



ANNUAL REPORT

**AUGUST 1, 2020
TO JULY 31, 2021**



***“ It was the best of times;
it was the worst of times...”***

The famous opening lines from Charles Dickens' 1859 historical novel could just as easily apply to other eras, including our own. The past year of COVID-induced lockdowns, mask mandates, and all-around anxiety certainly qualifies as the kind of year that no one will soon forget. In the end though, despite differing opinions, calmness and cooperation were largely the order of the day. Being able to adapt to change is a critical skill in times like this. We adapted and made the best of it.

As a learning organization that has education as its primary purpose, we used the slow-down in normal operations to rebuild and retool for the future. We took the time to think deeply about how to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world and how we could come out of the pandemic stronger than ever. After our first 40 years of serving the community, we were determined to set the stage for success over the next 40 years. And that is what we did.

This fiscal year (Aug 1, 2020 to July 31, 2021) was all about building our capacity, strengthening our infrastructure, and clarifying our vision, mission, and values, all while surviving the pandemic. We have more work to do, but we are well on our way to becoming the kind of charity that will break new ground in doing good work in our community. This was the year that we set about establishing a new Strategic Plan for our charity that will be perfectly aligned with our new and improved charitable purposes.

If there could ever be a “good” time for Dundas Street in front of our building to be torn up and rebuilt, this was probably the best year for it to happen. Foot traffic was already drastically reduced because of COVID so a torn-up street didn't hurt as much this year as it would have in past years or next year when everything opens again.

With renewal happening on the outside, we also began a rebranding and renaming process internally. In the coming year, as we emerge from the restrictions brought on by the pandemic, we will be ready to launch new initiatives and new messaging about our revitalized organization.

We are ever grateful for the support we received from our artists, operational funders, and from government programs. Years of fiscal prudence practiced by the LPG's leadership team combined with COVID relief funds allowed us to realize a surplus in fiscal year 2021. This is miraculous given the fact that most of our revenue streams dried up during the pandemic, creating significant uncertainty about how to move forward. By receiving operational funding from London Arts Council and Ontario Arts Council, wage and rent subsidies, and a loan from the federal government we were able to keep all staff working from home and at London Clay Art Centre. Additionally, we received a grant from the Canada Summer Jobs program for six temporary staff positions, and donations from many of our loyal donors.

To all our supporters, we extend a big "Thank You!" We couldn't have done it without your unwavering support.

Sincerely,



Lawrence Durham

President and
Board Chair



Darlene Pratt

Executive Director &
General Manager

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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“

The Year that COVID Changed Everything

”

Congratulations!

You made it through a whole year of being locked down, isolated, masked, and vaccinated. You've spent a whole year developing new habits and learning a new vocabulary so that phrases such as curbside service, elbow bumps, and social distancing now slip easily off your tongue. You now consider ordering online to be a normal way to shop and Zoom calls the normal way to conduct meetings (pants optional).

This will be the year you will talk about with your children and grandchildren, saying, "Yes, I lived through the pandemic of 2020-2021." This is the year where online learning became the new normal, where we discovered just how many of us could actually work from home if we had to, and where home cooking, home crafting, and gardening all sparked renewed interest.

What follows is YOUR story and how it intersects with OUR story for this fiscal year.



ADJUSTMENTS ON THE INSIDE

Summer

By the time we hit the beginning of our fiscal year on August 1, 2020 we were five months into the pandemic. We had been locked down once already, having to cancel the in-progress spring session that had started in March. We were encouraged that at least some late summer clay camps could take place. By then, you were used to curbside service, some studio users had rented wheels to use at home, and people had gotten used to transporting pots to and from LCAC for firing.



Fall

In the fall, there was renewed optimism as lessons took place even with some restrictions on class size. We organized an outdoor Potters Market behind LCAC on October 3 and an indoor Holiday Potters Market at 630 Dundas Street on December 4-5. The second lockdown hit three weeks later, on December 24.



Winter

Classes started again in February but only ran for two-thirds of their normal length (6 out of 9 classes) before being cancelled in March. This caused a great amount of work for staff and great disappointment for students trying to complete a full set of classes.

Spring

We were able to run clay camps at half capacity during March Break, more as a service to beleaguered parents and to maintain a semblance of momentum than to realize revenue. Everyone was trying their best to remain buoyant, but it was hard for all.

Classes were supposed to start again in April 2021, were postponed until May, and ultimately cancelled entirely. Once again, that meant a lot of confusion for students trying to register and re-register for classes and workshops, and for staff who had to issue refunds and credits.

