

**Stupid Not to Include the Arts:**

**The Creation and Evolution of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1948-1970**

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By

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## **Abstract**

Wishing to modernize the province of Saskatchewan, the Tommy Douglas-led Co-operative Commonwealth Federation government (CCF), initiated a number of major, if not groundbreaking, programs. One of these initiatives, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, was a significant cultural agency for the province. Modeled on the British Arts Council, it was the first organization of its kind in North America. *Stupid Not to Include the Arts* examines the first twenty-two years of the Board's existence and whether it strayed from its original mandate, and whether it was successful. By focusing on the Board's relationships with the artists, the people, the government, and the art world, this thesis will illustrate the Board's transition from an audience-developing and programming organization to an artist-developing and grant-giving organization.

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## Table of Contents

<b>Permission to Use</b> .....	i
<b>Abstract</b> .....	ii
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	iii
<b>Tables of Contents</b> .....	iv
<b>Introduction</b>	
Paving the Road for the Arts .....	p. 1
<b>Chapter One</b>	
“Hungry for...things of the mind and spirit”: Creating the Board, 1947-1950 .....	p. 12
<b>Chapter Two</b>	
“We must counteract the tragic influences of the Elvis Pressleys”: Developing and Maintaining Standards, 1950-1960 .....	p. 37
<b>Chapter Three</b>	
“A New Threshold”: Transforming the Board, 1960-1970 .....	p. 64
<b>Conclusion</b>	
“Coming of Age” .....	p. 88
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	p. 92

## **Introduction**

### **Paving the Road for the Arts**

The Saskatchewan Arts Board always had to take the Saskatchewan weather into consideration. In typical Saskatchewan fashion, it snowed the evening of December 10, 2010 when I attended a concert in the town of Langenburg. Although it took longer to drive to Langenburg than it normally did, it was not a terrible storm. It likely kept several people at home, though, and made them miss the piano duets of Alessio Bax and Lucille Chung, an accomplished husband and wife duo. The performance was one in a series presented by the Langenburg Arts Council. It was also one concert in a tour that travelled to numerous towns across Manitoba and Saskatchewan from October 2010 to March 2011. The tour was a joint venture, sponsored and funded by a variety of local and provincial arts organizations across the prairies.<sup>1</sup> Among these organizations was, not surprisingly, the Saskatchewan Arts Board. The Board appeared to be little more than a generous supporter of the tour. Listening to the sound of Brahms and Mozart, however, I began to realize that this concert reflected many of the goals and visions of the early Board.

The concert was in a small town of 1100 situated on the eastern edge of the province. Though the talent was at an elite international touring level, here they were in this small prairie community, performing in a building that doubled as a stage and movie theatre. While the Saskatchewan Arts Board never neglected the cities of the province in funding and programming, there was always a special emphasis on bringing the arts to the smaller communities of Saskatchewan. The audience that night was varied, reflecting the Board's desire to introduce the whole province to art. There was a wide range of ages and more than a few children. Familiarizing children with the arts, in particular, was always given special emphasis by the Board. For example, touring artists sponsored by the Board often gave school concerts in addition to the larger community concerts. It is likely that none of the children that attended the Bax and Chung concert will do anything significant in the musical world, but being inspired to take up music lessons or continue with them would be a significant impact in itself. Some people, like me, had even slipped across the provincial border to attend the concert. The Board had always been welcoming to out-of-province people, and people in Alberta and Manitoba were often impressed by the programs offered in Saskatchewan.

The Saskatchewan Arts Board had almost always put special emphasis on using home-grown talent as well. Being in 2010, the concert was consequently something of an exception. Bax and Chung were not from Saskatchewan, or even the prairies for that matter.<sup>2</sup> This change has become impossible to escape from in the last sixty years, as the artistic world has become ever more connected and international. Yet there is still an essence of that original vision of the Board. It may not be able to support home-grown Saskatchewan talent as often, but it is still possible to support home-grown Canadian talent. Likewise, the concert featured *Centaurus A*, a 2008 piece composed by pianist/composer Heather Schmidt, originally from Calgary. Again, not home-grown Saskatchewan talent, but still home-grown prairie talent.

At the same time, the concert also showcased the trials and tribulations the Arts Board sometimes faced. The weather could always be a problem. The audience was fair-sized, but the

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<sup>1</sup> The biggest organization involved here was Prairie Debut. Established in 1995 by the Manitoba Arts Council it is "an interprovincial touring network whose mandate is 'to strengthen opportunities for the presentation of professional classical and world music in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.'" ("About Us," *Prairie Debut*, <http://www.prairiedebut.com/organization/> (accessed September 20, 2011).)

<sup>2</sup> Chung, however, was Canadian, being a native of Montreal.

theatre was far from being full. And while there were a handful of children and younger people, the audience demographic leaned towards the elderly. But despite the inclement weather and small audience, the concert still seemed to reflect so much of the hopes and dreams of the early Saskatchewan Arts Board more than sixty years ago. The Board could also pride itself on developing an interest in and appreciation of the arts in the province to the point that Langenburg could form its own Arts Council and develop its own programming. Without the work of the early Board, Bax and Chung may never have been able to perform in Langenburg.

The Saskatchewan Arts Board was officially formed in 1948 by order-in-council.<sup>3</sup> It was one of the many initiatives of the Cooperative Commonwealth Party (CCF). Elected in 1944, the CCF ran on the motto “Humanity First.” The new government was determined to provide the “province’s citizens with equal access to the highest possible levels of education, health care, and welfare.”<sup>4</sup> Rural Saskatchewan was particularly important to the CCF, and the government always ensured that both the rural and urban areas of the province were equally supported in a variety of areas. Under Premier Tommy Douglas, the CCF government (1944-1961) would pass the Saskatchewan Bill of Rights, work towards providing power and natural gas to farms and urban centres, and make Saskatchewan the first province to offer Medicare. Much has been written about these initiatives in the scholarly literature but the story of Medicare tends to overshadow other important policies. Among these other policies was the formation of the Saskatchewan Arts Board.

The idea for the Board originated with David Smith, Director of Adult Education in the Saskatchewan Department of Education. He was experienced in both educational and artistic fields and wished to combine the two with the creation of a provincial arts board. Aided by prominent Saskatchewan artists such as painter Ernest Lindner, University of Saskatchewan drama professor Emrys Jones, and University of Saskatchewan English professor Carlyle King, Smith drafted the details for the new organization. Eleven other men and women joined Smith, Jones, King, and Lindner as the first board members. The pioneers of the Board represented most of the major centres of the province and all the major artistic areas.<sup>5</sup> They formed an organization concerned with the promotion and support of the arts in Saskatchewan. Modelled after the British Arts Council, the Saskatchewan Arts Board was the first organization of its kind to be established in North America.<sup>6</sup>

Little has been written, however, on this important cultural initiative. The most significant work is W.A. Riddell’s short history, *Cornerstone for Culture: A History of the Saskatchewan Arts Board from 1948 to 1978*, published by the Board in 1979.<sup>7</sup> It was generally seen as disappointing. David Smith called it “an example of revisionist history writing”<sup>8</sup> and believed Riddell was giving credit to the wrong people. Even without the issues Smith raised, *Cornerstone for Culture* is short (forty-two pages with pictures) and focuses more on the programs offered than on the efforts that went into creating and running the Board. Rather than being a significant history of the Board, it comes across as more of a lengthy brochure for the Board and its programs. A short entry in *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan* by former

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<sup>3</sup> The actual Arts Board Act would be passed the following year in April.

<sup>4</sup> Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005), 357.

<sup>5</sup> These areas originally included music, literature, visual art, drama, and handicraft.

<sup>6</sup> W.A. Riddell, *Cornerstone for Culture: A History of the Saskatchewan Arts Board from 1948 to 1978* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1979), v.

<sup>7</sup> Riddell was the chairman of the Saskatchewan Arts Board from 1950 to 1964.

<sup>8</sup> David Smith, *First Person Plural: A Community Development Approach to Social Change*, ed. Ted Jackson (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1995), 159.

Executive Director Jeremy Morgan, and passing mention of the Board in a few Saskatchewan histories make up the rest of the historical writing on the Board.<sup>9</sup> As such, *Stupid Not to Include the Arts* will make an original contribution to the field, filling a rather large void. The fact that the Board is barely even mentioned in most of the literature is a little surprising, particularly since it was the first of its kind on the continent. Perhaps why so little has been written about the Saskatchewan Arts Board has been that the focus has been too much on Douglas and many of the other programs and activities of the CCF. The Board was an initiative much less Douglas-centred and may suffer in the literature because of it. Or perhaps the interest has simply never been there.

But the problem is not unique to the Saskatchewan Arts Board. Outside of Saskatchewan there appears to be little written about the history of government arts organizations in Canada. Paul Litt's *The Muses, the Masses, and the Massey Commission* and Karen Finlay's *The Force of Culture: Vincent Massey and Canadian Sovereignty* both focus on the Massey Commission and its recommendations. The creation of the Canada Council plays a part in each book. It is a small part, however, and little emphasis is placed on the Council after its creation. Some literature exists for the provincial arts as well. Nancy Townshend's *A History of Art in Alberta 1905-1970* offers a comprehensive survey of the arts and artists in Alberta. But Townshend focuses on the larger Albertan art movement and looks at a number of artists and organizations in detail. It is not intended to be about the provincial board. Roy MacSkimming's *For Arts' Sake: A History of the Ontario Arts Council 1963-1983* and Paula Kelly's *For the Arts: A History of the Manitoba Arts Council* both focus on their respective organizations' histories. Like Riddell, MacSkimming (seventy-three pages) and Kelly (seventy-eight pages) are short. MacSkimming's history was commissioned for the twentieth anniversary of the Council in 1983. Much of *For Arts' Sake* is well done. MacSkimming breaks his chapters down into decades and depicts a similar pattern to what the Saskatchewan Arts Board had experienced decades earlier. *For Arts' Sake* tends to focus on individual board members and finances, but still provides a good overall picture of the early Ontario Council. Upon reaching the 1980s, however, the book becomes an overview of the Council's current programming and direction. This latter portion shares some similarities with Riddell and reads like an annual report. *For the Arts* was also commissioned for an anniversary: the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Manitoba Council in 1995. The book consists of a series of short chapters that deal with each year of the Council's existence. But Kelly ends up providing a broad survey of the arts in Manitoba rather than a specific history of the Council. The Council is featured in nearly every chapter, but initiatives from other organizations are also highlighted. Nor does Kelly examine the creation of the Council, other than providing a series of short letters at the beginning of the book. As a result, it is an interesting overview of the arts in Manitoba, but is lacking as a history of the Council. On the whole, provincial art organization history seems to be neglected. When anything is written, it is usually commissioned by the organization itself and any disagreements or controversies seem to be glossed over. Many provincial boards and councils still being quite young, perhaps it is not surprising that only the oldest ones appear to have anything written about them.

While the Saskatchewan Arts Board was formed quite quickly after being proposed by Smith, promoting the arts was not always an easy task. The government and the artists did get along for the most part, but there would be contentious moments between the two, particularly in

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<sup>9</sup> To be fair, the entry in *The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan*, while brief, is well done. It is also the most readily available history on any provincial arts organization in Canada and the Saskatchewan Arts Board's website does link to it. Some provincial arts organizations' websites do not even provide an inception year.



the early days as the Board struggled to find an identity. In the first few years of the Arts Board's life the creative energy of the Board led to a variety of programming and ideas, some of which would not survive and some of which never came to fruition. It was a chaotic time. Some of the province's greatest artistic minds had come together and each had their own creative ideas for programming and funding. There was also a lot of work to do in the early years. Artists had to be convinced to stay in the province, new artists had to be taught and trained, and an audience needed to be developed. Unfortunately, doing all of these at once on a limited budget was next to impossible.

By the early 1950s, the Board was already shedding some of the programs and funding offered. While still concerned with developing a province-wide appreciation of the arts, the Board also became concerned with working with the professional (or potential professional) rather than the amateur. The Board began developing standards in the major artistic fields. But these standards did not always find provincial support and the Board risked alienating audiences and amateur artists. Modern visual art, music, and drama, particularly in more abstract forms, were well respected among the cultural and artistic elite of the world. But the general populace were sometimes confused and disgusted. Raising standards also led to the creation of a variety of teaching programming. These programs included consultants, camps and workshops in drama, music, art, and handicrafts. Many would be successful and long-lasting.

While the question of standards continued into the 1960s, other issues began to appear as well. The Board was gradually heading towards more of an advisory role in the artistic world and less of an active one. Led by Executive Directors George Shaw and Cal Abrahamson, the Board became more concerned with funding and finances, rather than facilitating the arts. The rise of the local arts councils in the mid-1960s and support from both the CCF and Liberal governments allowed the Board to become more decentralized. The Board did not entirely neglect its programming as some significant developments took place during the 1960s, including the camps at Fort Qu'Appelle and the Festival of the Arts. But the Board had succeeded in facilitating the arts in Saskatchewan and it was needed less at the forefront than it had been in the last two decades.

The first three decades of the Board's existence will form the backbone of *Stupid Not to Include the Arts*. The first chapter, "'Hungry for...things of the mind and spirit': Creating the Board (1947-1950)" focuses on the early, chaotic Board. The first years for the Arts Board were full of creativity and excitement. Not every program dreamed up would see fruition, but the Board managed to accomplish some ambitious programs with little funding. The second chapter, "'We must counteract the tragic influences of the Pressleys': Establishing and Maintaining Standards (1950-1960)" examines the Board as it began to find its identity. Much of the focus here is on the contention between the Board and the population of Saskatchewan, and the creation of standards for the various artistic areas. Tied to these developments was the establishment of a number of significant ventures for the Board, such as the consultant and workshop programs. The final chapter, "'A new threshold': Transforming the Board (1960-1970)" examines the Board's transition to and its inward struggle with becoming more orientated towards funding and advising rather than teaching and audience development. The Board itself underwent large changes in this period. The board would be nearly completely replaced in 1965, and faced new policies and planning under both Liberal and CCF governments. Throughout all three chapters a number of smaller issues will be examined, such as the Board's attitude towards and support of Indian art and the Board's incremental involvement in the artistic world outside of Saskatchewan.

In looking at the history of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, two primary sources are highly important. The first is the Saskatchewan Arts Board collection at the Saskatchewan Archives Board. The collection, mostly from 1947 to 1960, consists of almost every document the Board offices had on file. Budgets, minutes, agendas, brochures, annual reports, correspondence, publicity, and news clippings can all be found in the collection, giving a concise picture of both the inner workings and the outer face of the Board. The collection amounts to nearly a metre of material. In addition, a number of unprocessed files from the 1960s, mostly correspondence and minutes, were made available by the Saskatchewan Archives Board for use in *Stupid Not to Include the Arts*. Supplementing the official Board collection is the Saskatchewan Arts Board section of the Carlyle King Collection at the Saskatchewan Archives Board. King was a board member from the creation of the Board until 1965 and head of the literature committee for most of his Board tenure. He kept meticulous records, including a number of documents that the Board does not appear to have kept. In addition, King's correspondence (both from him and others) tends to be more candid than much of the correspondence found in the Board records. King's papers also counterbalance the overly positive annual reports. Also valuable was David Smith's *First Person Plural: A Community Development Approach to Social Change*, which features a number of articles and reflections by the former Director of Adult Education. Although Smith spends little time discussing the Board, *First Person Plural* does help in understanding his goals in creating the Board.<sup>10</sup>

Former Winnipeg Blue Bombers kicker Troy Westwood famously joked that the people of Saskatchewan were "a bunch of banjo-picking inbreds." He later apologized noting that "the vast majority of people in Saskatchewan have no idea how to play the banjo."<sup>11</sup> What *Stupid Not to Include the Arts* demonstrates was that Saskatchewan was far from any image Westwood might have invoked. Saskatchewan was not a cultural backwater. Through the efforts of the Saskatchewan Arts Board the province gained an appreciation of the fine arts and helped develop both the current and future generations of artists. Most importantly, it showed Saskatchewan was far ahead of the other provincial governments when it came to arts programming and was even slightly ahead of the Canada Council. Many provinces would not see a government arts organization until decades later. *Stupid Not to Include the Arts* demonstrates that Saskatchewan and the CCF were not only leaders in Medicare, the Bill of Rights, and providing province-wide

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<sup>10</sup> Secondary reading on Douglas and the Douglas administration included: Stuart Houston and Bill Waiser's *Tommy's Team: The People Behind the Douglas Years* (Markham: Fifth House, 2010), A.W. Johnson's *Dream No Little Dreams: A Biography of the Douglas Government in Saskatchewan, 1944-1961* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), Bill Waiser's *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2005), Thomas and Ian McLeod's *Tommy Douglas: The Road to Jerusalem* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2004), Lewis H. Thomas' *The Making of a Socialist: The Recollections of T.C. Douglas* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995), and Walter Stewart's *The Life and Political Times of Tommy Douglas* (Toronto: McArthur, 2003). Reading on the arts in Canada included: Paul Litt's *The Muses, the Masses, and the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) and Karen Finlays' *The Force of Culture: Vincent Massey and Canadian Sovereignty* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004). Reading on the technical side of art boards and organizations included Michael Kaiser's *Leading Roles: 50 Questions Every Arts Board Should Ask Itself* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2010) and *The Art of the Turnaround: Creating and Maintaining Healthy Arts Organizations* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2008). Finally, Don Kerr, in *A Book in Every Hand: Public Libraries in Saskatchewan* (Regina: Coteau Books, 2005), spends a few pages discussing the relationship between the libraries and the Board and Terrence Heath's biography of Ernest Lindner, *Uprooted: The Life and Art of Ernest Lindner* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1983), was useful in examining the most vocal artist involved in the early Board.

<sup>11</sup> Kirk Penton, "Evolution of the Banjo Bowl: Kicker's quip turns into annual tradition," *Winnipeg Sun*, September 9, 2006, <http://slam.canoe.ca/Slam/Football/CFL/Winnipeg/2006/09/09/1818545-sun.html> (accessed April 20, 2012).

power and gas; they were also leaders in the arts, not just in the province, but in the country as well.

## Chapter One

### “Hungry for...things of the mind and spirit”: Creating the Board, 1947-1950

It was chaos. The first Saskatchewan Arts Board meeting on February 7, 1948 brought together sixteen of the brightest artistic minds in the province. For most of that day the Writing Room at the Saskatchewan Hotel was filled with excited discussion and interesting ideas. The recording secretary must have had trouble keeping up, for the draft of the meeting is haphazard. At times, the draft reads like a very fast, very intense play, particularly as the person speaking had their last name written on the left side, as if being given lines. Despite its chaotic nature, many of the ideas discussed at that first meeting would set in motion most of the major programs for the next two decades. Out of chaos came creativity. In fact, much of the creation and infancy of the Saskatchewan Arts Board could easily be described as chaotic. It was not a simple road that led to the creation of the Saskatchewan Arts Board. Serious discussions between government and artists surrounding the creation of the Board began in early 1947. But as the core values of the government, particularly the Adult Education Division, and the artists did not always match, coming to an agreement was hardly an easy task. To say the chaos was all detrimental was hardly accurate, but putting together more than a dozen of some of the most artistic and creative minds in the province led to a different kind of chaos in devising the Board and its programs. Combined with the fact that the Board and its staff took some time finding their feet, it was a hectic time. The first few years of the Arts Board can be seen as haphazard, and at times disorganized, but from the outset glimmers of what was to come could be seen. Creative ideas and programming and a growing enthusiasm from the province’s people would lead the way into the 1950s and a new artistic age. Out of chaos came creativity.

