



Michael Maynard | PRESIDENT'S REPORT | May 27, 2021

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It's an honour to have been elected President of the AGN Board following our Annual General Meeting on April 24. Thank you. I'm excited about this opportunity, working with all of you as we define our long-range strategic plans and help the Gallery continue to build its operational stability, programming success and community engagement.

This being my first Board meeting as President I do want to acknowledge what I believe were some concerns regarding the election process. To clarify, a brief update.

Back in March my name was brought forward to Mary, nominated for the role of President in 2021-22. Mary had mentioned a desire to step back from the President's role and was supportive of my candidacy. So, we began regular meetings where she helped me better understand recent AGN history, and how best we could plan the transition from her successful tenure. However, she did want to complete her work on the Board's policies and procedures, and initially suggested staying on as President for a few months after the AGM to complete that procedural work. Then just before the election she suggested the Board should decide.

In hindsight it might have been better if my nomination had been discussed openly much earlier. But now the election is behind us and Mary and I continue to chat regularly, to work on projects together, with a shared commitment to stable, respectful and progressive leadership.

Thank you, Mary for a long – and ongoing – association with the Board, for your support of my candidacy and the helpful stream of administrative details post-election. Succession plans we intend completing this year will certainly help going forward.

In fact, the past four weeks have been busy ones: two Laridae strategic planning sessions; my online presentation at the Ontario Association of Art Galleries workshop; an AGN Volunteer meeting; my first Executive meeting; and a virtual orientation session to welcome Sheila and Cynthia to the Board.

Several observations, first from the OAAG workshop:

1. The discussions reinforced for me the importance of the Art Gallery of Northumberland to the culture sector in our communities here in Cobourg and across the county.
2. The AGN is not alone amongst public art galleries/museums in dealing with fiscal and operational challenges, whether it's uncertainty around year-to-year funding or locked doors because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Olinda and the Board are handling it all very well.
3. A mutually respectful working relationship between the Board President and Executive Director was cited as key to gallery success – Olinda and I have been touching base every week (or more) since the election to ensure our regular and positive communications are ongoing.

4. Like many larger galleries, the AGN has embraced the world of digital communications with a new website (soon!), a great web presence and ongoing social media activity – these initiatives will be increasingly important even in a post-pandemic world.
5. The importance of approved and documented Board policies and procedures was mentioned as a priority for all public galleries. This is a work-in-progress for the AGN but we now have a members' Handbook and we will have our By-laws and administrative procedures completed ASAP.
6. The other priority is an authentic strategy in support of inclusivity and accessibility for Board membership, gallery collections and programming. Again, recognized as important for the AGN and a work-in-progress.
7. And finally, our work on a renewed strategic plan reflects standard practice for successful galleries across the province.

Next, the Volunteer committee meeting:

1. We have an amazing team of volunteers – whether on the Board or on the Volunteer committee led by Linda Cardie – all actively engaged in helping Olinda and her staff realize the AGN's potential.
2. Debbie Beattie from Critical Mass in Port Hope was a guest speaker at the meeting. Her talk was a reminder there are several art organizations within our communities that are also contributing to the local culture sector and our creative economy (Sarah Jacob is a member of the Critical Mass Board). Others include Spirit of the Hills, the Northumberland Festival of the Arts, and a new music festival. I look forward to discussions around further engagement opportunities for the AGN.

And finally, the orientation meeting:

1. As mentioned earlier, we have two new members on the Board – welcome Sheila and Cynthia! Olinda, Astrid and I spent an hour and a half last week providing some perspectives on the AGN and the Board and answering their questions. They both have a copy of our new Board Handbook and I'm confident this orientation initiative will help them (and other new members going forward) as they get up to speed on our team.

With a 60-year history, over 1,000 original artworks in our collection, and a long-standing budget deficit eliminated, the AGN is ready to build on past successes and realize its full potential. Thanks for your emails and phone calls, I will continue to do my best to respond promptly to any questions or concerns. Certainly, I want to continue Mary's leadership style this year, encouraging open and positive communications and an inclusive approach to decision-making.

In closing, I look forward to the final draft of our strategic plan, completion of our MOU with the town, and working together on opportunities for growth and further success!