Summer

In July, clay camps ran at half capacity but it was wonderful to see people having fun at LCAC once again!



CHANGES ON THE OUTSIDE

While we made adjustments inside our building, positive changes were happening all around LCAC as the commercial corridor is slowly but surely revitalized. In January 2021, Goodwill Industries (GWI) announced the purchase of the building out of which London InterCommunity Health Centre (LIHC) operates, across the street from LCAC. GWI plans to build a \$10-million health and community centre on the site. “This is a game-changer,” said the chief executive at Goodwill Industries, “It will be transformational for Old East Village.”

Additionally, the City of London invested millions of dollars into the area with its long-overdue Infrastructure Renewal project along Dundas from Adelaide to English Streets. Starting in April, the road in front of LCAC was ripped up and slowly transformed. The new streetscape is designed to be more pedestrian and cyclist-friendly, with larger sidewalks and a dedicated bike lane on the south side.

Indwell, a Christian charity that builds deeply affordable and supportive housing, started construction on its latest building, Embassy Commons, east of LCAC at Dundas and English Streets. We are excited about our agreement with Indwell to design, create, and install three large mosaic tile panels on the south and east facades of their new building! Set for installation in the summer of 2022, we are committed to helping elevate the Old East Village by continuing to beautify local buildings with tiles handmade by our talented ceramic artists and hundreds of volunteer participants.

Also in the spring of 2021, as part of its Support Local video series, Tourism London (TL) sponsored a short video featuring LCAC that was promoted through social media channels and is highlighted on TL’s website.

While undeniable social challenges persist along the commercial corridor encompassing LCAC, the area is on an upward trend overall. As the largest heritage conservation district in London, Old East Village is also being promoted by the OEV Business Improvement Area as an up-and-coming arts and culture district. We are one of three major arts facilities in OEV and are proud to be an anchor and destination for this important area of London.



BEHIND-THE-SCENES

LCAC was closed to the public for months at a time but the staff team remained as busy as ever working from home and at LCAC responding to the ever-changing needs of the pandemic. We provided robust drop-off and pick-up services to honour our studio-users, ensuring they could at least make pieces at home and have them fired with us despite not having access inside LCAC.

Fortunately, the resourceful staff used the COVID slowdown as an opportunity to regroup. A new online registration system was researched and tested in the summer in preparation for going online in the fall of 2021. For the first time ever, we received funding for 6 positions through the Canada Summer Jobs program. The positions helped us tackle intensive programs and initiatives, namely summer programming, revamping our entire set of glazes to fit 9 clay bodies, managing the start of our mosaic-making project with Indwell, and organizing the Empty Bowls event.



Edith Pierce Memorial Award

Usually, in June each year, we provide a monetary award and summer studio-use at LCAC to the Bealart student who displays outstanding talent and discipline in working with clay and who wants to pursue ceramic studies at a post-secondary institution. Unfortunately, this year Beal Secondary School's Bealart program experienced challenges that made it difficult to select a recipient. As a result, we suspended awarding the Edith Pierce Memorial Award in 2021 until young ceramic artists regain full-time, in-person access to Beal's studios.

Artist-in-Residence Program

Although we kept our Canadian Artist-in-Residence in place, several months of access to our studios was lost, as it was for all of our working artists through the pandemic.