Saskatchewan was ready for an artistic awakening in the immediate post-war era. New changes had already begun in 1944 with the election of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation Party (CCF). Led by Premier Tommy Douglas, the new government’s goal was to modernize the province and ensure Saskatchewan was not seen as a backwater. This goal would eventually include Medicare, the Saskatchewan Bill of Rights, and power and gas supply to the whole province, but the arts were not ignored for long. Douglas gladly backed plans for an arts board. “I’ve always maintained,” he stated, “that the people on the prairies...are hungry for what are commonly described as things of the mind and spirit.”<sup>12</sup> Douglas himself was hungry for things of the mind and spirit, as he was a great supporter of the arts. The Premier had also enjoyed being involved in dramatic productions prior to his election.<sup>13</sup>

It is interesting that this primarily rural province would be the first to take a significant step forward in governing the arts. Was there something to Douglas’ comments about the people being hungry for things of the mind and spirit? Perhaps Saskatchewan’s rural nature was always important to the success of the Board. The communities of the province enthusiastically responded to the initiatives of the Board. Not every person was an artist, but there were many people who could greatly appreciate and enjoy a wide variety of art. And although the Board was trying to develop an audience, all too often it seemed like the audience was already there. The arts were not always easily available to everyone in Saskatchewan and at times, the Board simply needed to facilitate and make the arts available, rather than develop an appreciation. On a Board concert tour in 1949, pianist Thelma Johannes learned just how receptive to the arts rural

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<sup>12</sup> L.H. Thomas, ed., *The Making of a Socialist: The Recollections of T.C. Douglas* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, 1984), 320-1.

<sup>13</sup> Walter Stewart, *The Life and Political Times of Tommy Douglas*, (Toronto: McArthur, 2003), 60-61.

Saskatchewan already was. She had originally arranged two concerts, one for the cities and one for rural Saskatchewan. But she discovered that rural Saskatchewan was not an artistic backwater. The rural audiences were critical, though always in a supportive manner. When Johannes played no Beethoven or Bach she was told a pianist of her calibre should play more classics and when she played *Claire De Lune*, she was told that she should perform less familiar pieces so the audience could learn and experience more. When she played only a single movement they wanted the whole sonata, and when she played a modern piece, they said they preferred romantic. And at many places on her tour new Canadian works tended to be well received and even encored.<sup>14</sup> What seemed like the biggest hindrance to the arts—the various, sometimes isolated, communities dotted around the province—were in the end one of the biggest strengths of the arts in the province. Many communities would eventually form their own arts organizations and plan their own programs.

The province had already attempted to take artistic steps earlier in the twentieth century. Walter Murray, president of the University of Saskatchewan from 1908-1937, had believed that it was up to the university to further the arts in the province and attempted to establish a chair in music.<sup>15</sup> Although the music department at the University would not be created until the early 1950s, certain people in the province recognized the value of the artistic world long before the creation of the Board. Murray himself was heavily involved in the artistic world, commissioning works by artists Gus Kenderdine and Ernest Lindner, giving the former a studio and the latter a job. Murray also started the university's permanent art collection, and served as president of the Saskatchewan Musical Association.<sup>16</sup>

Nor was it simply people like Murray, already involved in the arts, who were supportive of the arts. Murray Adaskin, composer and head of the Department of Music at the University of Saskatchewan from 1952-66, recounted how his student Boyd McDonald was short on cash to get to Paris for schooling in the early 1950s:

Three hundred dollars by today's standards is not much, but at the time it meant the difference between making it and not making it. I decided to speak to a wealthy neighbour of ours, Mr A.A. Murphy, owner of the radio station CFQC in Saskatoon. I went to see him and told him Boyd's story. Well, he did not know much about Boyd, but he said to me that if I thought that that was the right thing to do, he would help me get some money. He gave me \$100. Then he picked up the phone right then and there and said to the person at the other end of the line, 'Bill, send me over a cheque for \$100.' The other person must obviously have asked for a reason, for the gruff reply was, 'Mind your own god-damn business. Do I ask you for a reason when you ask me for money?' With that the receiver was slammed down. He turned to me and said, 'Okay, we have \$200,' upon which he picked up the receiver again, dialled another number, and within two seconds I had the money for Boyd.

These businessmen may have had rough exteriors, but they all had hearts of gold.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. IV.8-Publicity, 1948-1960, A.H. Walls, "Music-Hungry Farm People Enjoy Thelma Johannes Performances," *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, September 10, 1949.

<sup>15</sup> Gordana Lazarevich, *The Musical World of Frances James and Murray Adaskin* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 175-176.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 175-76.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

Of course, it did not hurt that it was Adaskin who had asked, but Murphy clearly thought he was doing the right thing by supporting McDonald.<sup>18</sup> There was undoubtedly a strong foundation for appreciation of the arts in place in the province before the Board was created. In some areas the arts simply needed to make the arts accessible, in others the Board needed to develop the appreciation first.

But it was no coincidence that the Board was created only after the election of the CCF. It was an exciting time in Saskatchewan; the election of the socialist party led to the province serving “as a kind of mecca for social activists.”<sup>19</sup> One of these social activists was David Smith, who was invited to be the head of the Adult Education Division of the Department of Education. It was Smith who would be one of the biggest driving forces and most integral figures behind the creation of the Board. Education had always been a large part of Smith’s life, first as a teacher and later as an adult education co-ordinator. But the artistic world remained important to Smith as well. In the introduction to *First Person Plural*, editor Ted Jackson noted that Smith “leads a Renaissance life.”<sup>20</sup> Educated in philosophy and literature,<sup>21</sup> Smith was also keen on the revival of baroque music, wrote haiku, and created mobiles to amuse his grandchildren and himself.<sup>22</sup> Upon his arrival in Saskatchewan Smith was already successful in the field of adult education. His most notable undertaking was in Simcoe County, Ontario where he developed a varied and far-reaching adult education program for the local people. This programming included artistic elements, which led to the development of a Simcoe Arts and Crafts Association. For Smith, art classes in Simcoe represented more than simple instruction. It was also about “the promotion of handicrafts as a recreational activity, the maintenance of standards of workmanship and design, and the development of a market for goods.”<sup>23</sup> For Smith, it was not enough to simply teach the art form. The community was taught how the arts and crafts could be useful to them personally and the community as a whole. Elements of this art education would be seen in the development of the arts board, where maintaining standards and developing a market would both be highly important, both in handicrafts and the other artistic areas.

Smith was convinced that the Saskatchewan populace—regardless of their class, ethnicity, or gender—would be receptive to the arts. To him, it was obvious that ‘man does not live by bread alone.’ “The good life,” he stated, “includes a great deal more than food and shelter. Folk art, singing, dancing, music, and a multitude of crafts make it clear that there is a vast capacity for artistic expression in great variety.”<sup>24</sup> He had been recruited to be the new head of the adult education division. But he would not leave the arts behind. He argued that the impulse for artistic expression was so strong that even when people are poor and life is going badly they find the time and energy for singing and dancing. Therefore, an artistic element was absolutely necessary in an adult education program. He had done it in Simcoe County and he would do it in Saskatchewan, although on a much larger scale. “Not to include the arts... is to be

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<sup>18</sup> Presumably Bill and the other person Murphy phoned came around to the idea once they found out what they were actually giving money for.

<sup>19</sup> Stuart Houston and Bill Waiser, *Tommy’s Team: The People Behind the Douglas Years* (Markham: Fifth House, 2010), 187.

<sup>20</sup> Ted Jackson, introduction to *First Person Plural: A Community Development Approach to Social Change*, by David Smith, ed. Ted Jackson (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1995), viii.

<sup>21</sup> David Smith, *First Person Plural: A Community Development Approach to Social Change*, ed. Ted Jackson (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1995), 17.

<sup>22</sup> Jackson, viii.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, 19-20.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

more than a little bit stupid,”<sup>25</sup> he noted. Not only could the arts be enjoyable and broadening on their own, but they could be a conduit for education. Smith posited that:

Adult education should be busy in that process by helping people understand why we have food banks and what can be done about them, why we have endemic unemployment and what can be done about that, why we have sickness care instead of health care and what can be done about that, and so on and so on. And in that dismantling, the insight and criticism that can be expressed through song, through theatre, through dance in inspiring and mobilizing people is critically important.

The arts were inextricably linked to education in Smith’s view, and it is no coincidence that his own education had dealt in part with the arts. The arts could answers questions, could simplify more complicated matters, and educate while entertaining.

From the beginning, knowing that some of the populace would be receptive to the Board, Smith had planned for the Board to be citizen-run. The Board, Smith wrote, was intended not to be an advisory board to civil servants, but rather a citizen board “charged with responsibility in their...fields and with the resources needed to discharge that responsibility.”<sup>26</sup> This setup allowed people already involved in the field the “opportunity to stimulate, extend, and integrate activities”<sup>27</sup> in the arts, without having to be unduly worried about government interference. It was not to be a government committee. It was an arms-length board with its own budget. The Board would still answer to the provincial government, but the people of Saskatchewan could have direct and effective control over the arts in Saskatchewan.

From the outset, painstaking care was taken to ensure that Saskatchewan was accurately represented on the Board. By the end of the preliminary discussions with Jones, King and Lindner it was decided “that the Board should aim to have amongst its initial membership a fair cross-section of citizens and professional members, representing those actively interested or engaged in the cultural field.”<sup>28</sup> One draft of the order-in-council tried to ensure that the Board was as diverse as possible, with a barely readable chart that included ‘6 city’, ‘6 citizens’, ‘1 UofS’, ‘2 govt—AEP, DFO’ and 5 art representatives, totalling fourteen.<sup>29</sup> Government representatives, leaders in the fields of art, and ordinary citizens could all be found on the Board. Care was also taken to ensure that they came from all across the province and not just Saskatoon and Regina. Typically, Saskatoon and Regina representatives each constituted about a third of the Board, with people from other areas making up the last third. Whatever the composition, there seemed to be little strife between those board members from Saskatoon/Regina and those from elsewhere.<sup>30</sup>

The first board members embodied this cross-Saskatchewan representation. Dr. Stewart Basterfield, the first Chairman, was the Dean of Regina College; Ernest Lindner, a prominent artist; Dr. Carlyle King, a professor in English at the University of Saskatchewan; Emrys Jones, a

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>28</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2-Board Meetings, 1948-1960, Untitled Document, 1.

<sup>29</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. I.2-Saskatchewan Arts Board Order-in-Council, 1948-1949, Order-in-Council Draft. AEP=Adult Education Division DFO=Department of Fitness and Recreation

<sup>30</sup> Animosity between Saskatoon and Regina, on the other hand, was another story at times.

professor in drama at the University of Saskatchewan; E.A. Moore, the supervisor of music for Regina Public; Mrs. A. B. McKenzie, former president of the Saskatchewan Music Teachers' Association; Ken Davey, the Production Manager at CKBI in Prince Albert; B.T. Richardson, the editor of the Saskatoon *Star Phoenix*; and David Smith and Dr. J.B. Kirkpatrick representing the Adult Education and Physical Fitness divisions respectively. The remainder of the Board consisted of citizens with a passion for the arts: William Davies, H.F. Harmer, Mary Louise Long, Anne McClenaghan, and Vivian Morton. And while many of the first board members had left in a few years their replacements were selected with the same amount of care. Leading experts in the various artistic fields could always be found on the board,<sup>31</sup> but always carefully balanced with more plebeian people.

Regardless of their background or hometown, board members could be assured of being equal in other areas. Board members were subject to review and each served a one-year term at a time. Each year, the government department in charge of the Board would invite the members they wished to have back, and if needed, search for new members. While this term limit was put in place to deal with problematic and unproductive board members, the reality was that nearly everyone was always invited back to serve another term. Most turnover occurred due to board members not wishing to return rather than the government not wishing their return. Other than the first few years where the Board was finding its footing,<sup>32</sup> the Board remained fairly static from year to year until 1965. Like most boards, board members could be assured of being relatively anonymous and under-appreciated. Even the work and effort put in by prominent artists would be largely overshadowed by their artistic works. The board members made sacrifices, spent time in meetings, and joined the sub committees, yet the thanks they got usually amounted to a small note from the minister of Education or the premier each year. These small notes tended to be copies with only the addressee differing on each one.

The first few minutes of the Arts Board meetings read like giant brainstorming sessions rather than any formal meeting, particularly the first. While the early Board was not without its problems, creativity and imagination were not among these. Putting sixteen artistic and community minded people together in a room to begin creating a brand new organization could potentially lead to some amazing ideas. All kinds of artistic ideas and programs were discussed at the first meeting on February 7, 1948. Some items brought forward at the first meeting would not be brought up again for many years, if at all. Mention of dance is made, but the Board would not bring in programming for ballet until the 1960s. Discussion of film was also made, but the

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<sup>31</sup> Later notables (1949-1970) would include music teacher Lyell Gustin; broadcaster Sid Boyling, who was a huge driving force behind CHAB in Moose Jaw during that time; Dean of Regina College, and professor of biology and chemistry, Dr. W.A. Riddell (whose hobbies included "music and fine cabinet work"); artists William Pehudoff and Henry Bonli; artist/University of Saskatchewan professor Eli Bornstein; musician Frank Connell; and architect Kiyoshi Izumi.

<sup>32</sup> Of the original Board members, only six would remain by 1951. One, Mrs. A.B. McKenzie, would be gone at the end of that year, and two of the six were David Smith and EW Stinson, the government representatives. Of the remainder, Mary Louise Long remained until 1955, Vivian Morton would retire after 1961, and Dr. Carlyle King would remain until early 1965, when he was not asked to return. Oddly enough, Emrys Jones, who left after the first year, returned again in 1964. The other original board members left for various reasons, such as leaving the province (Anne McClenaghan) or resigning (Ernest Lindner), but the majority are unknown. It is possible they were not asked to return but in light of later developments, when everyone was always welcomed back, this idea is doubtful. Whatever the reason behind the minor exodus of original board members, it was not bad for the Board. According to arts manager Michael Kaiser, "the people who help start an organization are not often the same people who should govern the mature organization." (Michael Kaiser, *Leading Roles: 50 Questions Every Arts Board Should Ask Itself* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2010), 125.)



Board never really did take up any serious work with film, other than the giving occasional financial assistance to film festivals.<sup>33</sup>

Perhaps one of the most remarkable ideas to come from these early meetings can be found in the minutes of the second meeting of the Board. Towards the end it is noted that “as Dr. Basterfield was absent during the afternoon, discussion on natural history projects was deferred to the next meeting of the Board.”<sup>34</sup> Unfortunately, this point is not elaborated upon, and even with Basterfield present at later meetings, it is never brought up again. The idea appears to have little linkage to the arts, but it shows that the Board could be creative and open minded to various ideas. And while the Board seemed extremely far-reaching in their scope and suggestions, they were closely following their purpose. The 1949 Arts Board Act stated: “The board shall endeavour...to make available to the people of Saskatchewan opportunities to engage in any one or more of the following activities: drama, the visual arts, music, literature, handicrafts and other arts.”<sup>35</sup> It is this idea of ‘other arts’ that is notable, as it shows that the Board was open to new and different forms of art.

No one could ever be quite sure what kind of ideas board members would come up with. The draft of the first meeting’s minutes noted the need for developing “policy for buying the work of artists for public institutions” and some unknown member wrote beside it “some publicity needed on this theme.”<sup>36</sup> The idea was appealing and it would have been a matter of concern to working artists. After all, they needed sales, and publicity was an easy way for the Arts Board to help artists than to find buyers. An arrow to the bottom of the page pointed to another written addition, author again unknown, which stated that “some dramas could be done about the experience of non-recognition by people of great talent—such as Van Gogh—[an illegible name beginning with W]—Rembrandt, etc.”<sup>37</sup> This idea was never acted upon, but it is impossible to deny the off the wall creativity of it. Its possible effect on raising awareness would likely have been small, but it is interesting.

Luckily, many of the ideas brought up at the first meeting were more manageable and a little more useful. In fact, the majority of the discussion at the first meeting would be quickly put into effect. Circuits and tours of various musical, artistic, and dramatic programs began that year. Lists of reading and play suggestions, designed to enrich lives and help community drama groups, were circulating relatively quickly, although these never seemed to have a huge impact.<sup>38</sup> The Board was also careful to build a strong relationship with the public libraries of the province. This relationship with the libraries included the collaborating on the aforementioned booklists, as well as working together on visual art tours. The library was a common place in a community and it made sense to display a work or collection there.<sup>39</sup> In the field of drama, the discussion included the “encouragement of players groups; play reading, play-writing groups, puppet plays”<sup>40</sup> which would all eventually be put into action, although script-reading services and puppetry programming would not appear until much later. The Board also attempted to

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<sup>33</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2-Board Meetings, 1948-1960, Draft of Minutes of a Meeting of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, Feb 7, 1948, 2.

<sup>34</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2-Board Meetings, 1948-1960, Minutes of a Meeting of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, March 13, 1948, 7.

<sup>35</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. I.1-Saskatchewan Arts Board Act, 1948-1949, Saskatchewan Arts Board Act, 1949.

<sup>36</sup> Draft of Minutes, Feb 7, 1948, 4.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>38</sup> Though the impact here was also hard to judge.

<sup>39</sup> Don Kerr, *A Book In Every Hand: Public Libraries in Saskatchewan* (Regina: Coteau Books, 2005), 100-103.

<sup>40</sup> Draft of Minutes, Feb 7, 1948, 2.

implement the suggestion that radio be used to bring arts programming to the province. Although this area ran into many difficulties, cooperative radio stations did what they could. But the most important ideas came in the advisory field. While it would take some time before the Board had a set of advisors to help in various fields, encouraging local individuals to use their talents was quickly taken up. The buying and encouragement of buying local works was also swiftly enacted upon. For all its apparent chaos, the first Board meeting set in motion, if not immediately then eventually, most of the major programs of the Board for the next two decades.

The Board was certainly diverse in its programming, and while ballet/dance might have been left aside for the time, steps were taken in the areas of drama, music, art, literature, radio, and handicraft. Radio itself was not really considered an art form, but rather a way to promote and showcase the arts, though the Board did promote certain radio programs it considered culturally valuable.<sup>41</sup> The Board largely intended radio to inform the public: announcing events and tours, discussing book lists, and playing classical music and radio plays. The reasoning behind using radio was sound: “In a province so vast as Saskatchewan, with its widely scattered population...the radio cannot be overlooked as a valuable medium in carrying good programmes out to the people.”<sup>42</sup> Despite the efforts of the Board, however, the radio program never caught on with the radio stations. Some were simply uninterested in working with the Board. In other cases expenses became an issue, particularly if a recording needed to be made. The Board also did little initial work in the area of literature, consigning itself mostly to book lists. And other than the summer tours and one workshop in 1950<sup>43</sup> little was done in the field of drama up to the end of 1950.

