I’ve lived in cities and towns from British Columbia to Quebec. In 2016, I moved to Pinawa with my family.”

They chose Eastern Manitoba, where they could live on the edge of the Canadian Shield, and, at the same time, pursue artistic interests, study, and raise their family. Thomas and her husband have relatives on both sides of Lake Winnipeg. For her it’s Ochekwi-Sipi and the Beaches area. For him, it’s Nopiming Park, in Manigotagan, and Long Lake.

At present, her primary interest is copper. Along with researching traditional Anishinaabe coppersmith practice, she is being mentored by a respected knowledge keeper and cultural educator. Thomas said, “Copper is culturally important to me. As an Indigenous artist, I embrace adaptation and innovation in all of my shop operations, and incorporate technology and contemporary production methods.”



Tanis Thomas

Almost all of her inspiration comes from the boreal environment – the land, the bush, the water. It informs everything she does and how she views the world. She said, “As an Anishinaabe Kwe, I’m responsible for protecting water and the best way I can do that is with by educating people about copper and its role in Anishinaabe and Maskéko culture and how that is tied to water.”

Thomas’ business, Boreal Workshop, is focused on creating beautiful and functional jewellery and items for people to use in their everyday lives. For her, working with copper is an act of cultural reclamation, a form of physical and spiritual therapy, and a great comfort (shaping metal with hammers). Mostly self-taught, Thomas spent summers as a child with her uncle Don LaForte, an accomplished Anishinaabe painter and visual artist, who encouraged her to explore different mediums and methods. When she became interested in becoming a coppersmith, she learned from with her husband, a skilled metalsmith with experience working in copper, silver, and gold. Recently, she began self-led cultural education, along with completing an Athabasca University degree. Her courses include art, art history, conservation, research methods, and creative writing.

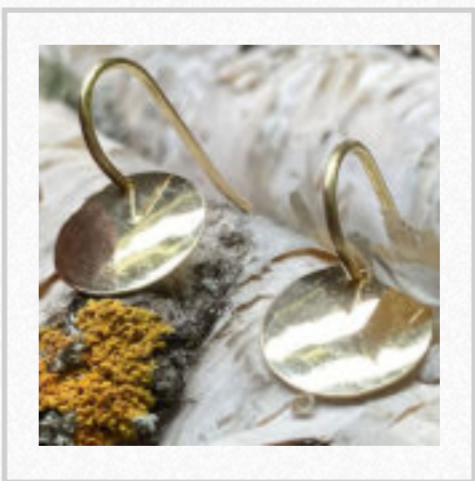
In the future, she plans to initiate classes on design and rudimentary coppersmith work. Also, she’s developing an interpretive cultural education experience in partnership with Debwendon Trail, also known as the Brokenhead Interpretive Wetland Trail on highway 59. It will include a copper gift produced in her shop.

Boreal Workshop information can be found on Instagram and Facebook. Thomas’ pieces are sold in person at gift shops such as the Golden Boy in the Manitoba Legislature and the Winnipeg River Heritage Museum in St. Georges. Her website ([www.borealworkshop.com](http://www.borealworkshop.com)) is regularly updated with new and replacement pieces. Recently, the C2 Centre for Craft gift shop in Winnipeg, a space run by the Manitoba Craft Museum and Library, and the Manitoba Craft Council, invited her to sell her work in their space.

Also, she’s producing work to gift to her home community (Ochekwi-Sipi Cree Nation) as well as other worthwhile organizations. She said, “This is in the spirit of reconciliation. I’m involved in a partnership to create pieces, with my home community and other communities, on Treaty 1 and Treaty 3 territory.”

Future plans include working on proposed projects and new designs, and then exhibits and community work (education and presentations). Thomas strongly believes in reaching out to community arts organizations and artistic disciplines across the region and province.

She said, “With technology, it’s possible to work with anyone anywhere now. Art is a vibrant and sustainable industry that speaks to strengths and challenges in our society. It is a great way to use your voice. I love art and plan to keep working in the industry until I walk on from this world.”



# Judy LeRoye – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #122

August 2022

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features artist Judy LeRoye. Her first home was in Great Falls. She has also lived in Grand Rapids, Great Falls, Gillam, Pointe Du Bois, and Winnipeg, but for the past four years her permanent residence has been Pine Falls, Manitoba. She said, “I was born at the local hospital, back when parents still had the joy of being able to give birth in this treasured town. I purchased my house some 17 years ago in preparation for my retirement as this is where I have always wanted to live.”

Her educational background includes a Transportation Degree with the University of Manitoba Transport Institute. Prior to retirement, she worked for Manitoba Hydro as their Senior Transportation Analyst.

Leroy mainly works with glass seed beads, producing extremely intricate pieces. Beading gives her the most joy, but she also incorporates other type of metals and stones. As a young teeny bopper, she learned from childhood friends in Grand Rapids. These creations instantly excited her and she was hooked.