Amy Klinkhamer
Artist-in-Residence



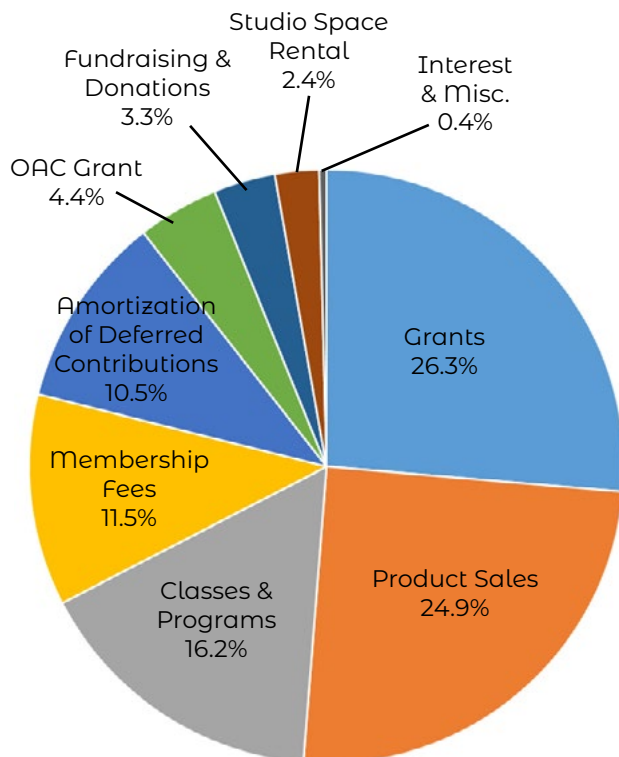
OUR FINANCIAL SITUATION

Years of fiscal prudence allowed us to draw on our reserves to invest in important projects that address the important questions all organizations face:

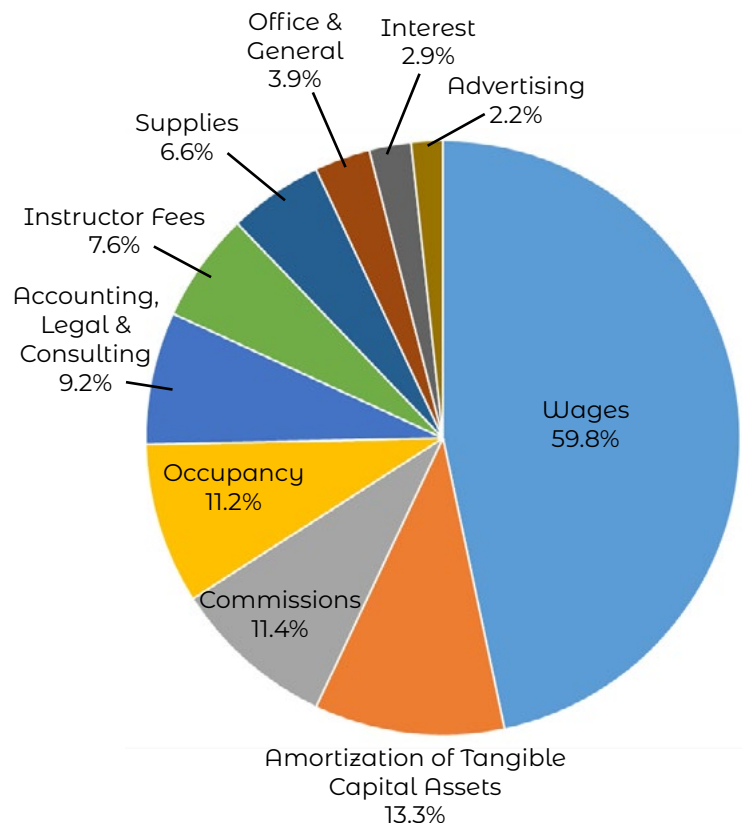
- 1) Why do we continue to do what we do? and,
- 2) How are we going to remain relevant in a world that is changing rapidly?

Government funding and timely support from London Arts Council, London Community Foundation, and Ontario Arts Council kept us buoyant. We were able to retain 100% of our core staff team who bravely confronted the immediate and ever-changing demands of responding to the loss of revenue caused by lengthy shutdowns. Miraculously, at fiscal year-end we realized a surplus of \$28,000. Without government subsidies and the strong support of our operational funders we would have seen a deficit of \$123,000 and would have had to let valuable staff go, which would have jeopardized LCAC's operations.

Revenues



Expenses



CONCLUSION

The hard work, dedication, and resilience of the board and staff teams, the continued support of our faithful artists, and the financial support of the federal, provincial, and municipal governments saved the day. We did what we had to do to keep London Clay Art Centre alive. We did what we had to do because LCAC is a vital community organization that should not be lost. We will survive and thrive for many more years, providing important arts education to the community and building an appreciation of the ceramic art form, the most ancient and complex art form in the world.

Canada



London Arts Council



LONDON
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO
an Ontario government agency
un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario



London
CANADA



Old East
Village
Business Improvement Area

Ontario
Trillium
Foundation



Fondation
Trillium
de l'Ontario

An agency of the Government of Ontario
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario



We believe working with clay empowers people to embrace their inner creativity, transforming how they feel about themselves and the connection between art and community-building.

We aspire to give everyone access to exceptional educational, artistic, and community-building experiences with clay and ceramic art.

Charitable tax number: 88667 6790 RR 0001



Tim Wilkinson



Endri Poletti



Unha Hill



Cathy Roberts