Perhaps because they were bigger, or perhaps because they were more easily accessible, more was initially done in the fields of music and visual art. Tours were made for each area immediately, and works of art were already being purchased for the Board collection. Plans were also underway in 1949 for an annual all-Saskatchewan exhibition of art, which would alternate between Saskatoon and Regina each year. The exhibition was “to encourage Saskatchewan artists and to make their work better known and appreciated in Saskatchewan.”<sup>44</sup> There was also a special emphasis on developing children as artists. In 1949 an exhibition of Saskatchewan children’s art was sent to the Worcester Art Museum in the United States, on invitation from the National Gallery of Canada, and later went to an international child art show in Denver.<sup>45</sup> In addition, Executive Secretary Norah McCullough examined hundreds of children’s artwork and comments were given on all the work Saskatchewan teachers had sent

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<sup>41</sup> What was seen as culturally valuable by the Board tended to be conservative and narrow-minded at times. The Board seems to have based both standards and cultural value on an idea of European high culture. The Board’s stance should come as no surprise, as the Board was modelled on the British Arts Council. Even in the 1960s there is a definite lean towards the European high ideal of art in both what the Board deemed culturally valuable and in standards.

<sup>42</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2-Board Meetings, 1948-1960, Untitled Document (possibly Executive-Secretary Interim Report), 2.

<sup>43</sup> Though to be fair, as evidenced in Chapter 2, this one workshop would be a huge springboard for the whole drama program.

<sup>44</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Saskatchewan Arts Board Report April First to December Thirty-First, 1949* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1950), 8. 370 works were submitted to the first exhibition, 82 which were chosen to be shown by jurors, and three of which were purchased by the Board for the circulating Saskatchewan art exhibition. (Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Saskatchewan Arts Third Annual Report, January First to December Thirty-First, 1950* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1951), 8).

<sup>45</sup> *1949 Report*, 7.

in.<sup>46</sup> More than simply supporting and encouraging young artists, the Board was giving useful critiques and attempting to educate as well. Visual art, in particular, was never lacking for promotion and funds, as it was easy to coordinate, not needing performers, but rather works. The visual arts would be hugely integral to the early Arts Board.

But the most immediate successes could be seen in the field of handicrafts, which basically consisted of anything handmade, from carving to weaving to pottery to needlework. Festivals were quickly planned, questionnaires were sent out, and a handicraft conference was held in 1949. The field was also easily accessible to amateurs and had a large scope. Within only a few years, the handicraft portion of the expense sheet was larger than any of the other main artistic areas. But handicraft shows and festivals always seemed to be well attended, both by the crafters themselves and the general populace. And although the Board was supposed to maintain high standards in the arts, this issue was not undertaken until the 1950s and craftwork seemed to have a lower set of standards than the other fields.<sup>47</sup> Over the next twenty years the handicraft field would fade to a less prominent role within the Board, but for the time being, it was seen by some as its greatest success.

Though the Board seemed little concerned with Indian artistry at this time, the ground work was being laid for later developments. At the Provincial Handicraft Conference of 1949 one person remarked that “unfortunately, Indian crafts are disappearing and some souvenirs sold by the average hotel are things that no Indian ever saw...Indian handicrafts should not stop because they are expensive and therefore available only to a limited public...The Indian should be protected against exploitation and a fair return given for his products.”<sup>48</sup> It was an area of concern that was being raised at the handicraft conference and elsewhere, but the Board would not do much promoting or educating in the area until the next decade.

The Board’s programming ideas enjoyed widespread support. Although the Board could only initiate minor programs so early in its life, due to the small amount of funds,<sup>49</sup> the people of the province happily participated in what they could. The first annual report of 1948-49 noted that “the response of the public to the services offered by the Board has come from widely distributed areas and from a variety of organizations, indicating that there has been a long felt need for cultural sustenance.”<sup>50</sup> The 1950 report noted that “the people of Saskatchewan have shown that they are ready for more activities of the kind already begun under the Board’s auspices.”<sup>51</sup> The demand for exhibitions had doubled by 1950.<sup>52</sup> In the dramatic field, the Board’s \$500 donation to the University Stage Society, along with other backers, allowed the

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<sup>46</sup> *1949 Report*, 8.

<sup>47</sup> Standards were not far from the Board’s mind, however, as the *1949 Report* voices the Board’s concerns about the state of handicrafts in the province: “It has been found necessary to discover how much genuine handicraft is being carried on, as distinct from busy-work, how much assistance people need in the way of encouragement and first class teaching, in order to maintain good standards and to help develop this valuable form of human activity in suitable ways. The Board is moving slowly in order to avoid error and a questionnaire is now in circulation throughout the province in order to compile a useful assessment of needs.” (*1949 Report*, 9.)

<sup>48</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *First Provincial Handicraft Conference*, (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, March 1949), 3.

<sup>49</sup> Only \$4, 447.87 total expenditure until the first annual report was printed. (Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Saskatchewan Arts Board First Annual Report, 1948-49* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1949), 11.) Funds were even more particularly tight since the board was still in its exploratory period and had not yet been officially established.

<sup>50</sup> *First Annual Report*, 5.

<sup>51</sup> *1950 Annual Report*, 5.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

society to put on a summer tour with travelling students. They found seventy-two appreciative audiences throughout sixty towns and villages. A subsequent tour for the following summer was quickly planned.<sup>53</sup> Reproductions of Canadian artists' works toured at least seventeen communities, including being displayed at the Saskatoon Art Centre and the Regina Public Library. Oftentimes, Norah McCullough accompanied the exhibitions in order to give talks to children and adults. The editor of the magazine *Canadian Art* reported "that circulation had been increased over the province."<sup>54</sup> Thelma Johannes' piano concerts were also a hit. She had given fifteen and nearly as many matinees at schools by the time of the printing of the first annual report.<sup>55</sup> Johannes would give nineteen more concerts in 1949 and plans for a trio of musicians to play in smaller centres near Regina were also made.<sup>56</sup> Some people enjoyed the concerts given by Johannes so much that they followed her to the next town to see her play again. Johannes also happily gave encores and at one point "two small girls had her playing until 11 o'clock and still did not want to go home."<sup>57</sup>

By the end of 1950, the outlook seemed even more promising. The introduction of the 1950 annual report noted:

During the past year...the work of the Saskatchewan Arts Board has become more closely integrated with the life of the province. Those organizations and individuals which have made use of the Board's services are becoming more familiar with what it has to offer and there is an ever-increasing demand made upon it. This is a good sign, for not only does it give justification for the effort made by the Board to meet community needs in the cultural field, but it also indicates the increased appreciation for such activities as picture exhibitions, handicraft festivals, concerts, drama courses, good reading, and for the timely notes that are sent out as information through the bulletin, "Saskatchewan Community".<sup>58</sup>

In a few short years the appreciation in the province for cultural activities had greatly increased, or perhaps had merely been discovered. The Board was undoubtedly creating an audience in some cases, but more often than not the people of the province already had a taste for the arts. It was simply not easy for them to access it. But whether or not they had always appreciated the arts, the people came out, and that included everyone. Even a simple handicraft festival would always be "well attended by the menfolk, high school boys and girls, and young children."<sup>59</sup>

Despite the early successes of the Board it was not without dissension and problems, both within and outside the Board. Not every Board member agreed with all the actions being taken by the Board and some of the Saskatchewan artists had fears and concerns. Nowhere was this problem better illustrated than with Ernest Lindner. Lindner was firm in his belief of what he

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<sup>53</sup> *First Annual Report, 1948-49*, 5. A request from Flin Flon even came in, guaranteeing a three night stand with an average minimum attendance of 600. Emrys Jones remarked that even with the cost of flying the troupe there it would be worth it, especially for publicity. (*Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2-Board Meetings, 1948-1960, E.M. Jones to David Smith, March 17, 1948.)

<sup>54</sup> *First Annual Report, 1948-49*, 6-7. Similarly, after only ten issues of *Saskatchewan Community*, a joint Arts Board/Adult Education bulletin, demand had grown to 3200, as opposed to 2000 five months earlier. (*1949 Report*, 11.)

<sup>55</sup> *First Annual Report, 1948-49*, 8.

<sup>56</sup> *1949 Report*, 6.

<sup>57</sup> Walls, "Music-Hungry Farm People..."

<sup>58</sup> *1950 Annual Report*, 5-6.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6.

thought the Board should be and for him, the Board was not going in the right direction. In a letter to Norah McCullough, Lindner said that he was ready to resign after the first meeting, but that Kirkpatrick had convinced him to stay and fight for his views.<sup>60</sup> Still, it was not long before Lindner did tender his resignation in January 1949.<sup>61</sup> In the same letter to Norah McCullough, shortly before the January meeting, he wrote

I am afraid I can not [*sic*] follow the whole method of procedure you follow as secretary of the Arts Board and the policy the Adult Education Division is taking in Arts Board matters...I find it difficult to put my finger on anything definitely wrong or on any specific action. I just feel that we have at the Board from the beginning been drifting – or been propelled – into a direction which I do not like at all.<sup>62</sup>

Lindner then stated what exactly made him uneasy about the Board, and some of these concerns were quite valid. Not surprisingly, one of the issues Lindner raised was that of money. Believing the Board had received “peanuts,” he maintained the Board should all resign in protest if larger funds were not made available or if the Board could not advise the government on expenditure. Lindner was also worried that the Arts Board’s purpose has been reversed from what was discussed before the creation of the Board. Instead of being a largely independent body, he felt that “the Adult Education Division uses the Arts Board to back and approve the programmes [*sic*] and projects it originates and wishes to undertake...It seems to me that the early suspicion some of us had, namely that the Division was looking for something to keep it busy and to justify its existence, has partially at least been confirmed.”<sup>63</sup> There was some truth behind his words as Smith was heavily involved in the early Board and at times seemed to have a domineering presence in some discussions. But at the same time he and Lindner did not always see eye-to-eye. Additionally, Lindner had issues with McCullough herself. Not denying her artistic knowledge and experience, he felt that she was ignorant about Saskatchewan, its people, and their receptivity: “It seems to me and to other [*sic*] that you only consult us –and always very briefly – on matters which you had already planned and worked out or whenever you need our help in carrying out a project of yours.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.3-Committee and Executive Meetings, 1949-1959, Ernest Lindner to Norah McCullough, January 14, 1949.

<sup>61</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2-Board Meetings, 1948-1960. Minutes of a Meeting of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, January 24, 1949, 1. The Board members, however, were unanimous in asking Lindner to rescind his resignation and he did return to the Board for is the March 26<sup>th</sup> meeting. After that meeting, however, he would leave the Board for good. The ultimate reason for his resignation was probably that the school board objected to his missing days for arts board meetings. But Lindner’s marriage had recently fallen apart as well and his art had stagnated. His belief that he was having little effect on decisions at Board meetings only made matters worse.

<sup>62</sup> Lindner to McCullough, January 14, 1949.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.* Lindner was certainly not the only one to take issue with the role of the Executive Secretary, as the problem arises throughout the 1950s and 1960s, although the biggest issues seemed to have revolved around McCullough rather than subsequent Executive Secretaries/ Directors. It is interesting to note, however, that until Cal Abrahamson was appointed in 1967, no Executive Secretary or Director was from Saskatchewan. They were all outside hires. Considering so much emphasis was placed on promoting and supporting artists from the province and the fact that board members, while not necessarily Saskatchewan born, were leaders in their communities, the fact that one of the most important roles of the Board came from outside the province is odd. Not having home ties could potentially be a good thing, as it would avoid any potential ‘Saskatchewan blinders,’ but Lindner’s point is completely valid and there is evidence that McCullough was not always in tune with the Saskatchewan public.

Finally, Lindner noted that the board was basically steamrolling over him on a matter he believed to be of the utmost importance, namely that of a provincial Art School. He wrote, “from the discussions at the two board – meetings when I tried to explain our ideas and plans of a provincial Arts school left me with the impression, that the board does not intend to really go behind this project and push it with all its power...I consider this project the key-stone to our provincial art programm [*sic*] – independent of any fine art development within the University.”<sup>65</sup> Ironically, perhaps, this idea would in part be achieved much later with the Summer School for the Arts, but at the time, other than the universities, there was little available in formal public training. The Art School was a dream of Lindner and many other artists. It was seen as a huge artistic step for the province and was a large discussion point in the preliminary meetings of the Saskatchewan Art Council, which Lindner had also been involved in. But after all the effort Lindner had put into the Board and Council, he would see some of his grandest dreams fall apart. To his credit, although Lindner may have been disappointed with the direction the Board had taken, he always appeared happy to be consulted and give suggestions. In reality, there was no alternative to the Arts Board in Saskatchewan, and however flawed, it needed to be supported. Lindner would appear elsewhere in the Saskatchewan artistic world, creating many noteworthy works, but there was no doubt the Board had alienated a creative and passionate man.

Lindner was hardly the only artist to be alienated from the Board, as there tended to be some contention between the government and the artistic community. These moments of contention can be traced back to the origins of the Board. Exactly whose initiative the Arts Board was is not easy to identify, as the two groups who take credit, the artists and the government, do not exactly match up in their recounting of the origins of the Board. That the base idea came first from David Smith seems the most reasonable. Based on his past work with community development and adult education in Ontario, which included the arts, Smith was experienced in the area and already had the background needed for the idea and realization of the Arts Board. In his 1979 history of the Board, however, former chairman W.A. Riddell noted that “the proposal [for the Arts Board] arose as a result of discussions between David Smith, Director of Adult Education; Herman Voaden, President of the Canadian Arts Council; Ernest Lindner, a Saskatoon artist who was Vice-President of the Arts Council; and Emrys Jones, Head of the Drama Department of the University of Saskatchewan.”<sup>66</sup> There is little doubt that Voaden saw himself, and the Canadian Arts Council, as integral to the project. In a letter, he argued:

Irrespective of the question of who launched the idea of an Arts Board in Saskatchewan first, it is important that the venture should be publicized, not as an undertaking of the Adult Education office, but as stemming from the Ottawa Briefs, the Canadian Arts Council, the decision to set up Provincial Arts Councils with membership in the national body, and the recognition by education and recreation authorities that the dignity and importance of the arts, and the proper direction of a provincial cultural program, demanded a separate arts board advised by competent provincial art organizations.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> W.A. Riddell, *Cornerstone for Culture: A History of the Saskatchewan Arts Board from 1948 to 1978* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1979), 5.

<sup>67</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.4b Arts Council, 1948, Herman Voaden, President-Canadian Arts Council to Messrs. Shumlatcher, Jones, Smith, Lindner and Miss Jean Swanson, n.d.

Regardless of who provided the impetus for the Board, there was no doubt that the artists were trying to take charge, probably over fear of losing control to the government. Smith, writing in 1995, would call Riddell's official history "revisionist...in which the establishment of the Board was said to have been the result of suggestions and pressure from members of the arts community. In fact, the Board was a deliberate policy initiative of the government about which some members of the arts community were, at first, a little hesitant."<sup>68</sup> And they had been hesitant. Writing to McCullough, Lindner noted that the artists had held suspicions about the Board and its direction before and after it was created.<sup>69</sup> An interview with McCullough sheds further light on the matter, giving a definite edge to Smith:

the idea came from the Adult Education Division..., which felt that we had a great many cultural resources not being fully used, because they needed co-ordination.

The Division suggested its interest in setting up such a Board last spring, and immediate support came from a group of people active in the arts. Through their joint efforts, the Arts Board has become a reality.<sup>70</sup>

In the end, there seems little doubt that the initiative began with Smith and the government, though artists such as Lindner and Jones were important in helping to formulate the Board.<sup>71</sup> On the whole, though, relations between the government/Board and the artists of the province remained quite cordial. There may been dissension at times, but the artists knew that there the Board was ultimately beneficial and that there was no alternative.<sup>72</sup>

Once the Arts Board was established, it faced several practical challenges. One of the first auditor reports cautioned about instances of sloppy record keeping. There had been difficulties with the location and verification of some of Music and Picture Purchase Committees' transaction information. A recommendation that all committee funds be centralized

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<sup>68</sup> Smith, 159.

<sup>69</sup> Lindner to McCullough, January 14, 1949.

<sup>70</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. IV.8-Publicity, 1948-1960, Radio Broadcast for the Arts/Interview with Norah McCullough, 1.

<sup>71</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2-Board Meetings, 1948-1960, News Release Draft.

<sup>72</sup> Further complicating these matters was the attempted establishment of a Provincial Arts Council by the artists of the province in 1947. The Council planning committee included many of the same people that would serve on the Board: Jones, Lindner, Gustin, King, McKenzie, and Smith. The committee saw the Council as a partner to the Board, with the Board being designed with consumers in mind and the Council being designed with artists in mind. But to some, the Council would have controlled the Board. It would be the Council which would make nominations to the government for Board members, in addition to programming suggestions.

The committee delayed formation of the Council until the Arts Board had been formed, in part to ensure that no programming was duplicated. The aims and objectives for the Council and Board, however, were too similar, and with the creation of the Board, plans for the Council fell apart. There was little need for the Council and most potential Council members ended up serving on the Board anyway. Undoubtedly, the dropping of the Council was a hard blow to the artistic community and Lindner in particular, who was still trying to set up a Council as late as 1957. (*Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.4b-Arts Council, 1948, Second Meeting of the Leaders of the Arts of Saskatchewan, September 28, 1948; Voaden to Shumlatcher, Jones, Smith, Lindner, and Swanson, n.d.; *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Ernest Lindner to Blodwen Davies, February 4, 1957.)

in the main offices of the Board seems to have prevented any further problems.<sup>73</sup> Evidentially, there were a few professional hiccups in the early years of the Board.

But while the Board could, and eventually did control problems like the audit trouble, there was little the Board could do about the some of Saskatchewan's core characteristics, namely its rural nature and weather. There was no doubt that harsh weather, particularly in winter, could cancel or affect a performance or tour, even in the cities. Obviously, in a province that greatly depended on agriculture there were also times where some programming of the Board simply would not work. Scheduling travelling musicians or theatre troupes at an important time in the planting or harvesting cycle could be potentially devastating to audience sizes, though this issue could be easily avoided with some careful planning. And it never really appears that it had an effect on programming, most likely because the Board was always careful to plan properly. But the agricultural nature of the province created other problems for the Board. The original vice chairman of the Board, H.F. Harmer, a farmer from Meyronne, simply could not juggle both the Board and his work.<sup>74</sup> "I have hoped against hope" he wrote, "that perhaps from some source conditions might arise that it would be possible for me to continue, but that situation now seems out of the possible." The reality for Harmer was that being away from home for even three or four hours usually required him to find someone to remain in his stead. But Arts Board meetings required a commitment of days, rather than hours, for in the less readily accessible area in which Harmer lived he lost two days simply making the trip to the meeting and back.<sup>75</sup> It was evident that Harmer did not wish to leave the Board (he had put off sending his resignation for some time), but faced with the choice between his livelihood and a largely volunteer position, there was really only one option. Upon hearing the news of Harmer's resignation Education Minister W.S. Lloyd, in a letter to Carlyle King, noted that it would be preferable to keep a farmer on the Board.<sup>76</sup> But as proven by Harmer it was difficult to keep a farmer on the Board, particularly one who lived in a remote area. Nor were farmers the only Board members who lived in remote or far away places. Board meetings were easy enough for Saskatoon and Regina members to attend with minimal time lost, but most others could lose as much time out of their undoubtedly busy schedules as Harmer did. The meetings themselves tended to run all day and were a significant time commitment, and one that would not allow much, if any, time for travel on the day of the meeting.