As her passion grew, she jumped from free hand-beading of the hippy chokers and bracelets of the 60's and 70's, and it led her to learn the art of bead looming. Despite her interest in this discipline, she's stopped doing the bead looming as it seems there's no market for those types of pieces anymore. She said, “I'm a pretty good knitter as well. But those items are labors of love for the grandbabies.”

Although she doesn't have formal training, as time went on it she learned how to move the beading wire through the beads to create spectacular patterns. Even now, when she uses a pattern, she changes it up and makes it unique in her own special way. She hasn't instructed any classes yet, but she has taught her grandchildren, and passed on her knowledge to great nieces and cousins. She said, “I love one-on-ones sessions; it's heart-warming to bond and blend the colors.”

She shares her work on Facebook and has many long-term and return customers who love the look and feel of wearing her art on their wrists and ankles. Also, the Winnipeg River Museum in St. Georges sells her work in their gift shop. This summer, she was delighted to be invited to join the Boreal Art Show Tour and she plans to continue doing this every August.

For Le Roye, the joy of creation and the blending of colors never get old and she uses it as a calming medication to get through life's daily stresses. She said, “Beading gives me strength, balance, and joy. I do most of my beading in my bright and cozy sunporch with calming music playing on my Alexa, usually Leonard Cohen or Corrine Bailey Rae.”



Judy LeRoye



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# Marilyn McNish – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #123

September 2022

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council revisits previously featured artist, Marilyn McNish. A self-taught visual artist, she creates stunning paintings, most often large-scale, using acrylic on canvas. She said, “Composition means everything to me. The image needs to grab at my soul, provide a connection to my past or the hopes in my future. I am amazed how my paintings connect with others as well.”

Since 2009, McNish has lived with her husband in the village of Manigotagan. During her corporate career, she trained staff and dealt with constant changes, new employees, and project rollouts. She always had a passion for painting but didn’t take it seriously until retirement and relocation in a small boreal community. Living on the Manigotagan River, surrounded by nature and wildlife, it felt natural to quietly step into an art career.



Marilyn McNish

After the move, she worked as a substitute teacher at the Wanipigow School in Hollow Water. Then someone asked her to teach art to adults and children. She said, “This request spurred me to spend hours studying best practices and methods.”

In 2021, with encouragement from Wanipigow’s art teacher, McNish applied for and received a grant from Manitoba Arts Council’s Artists in Schools program, to teach acrylic painting for two weeks.

Once she completed the Wanipigow residency, she contacted the principal at Churchill’s Duke of Marlborough School. As a result, in April of 2022, she did an art residency in this northern school, working with kindergarten to grade 12 students. In January of 2023, she plans to return to Churchill to do a special project with the high school students. Once again, her trip will be funded via MAC’s Artists in Schools program.

McNish said, “Every time I sell a painting, or print, or have a child’s eyes light up when they have learned a new brush skill, it is so rewarding. I greatly appreciate the Manitoba Arts Council and our government’s support for the arts, allowing me to teach in the north.”

In March of 2022, Cre8ery Art Gallery in Winnipeg exhibited her art solo art show. From October 23 to November 19, her work will be featured at Gwen Fox Art Gallery in Selkirk. Also, every year, she participates in the Boreal Shores Art Tour and she plans to do so again in August of 2023.

Her final inspiring thoughts: “I encourage everyone to buy art, display art, and attend art functions. We have been cooped up for two long years. It’s time to live and appreciate color, music, and movement.”



Dock Days



Fight for Leadership



Peggy's Cove Village

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# Shelley Penziwol – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #124

October 2022

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features writer Shelley Penziwol, the author of two books published by Great Plains Publications – Storm Signals: A History of Weather in Manitoba (2004) and From Assissippi to Zed Lake: A Guide to Manitoba's Provincial Parks (2011). The first was nominated for the Manitoba Historical Society's Margaret McWilliams Award in the popular history book category. She has also written several magazine articles.

In 2013, Penziwol moved from the Winnipeg area to Victoria Beach. Living in a forest near the lake provides inspiration for all sorts of activities, including a bit of creative nonfiction writing. She's also an avid beachcomber who loves making things out of found objects such as driftwood, beach glass and lucky stones.



Shelley Penziwol



For over 25 years, Penziwol worked for the Manitoba government in various roles, spending the last 12 years in a communications role before leaving in June 2022 to take on the position of head librarian at Bibliothèque Allard Regional Library.

Penziwol has a master's degree in library and information studies from the University of British Columbia and said, "It's a treat to be back in the world of libraries and books. Libraries, research and writing all intertwine beautifully. You can't be nonfiction writer, especially one focused on local history, without accessing the treasure trove of historical documents housed at some libraries and archives."

