

Narrative Annual report v.1

Purpose

The Sault Area Arts Council was founded in 1987 “To sponsor and encourage cultural and educational activities in Sault Ste. Marie and surrounding areas.”

Mission

On a day-to-day basis, the Council “sponsors cooperative planning, research, fund raising and educational programs, administers property, and undertakes such other services deemed necessary to encourage participation and appreciation of the arts by all citizens in the area.”

Vision

Our long-range plan is to offer a gathering place where locals and tourists can come together to share ideas, and to create, exhibit, view, and buy and sell art.

Values

We know that arts, by preserving and passing on culture, craft, language, stories, and traditions leads to cultural resiliency. For our residents we believe that the arts build knowledge and pride in who they are and help to develop a sense of belonging and cultural identity. For out-of-town visitors, the arts make one place different from another and create a draw/reason to explore; this in turn creates foot traffic, vibrancy, and even economic growth in our county. For everyone, the arts create understanding of and respect for “the other.” We believe that opportunities for creative expression and access to arts experiences enrich lives and broaden horizons and should be available to all.

2023 Activities

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT and Training with PoS

The saultartcenter.com website was made fully functional and is updated continually by social Media Specialist and Business Manager, Rebecca Jones. Rebecca also posts regularly on Facebook and is getting an average of 1500 hits weekly. Our Instagram account is monitored by Erin Bullock who reports a 147% growth since July 2023. All classes, upcoming events, Gallery exhibits and contributing artists are posted, as well as opportunities to become members and/or make donations. All SAAC members are encouraged to share any website announcements to help expand awareness of the organization.

Commented [L1]: Hi Dashie! I'm excited to be working on this annual report with you. You have documented so many wonderful things brewing at SAAC, and we'll make sure this report puts them front and center!

I will be addressing issues of structure in this edit. I think restructuring the report around themes will allow you to create a more dynamic narrative that will keep your readers' attention and get them excited about SAAC.

To this end, I have identified several themes that stand out to me (see the Editorial Letter for more discussion) and will point them out in my comments so that you can identify elements to be combined into narrative sections.

Once the narrative has come together, you may find that a compelling title emerges—perhaps a line directly from the text or even part of a quote from a volunteer.

Commented [L2]: *Who We Are:* This is a great starting point for an introductory section on “Who We Are.” The four elements you have here (Purpose, Mission, Vision, and Values) could be nicely combined into one cohesive paragraph that describes your mission and leads nicely into a new paragraph—namely, *Where We Come From*.

In our conversations, it emerged that there are parallels in the beginning of the SAAC story and the ways in which it is now growing (i.e., arts-oriented folks searching for—and becoming—the local arts community). Adding a *Where We Come From* section after the introductory *Who We Are* section will provide the background/history for this story of growth.

Commented [L3]: These website/social media developments and changes to the PoS system could be included in a section about changes the organization has made called *Growing and Changing*. I would suggest moving this information to later in the report so that you can lead with the even more compelling narrative of the new building and the creation of the Cultural Circle of Sault Ste Marie (*Where We Are Going*—see final comment). These nitty gritty updates will still be there for anyone who wants to learn about them, but your most exciting news will be shared with your reader right on the first page.

Training with the new Point of Sale system was given to all the shop volunteers. The PoS can be inputted with all sales, donations, sponsorships, and memberships. It allows us to set up new inventory for the shop and gallery shows and track and report invoices for artist payments in addition to sales. Through the PoS weekly, monthly and annual of financial reports can be easily generated.

COOPERATIVE PLANNING

- We initiated **informal collaborations** with *Lake Superior State University, Chippewa County Historical Society, Bayliss Library, Soo Locks Children's Museum, and the River of History Museum* with plans to hold a multivenue program of exhibits, lectures, discussions, and classes in September 2024. The program entitled "The Soo Collects: Art for All" intends to bring knowledge of locally available visual art to our economically challenged and geographically isolated, underserved community as the goal of an NEA funded grant. (See below under Grants for details) Art objects have been collected by local institutions and private collectors in the area over the past 100 or more years and there are many fine pieces that the owners are willing to share with the public. This project intends to give our Sault area residents opportunities to participate in multiple art appreciation activities during that month.
- Meetings with Stephanie Sprecker, **Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Director** to plan special events involving the city spaces and to work with her on the planned future home of the Sault Area Art Center (538 Ashmun St) More details on this are in section OUR FUTURE PLANS

Commented [L4]: These collaborations are important and speak to the exciting growth of SAAC, as well as its budding ties to other organizations that will make up the Cultural Circle. I would suggest either wrapping them into the **Where We Are Going** section or including them as a separate Collaborations section later in the report (see the proposed outline in the Editorial Letter for options).