Being the first arts board in North America and predating the Canada Council was certainly a significant and ground breaking move, but the rest of the world was quickly following. And although being the first arts board in North America was a big step, little evidence exists of the Board offering advice or help to new and developing boards, or even collaborating with other provinces in its early existence. The Board was involved with the

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<sup>73</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. II.1-Budget, 1947-1964, C.H. Smith, Audit Report for the Period Ended December 31, 1949.

<sup>74</sup> This problem had most likely apparently risen even earlier, as he appeared to have stepped down as vice-chairman at one point and became a regular board member.

<sup>75</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.3-Committee and Executive Meetings, 1949-1959, H.F. Harmer to Nora McCullough, May 24, 1951. Harmer, like other resigned members, such as Lindner, would still want to stay involved with the Board in some way. His letter ends with, "I would like to keep in touch with the activities of the Board by such publications as you may from time to time issue, and I would like, if I am not making too large a request, to have you leave my name on your mailing list." Just because he had left the Board did not mean he severed all ties, and likely remained a good community ambassador for the Board in the Meyronne area.

<sup>76</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Correspondence, 1944-1965, W.S. Lloyd to Carlyle King, June 12, 1951.



Western Canada Art Circuit, but was hardly a driving force behind it.<sup>77</sup> It is quite possible that the breakthrough in Saskatchewan could have provided the impetus for other provincial boards. As Lindner suggested, “I am confident, that we in Saskatchewan will set the pattern for the other provinces to follow, if they have sense.”<sup>78</sup> But this influence was very broad and other provinces would not follow Saskatchewan’s lead until much later. The Board did send in twelve pages of recommendations to the Massey Commission,<sup>79</sup> but beyond this move there is little evidence of influence on the wider arts in Canada. The Board was beginning to correspond with other countries, though, as evidenced by a letter to Norah McCullough from the Minister of Switzerland. The Minister was thankful to be informed of the Board’s establishment and purpose, and was potentially interested in setting up a student exchange.<sup>80</sup> Nothing ever came from it, but the Board was clearly attempting to develop international relations.

The Saskatchewan Arts Board was undoubtedly succeeding in facilitating the arts in its first years despite the lack of involvement on the national scene, the rural nature of Saskatchewan, and the moments of contention between the artists and the government. The groundwork was being laid for a strong and varied program that aimed to assist artists and promote and make accessible the arts in Saskatchewan. Led by David Smith and leaders of Saskatchewan’s artistic world, the Board quickly set out with basic programming that was quickly and happily accepted by the province. The Board’s programming was understandably simple and unfocused at this early point in its existence, but it would quickly take off as the Board entered the 1950s. The province had more or less accepted the Board with open arms, but the Board would face challenges in the decade ahead. For while the Board found itself at odds with the artistic community at times and widely accepted by the populace, both of these relationships would change in the coming decade.

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<sup>77</sup> *1950 Annual Report*, 9.

<sup>78</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.4b-Arts Council, 1948, Ernest Lindner to David Smith, August 16, 1947.

<sup>79</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.2-Briefs and Reports, 1949-1964, Brief to the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, October 1949.

<sup>80</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Minister of Switzerland to Norah McCullough, March 25, 1948.

## Chapter Two

### “We must counteract the tragic influences of the Elvis Pressleys”: Developing and Maintaining Standards, 1950-1960

“Ode to a Clucking Hen”  
Buddy, I admire your pluck,  
As you fuss about an cluck  
Though you have layed [*sic*] for days and days  
A family now you wish to raise<sup>81</sup>

“Ode to a Clucking Hen” was one of the many poems sent into the 1963 Saskatchewan Arts Board Writing Contest. Unfortunately, it also represented the majority of submissions: simple, rhyming, misspelled, and terrible. Carlyle King, head of the literature committee at the time and a professor of English at the University of Saskatchewan, would go so far as to begin copying the worst entries into a private anthology of awful poetry. Included was the aforementioned “Ode” as well as number of others, such as this untitled poem:

Then out came Aunt Annie,  
All dressed up real perky,  
She said come on in  
Oh! The aroma of turkey<sup>82</sup>

There were a handful of good entries, however, and King sent about forty percent of the submissions on to the judges. But the quality of writing in Saskatchewan seemed rather dismal. Throughout the 1950s the Saskatchewan Arts Board had run contests in the five major artistic disciplines, namely visual art, drama, literature, music, and handicrafts. The contests, particularly the literary ones, show that while Saskatchewan was producing some works with artistic merit, both amateur and professional, there was an equal amount that was widely scorned by the artistic elite. For every prominent artist that rose to fame, there were countless more that could create only pale imitations. And while even bad art and performances were heartening to the Board, in the sense that art was being promoted and accepted, the sheer levels of dreadfulness achieved in certain works was beyond the resources the Board had. Therefore, after the hectic programming introduced in the late 1940s the Board found itself needing to scale back a little. The Board continued to introduce new and innovative programs, but there was an attempt to focus on providing more services to those artists who were already established or those with potential. Standards were quickly created in all the major disciplines the Board oversaw. But the Board’s views on standards and the province’s views on standards did not always match. Nor did board members themselves agree. And with the Board happily supporting these developments in modern visual art, music, and theatre, the populace was sometimes at odds with the Board. Modern art was being questioned across the country and the world, and Saskatchewan did not differ in this bewilderment. While the Board continued to expand its programs and ideas into the 1950s there was a conscious focus on ensuring the various artists of the province were being held to a high standard. And much like the Board’s idea of cultural

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<sup>81</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Carlyle King, ed., *Anthology of Bad Poems*, 1.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

value, these standards tended to be based on the European ideal of high art. Many of the activities and programs of the decade point towards this shift, but the Board risked alienating the lesser artists and its audiences.

The Board seemed most concerned with the standards in visual arts. The Board was particularly uneasy with class work being submitted to exhibitions as work done in the classroom was not considered to be original. The Board did its best to limit works such as these.<sup>83</sup> Overall, there was simply too much conservative artwork being done in the province, and most work showed few elements of a more modern style. Many works showed signs of style imitation, particularly of the Group of Seven, especially A.Y. Jackson.<sup>84</sup> Canadian painter Jack Shadbolt, adjudicating the Fifth Annual Exhibition, noted that most pictures in the show were “not great works, not provocative, but reassuringly pleasant and sometimes even lyrical”<sup>85</sup> and had a regional/rural flavour. This rural flavour would also extend to what was known as ‘primitive’ art. Primitive art was essentially amateur work done with no formal training or knowledge of the artistic world. Once again, the Board and adjudicators looked down on these works. The artwork might be pleasant, but the Board clearly wanted work that pushed the boundaries and had its own style.

Music had its problems as well, particularly in the vocal sphere. Rock-and-roll was rapidly gaining popularity in Saskatchewan and the classically trained musicians of the province were concerned. Similar to elsewhere in North America, the Board believed that young people were too easily influenced and the radio stations were more apt to play recent hits rather than what the Board saw as culturally acceptable.<sup>86</sup> “We must counteract the tragic influences of the Elvis Pressleys [*sic*],” a report from board member and Yorkton radio station operator Ernest Crosthwaite read, “who are rapidly undermining the whole vocal structure in our communities. Our young people are excellent imitators, and unfortunately, the Presley cult has captured their imagination.”<sup>87</sup> The biggest problem, as Crosthwaite and by extension the Board saw, was that it was not easy to counteract the influence of popular music. Crosthwaite’s report noted that “unfortunately, most of our teachers are inadequately equipped to combat the appalling noises which come from the throats of the popular rock-n-roll artists,”<sup>88</sup> but that properly knowledgeable teachers would be advantageous. Crosthwaite was sure children would prefer to sing properly if given the choice and support.

Basic standards were even applied to the field of handicrafts, which had never had very high standards. In the early years, the handicraft field was undoubtedly one to be proud of, and perhaps one to be less critical of. The 1956 annual report remarked that “no province in Canada has any comparable survey of the resources of the handicrafts to that which has been carried on

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<sup>83</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2-Board Meetings, 1948-1960, Eli Bornstein, Saskatchewan Arts Board Art Committee Report, April 16, 1956, 3-4.

<sup>84</sup> W.A. McCloy in consultation with Mrs. H.A. Dyde, “Adjudicator’s notes,” *Saskatchewan Art Exhibition Fourth Annual Exhibition*, by the Saskatchewan Arts Board (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1953).

<sup>85</sup> J. Shadbolt, “Adjudicator comments,” *Saskatchewan Art Exhibition Fifth Annual Exhibition*, by the Saskatchewan Arts Board, (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1954).

<sup>86</sup> Difficulties still existed with various radio stations in the 1950s and it was not long before the Board essentially gave up on using radio. It received less and less funding throughout the decade and by 1957 had disappeared from the annual report. Sid Boyling and Ernest Crosthwaite, both involved in the radio industry, however, did remain on the Board until 1959 and 1962, respectively.

<sup>87</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.3-Committee and Executive Meetings, 1949-1959, Ernest Crosthwaite, quoted in Lyell Gustin, Music Committee Report, September 1, 1958.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

for seven years in Saskatchewan.”<sup>89</sup> By 1954, a Standards Committee had been set up, which was designed to “approve articles of quality for sale and encourage high standards of workmanship.”<sup>90</sup> But handicraft standards were still lower than in the other artistic realms. Nearly anything could be displayed at a festival or exhibition and the skill disparity at these events could be quite large. This difference of standards became less of an issue by the end of the decade because handicrafts would become less promoted and funded by the Board.

As evidenced by “Ode to a Clucking Hen,” there were some rather large issues when it came to standards in the field of literature. Author W.O. Mitchell recalled the submissions for the Writers’ Workshop: “every year I get people from Tisdale and Elbow writing about bars in Los Angeles and Manhattan when they have never seen a cocktail bar in their lives.”<sup>91</sup> Once again, there was reasonable talent but that talent was bogged down in trying to imitate what was popular at the time. And popularity did not ensure what was being copied had any literary value. Mitchell believed that it was important to write about something which the writer was at least somewhat familiar with. Doing so with a Manhattan or Los Angeles setting would invariably lead to failure, and as Mitchell saw it, there would be a sense of ‘phoniness’ in the work. Things appeared to have improved little by 1957, when workshop leader Magaret Stobie noted that “the brutal truth is that there are few writers, or potential writers, in Saskatchewan, if by writing one understands anything more than the making of marks on paper.”<sup>92</sup> For the least funded of the original artistic fields of the Board, things seemed dire.

Carlyle King would go so far as to flatly state at one meeting that Saskatchewan writers were producing trash. But this deficiency was unsurprising as the literary field was so little developed. It was a problem that would be raised by Board member Mrs. M.K. Edwards upon her joining the Board in 1957. Believing that the literature field was the Board’s “step-child,” with its pitiful funding, it was obvious that there was little progress being made.<sup>93</sup> Although the annual Writer’s Workshop was receiving a great deal of praise, the reality was that it was assisting only a handful of people each year, for only two short weeks, and turning away any artists deemed inferior. Edwards, however, differed from other members of the Board in that she supported writing production of any sort. She told King:

If there are people in Sask. who are, however ineptly, trying to express themselves on paper, then it is part of the duty of the Board to help them to do so. That is my interpretation of Article 11 of the Act. And I further submit that it is better to do anything badly than not to do anything at all; and that no one has ever climbed a mountain without first starting on the lower slopes.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Saskatchewan Arts Board Ninth Annual Report, January First to December Thirty-First, 1956* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1957), 6.

<sup>90</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. IV.4d- Miscellaneous Handicraft, c1950-1959, Vivian Morton to Handicraft Committee, June 1954.

<sup>91</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. IV.8-Publicity, 1948-1960, Doug Sagi, “Sask. Termed provocative area for story-telling,” *Regina Leader-Post*, August 4, 1955.

<sup>92</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2-Board Meetings, 1948-1960, Carlyle King, Literature Committee Report, September 5, 1957, 1.

<sup>93</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Mrs. M.K. Edwards to Blodwen Davies, January 9, 1957. Compare the \$11,300 given to handicrafts and the \$1400 allotted to literature in the 1957 budget.

<sup>94</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Mrs. M.K. Edwards to Carlyle King, September 1, 1957.

It was a sentiment that, while probably felt by others on the Board, appears to have been rarely mentioned. It was impossible to support and develop the artistic abilities of every single person in the province, but at the same time it left countless other people unsupported.

Edward's comments reveal a disconnect between the Board and the populace. In setting standards and exercising quality control over what it supported, the Board made everything much less personal. Too often it seemed that the Board wanted results too quickly. Edwards noted:

giving recognition and help to established artists is only half the job. Development of potential talent is, in my opinion, even more important. There is talent lying dormant in Saskatchewan of which even its possessors are not aware. In this field I find myself thinking in terms of personalities. I think, not of masterpieces never written, composed, or painted, but of talents undeveloped, and people unfulfilled.<sup>95</sup>

To her, the Board was concerned with the physical results rather than the metaphysical ones. Even when developing talent, such as with the workshops, work was reviewed, age limits were set, and less talented people were turned away. The Board had to find the proper balance, but it obviously did not suit everyone. Edwards was really only impressed with the Handicraft field as she believed that it was the only program adequately "meeting the needs of the people of Saskatchewan."<sup>96</sup>

Of course, it was not surprising that board members would differ in their opinions. For instance, competitive drama was a point of discussion that arose in 1952. Some board members doubted the value of the competitions, while others wondered about incentive. There were also differing views of 'for art's sake' and 'for competition's sake'. Broadcaster Sid Boyling believed that competition offered an incentive to do better, and if competition was not the way then an alternative such as compensation should be found. Boyling believed there needed to be some form of material motivation. Riddell, on the other hand, believed that adjudication was more important than a competitive element. Adjudication would offer critique and praise and should see more concrete results in understanding and improvements in the field. David Smith, on the other hand, believed that the experience and understanding of the play "was really more satisfying than beating someone else."<sup>97</sup> Smith's opinion matched his own reasons for creating the board in the first place: being involved in a play should ultimately better a person, not simply better their talent. The above three board members had differing viewpoints on one tiny element of the drama field and remaining board members likely had their own or varying views. There is no doubt that each had a differing view on standards as well.

Although the Board, by and large, agreed that a high standard must be maintained in all areas, the populace sometimes disagreed. Edwards commented at one point that her impression was that "the Board was operating in a somewhat rarefied atmosphere that the ordinary citizen couldn't attain, let alone understand." More worrying, she pointed out that she had heard "off-the-record complaints along this line, as well, and thought the committee undoubtedly could ably defend itself on this charge, it surely is not well that the Board be so considered by the local (particularly rural) population."<sup>98</sup> Though the Board undoubtedly meant well, it appeared it had alienated part of the province.

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<sup>95</sup> Edwards to Davies, January 9, 1957.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.8-Minutes and Agendas, 1948-1963, Minutes of a Meeting of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, October 4, 1952, 1.

<sup>98</sup> Edwards to Davies, January 9, 1957.

Complicating the matter of standards was that modern art was becoming more popular among artists and the artistic world in the 1950s. Yet certain portions of the populace disliked and saw little value in some of the more modern artistic forms. It was a problem that Canada as a whole faced. “We tend to regard art as the preserve of a few intellectuals” one radio commentator noted, and “while this view is being overcome there is a tendency to think of it as the stuff that is forced down unwilling throats by the Canada Council, the CBC and the National Film Board”<sup>99</sup> and, by extension, the Arts Board. One woman from Moose Jaw sent a letter criticising “what she thought was the modern bias on the part of our judges”<sup>100</sup> at one of the art exhibitions. The Board believed that a good cross-section had been selected at that exhibition and that the judges had chosen carefully. Whether the woman had entered her own work in the exhibition and was feeling unfairly treated is unknown, but the non-artist citizens of the province also made their views known. One woman, Alice DeRoo, colourfully wrote to the editor of *The Leader Post* that at a recent Saskatchewan art showing “I longed to find some modern creation on canvas that I could at least decipher. What a waste of canvas, I thought when I scrutinized a painting where the only real things I could see were splashes of color in a confused jumble!” More than just finding it confusing, DeRoo seemed to find it upsetting. “All this and more challenged my divining powers,” she wrote, “Surely, I thought, it’s all my fault. I’m just stupid, inartistic, and uncultured.” DeRoo finally ended up “fleeing” to the top floor of the gallery where some works of the “old masters” hung. “Old friends are the best, I said to myself as I looked at them, especially when the new are inarticulate and coldly aloof, and choose to remain complete strangers to all but the inner phantasmagoria of a modern artist’s mind!”<sup>101</sup> Though DeRoos’ comments are overly dramatic and exaggerated, feelings of confusion and inferiority were not uncommon among many viewers of visual art.

These problems of ‘the modern’ were extended to other fields as well. In a news report on the 1957 Dominion Drama Festival, it was noted that after a performance of *The Crucible* “the audience of about 2,300...obviously didn’t care for the play either. Lobby comment after the performance indicated that the play—pure theatre throughout—was too harsh and grim for the majority’s taste.”<sup>102</sup> Eventually becoming a staple of high school classrooms, popular opinion has evidently changed on *The Crucible*. But it is strange that the fairly straightforward drama, if a little dark and depressing, was so poorly received. But it seemed as if audiences wanted safe, usually comedic works presented on stage. In one letter, Laura Logie, an eventual Board member, noted that “I realize that a farce is not the best choice for amateurs, but we have been going on the policy of alternately giving the people what they want and making lots of money (!) and then using that money next time to give them something of a more worthwhile character having captured their interest.”<sup>103</sup> She illustrated a problem that was prominent then and still remains, particularly in the smaller centres. It was simply economically impossible for most theatre companies to put on meaningful dramas. A meaningful drama could still be

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<sup>99</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. IV.1-Art Clippings and New Releases, 1955-1960, “Talk on the arts provokes debate,” author unknown, n.d.

<sup>100</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2-Board Meetings, 1955-1960, Minutes of a Meeting of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, May 26, 1956, 6.

<sup>101</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. IV.1-Art Clippings and News Releases, 1955-1960, Alice DeRoo, “CANVAS WASTED,” *Regina Leader-Post*, March 1958.

<sup>102</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. IV.1-Art Clippings and News Releases, 1955-1960, “Adjudicator Harsh on Hamilton cast,” *Regina Leader-Post*, May 25, 1957, 5.