She has fond memories of spending days in the Legislative Library of Manitoba searching for gems tucked away in old reports and scrolling through reels of microfilm to gather stories from old newspapers.

Bibliothèque Allard Regional Library, with branches in St. Georges and Victoria Beach, serves a population spread over a large geographical area. Penziwol and her team are looking forward to connecting with the community by hosting a variety of events at both library locations, throughout 2023 and in the coming years.

# Verla Fortier – Focus on Local Artists – Issue #125

November 2022

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features Verla Fortier, podcast host and author of two recent nonfiction books – all geared toward helping readers and listeners realize that going into green spaces is not just a nice thing to do, but it can change, and even save your life.

Her two books are based on her own experiences. In “Take Back Your Outside Mindset: Live Longer, Stress Less and Control Your Chronic Illness,” she describes getting diagnosed with Lupus Erythematosus, at the same time she was exiting her career as a nursing professor.



Verla Fortier



In her second book, “Optimize Your Heart Rate,” she writes about a close childhood friend who died from a sudden cardiac event, on day 3 of a road trip. On her podcast “Your Outside Mindset,” she interviews people who value the natural world: green space researchers, Indigenous leaders, physicians, nurses, gerontologists, authors, poets.

Fortier grew up in Pine Falls, and, in 2014, at the age of 63, she retired to her hometown. Once she stopped working in health care, and became a patient, she had to learn how to write on a more personal level. She said, “This was a challenge; a speaking coach helped me to get away from research/technical speak and just tell my stories.”

On her personal email list and her podcast, and in her books, she encourages people to get outside more often. In person, she’s spoken to grade 11 and 12 students at Powerview School and shared her friend Leslie’s story from “Optimize Your Heart Rate.” And she recently launched this same book at Library Allard.

As a guest on international podcasts, she gives tips on using green space science in daily lives. She also writes regularly for “Sixty and Me,” to share research, find ways to recognize harmful environments, and figure out what to do about it.

Both of Fortier’s books and audiobooks are best sellers on Amazon Canada, US, and UK. As well, they rank in the top 3 best-selling in lupus and heart disease categories. Her podcast, “Your Outside Mindset,” has surpassed industry download milestones and has listeners in 41 countries. For upcoming events, she invites everyone to visit her website and join her email list at [www.treesmendus.com](http://www.treesmendus.com)

Her main message: “Getting outside to notice the beauty in nature’s repeating patterns, called fractals, inspires me every time. “



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# Lac du Bonnet and District Historical Society – Focus on Local Organization – Issue #126

December 2022

For this month, Winnipeg River Arts Council features Lac du Bonnet and District Historical Society. In 1988, seven individuals from the Lac du Bonnet area, Gordon Emberley, Helen Stine, Joan Lesko, Louis Bruneau, Stella Hammerstedt, Adele Bycyek, and Lorraine Carlson got together and formed this organization.

Their main objective: preserve Lac du Bonnet's vibrant history. To achieve this goal, they focused on assembling local artifacts and historical material, providing an environment where participants work together to promote understanding of local history, and figuring out how to relay this information to future generations.



The Society thrives and continues to grow thanks to the many volunteers and partners who passionately provide skills, knowledge, and time to preserve and promote local history. And the volunteer board strives to provide clear, active and strong leadership, in order to carry out their mandate.

One of their major projects is the Lac du Bonnet and District Museum, housed in the relocated and renovated Hans Erickson Cabin, a short distance off Highway 502, close to the Winnipeg River. This parcel of land, previously known as Halliday Park, is a designated Municipal Heritage Site and the grounds were the first registered homestead on Treaty 1 Territory. A unique and attractive site, the museum and its surrounding property contain exhibits and artifacts viewed by residents, and visitors from around the world.

Another major project involved the Society taking over the former St. John's Anglican Church in Town of Lac du Bonnet. This building is also a designated Municipal Heritage Site, and is now known as St. John's Heritage Church and Arts Centre. It operates as an artist's hub and local gathering place, aimed at bringing people together to celebrate arts and culture.



To celebrate local history and culture, a wide variety of programs, workshops, and special activities are held throughout the year. Annual events include "Listening Room" performing arts activities, Winnipeg River Rendezvous, and Community Tipi Raising.

The Lac du Bonnet and District Historical Society is a non-profit registered charity, and their operations are funded by volunteer services, government grants, fundraising activities, and donations. Visit their website at [ldbhistorical.ca](http://ldbhistorical.ca)

Volunteers provide the driving force for the Lac du Bonnet and District Historical Society. Memberships are encouraged – \$20.00 single and \$35.00 family – however all events are open to the public. The Society meets on the second Monday of the month, at 7:00 p.m. in St. John's Heritage Church and Arts Centre.

The Society strongly believes "Lac du Bonnet comes to life through history, culture, and art. And these valued community components are both seen and sensed as visitors and residents tour the area."