GALLERY EXHIBITS During 2023 we had nine high caliber Gallery exhibits, the majority of which had \$500 sponsorships by local businesses.

- **March: Youth Creates.** 56 students from six schools participated in the Annual K-12 Youth Art Exhibit and the Opening Reception was attended by 125 people. It was a delight to become aware of the artistic talent in our local children.
- **April: Artist Choice Juried Exhibition** (sponsored by Century 21, Advantage Plus) Forty artists participated exhibiting 2D and 3 D works. This show netted approx. \$2500.
- **May: Fiber Arts** (sponsored by Kristin Fairbanks, DDS) This show included high quality examples of Basketry, (Traditional Black ash baskets and Porcupine Quill baskets), Rug hooking, (including three vintage rugs hooked by Sugar Island Native Americans during the Works Progress Administration (WPA), exquisite rugs from the collections of Phyllis

Commented [L5]: This section could be titled **Showcasing Local Talent**. Rather than being listed chronologically, it might be more compelling for your reader if these exhibits were grouped by theme (e.g., children's talent, local artists, Indigenous art).

Alternately, the information about the Youth Creates exhibit could be combined with the later discussion of the Art Camp to form an entirely separate section about SAAC youth programs (perhaps entitled "Budding Artists").

Bigelow and Kate Marshall, modern and traditional Quilts, as well as Embroidered art objects, a painted canvas floor covering, and Korean traditional Pojagi curtain and Ramie Patchwork

- **June: Kaleidoscope and Lens & Chisel** (sponsored by an anonymous donor) Four artists (Susan Johnson-painter, Judy Merrill-Smith-fiber artist, Katherine Sirvio, wood turner and Neil Weaver-photographer) were featured in this colorful, textural show.
- **July: Chippewa in Photographs** (sponsored by 4Front Credit Union) The project, entitled “48, 48, 48” involved a collaboration of 48 photographers (amateurs and professionals) photographing at one of 48 geographic sections in Chippewa County, over a specific 48-hour period in June. The Gallery exhibits in July consisted of showing a maximum of three photos taken by each participant. Prizes of \$300, \$200, and \$100 were awarded. This was one of the more popular shows of the year with exceptional community involvement. Attendance was amazing, bringing numerous people to the Art Center who had never previously visited.
- **August: Paint and Metal** (sponsored by GHL Certified Public Accountants) was an invitational show exhibiting the fine quality metal working of Bill Morrison and a retrospective show of Charles Colbert’s mixed media art which chronicled progression of his work from 2012 to 2023. Colbert donated 100% of his proceeds to the Art Center. (\$1200)
- **September: The Curiosities of two Dames** (sponsored by Craig Flickinger, DDS) was a show that featured painters Robin Sorquist and Stephanie Moran, who in preparation for this show explored Michigan and traveled to Colorado to enhance their artistic skills and satisfy their curiosities. The paintings were mostly done in plein air and representative works of the Eastern Upper Peninsula Plein Air group were also on display.
- **October: Bonifas Award Winners** (sponsored by Soo Coop Credit Union) Every year SAAC has the opportunity of selecting winners of the Northern Exposure Exhibit at the William Bonifas Art Center in Escanaba, to show their work at the Sault Area Art Center. The 2022 artists selected to exhibit in October 2023, were Dave Berg, Print maker of linocuts, Ted Brainerd, Furniture maker and Joan Miron, Painter. Each of these artists was self-taught. All acknowledge they were strongly influenced by the natural surroundings of the Upper Peninsula. The combination of the three excellent artists and the media types represented, lent itself to a stunning exhibit in the mini and main galleries at Alberta house. At the Opening Reception, each of the artists gave a brief, very informative talk about the processes involved in their art forms.

- **November: Indigenous Arts and Crafts** (sponsored by). This exhibit consisted exclusively of works created by Indigenous members of the community and included both 2D and 3D objects, i.e., paintings, baskets, bead work, sculpture, and a birch bark canoe - in the process of being built. Prominently featured in this show were four generations of Bowen family artists of the Bay Mills Indian Community as well as artists from the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians.
- **December: Christmas at Alberta House** (sponsored by Sault Ste Marie Rotary Club) **Laura, this will be completed by December**