<sup>103</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.2-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Briefs and Reports, 1948-1964, Laura D. Logie to Mrs. Burgess, January 28, 1952.

appreciated. Farces and comedies, however, tended to be better received and certainly better attended. There was no doubt that there was disconnect between standards and audience reception.

The Board quickly began to take steps to raise standards. The best way to ensure standards were being maintained was through teaching. It was in this way that the Board could counteract the Presleys, as Crosthwaite had noted. One of the biggest ways in which the Board encouraged this refinement of art was through workshops led by professionals in the field. The earliest of these was a drama workshop held in August 1950. It was conducted by Burton and Florence James, co-directors of the Seattle Repertory Playhouse, and dealt “with the problems of production and acting in small communities.”<sup>104</sup> The workshop had forty people registered but many others joined the group periodically. With the Western Canada Theatre Conference running the same week, many people attended classes when not at the conference. Although the workshop focused less on the concrete aspects of theatre it was well received and plans were quickly made to hold another, longer, workshop at Fort Qu’Appelle the following summer.<sup>105</sup> This subsequent workshop, once again led by the James’s, was well attended and many of the registrants were returnees. The majority of registrants were teachers, who would be great conduits as they would presumably take the skills they learned at the workshop back to their communities and classrooms. Pleased once more with the turnout, the Board made plans for an even larger workshop for the next year.<sup>106</sup> It would be this workshop that would ultimately serve as the template for the following ones and would grow each year. Various facets of drama would each receive their own workshops, and annual workshops in writing would soon follow as well, eventually culminating in large camps in the late 1960s. One common thread found here would be the use of Fort Qu’Appelle as a location. The facilities at the nearby Qu’Appelle Valley Centre offered a great deal for workshop participants. With rooms and food, it effectively became a retreat for the potential artists. And nestled in the Qu’Appelle Valley near the shores of Echo Lake, it presented a retreat into nature.

Unfortunately, Burton James’ death in December of 1951<sup>107</sup> had various repercussions for the drama program in the province. Likely due to the absence of the James’s from the 1952 workshop, attendance fell.<sup>108</sup> In 1953, however, the Board hired widowed Florence James as a drama consultant and put her in charge of the workshops for the next decade, among other duties.<sup>109</sup> Florence James was perhaps the most significant hiring the Board made in its early

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<sup>104</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Saskatchewan Arts Board Third Annual Report, January First to December Thirty-First, 1950* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1951), 11.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>106</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Saskatchewan Arts Board Fourth Annual Report, January First to December Thirty-First, 1951* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1952), 12.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 12. The death of Burton James is a tragic story. Brought before the Committee of Un-American Activities in Washington on phony charges both Florence and Burton were charged with a fine and jail time. The jail sentences were suspended, but the damage to the Seattle Repertory Playhouse was irreparable as audience size dwindled. The Playhouse was eventually shut down and purchased by the University of Washington. Burton James passed away shortly after the sale at the age of 61. His doctors had found him quite sound. Florence would maintain that it was “the destruction of his life’s work was what killed him.” Ultimately, Burton had died of a broken heart. Although her husband’s death was upsetting, in the end, it probably only strengthened Florence and made her strive harder to improve the theatre world. (*Saskatchewan Archives Board, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Norah McCullough to Carlyle King, n.d.*)

<sup>108</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Saskatchewan Arts Board Fifth Annual Report, January First to December Thirty-First, 1952* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1953), 4.

<sup>109</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Saskatchewan Arts Board Sixth Annual Report, January First to December Thirty-First, 1953* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1954), 11-12. Further discussion of James’ role as consultant and

years. She would remain an integral part of the Board until 1968 and the successes in the field of drama can largely be attributed to her. Executive Secretary Norah McCullough had much to praise in James: “Florence James is rare, the best possible person to give the whole scheme for provincial drama some real quality. There is no one else here with her knowledge, her drive, her devotion to a cause and experience of theatre.”<sup>110</sup> McCullough, moreover, noted that James “has taken a new lease of life here and has been so elevated by the opportunity, it is touching” and had a “wonderful trust in us and in this province.”<sup>111</sup> James would dedicate herself to improving drama in the province and in the country. Nor was James an elitist drama person in any way. “She is just as interested in helping stage a Sunday school play in one act, using bed sheets for make shift stage curtains,” one article stated, “as she is in a three act full treatment production in the largest auditorium in the community.”<sup>112</sup> For James, theatre could be an integral part of life, matching with Smith’s original views of the Board. Drama could better people. She would work tirelessly for the Board and with various communities. At the same time, she would adjudicate at festivals across the country and would attend many of the meetings and conferences of the wider theatre world. The Board was fortunate to establish close ties with such a person.

As the workshop constantly grew in size and ambition, James realized there was no way to properly conduct the workshop by herself and got other dramatic artists to help out in various areas. Classes devoted specifically to make-up, for instance, would be running by the end of the decade, led by guest artists. Even out-of-province students would attend the workshop and more than one student preferred attending Valley Centre rather than the more renowned Banff summer program. In part, this preference was due to the more intimate class sizes at Fort Qu’Appelle, but Banff did not supply living arrangements and the element of community and sociability that Valley Centre provided was lost.<sup>113</sup> As well, the drama workshop was important for having its attendees take the knowledge back to their respective towns. At one point, two attendees of the 1954 workshop went on to run their own workshops “in the school area of Swift Current, Eastend, and Shaunavon.”<sup>114</sup> The drama workshop was also carefully designed to meet the needs and conditions of smaller centres. “We attempt, in the course and in the presentation of the plays,” James wrote, “to enable our students to meet the conditions they find in the areas in which they work.”<sup>115</sup> The emphasis was always on how to properly convey a setting while using common and cheap materials.

For the summer of 1952, the Board, namely Carlyle King, planned a writers’ workshop to be led by famed Saskatchewan writer W. O. Mitchell. Mitchell had even turned down an offer from the Banff School of Fine Arts in order to concentrate on the Board workshop.<sup>116</sup> The workshop would allow both “coaching and criticism in the writing of the short story, the one-act

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the consulting program will be looked at later in the chapter.

<sup>110</sup> McCullough to King, n.d.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Naomi Arps, “Reward Days at Valley Workshops,” *Western Producer*, August 30, 1956, 1.

<sup>113</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. IV.8-Publicity, 1948-1960, Rose McLaughlin, “One big family at Valley Centre,” *The Saskatchewan Farmer*, 1954.

<sup>114</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Saskatchewan Arts Board Seventh Annual Report, January First to December Thirty-First, 1954* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1955), 12.

<sup>115</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2 Board Meetings, 1948-1960, Florence James, Report on drama workshop, September 9, 1954.

<sup>116</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.2-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Briefs and Reports, 1949-1964, Carlyle King, Saskatchewan Arts Board Literature Committee, January 20, 1952.



play, and the radio play.”<sup>117</sup> As one attendee noted, it “compared favourably to university lectures in English.”<sup>118</sup> The Writers’ Workshop allowed Mitchell to both lecture in a classroom setting and have private sessions where he could criticize and offer suggestions for improvement.<sup>119</sup> Like its sister workshop in drama, the writing workshop was very successful, with both participants and Mitchell expressing their enthusiasm. Plans were quickly made to enlarge it the following year. Limited to small class sizes of no more than twenty, with an age limit of around thirty, and requiring a submission of one’s work ahead of time, it was clear that the workshop was intended for those with skill and potential.<sup>120</sup> Like the drama workshop, many students also saw it as a good place to go. One attendee noted that “I have attended other workshops which turned out to be nothing more than lectures” but that the workshop at Valley Centre was “highly effective.”<sup>121</sup> One Albertan journalist noted he was sceptical when he arrived at the workshop, but returned home “so enthusiastic about the Valley Centre Writer’s and Drama workshops, and about all, your wonderful Arts Board, that I am in danger of becoming rather a bore on the subject.”<sup>122</sup> Plans for similar poetry and journalism workshops fell through because of a low number of applications, but the attempt for broadening horizons was there. Students returned time and time again, even if, as one pointed out, Mitchell used “the same lectures year after year.”<sup>123</sup> By 1955 two students had attended three times and three had attended twice.<sup>124</sup> Plans were also quickly made to link the drama and writing workshops. Already at the same location, moving them to the same time in the summer was a logical move. There was a certain amount of interplay between the two disciplines, and the communal setting allowed both workshops’ attendees to get to know one another. Often, the drama workshop would use a play written by one of the writers.

Puppetry also received a workshop in 1959. Although a comparatively minor field of art compared to the larger fields, it was an easily accessible art form that required both handiwork and dramatics. Although only five children and three teachers registered for the workshop, figures were made and costumed, and a performance was put on. The Drama Committee considered it a “satisfactory beginning.”<sup>125</sup> Though it may only have been a minor program, it still illustrates how the Board was willing to think outside the box. Puppetry could be extremely

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<sup>117</sup> *1951 Annual Report*, 11.

<sup>118</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Geri Wudrick to Norah McCullough, August 15, 1956.

<sup>119</sup> In a way, Mitchell saw it as repaying a debt to his own mentor, F.M. Slater, who had helped Mitchell with his renowned work *Who Has Seen the Wind*. (Sagi, “Sask. Termed provocative...”)

<sup>120</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.2-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Briefs and Reports, 1948-1964, Carlyle King to W.O. Mitchell, September 6, 1951; *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.2-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Briefs and Reports, 1948-1964, W.O. Mitchell to Carlyle King, November 22, 1951. Mitchell was leery about an age limit but did concede “it would do a lot towards keeping out the nice old ladies with brown paper parcels under their arms.”

<sup>121</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Kathleen G. Nouch to McCullough, September 7, 1953.

<sup>122</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Frances J. Fraser to Woodrow S. Lloyd, August 15, 1956. To Fraser, the Board had more than justified its existence simply by putting on the workshops and the young musician series.

<sup>123</sup> Sagi, “Sask. Termed provocative...” The reason the attendee kept returning was that he told a “different story each year,” in addition to Mitchell’s critiques.

<sup>124</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Saskatchewan Arts Board Eighth Annual Report, January First to December Thirty-First, 1955* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1956), 13.

<sup>125</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.2-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Briefs and Reports, 1949-1964, Carlyle King, Saskatchewan Arts Board Drama Committee Report, September 21, 1959, 3.

useful as well, since it offered a nice, less formal introduction to drama, something that might be more attractive to children. With the inclusion of the three teachers, the puppetry knowledge was likely being passed on in numerous classrooms as well during the following year.

Other annual workshops would take place away from the Qu'Appelle Valley. Emma Lake was a popular spot both for vacationers and artists. The annual artist's workshop was located at Emma. Although not an outright initiative of the Board, it did help pay the honorarium for the workshop leader in its first year and supported and advertised it in subsequent years.<sup>126</sup> The artists' workshop was also well received, particularly after workshop leaders started coming from further away. The artists' workshop, however, could be considered more advanced than the other workshops. Rather than attracting less experienced young adults, the artists' workshop attracted a more experienced group of people. Many prominent artists attended, both from within and outside the province. For both the drama and writing workshops, the focus was on teaching and instructing because many attendees were still in the earlier stages of dramatic or literary development and the majority were quite young. But at Emma Lake, there was more of a sense of equality among the attendees and between the attendees and the workshop leader. It was a place for artistic minds to meet, reflect, and refine, rather than simply learn. Ella May Walker from Alberta wrote Kenneth Lochhead that she was pleased with the workshop and found it valuable: "it was a stimulating and enjoyable experience, this working together with other artists and this is an experience not often afforded to you after student days and classes in art."<sup>127</sup> But perhaps no one was more affected than artist Ernest Lindner. The workshop of 1957, he wrote,

has been the most significant to me. Mr. Barnett's understanding help has done more for me than I ever dared hope for. I believe he has helped me to a definite break-through in my work and I hop [*sic*], no, I am convinced, that my work will improved [*sic*] from now on and that my contact with Barnett will proved a definite turning point in the quality of my work.<sup>128</sup>

The workshop was significant to Lindner as it allowed him to finally break into a new and progressive style after nearly a decade of aimlessness.<sup>129</sup> Lindner also noted that "the whole atmosphere was electrically charged, making everybody work at top capacity" and that "far away as we are from the great Art Centres of the world it is one way to raise our standards of works and to keep in touch with contemporary trends."<sup>130</sup> There was no doubt that the artists' workshop could have a profound effect on the artistic world of Saskatchewan and it was easily

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<sup>126</sup> There were many notable workshop leaders, often hired from the United States. These included Kenneth Lochhead, Arthur McKay, Jack Shadbolt, Will Barnett, Barnett Newman, and Clement Greenberg. Perhaps the most interesting choice of leader occurred in 1965 when critic/curator Lawrence Alloway co-led the workshop with American composer John Cage. Although Cage is primarily known for his music he also produced a small amount of artwork. Cage actually ended up getting lost in the woods during the workshop. He happened to be a mushroom expert, however, so not only managed to survive until rescued but also picked enough mushrooms to cook a meal for everyone on his return.

<sup>127</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Ella May Walker to Kenneth Lochhead, September 4, 1957.

<sup>128</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Ernest Lindner to Kenneth Lochhead, August 31, 1957.

<sup>129</sup> Terrence Heath, *Uprooted: The Life and Art of Ernest Lindner*, (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1983), 128-130.

<sup>130</sup> Lindner to Lochhead, August 31, 1957.

the workshop that accomplished the most in professional development. In 1958, smaller classes and workshops, more accessible to the populace, were also held in Craik and North Battleford.<sup>131</sup>

Band and choir workshops were also initially located at Emma Lake, but later moved. The choral course, begun in 1952, mostly consisted of students and “holidaying children,”<sup>132</sup> but was deemed successful enough to bring it back the following year, although aimed more at teachers and choir directors. The choral course never reached the attendance numbers of the other workshops and the Board spent little effort publicizing or reviewing it. But for as long as it ran it was filling a void. Once teachers and choir directors began attending the knowledge was again being passed on in their home communities. Board member Julia Graham went to observe a few sessions of the 1956 Choral Workshop, led by a Mr. Bancroft, but ended up staying for them all. All the organists and choir leaders of Saskatoon apparently attended, as well as some from outside the city. Above all, Bancroft himself was enthused about the project and gladly noted he would be happy to return at any time.<sup>133</sup>

Teaching was also applied to the handicrafts area. In Eastend a three-month pottery course was enthusiastically attended in 1952. Shortly afterwards, the town began holding regular classes with the assistance of the Board. By 1954, class size had continued to grow, equipment had been purchased, and the venture was more or less self-sufficient.<sup>134</sup> A bigger development in the handicrafts field was the establishment of the craft house in Fort Qu’Appelle, where there was to be an artist-in-residence. The craft house was designed as a place where handicrafts could be shown and sold, as well as frequent demonstrations held by the artist(s)-in-residence. This project also involved summer classes in pottery, for which attendance seemed to grow each year. In 1958 “well over a thousand visitors [had] toured the shop and sales of craft work...more than doubled.”<sup>135</sup> The project was specifically designed for the discerning artist. “What we aim for,” McCullough noted, “is a real training so that eventually people will learn the difference between hobbies and honest, good crafts...that demand and provide life-long devotion and interest.”<sup>136</sup> Once again, attendees were pleased with the result and were particularly happy with the second artist-in-residence, David Ross.<sup>137</sup>

Consulting services and related endeavours were also a new Board initiative in the 1950s. At first, after Florence James had been hired, the Board offered only drama consulting. Response to this initiative was enthusiastic, with nearly every community she visited requesting follow-up services.<sup>138</sup> The program kept James busy on the road around the province. When her services were requested James would often go to the place and simply be on hand to offer advice and guidance. At other times she would lecture, conduct a workshop, or even direct a play. James was always pleased by the response to her consultation visits:

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<sup>131</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *11<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1958* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1959), 5. Craik had an eleven week course on Saturday afternoons led by Robert Murray and North Battleford held a weekend workshop led by Reta Cowley.

<sup>132</sup> *1952 Annual Report*, 7.

<sup>133</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2-Board Meetings, 1948-1960, Minutes of a Meeting of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, September 29, 1956, 8.

<sup>134</sup> *1954 Annual Report*, 15.

<sup>135</sup> *1958 Annual Report*, 12.

<sup>136</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. IV.4b-Craft House, Fort Qu’Appelle, 1953-1960, Norah McCullough to David Ross, July 4, 1956.

<sup>137</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2, Board Meetings, 1948-1960, Mrs. J.G. (Amelie) Stratford to W.A. Riddell, Card of Thanks, filed Nov. 14, 1957.

<sup>138</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2, Board Meetings, 1948-1960, Florence James, Report of drama consultant services, January 15, 1954.

In every area I found an intense and active interest in the development of community theatre...I would like to add how impressed I have been with the composition of these groups—the maturity of the people, the wide range of community interests represented, the ministers, lawyers, local carpenters, housewives, and shopkeepers working together to make their community a more interesting and exciting place to live.<sup>139</sup>

Beyond the drama consulting program, the Board also began a similar program with music, although using a wide array of consultants rather than a single one. Specialists in voice,<sup>140</sup> piano, string and wind instruments were available for about eighteen days total in the year. The Board always covered the consultants' fees, but the local group who had made the request paid the travel and accommodation expenses.<sup>141</sup>

There were other Board teaching programs. A committee was formed that would read and compile a list of good plays, categorizing them so that smaller groups and centres with limited facilities could choose what was best for them.<sup>142</sup> James also led a speech training class at CHAB in Moose Jaw. This class was one of the least artistic programs the Board ever implemented, yet perhaps the most practical of all, as it helped with an everyday skill.<sup>143</sup> Additionally, in the Board's first explicit move to try to convince young people to stay in Saskatchewan, a grant was developed in 1959 for piano study at the Regina Conservatory or the University of Saskatchewan. The recipient was "expected to teach for at least two years in one of the smaller communities."<sup>144</sup>

Despite what the populace might have thought about the sometimes high-brow positions of the Board, there was no doubt that the teaching programming was having an effect. Shortly after completing the fourth writers' workshop W.O. Mitchell, in an interview with the *Regina Leader-Post*, noted that Saskatchewan was one of "most provocative areas for storey-telling [*sic*]."<sup>145</sup> He said "the people of Saskatchewan seem more vivid than the people of Alberta" and that Saskatchewan had a variety of people who showed talent. Albertans, he believed, were "too busy trying to make their province the Texas of Canada to be themselves" and noted that Calgary was full of "bankers, clerks and pipefitters trying to be cowboys."<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, after the 1955 workshop he believed that at least four short stories produced by students were publishable. Past attendees had had work published as well and a handful of students had gone on to work in radio and newspaper.<sup>147</sup> Florence James was equally impressed with the work being done in drama. In her 1955 summer consultant report she noted, using a metaphor identifiable with Saskatchewan:

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> The consultant program would render the choral workshop null and void for the time being (Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Saskatchewan Arts Board Tenth Annual Report, January First to December Thirty-First, 1957* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1958), 8.)

<sup>141</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Music Services*, (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1959).

<sup>142</sup> *1952 Annual Report*, 4. Sixty plays made the list and 400 copies had been run off by the next year

<sup>143</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2-Board Meetings, 1948-1960, Minutes of a Meeting of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, December 8, 1956, 3.

<sup>144</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *12<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1959* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1960), 18.

<sup>145</sup> Sagi, "Sask. Termed provocative."

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid. Interestingly, the large majority of attendees were women, who Mitchell rationalized that they had more interest in culture, but the rural nature of the province was also doing its part to keep some men from devoting two weeks of their time to attending the workshop.

“I may say here that the work we are doing is one of breaking the land. We are a long way from the bumper harvest but we do see signs that harvest is possible. With time and hard work and belief in our job we will achieve it.”<sup>148</sup> Likewise, ground was being made in visual art and music. Ferdinand Eckhardt and John Rood, the 1957 Saskatchewan Art Exhibition judges, reported that “the work of these artists does not reflect to a great extent the major styles and personalities of the international art world which is often found in other places, but show more the personalities of the different artists.”<sup>149</sup> It appeared artists of the province had taken past comments to heart and were working hard to improve. Saskatchewan art was apparently growing, helped by the Board’s programming.

Indian artistry fared little better in the 1950s than it had under the initial years of the Board, though some developments were occurring. The 1953 report noted that the Board had begun to take “some concern in the problem of the collection and preservation of native Indian music and legends.”<sup>150</sup> But this concern mostly consisted of preserving the past rather than trying to encourage and develop artists, and the program was ultimately cut due to budgetary reasons.<sup>151</sup> There was also talk of having someone from the Indian Department on the handicraft committee, but it ended up being no more than talk.<sup>152</sup> Although McCullough had certainly been encouraging in the field of native artistry it was the arrival of Interim Executive Secretary Blodwen Davies that heralded a more serious attempt in programming. Davies visited some of the reserves in the province shortly after her arrival. She was keen to learn more about the cultural resources of the Indians in Saskatchewan and how the field could be encouraged and developed.<sup>153</sup> Davies could do little, however, as hers was only a term position and there was little change she could bring within a year, but support for Indian artistry was strengthening towards the end of the 1950s. But it would not be until midway through the 1960s when significant steps would be taken.

Internal Board problems still continued throughout the 1950s as well. The auditor’s office was still catching accounting errors and communication was still not perfect, but perhaps the most troubling was that there were problems with all three of the decade’s executive secretaries (Norah McCullough, Blodwen Davies, Donald Harvey). McCullough often tried to take on responsibilities and make decisions that properly belonged to the Board. For instance, at one point a book list of popular fiction was being prepared to send out as recommendations for good reading. King, head of the literature committee, took issue with the book list because it had not been approved by, or even proposed to, the Board or the literature committee. McCullough had planned this project on her own initiative. King also believed that McCullough was giving literature short shrift, as he supposed she would never have done the same thing in visual art, her area of specialization. “Every country drugstore has a rack of popular fiction,” he told Riddell, “Miss McC. would never dream of circulating an exhibition of chocolate-box-cover “art”,

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<sup>148</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2-Board Meetings, 1948-1960, Florence James, Report on Drama Consultant Services June 2-August 31, 1955, 2.

<sup>149</sup> Ferdinand Eckhardt and John Rood, “Statement by Judges,” *Saskatchewan Art Exhibition Eighth Annual Exhibition*, by the Saskatchewan Arts Board, (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1957). They found the whole exhibition “very refreshing.”

<sup>150</sup> *1953 Annual Report*, 18.

<sup>151</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2-Board Meetings, 1948-1960, Minutes of a Meeting of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, May 26, 1956, 1.

<sup>152</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2-Board Meetings, 1948-1960, Minutes of a Meeting of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, December 8, 1956, 5.

<sup>153</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.2-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Briefs and Reports, 1948-1964, Blodwen Davies, Interim Report March-May 1957, 1.

although people are said to like it. The Music Committee is not going to promote boogie-woogie, although I am sure it is popular music.”<sup>154</sup> To make matters worse, of the ten (non-popular) book lists the literature committee had created in 1949 only three or four had been printed. The crux of King’s problem, though, was not the book lists themselves, but McCullough’s job. “What I want to know is,” he asked, “by what authority does the Executive Secretary of the Arts Board speak in the name of the Board on a subject not approved by the Board?...Does the Arts Board and its Committees tell the Executive Secretary what to do, or does the Executive Secretary initiate projects and present the Board with an accomplished fact?”<sup>155</sup> It was a question that the Board would struggle with for the remainder of the decade.

For Blodwen Davies, most of the difficulties between her and the board stemmed from the fact that she was not Norah McCullough, for better or worse. This problem was two-fold. Davies obviously worked differently and had different opinions than McCullough, but some board members expected to have the same difficulties with Davies as they had had with McCullough. It was not an easy transition for Davies. “My first four harrowing months,” she wrote, “were spent—seven days a week—in winning the good will of the hurt, humiliated and hostile people I had to cope with in every phase of my work. I was constantly exhausted with handling problems which I should never have been expected to assume as part of my responsibility.”<sup>156</sup> Davies felt overworked and isolated and found it upsetting when she discovered that steps had been taken to ensure that the executive secretary could take less initiative on her own, fallout from McCullough’s time with the board.<sup>157</sup> Nor did she get much support from the Board. “No one [sic] from the Board has ever come to the office to enquire about how I was getting on or to offer any help in making things easier for me,”<sup>158</sup> she noted to King, months after she had begun working. In fact, it was not until March 10, 1957 when she noted that “this is literally the first day since I came to Saskatchewan that I feel happy here.”<sup>159</sup> It was perhaps unsurprising that she so readily left after a year of work, even though her relationship with the Board did improve. In Davies’ defence, she shared few similarities with McCullough. In fact, she pointed out that

I am actually trying to do the exact opposite of what Norah did. I believe several of the members are of her choice, and that she tried to neutralize the members and take on their authority herself. I’d be happy to see more members more active. The more of them I

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<sup>154</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Carlyle King to W.A. Riddell, March 5, 1951. Further complicating matters was that Riddell replied that he had been told that the suggestion had come from Miss Dunlop of the Regina Library. King, however, discovered that Dunlop had not made the suggestion and knew nothing of the book lists.

<sup>155</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Carlyle King to W.A. Riddell, March 17, 1951.

<sup>156</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Davies to King February 3, 1957. She also felt that the job she had received was not the one she had agreed to fill. To her, it “was a major repair job thrust upon me without help or advice from anybody.”

<sup>157</sup> Davies also ran into apparent communication problems, as queries to both the minister of Education and Riddell went unanswered on more than one occasion.

<sup>158</sup> Davies to King, February 3, 1957.

<sup>159</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Blodwen Davies to Carlyle King, March 10, 1957. It can be gleaned that the meeting from the day before had been a good and productive one and that King had come to Davies’ support at one point. King probably realized that Davies needed support after her slough of letters to him in February. It apparently worked, as Davies appears considerably more content after that point.

can consult with, the more I can rely on for guidance and co-operation, the better it will be.<sup>160</sup>

Davies was critical of the Board members themselves. She was impressed with King and Morton, who she believed possessed “vision and conviction” as well as “two potentially important members...in addition to a competent and devoted treasurer.”<sup>161</sup> But the others were more problematic. She wrote, “There are three amiable and uninspired members, three well-intentioned but very limited personalities, one negative, uninspired and ambitious member and three who are completely useless.”<sup>162</sup> To be fair, Davies only had a year to find out about the board members, but it is unfortunate that so much tension and ambivalence seemed to exist between Davies and the Board. Davies’ philosophy leaned towards a more collaborative approach in the board-secretary relationship. Ultimately, Davies left the province not by choice, but because her house in Ontario was only being rented for a year. But she did remark at one point that she felt she could “accomplish very much more outside the Board than I can within it.”<sup>163</sup> She was particularly passionate about folklore and art, an area the Board was not deeply concerned with and knew she could be of more value not tied to the Board.

Donald Harvey was perhaps the most problematic executive secretary as his job performance was poor at times. King, in particular, had no patience with Harvey, of whom he noted, “The fellow simply doesn’t know what he is doing from one day to the next”<sup>164</sup> and “that he writes very badly.”<sup>165</sup> After a number of problems had occurred with the 1960 writing contest King and Harvey argued. Again illustrating the disconnect between the Board and the secretary, Harvey angrily wrote “I am not your employee.”<sup>166</sup> And although Harvey was not King’s employee, per se, King did note to Riddell that “we had agreed that the Secretary was to follow instructions from the Committees subject to over-all direction of the Board” and the Board as a whole employed Harvey.<sup>167</sup> It still appeared there were doubts over who answered to whom. It would not be until the 1960s when the Board and executive secretary relationship would improve.

While the Board was still doing little work outside the province, it was certainly beginning to build a reputation and attract attention. The 1953 annual report was well received and brought “comment from many parts of Canada, England, the United States, Germany and South Africa,”<sup>168</sup> some of which were seeking advice on setting up cultural services. Legislative

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<sup>160</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Blodwen Davies to Carlyle King, Monday, n.d. (likely in February or March of 1957).

<sup>161</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Blodwen Davies to Carlyle King, January 26, 1957.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.* Davies does note that this observation is from her personal point of view and King appears to have disagreed to a point, but Davies’ view is interesting. Which board member was which is nearly impossible to figure out, as most of the members were significantly active and certainly not “useless” at one point or another, though perhaps not at the same time Davies was secretary.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Carlyle King to W.A. Riddell, December 7, 1959.

<sup>165</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Carlyle King to W.A. Riddell, November 28, 1959.

<sup>166</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Donald Harvey to Carlyle King, November 30, 1959.

<sup>167</sup> King to Riddell, December 7, 1959.

<sup>168</sup> *1954 Annual Report*, 19.

leaders from Nigeria had visited the Fort Qu'Appelle craft shop.<sup>169</sup> Letters even came from as far as Australia. The Australian Government, not understanding the purpose of the Board, sent the Board a list of businesses that exported kangaroo skins and leather.<sup>170</sup> No doubt a little surprised, McCullough replied that the Board was educational rather than commercial, but never one to miss an opportunity to promote the Board, enclosed a copy of the 1956 annual report.<sup>171</sup> There was certainly much for the rest of the world to be impressed with. After adjudicating the fifth annual art exhibition, and noting a rise in quality and quantity, artist Jack Shadbolt stated that "the rest of Canada's art world is watching the enlightened program being carried out by Saskatchewan board and it may be the forerunner of similar projects."<sup>172</sup> The Board was not influencing any other organizations' programming, but the world was paying attention.

At one point Sid Boyling asked the very pertinent question: "Did we want to encourage the average person to become interested in music or did we wish to encourage and develop the artist who had possibilities of making a career out of music?"<sup>173</sup> Applied to all the artistic fields, it was a question that was central to the Board in the 1950s. While still concerned with developing audiences and promoting the arts, the Board began focusing on developing standards and helping and instructing the artists with potential. This shift, however, risked alienating the average person, particularly as artistic forms appeared to be moving in a more modern direction. But no one could quite agree on a firm answer to Boyling's question and it would continue to trouble the Board in the coming decade. The 1960s would bring many changes and conflicts to the Board, both inside and outside. In the end, the Board would be set on a more bureaucratic path and the focus would be on developing the artist with potential rather than encouraging the average person.

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<sup>169</sup> *1958 Annual Report*, 12.

<sup>170</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. IV.4d-Miscellaneous Handicraft, c1950-1959, C.A. Allen, Australian Government Trade Commissioner to Executive Secretary, October 2, 1957.

<sup>171</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. IV.4d-Miscellaneous Handicraft, c1950-1959, Norah McCullough to C.A. Allen, October 29, 1957.

<sup>172</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. IV.8-Publicity, 1948-1960, "Improved quality of art is noted," *Regina Leader-Post*, March 9, 1954.

<sup>173</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Saskatchewan Arts Board Records, f. III.2-Board Meetings, 1948-1960, Sid Boyling to Florence James, September 13, 1957.



### Chapter Three

#### “A New Threshold”: Transforming the Board, 1960-1970

There was only one conclusion. The arts could never succeed in Saskatchewan. Or so it seemed. The 1964 Saskatchewan Arts Board annual report lamented that the development of the arts had been slow in Saskatchewan. The population density was too small, the people too busy. Above all, the province could not retain any artists. They had all left for different places.<sup>174</sup> The annual reports had never been this dire.<sup>175</sup> In fact, previous reports had never come even close to sounding negative.<sup>176</sup> But 1964 had been a year of change for the Board. On April 22, Ross Thatcher had led the Liberal Party to victory in Saskatchewan. It would be the first time since the creation of the Board that the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) was not in power. With the new government, new adjustments came to the Board. Rather than reporting to the minister of Education, the Board reported directly to Thatcher. Most board members, additionally, were replaced the following year. But while aspects of the Board were changing on the surface, little changed in the direction it would take. The CCF government had already been suggesting significant changes to the Board earlier that decade, wishing to transform it into a grant-giving agency. Local communities began to take leadership roles in the arts as well. By the end of the decade, the Board had moved further away from programming and more towards support. Government pressure, the changes within the province, and the rise of municipal arts programming allowed the Board to become more decentralized.

It would be easy to assume a correlation between the Board's changes and Ross Thatcher's election. Before Thatcher's election the Board had reported to the Minister of Education. Thatcher, however, appeared to have a more vested interest in the Board than either Tommy Douglas or Woodrow Lloyd, even though the Board had reported to Lloyd for years when he was Minister of Education. Thatcher was interested in the arts and particularly curious about “the development of festivals, concerts and bands”<sup>177</sup> and quickly set up a meeting with the Executive Secretary after being elected. The content and direction of the Board, however, apparently pleased the new Liberal government. There was little interference in the programming and direction of the Board. It was a different story, though, for the people on the Board.

In 1965 Thatcher wasted little time in replacing most Board members. While the Board had remained largely unchanged from year to year, Thatcher did not ask most board members to

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<sup>174</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *17<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1964* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1965), 3.

<sup>175</sup> It is unknown precisely who wrote the introduction to the 1964 report. Ultimately, the Executive Secretary/Director was responsible for annual reports, but evidence points towards the Chair writing the introduction in some years. It was likely either Shaw or Riddell.

<sup>176</sup> Carlyle King had been critical of this fact, believing the annual reports were little more than “a de luxe trumpeting of our little horn...I should prefer not so much recording of trivia, not so much editorializing, not so much florid prose, but a plain, straightforward account of the Board's main accomplishments in a given year. Since, however, ours is the Age of Ballyhoo, in which every citizen's first duty is to proclaim as loudly as possible that he is three times as good as anybody else, I shall not be disturbed if nobody pays any attention to what I say.” (*Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Carlyle King, Thoughts on the Annual Report.) Reading through the reports it is hard not to agree with King. Apparently, the fact that the Board had purchased “a fine handbound guest book in which to register distinguished and interesting visitors” was remarkable enough to include in the 1956 annual report.

<sup>177</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.8- Saskatchewan Arts Board-Minutes and Agendas, 1948-1963, Minutes of a Meeting of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, September 12, 1964, 1.

return. Of the fifteen board members appointed in 1965, only five were returning members. Of these five, James Weir and Emrys Jones had only served since 1964<sup>178</sup> and none of the others had been around longer than 1961. Writing to inform board member Carlyle King that he was being let go, Thatcher noted that “Board members are appointed for a one-year term. The Government believes that the membership of all boards should be rotated in order that new people may bring their individual approaches.”<sup>179</sup> The shakeup of the Board could be seen as helpful, as the majority of those who were not asked to return had served for quite a long time. It should be noted, however, that after the initial purge the Board once again appeared to stay more or less unchanged. After 1965, there seems to be little worry about rotation, proving Thatcher somewhat hypocritical and suggests that he had simply replaced the Board with his own supporters. Upon letting him go, Thatcher also noted to King that “the ideas and judgment you have brought to the Arts Board have been most useful.”<sup>180</sup> Nearly twenty years of work had been summed up as useful. King, the only remaining original member of the Board, had been let go with a generic comment.

The Board underwent some superficial changes under Thatcher, but it was the changes implemented earlier in the decade that had set the Board on its path from initiator to enabler. In 1963 the Lloyd government had reorganized the Ministry of Education. The Division of Adult Education (where the Board had originally belonged) and the Division of Physical Fitness and Recreation were merged to form the Continuing Education Branch under Jack Wilkie. This move created some problems for the Board, particularly in the field of drama. Drama responsibility in the province had been a gray area since the 1950s, as the Physical Fitness and Recreation Division had its own drama programme. Both the Board and the Division differed in their approaches to drama and differed in their views of standards. Ultimately, a decision was reached that the Board would continue working on community and professional development while the Division focused mainly on the schools.<sup>181</sup> It was an agreement that worked in theory, as the two areas shared little overlap.

Mary Ellen Burgess, the Dominion Drama Festival representative at the Division, however, would have none of that. She was looking to control drama programming for the whole province. Apparently jealous she was never asked to serve on the Board, she did her best in the late 1950s to discredit Florence James, the Board’s drama consultant. Burgess also tried to initiate a directors’ workshop to run alongside the drama workshop in the summer. The Board managed to succeed in blocking the workshop for a number of years. It was not opposed to the workshop in theory as it realized the workshop could be a beneficial program. But Burgess herself planned to lead the workshop, which the Board did not want. The Board did not consider her to have nearly enough of an established reputation.<sup>182</sup> The Board was also concerned with overlap between workshops. It was possible that the rival workshop could end up taking over the original.<sup>183</sup> Any opposition to the workshop by the Board, however, would appear to go

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<sup>178</sup> Jones, of course, had been a Board member in 1948 as well.

<sup>179</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965. W. Ross Thatcher to Carlyle King, March 4, 1965.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>181</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Unprocessed Saskatchewan Arts Board Files, f. 1961 General Correspondence, Work Programme for Drama Consultant, 5.

<sup>182</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, W.A Riddell to W.S. Lloyd, March 21, 1958.

<sup>183</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Florence James to Carlyle King, April 25, 1957.

against the principle of the workshop. The Board could only delay the workshop so long. In 1960 a directors' workshop was offered for the first time.<sup>184</sup>

Burgess' feelings carried over to the Division and even to the Continuing Education Branch. Jack Wilkie, deputy minister of Continuing Education, believed that the Continuing Education Branch was better equipped to do work in the field of drama than the Board. Workshops, training, and community development were suited to Continuing Education while assistance and encouragement of talent was what the Board was suited for.<sup>185</sup> But board members fought back against the Continuing Education Branch. They knew that the Board's primary goal was to develop and encourage the arts, not simply the portion of the arts the government thought it should deal with. The Board was a more or less neutral party, a buffer to the political forces in Saskatchewan. "We are not doing our job if we allow or force Government to formulate policy rather than doing it ourselves," board members had noted.<sup>186</sup> Despite these feelings, the Board's territory was constantly encroached on. In 1961, Executive-Director George Shaw noted that there were "no less than nine programs...sponsored by the Divisions of Fitness and Recreation and Adult Education which are entirely in our sphere of operations."<sup>187</sup> Most worrying was that nearly all of those programs had been created "subsequent to the inception of the Arts Board in 1948."<sup>188</sup> But the Department of Education had plans for the Board.

Changes to the Board were being suggested directly from the top. In 1960 Allan Blakeney, then Minister of Education, noted that the Board's achievements in "the consultative and instructional field" were of "secondary significance, so far as the Board's central purpose is concerned."<sup>189</sup> Blakeney believed that if some other organization was prepared and willing to undertake responsibilities, such as consulting and instruction, that it would be advantageous for the Board to pass those on. Doing so would allow the Board "to develop new lines of service to the Province."<sup>190</sup> It was an interesting notion and one that the Board had also been considering. Gordon Campbell, Blakeney's successor, believed that the Board "should be a grant-giving agency and not a programming agency."<sup>191</sup> In fact, he considered those two functions to conflict with each other. Campbell was adamant that the Board should change.

The Board itself was not adverse to many of the changes of the 1960s. Tension with Burgess and the Division aside, most members believed the Board was heading in the right direction. They knew that their policies had to be altered. There were two main reasons for

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<sup>184</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.8-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Minutes and Agendas, 1948-1963, Minutes of a Meeting of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, January 9, 1960, 3. By the following year, however, the Board suggested extending the workshop to three weeks and fully integrating the director and actor courses, effectively putting the Board in complete control again. (*Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.8-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Minutes and Agendas, 1948-1963, Minutes of a Meeting of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, October 14, 1961, 3.)

<sup>185</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.2-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Briefs and Reports, 1949-1964, Report of the General Committee, January 31, 1964.

<sup>186</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Unprocessed Saskatchewan Arts Board Files, f. 1966 Board Correspondence and Mimeo Material, Summation in Specific Motion Re Policy – Board, Finance, Staff, 1966.

<sup>187</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board Correspondence, 1944-1965, George Shaw to Allan Blakeney, September 26, 1961.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965. A.E. Blakeney, Minister of Education, to W.A. Riddell, November 30, 1960.

<sup>190</sup> Blakeney to Riddell, November 30, 1960.

<sup>191</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Unprocessed Saskatchewan Arts Board Files, f. 1961 General Correspondence, George Shaw to W.A. Riddell, June 21, 1961.

change. First, the public was “becoming more aware and more amenable to the arts.”<sup>192</sup> This gradual change was significant for the Board. There had been amenable audiences as soon as the Board was created and the Board was necessary to help facilitate the arts in some parts of the province. But there had been a definite shift in the population’s perception and acceptance of the arts. The province was more aware and accepting of a variety of art forms, including more modern styles, than it had been before the Board’s creation. The Board had come a long way in fulfilling one of its original goals and could now focus on its other goals. The second reason, the Board noted, was “our sharply rising budget enables us to do more and different things on a larger scale.”<sup>193</sup> The Board was spending over \$100,000 a year by the mid-1960s and this amount would continue to increase each year. By 1969, the province was providing forty cents per capita for Arts development, thirty-four cents more than 1960.<sup>194</sup> It was the highest in Canada.<sup>195</sup> The Board had the money and the audience. The problems were “mainly of priorities”<sup>196</sup> now. For the remainder of the decade, the Board would decide whether to emphasize its programming elements or its grant-giving duties.

Helping the Board along were two highly important executive directors. George Shaw was hired in 1961. Shaw had previously been Registrar for the Banff School of Fine Arts, a position that gave him a good background in co-ordinating and organizing varied programming. Interestingly, unlike past executive secretaries/directors, he had no significant background in art. “He does not have the depth of training or experience to act as a consult in any art or handicraft,” Riddell told King, “but he appears to have good sense and good taste as a deep interest in the fields that concern the Arts Board.”<sup>197</sup> But what Shaw lacked in artistic experience he more than made up with administrative experience. Beyond that, he was charismatic and influential. Shaw was exactly what the Board needed. Enthusiastic and hard working, Shaw was a large reason the Board took the direction it did in the 1960s. He was able to respect artistic integrity, but was also concerned with financial and administrative matters. There would be no Donald Harvey-like mistakes with him.

Shaw agreed with most of the ideas proposed by the Ministry of Education, but advised against implementing them too rapidly. Under him, the Board was allowed to continue gradually transitioning. He recommended taking Education Division representatives off the Board, and also advocated for the dissolution of programs from the Divisions of Fitness and Recreation and Adult Education that closely matched those of the Board.<sup>198</sup> Equally important, Shaw believed that the Board should try more experimental programming, proving that he would play a large part of the Board’s transition in the mid 1960s. Shaw was also willing to fight for the Board. He knew that the Board could not “become the prestige grant giving body” Campbell wanted it to be until it had grown more.<sup>199</sup> Writing to the departing King in 1965, Shaw believed that the Board could take things to the next level. “I feel that the Board is on a new threshold” he wrote,

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<sup>192</sup> Summation in Specific Motion.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Unprocessed Saskatchewan Arts Board Files, f. 1969 Board-Board Correspondence and Mimeo Material, Cal Abrahamson, Creation and Recreation, 1; Saskatchewan Arts Board, *13<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1960* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1961), 4.

<sup>195</sup> Abrahamson, Creation and Recreation, 1.

<sup>196</sup> *1960 Annual Report*, 4.

<sup>197</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, W.A. Riddell to Carlyle King, May 3, 1961.

<sup>198</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, N.G. Shaw to Allan Blakeney, September 26, 1961.

“having reached a point of recognition in the Province which it would not have attained without the unstinting efforts of people like yourself.”<sup>200</sup> King and the old guard had done their job. It would be up to the new Board to continue the work begun in 1948 and continue improving the arts in Saskatchewan.

Cal Abrahamson would be appointed as Executive Director in 1968 and would continue the pattern that Shaw had begun. Abrahamson was significant in that he was the first Executive-Director to have come from Saskatchewan. For an organization that was focused on home-grown arts it was interesting that the others had been outside hires. He was also experienced and knowledgeable having served on the Board since 1965. This experience meant that he was well acquainted with other board members, the government, and artists. It was an easy transition for the Board.

The 1960s also represented a chance for the Board to develop arts that had lain dormant since the first meetings of the 1940s. Programming was developed in dance for the first time. In 1962 American choreographer Bruce King was invited to do a workshop and performance in creative dance.<sup>201</sup> Attendance was low, though the Board was not concerned. New programs, after all, were not always guaranteed a high attendance. The Board was right in its thinking, though, as the province quickly embraced dance. The Royal Winnipeg Ballet gave five performances across southern Saskatchewan in 1964. These performances were not simply entertainment; they had a lecture and demonstration element to them as well. These educational elements did not keep audiences away. In one of the towns 1400 people attended the performance. The unidentified town’s population was 3000.<sup>202</sup> Doubtless some of the audience had travelled to see the performance, but the amount still seemed quite large. In 1965, ballet was even given its own section in the annual report, always a good sign of how seriously the Board was treating a program.

In 1961 a Symposium on Saskatchewan Architecture was also held. This project represented a new direction for the Board and it took two years of planning by the Art Committee.<sup>203</sup> The Board had moved into a slightly different area. Architecture could be art, but it was a different kind of art from what the Board was normally associated with. It was a complicated subject, as evidenced by the symposium:

For architecture is both more and less than art. I know this statement maddens artists, for what could be more than art? And I know it maddens critics who are concerned only with the aesthetics of architecture and would like to reduce all contemporary architectural discussion to purely aesthetic terms....Buildings are not ordered by clients simply to add something beautiful to the landscape or to earn a laurel for the artist-architect, and architects who propose this have lost any sense of their role. Art is the most important element of architecture but it is not the only element.<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Unprocessed Saskatchewan Arts Board Files, f. 1961 General Correspondence, George Shaw to Dr. Davis A. Davis Beattie, July 11, 1961.

<sup>200</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, George Shaw to Carlyle King, March 1, 1965.

<sup>201</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Fifteenth Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, January 1 to December 31, 1962* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1963), 4.

<sup>202</sup> *1964 Annual Report*, 11.

<sup>203</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *14<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1961* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1962), 15.

<sup>204</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Saskatchewan Symposium on Architecture* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1962), 9.

Part of the symposium consisted of discussing the Saskatchewan style, as many people believed that Saskatchewan architecture was “tawdry, dull, and monotonous.”<sup>205</sup> The only true Saskatchewan architecture, according to board member and professor of art Eli Bornstein, was the grain elevator. Although Bornstein regarded elevators as “stiff, ungraceful and bleak” they were also “honest rough-hewn symbols of our region.”<sup>206</sup> The symposium did not result in any significant programming, but it allowed artists and architects to gather and talk about the field. Nor was the symposium the only move made in the architectural field. Architect Kiyoshi Izumi was appointed to the Board the same year and would continue to serve on the Board until 1967.

By 1964, grants, scholarships and bursaries had been given their own section in the annual report, reflecting the Board’s changing nature. There was a wide variety of financial support available by this time. Funds were given out to individuals for various reasons: support, supplies, and travel. Equally important, grants were also given to communities and arts organizations. Most were given based on financial need, the Board preferring to help organizations and individuals that had little or no assistance.<sup>207</sup> All awards required applications and all grants needed to be annually applied for. The Board did not budget any specific amount for a certain discipline, preferring not to constrain itself to certain art forms that may need more or less money each year.<sup>208</sup> The grant program would grow quickly. The grant lists in the annual reports were consistently more detailed and longer each year.

By 1966 the Board’s budgets had been streamlined as well. For the majority of the Board’s existence budgets had been broken down into artistic areas. At the time, it had been helpful. Each committee knew they had a certain amount to base estimates on for the following year and it was easy for the public to see what was being spent in what area. As the Board matured, however, categorizing the budget into artistic areas no longer worked. By 1968 there were only five areas in the budget: Administration, Audience Development, Organization Development (which included grants), the Festival of the Arts, and the Residential Centre. The Board was no longer constrained by the original artistic areas. It could expand outside them to other areas and its mission and goals could develop further.

Just because the Board was becoming the grant-giving agency the government wanted did not mean it neglected other aspects of its mandate. The Board continued developing programs in the 1960s, though often on a much grander scale. The Saskatchewan Festival of the Arts was one of the biggest programs implemented by the Board in the 1960s and one of the most successful. In a sense, it was a giant advertisement for the Board and a chance for the province to simply celebrate art. The Board had put on countless events in the past two decades, but none had the broad appeal and focus that the Festival of the Arts had. The Festival of the Arts was a result of the whole Board working together, rather than individuals or committees. It consisted of a number of workshops and a variety of performances and lectures.<sup>209</sup> The major benefit of the 1962 festival, the Board noted, “was twofold: a) the Board was introduced as a unit to the Province for the first time, displaying our many facets of interest. b) our effective contact

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<sup>205</sup> *Symposium on Architecture*, 1.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>207</sup> *1964 Annual Report*, 13.

<sup>208</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Unprocessed Saskatchewan Arts Board Files, f. 1968 Board-Board Correspondence and Mimeo Material, Phyllis Wilson, Admin Assistant to Anne Adamson, Drama Advisor, Department of Education, Government of British Columbia, November 29, 1968.

<sup>209</sup> *1962 Annual Report*, 4.

with individuals and groups of the Province has been increased.”<sup>210</sup> It was truly all encompassing. An ethnic dance performance could be followed by a workshop on film-making. The festival also allowed for programming in smaller artistic areas not always recognized by the Board. There was a jazz workshop and a course in Ukrainian stitchery. By 1965 the festival had become a province-wide event. Yorkton, Moose Jaw and North Battleford hosted concurrent festivals. There was some overlap between the three but each was unique. By placing the festival in three places, the festival was made accessible to most of the province at once.

The other major program implemented in the 1960s was the Saskatchewan Summer School of the Arts. The School, originally encompassing music, drama, writing, painting, and choir, was the result of the many years of workshops the Board had previously put on. First held at the Briercrest Bible Institute in 1966 as a three-week program, it was attended by over 300 students. Briercrest had been the site for the annual music camp the year before, which had also been well attended. The music camp, begun in 1964, was a useful blueprint for the Summer School of the Arts. In 1967, the School would take up permanent residence at Fort San near Fort Qu’Appelle, the site of so many workshops before it. Courses would run for four weeks in 1967 and even more weeks in 1968. Over the next decade, the buildings would be renovated and expanded to house more programs and students. A mile-and-a-half long, the School was situated on beautiful lake property. Six buildings could house 300 students and provide plenty of studio space. The Residential Centre was in use for four months by 1969, with the Board planning for the Centre to be open year-round.<sup>211</sup> The School would remain at the Centre until the School’s closure in 1991.

The establishment of the Summer School meant, however, that the old workshop format disappeared. Perhaps this change was inevitable. The workshops seemed to have run their course by this time. Attendance was falling and submissions were still on the amateurish side. The 1960 Writing Workshop had only nine attendees and workshop leader Edward McCourt felt “he was wasting his time on at least half of the group.”<sup>212</sup> One of the ways the Board tried to correct these problems was to change the nature of the workshops. The Writing Workshop of 1963, for example, asked a number of high schools to submit promising students’ submissions. Three students were selected to attend the workshop, one which greatly impressed instructor Victor Cowie. Likewise, the Drama Workshop of 1963 was changed to a Summer Drama Camp as an experiment.<sup>213</sup> In 1962, a summer course for beginner artists was held at Fort Qu’Appelle as well.<sup>214</sup> Allowing young people into the workshops was a sign of future change. As arts manager Michael Kaiser wrote, “Too often we expose children to an art form by asking them to participate in creating that kind of art. If they cannot do it well, we simply assume that art form is not for that child and we move on...We must allow children to “enter” the arts through whichever related discipline is interesting to them.”<sup>215</sup> The Board likely shared a similar view in the 1960s. It was important to expose children to the arts and if they were enjoying themselves it

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<sup>210</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.2-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Briefs and Reports, 1949-1964, The following is a Summary of the Analysis of the Festival of the Arts 1962, 1.

<sup>211</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Saskatchewan Arts Board 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Report January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1969* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1969), 7.

<sup>212</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.2-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Briefs and Reports, 1949-1964, Carlyle King, Literature Committee Report, October 3, 1960.

<sup>213</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Unprocessed Saskatchewan Arts Board Files, f. Executive-Secretary Communication with Board Members and Board Minutes, etc., 1964, Russ Waller, Report on 1963 SAB Summer Drama Camp, August 21<sup>st</sup> 1963.

<sup>214</sup> *1962 Annual Report*, 11. A joint initiative, the camp was officially held by Regina Campus’ School of Art with the co-operation of the Arts Board.

should not matter how good they were. The School was still meant to develop young people, of course, but elements of simple teaching and having fun could be glimpsed.

The Summer School of the Arts was, at heart, for children. No doubt pleased with experiments such as the Writing Workshop, the Board made a conscious decision that its summer programming should look more towards children than developing artists.<sup>216</sup> It was attractive to many young people and attendance continued to climb. The 1968 camp had students from more than 120 communities in Saskatchewan, as well as students from Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia, Montana, North Dakota, Maryland and New York.<sup>217</sup> The course selection would greatly expand as well. In 1969, 900 students would attend courses in band, pipes, drums, Highland dancing, orchestra, choir, drama,, creative writing, painting, pottery, dyeing, spinning, and weaving. Plans for the following year included ethnic dancing and classical and modern ballet.<sup>218</sup> Not every course was an artistic area the Board usually recognized, but there was a wide selection that young people would find interesting and attractive. There was an element of enjoyment to the whole program, though, something that the Board seemed to have forgotten in the past.

The emphasis on youth programming was an interesting shift for the Board. Past programs had sometimes involved young people. The puppetry workshop had been one of these. But for the most part, the Board had largely ignored the youth of the province. Workshops were almost always for people with talent and potential and the Board was all too happy to turn away those it deemed unfit. Even more strangely, youth programming came at a time when the Board was spending more on funding and supporting, rather than encouraging and developing. While it was putting more resources into grants and scholarships in the 1960s, suddenly programming for youth appeared. Perhaps the Board had simply realized that young people were the future and it was important to involve them in the arts as early as possible. The 1969 annual report supported this idea. “We believe,” it noted, “that an appreciation of the arts and an involvement in them should be an integral part of the formative years of our province’s young people.”<sup>219</sup> Since the arts were largely extra-curricular and were not stressed in school and university, the Board needed to make an effort to encourage students.<sup>220</sup> The involvement of teachers and educators in previous workshops may also have helped the Board realize that children could be receptive to programming. The Board also believed that by bringing the arts to young people earlier they had a better chance of keeping young artists in the province, by showing them the Board was willing to support them. After all, the lament in the 1964 annual report specifically noted a number of Saskatchewan-born artists that had left the province.<sup>221</sup> The Board did not want to lose any more artists. The earlier they supported budding artists the better the chance of retaining them.

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<sup>215</sup> Michael Kaiser, *The Art of the Turnaround: Creating and Maintaining Healthy Arts Organizations* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2008), 87.

<sup>216</sup> The Artists’ Workshop at Emma Lake, however, continued. Not a Board program to begin with, it was still seen as successful and helpful for artists.

<sup>217</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Saskatchewan Arts Board 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Report, January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1968* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1968), 5.

<sup>218</sup> *1969 Annual Report*, 4.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>220</sup> *1962 Annual Report*, 3.

<sup>221</sup> *1964 Annual Report*, 3. Among those mentioned were Frances Hyland, Bob Murray, Jon Vickers, W.O. Mitchell, Bill Walker, Ken Lochhead, Murray Bathgate, Irene Salemkka. To be fair, some of these emigrants were still involved in the Saskatchewan art community, most notably Mitchell and Lochhead.



The Board believed itself to be a catalyst in the province. It described itself as “something which brings other people or forces together to arrive at a hitherto unachieved goal.”<sup>222</sup> At times, however, the Board was content to sit back and assist other people become catalysts in their own communities. While there were many new artistic programs coming into being in the province, sometimes the Board was only distantly involved. Unlike the programming of the 1940s and 1950s, the creative ideas were not usually coming from inside the Board in the 1960s. In the annual reports phrases such as ‘assisted by the Board’, ‘supported by the Board’, and ‘in conjunction with the Board’ were more common. The community resident artist in Weyburn was a good example of this assistance. In 1967 Weyburn had hired artist Wayne Morgan to live and work in the community. He lectured, taught, and encouraged “interest and participation in the visual arts in the community and surrounding districts,”<sup>223</sup> all while producing his own work. The idea had come from Weyburn, the Board had simply helped make it possible.<sup>224</sup> The Board did often mention the program and took as much credit as they could for it. In a sense, though, the Board was justified in claiming some credit for the program. It was the Board who had created the atmosphere in the province that allowed Weyburn to form its own Arts Council and to implement the Community Resident Artist program. The Board had retreated out of the spotlight in some ways, but it was still intimately involved in the province in programming and funding. It had done such a good job promoting the arts that the Board was less needed than it had been even ten years earlier.<sup>225</sup>

In the field of handicrafts, enough craft retail outlets had developed in the province that the Board could devote less of its time to handicrafts. Crafts were still succeeding in the province, a trend that was found in Canada as a whole, and needed less developmental support and encouragement.<sup>226</sup> The biggest change was the elimination of the annual craft sale. The handicraft program had been steadily dropping in importance with the Board since the mid-1950s. For a long time, it had needed little funding and development. This change was mostly due to the public easily taking over the programming. By 1964, it was being suggested that the Craft Committee should be folded into the Art Committee.<sup>227</sup> This idea spoke to the similarities of the two fields, but also because the Board was no longer needed in the handicraft field.

The municipal art councils also created less work for the Board. These first appeared in 1965. The pressure for local art councils had come directly from the communities themselves and in 1965 the Board happily set up a Provincial Arts Conference in Weyburn. Here, representatives from eleven communities and the Board discussed the formation of local art councils. These councils needed funding, of course, but the Board was suddenly less necessary on a programming level. By the end of the year there were art councils in Weyburn, Moose Jaw,

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<sup>222</sup> *1969 Annual Report*, 20.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>224</sup> Having an artist in residence was hardly a unique idea. A similar program had existed in Fort Qu'Appelle with the Craft House in the late 1950s. That program, however, had always been intended for the discerning crafter, reflecting the issues of standards in the 1950s. The Weyburn program was much more open, with Morgan assisting amateurs and children, as well as more serious-minded artists.

<sup>225</sup> Other notable programs assisted by the Board included the Saskatchewan Youth Band Tour (helped plan and provided practise space) and Fr. Jourdain's North Battleford art studio/school (financial assistance). The Board also sponsored the meetings that led to the formation of the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild.

<sup>226</sup> *1964 Report*, 7-8.

<sup>227</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Unprocessed Saskatchewan Arts Board Files, f. Executive-Secretary Communication with Board Members and Board Minutes, etc., 1964, Minutes of a Meeting of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, October 24, 1964, 5. Likewise, ballet was to be folded into drama.

Yorkton, North Battleford, and Unity.<sup>228</sup> Although the impetus had come from the communities, the Board had played a role in encouraging that impetus. Shaw believed that the formation of the Weyburn Council was a direct outcome of holding the Festival there in 1963.<sup>229</sup> He had, in fact, been expecting a development along these lines, but was surprised at how quickly it had happened.<sup>230</sup> Swift Current would quickly establish a council as well, and would be joined by Regina, Prince Albert, Nipawin, and Estevan in 1967.<sup>231</sup> Oddly enough, the Unity Arts Council appears to have disbanded at one point, as the 1967 annual report makes no mention of it. The smallest of the first local arts councils, it was probably too small to survive at the time. Despite the Board's perceived success, however, it is worth noting that the local arts councils felt the need to take over some parts of the Board's programming whether the Board desired it or not. The Board had been an impetus, but the local councils evidently felt they could perform some of the Board's duties as well as, or better than, the Board could.

In June 1968 the various arts councils would form the Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils (OSAC). Through OSAC the councils could meet occasionally and discuss any mutual problems.<sup>232</sup> This formation only seemed to move the Board further towards decentralization. The Board was still relied on for guidance, but with the formation of OSAC, it was less of a necessity. Its children had grown up in a sense. Cal Abrahamson considered Saskatchewan the most advanced in the organization of its Regional Councils, a good sign.<sup>233</sup> The regional arts councils were a success and still remain a vital part of Saskatchewan communities today.

The Councils were particularly important to the Board. "We are honestly trying to work ourselves out of jobs we feel regional councils should and which they are better equipped to handle" Abrahamson noted in 1969. "The arrangement is a tidy one" Lawrence Sabbath of the *Montreal Star* noted, "as long as it...doesn't become unwieldy."<sup>234</sup> The Councils could ease the burden on the Board and allow it to focus its energies in new directions. The Councils could also take on some of the programming that the Department of Education had suggested the Board move away from, allowing the Board to be relieved, but to keep the arts in artistic, rather than political, hands. The Councils, additionally, could be an easier point of access for "individuals and troupes who [were] too shy to seek aid" or unaware that assistance existed.<sup>235</sup> The early Board had spent much of its time planning and developing concerts, lectures, exhibitions, and other programs designed to encourage and make accessible the arts. Now it would be the local Councils' jobs to handle this programming.

The rise of the local arts councils was one of the most significant changes in the 1960s. They can also be seen as perhaps the biggest measurement of the Board's success. The Board had been established to promote appreciation and development of the arts in the province. Within two decades, nine communities had managed to develop the arts to a point where they

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<sup>228</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *18<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1965* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1966), 12.

<sup>229</sup> Weyburn had actually done most of the planning for the Festival that year as it coincided with the city's Jubilee celebrations.

<sup>230</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.2-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Briefs and Reports, 1949-64, George Shaw, Report of the Executive Secretary April 1, 1964 to August 30, 1964, 4.

<sup>231</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *20<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1967* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1968), 11.

<sup>232</sup> *1968 Report*, 114.

<sup>233</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Unprocessed Saskatchewan Arts Board Files, f. 1969 Board-Miscellaneous Correspondence Re-Board, Lawrence Sabbath, "Filling in the cultural gaps," *Montreal Star*, July 19, 1969.

<sup>234</sup> Sabbath, "Filling in the cultural gaps."

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*

could generate support and plan programming without the province's assistance. They would still need financial assistance at times, but creatively, they were more or less on their own. These first nine represented the beginning of local artistic programming. They would be joined by various other local arts councils in the coming decades, representing the smaller communities of the province.

The Board's success also led to its increased role in the international art world. In the previous two decades, the Board had given advice to new and up and coming art boards usually by giving copies of the annual report out. In the early 1960s, however, the Board had solidified its programming and was beginning to secure recognition.<sup>236</sup> Surprisingly, there was still no similar arts organization in Manitoba, a fact lamented by Manitobans.<sup>237</sup> The only arts organization at that time was the Manitoba Arts Council. The Council had certainly been filling an artistic void in the province, but it was a volunteer organization and had no connection to the Manitoba government. Both the government and the Council were interested in working together and looked to the Saskatchewan Arts Board for help. Shaw met with Donald Campbell, President of the Manitoba Arts Council, in June 1963.<sup>238</sup> The meeting with Campbell in Winnipeg was a significant step for the Board. Never before had anyone from the Board appeared to have had formal talks with budding arts organizations. The Board had always simply sent out information packages. These could hold value, but their significance was likely small. The Manitoba Arts Council would be formally established in 1965.<sup>239</sup> How much the Board influenced the Manitoba Arts Council is unknown but the fact that there were actually in-person meetings shows that there were close connections between the two.

Manitoba was hardly the only province or state looking to set up an arts board in the 1960s. In 1961, North Dakota was interested in setting up a state arts organization and was looking for assistance. The Board even noted this fact in the annual report for that year, the first time they had ever referenced assisting another arts organization in a report.<sup>240</sup> Rather than simply corresponding with art boards, New Brunswick actually sent someone to Saskatchewan. They studied the board in detail and evaluated their programs. Nova Scotia was also looking for assistance and Abrahamson recommended they send someone to observe as well.<sup>241</sup> Letters from the interim British Columbia Arts Board and the Fine Arts Council of Florida also made their way to the desk of the Board, looking for advice, guidance, and tips.<sup>242</sup> To be fair, none of these

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<sup>236</sup> *1961 Annual Report*, 5.

<sup>237</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.5-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Correspondence, 1944-1965, Margaret Stobie to George Shaw, May 31, 1963.

<sup>238</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Unprocessed Saskatchewan Arts Board Files, f. 1961 General Correspondence, George Shaw, Travel Report of Executive-Secretary, August 13, 1963.

<sup>239</sup> "About Us," *Manitoba Arts Council* <http://artscouncil.mb.ca/about/> (accessed March 5, 2012).

<sup>240</sup> *1961 Annual Report*, 5.

<sup>241</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Unprocessed Saskatchewan Arts Board Files, f. 1968 Board-Board Correspondence and Mimeo Material, D. Ray Pierce to Saskatchewan Arts Board, October 1, 1968; *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Unprocessed Saskatchewan Arts Board Files, f. 1968 Board-Board Correspondence and Mimeo Material, Cal Abrahamson to D. Ray Pierce, October 4, 1968.

<sup>242</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Unprocessed Saskatchewan Arts Board Files, f. 1969 Board-Miscellaneous Correspondence Re-Board, W.G. Gay, Interim BC Arts Board to Executive Director SAB, September 2, 1969; *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Unprocessed Saskatchewan Arts Board Files, f. 1969 Board-Miscellaneous Correspondence Re-Board, Jim Camp to SAB August 18, 1969. The Board had also previously been in communication with the Drama Advisor to the British Columbia Department of Education in late 1968 (*Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Unprocessed Saskatchewan Arts Board Files, f. 1968 Board-Board Correspondence and Mimeo Material, Phyllis Wilson Admin Assistant to Anne Adamson, Drama Advisor Dept. of Education Government of BC November 29, 1968).

initiatives was relying solely on Saskatchewan. The Nova Scotians had sent letters out to as many arts organizations as they could, and it would be foolish to presume New Brunswick had not sent anyone elsewhere. And it would be years before Nova Scotia, New Brunswick or British Columbia actually created a Board. But the Board had found itself on the international stage at last, being relied on for advice and guidance.

The Saskatchewan Festival of the Arts' impact cannot be underplayed here. The Board had caught the media's attention with the Festival. It had been a successful program from the beginning and was making waves in the larger artistic world, certainly in the Canadian one. Nor was this media coverage confined to small and local media. By 1962, both *Star Weekly* and *MacLean's* indicated interest in not only the Festival but other Board activities as well.<sup>243</sup> By 1965, the Festival of the Arts was being used as a blueprint by other provinces.<sup>244</sup> There were still occasions, though, during which the Board's relation with the international world bordered on the ridiculous. At one meeting a board member suggested that the Board advertise in the United Kingdom "the opportunities in Saskatchewan for good piano tuners."<sup>245</sup> Riddell quickly shot this idea down, though, advising to advertise in Canada first.

The Board's work with Indian artistry took a large step forward in the 1960s as well. In 1960, through discussions with the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Co-operation and Co-operative Development, a program for supporting handicrafts in the North was devised. The Northern Handicraft Co-operative Association Limited was quickly formed and was based in a new handicraft centre in La Ronge. Assisted by handicraft consultant Sheila Stiven, the centre was to "revive traditional designs where necessary and to raise the standards of the work produced."<sup>246</sup> By the end of the year, an exhibition and sale was organized in Regina and a sales outlet and mail order business were also established. Aside from encouraging the revival of traditional crafts, the centre also looked to help improve the economic welfare of the region. The program met quick success and most of the locals were enthusiastic about the project.

This program would see large gains over the next few years. By the end of 1961 the standard of work in the North had greatly improved. Sales outlets had been established in many of the provincial parks and at the Museum of Natural History in Regina.<sup>247</sup> Stores outside the province also began selling products.<sup>248</sup> Some work was even displayed in Rome and Florence.<sup>249</sup> Beyond learning traditional skills, classes and workshops were also introducing new skills. Rug making, printing and woodworking were all being introduced.<sup>250</sup> The Board was also instrumental in initiating southern projects, such as a rug-making program at Standing Buffalo First Nation near Fort Qu'Appelle.<sup>251</sup> It is surprising that it took so long for such a program to get going at Fort Qu'Appelle, one of the artistic centres in the province.<sup>252</sup> Like the centre at La Ronge, the rug-making initiative soon saw success. Tapestries created by Standing Buffalo

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<sup>243</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.2-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Briefs and Reports, 1949-1964, Analysis of the Festival of the Arts 1962, 2.

<sup>244</sup> *1965 Annual Report*, 15.

<sup>245</sup> *Saskatchewan Archives Board*, Carlyle King fonds, f. III.8-Saskatchewan Arts Board-Minutes and Agendas, 1948-1963, Minutes of a Meeting of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, October 5, 1963, 4.

<sup>246</sup> *1960 Annual Report*, 20.

<sup>247</sup> *1962 Annual Report*, 18.

<sup>248</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, January 1 to December 31, 1963* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1964), 9.

<sup>249</sup> *1962 Annual Report*, 18.

<sup>250</sup> *1963 Annual Report*, 9.

<sup>251</sup> *1968 Annual Report*, 20.

women were soon touring Europe, Japan, and Australia.<sup>253</sup> Significant improvements in the field had been made, but the Board still seemed to be rather ambivalent toward Indian artistry. The centre at La Ronge, undoubtedly the biggest move, was discussed enthusiastically for the first three years. After that time, however, the Board rarely mentioned it. Of course, the Board and Provincial Government were undergoing changes at the time and it was easy for the Indian programming to get lost by the wayside. Small and invisible as it was at times, however, the Indian programming of the Board had come a long way in the last two decades. Things looked promising.

By 1970 the Board had undergone a number of changes. It had gradually transitioned from being program-focused to being funding-focused. The reasons for this shift were numerous. The CCF government had been stressing a change since the early part of the decade. The Thatcher Liberals continued in this pattern in 1964. The Board itself, led by Executive Director Shaw, also wished to move in this direction. While Shaw wanted to see the Board on a new threshold he cautioned against moving too fast. It was the rise of the local arts councils in the mid-60s which would finally allow the Board to begin its decentralization process. The local councils were able to take on some of the responsibilities of the Board, allowing it to grow and mature. The Board had moved toward the world of funding and grants. These would be available both to individual artists and to community organizations. The Board would not stray from its original goals, though. The local arts councils allowed the Board to continue building its larger programs. The Board had begun implementing a youth movement with the Summer School of the Arts. Developing audiences and appreciation was still an important facet of the Board as well, as evidenced by the Saskatchewan Festival of the Arts. The Board would continue to be a largely financial service in the coming years, but would continue to do major programs in the development areas. But it had succeeded in facilitating the arts to the province, and it was no longer necessary for it to be so intimately involved. In a way, the Board had achieved a perfect equilibrium. It was moving forward but not forgetting its own past.

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<sup>252</sup> Although four young women from the reserve did attend the Summer School of Arts, taking spinning and weaving classes.

<sup>253</sup> *1968 Annual Report*, 20.

## **Conclusion** **“Coming of Age”**

The Saskatchewan Arts Board had made the arts relevant in Saskatchewan. But it apparently could not do simple math. It was 1970 and the annual report proudly stated the Board had come of age:

The Saskatchewan Arts Board has just passed its twenty-first birthday. Traditionally, this milestone symbolizes a “coming of age”, and the ability to deal maturely with the problems and responsibilities of life.

To those associated with the Board at this time, our twenty-first year of operation has marked a period of reassessment, of asking questions and seeking answers, of seeing what has been accomplished and what tasks still lie ahead.<sup>254</sup>

But the report was wrong. The Board had technically come of age the year before.<sup>255</sup> Whether the Board had come of age in 1969 or 1970, though, did not diminish what the Board had achieved over the last twenty-one or twenty-two years of its existence. The Board had come a long way since its creation in 1948, and had been able ‘to maturely deal with problems and responsibilities’ long before it had come of age. What began as a chaotic organization that haphazardly worked on developing an appreciation of the arts in the province had transformed into a prestigious leader in the arts. By 1970 the Board could be considered much stronger than it had been in 1948 in many different areas. Though many “tasks still [lay] ahead,” as the annual report noted, much had been accomplished.

The Board had helped develop an audience and an appreciation for the arts in Saskatchewan. Through concert and theatre tours, craft and art exhibitions, book lists, and radio programs the Board had reached out to the province in a variety of ways. For the most part, the province responded enthusiastically. Many concerts, tours, and workshops were well attended and could be considered successes. And although the populace did not always agree with issues of higher standards raised in the 1950s, it had become less of an issue in the 1960s. Perhaps people realized the Board had been right to hold the province to a high standard or perhaps they had gotten used to modern artistic developments. In the 1960s the Board would continue to foster appreciation of the arts, particularly with young people. The Saskatchewan Festival of the Arts and the Summer Arts School were both major programs that aimed at enjoying the arts rather than teaching. Saskatchewan would not be seen as a cultural backwater. The Board had done its part in achieving Tommy Douglas’ goal of modernizing Saskatchewan.

The Board had helped many artists, some who reached national and international fame. Although, there were contentious moments between the Board and the artists surrounding the creation and initial direction of the Board, the provincial artists were usually happy to receive support from the Board. And the Board gave support in many ways. Various tours and exhibitions gave artists a chance to perform and show their work. In the 1950s workshops, camps, and the consultant services would help improve both amateur and professional artists. And with grants and scholarships the Board helped many artists financially. The province would inevitably lose some artists, but the Board had helped ensure some of them stayed. Even those

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<sup>254</sup> Saskatchewan Arts Board, *Saskatchewan Arts Board 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Report, January 1<sup>st</sup> to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1970* (Regina: Saskatchewan Arts Board, 1970), 3.

<sup>255</sup> The problem was that some people saw the Board as being created in 1948, the year it actually began, while others saw the Board as being created in 1949, the year the Arts Board Act was passed.

who left often returned to assist the Board. W. O. Mitchell might have left Saskatchewan, but the Board had made sure he was still involved in his home province. The Board had also helped Indian artists. The Board was initially slow to move in this area, but by the end of the 1960s had worked on assisting in sales and development.

The Board had fostered the development of community arts organizations and local boards. By the mid-1960s a variety of local councils and arts organizations had appeared in the province. These organizations, in turn, began to develop their own programming, assisted by the Board only in financial matters. Their appearance could be seen as one of the greatest signs of the Board's success.

The Board had also assisted in the development of other arts board and councils. Shortly after its creation the Board was corresponding with a number of organizations, both national and international. While much of this correspondence amounted to sending out annual reports, by the 1960s the Board was giving advice to new and prospective arts organizations from as far away as Florida. In Canada, the Board played host to a visitor from New Brunswick wishing to set up a Board and George Shaw, the Executive Director of the Board, had met with Manitoba Arts Council President Donald Campbell before the Council was created. Many of the Board's programs, additionally, attracted out-of-province visitors. Other programs, such as the Saskatchewan Festival of the Arts, became blueprints for similar ideas elsewhere in Canada.

In twenty-one years the Saskatchewan Arts Board had grown considerably and would continue to grow. It had experienced growing pains at times, but it was undoubtedly a success. Board creator David Smith agreed. He saw the Board as his greatest success. "In fifty years of work," he recalled in 1993, "I have only had one success – the Saskatchewan Arts Board."<sup>256</sup> And Smith still believed it was important. Smith did note that "over the years the Board has shifted from being an *initiator* to an *enabler*,"<sup>257</sup> but this change did not mean the Board had moved away from its original goals and purpose. The Board's creator believed the Board still followed the original vision he had of the Board. "The main guide lines established in the early years have been maintained," Smith noted. "These emphasized quality in every aspect of the Board's work, provided support for experimental programs, gave assistance to young people of promise, and made a point of maintaining a balance among the various interests in the arts as well as different regions of the province, with special attention to rural and isolated communities."<sup>258</sup> Few could have argued with him.

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<sup>256</sup> Ted Jackson, introduction to *First Person Plural: A Community Development Approach to Social Change*, by David Smith, ed. Ted Jackson (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1995), xii.

<sup>257</sup> David Smith, *First Person Plural: A Community Development Approach to Social Change*, ed. Ted Jackson (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1995), 123.

<sup>258</sup> Smith, 27.

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