SPECIAL EVENTS

- A Meet and Greet for local artists was held in March. Ten artists new to SAAC attended.
- Evening of the Arts April 15 and April 16 Gallery Awards Reception. This was our first event of its kind and was well attended.
- On Engineer's Day, June 30, SAAC sponsored a vendor booth and a food booth. Native American fisherman and restaurateur Michael Lagendorf donated his time and 200 pounds of Lake Superior whitefish freshly caught that morning! At the food booth Michael's staff demonstrated how the fish is prepared and fried. Not only was this an informative event, the fish was DELICIOUS.
- Host UP Arts and Culture Alliance quarterly meeting June 20 and 21. The Upper Peninsula Arts and Culture Alliance is a 15-county affinity group comprised of Artisans and art organizations, historians and culture bearers, as well as allies in related sectors such as tourism and recreation, local and regional government and economic development. Scott Laursen, vice chair of SAAC and member of the Alliance facilitated this event which gave SAAC markedly increased visibility.
- Host Meet and Greet for MACC Board regional meeting on July 20. The Michigan Arts and Culture Council is the State granting agency whose mission is to encourage, develop and facilitate an enriched environment of creative and cultural activity in Michigan.
- Hosting guest artists. Board members Cathie Chenoweth and Phyllis Bigelow offered overnight housing for visiting artists from Marquette area for their show reception in October
- A Pampered Chef fundraiser was organized by Kathleen Maine, in October and yielded x#\$

Commented [L6]: I think these events could be divided among the following sections: [Connecting Artists](#), [Celebrating the Arts](#), and [Managing & Raising Funds](#). Breaking them up and grouping this way will allow your reader, at a glance, to see the ways in which SAAC events are impacting the community.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

- Education Committee formed under Terri Wolski developed class policies for instructors and students re: payment and attendance and developed a satisfaction survey for class participants
- LSSU course credits Lake Superior State University which does not currently have Visual Arts class offerings expressed interest in collaborating with SAAC in the future where students can get University credits in the Fine arts.
- Poetry night Renee Dreiling initiated once per month at the Art Center. Average attendance is 4-5 people
- SAAC Library has been fully catalogued and available for borrowers. X# books
- Artist-in-Residency Program was initiated by Scott Laursen, Board Vice Chair. Scott and his wife Eva are offering their VRBO cabin for 10-day periods in September, November 2023 and April 2024. The program is advertised on Arts | CaFÉ. Application fee was.... Fifty six artists (visual arts, writers and photographers applied for 2023. Application fees contributed x#\$\$\$

To date 2 artists (a writer and a photographer) have completed the program

- 46 Classes were held at the Art Center this past year and included: Acrylic Pour, Alcohol Ink, Life Drawing, Nature Journaling, Travel Journaling, Watercolor, Book binding, Beading, Black Ash Basket making, writing, Color theory for clothing choices. Our goal for 2024 is to offer 100 classes.

MEMBERSHIP Policies were developed to categorize levels of donation and clarify associated benefits. We now have X# members. **To be completed at end of Dec**

PROPERTY ADMINISTRATION

- During January and February while Alberta House was closed Robin Sorquist and Rebecca Jones completed several major tasks including: Painting and rearranging the shop, digitizing shop inventory, contacting artists to confirm addresses and update their inventory, and painting the Gallery.
- Met with Fire Marshall who determined that capacity at AH should not exceed 52 people at a time for any event people. He also recommended that we fix the exit sign, install fire alarms, and apply fire retardant to the carpeted walls.

Commented [L7]: For this section, I propose the section title *Fostering Artists & Teaching Skills*.

Commented [L8]: This could fit nicely in the Managing & Raising Funds section, where other financial matters are discussed.

- Repair and repaint exterior. Board member Tom Harrison and Volunteer, Terry Moran, repaired and repainted the front porch, fire escape and handicapped ramp.
- *New logo.* In anticipation of selling Alberta House and moving to our new location at 538 Ashmun St, we will be doing business (d/b/a/) as the Sault Area Art Center. As we make this transition we will be using our new logo on all written materials
- *Determine architectural and engineering requirements* for our new space at 538 Ashmun St. The space to be leased at 538 will be in whitebox readiness. Basic electrical wiring/outlets, plumbing, lighting, and HVAC will be completed. SAAC will need to build out the space to meet our specific requirements. We are holding ongoing meetings to outline exactly what construction and furnishings are needed for the gallery (lighting and hanging systems, cubes for 3D objects, chairs and other seating, shop displays, office, computer and printer, desk and cabinets, classroom tables and chairs, studio space, storage and more, including a full kitchen, classrooms, a clay studio, glass making. We are preparing for a Capitol campaign to fund these expenses. We will apply for government grants and appeal for matching donations to cover these costs.

STAFF After relying on volunteer labor for almost 40 years, for the first time we now have two parttime paid staff. *Operations Manager* – A contracted position was created for Robin Sorquist to work up to 20 per week. Her responsibilities include:

Business manager and *social media specialist* Continue contract for Rebecca -up to 12 hours/wk

With the enormous effort put in by Robin and Rebecca we have experienced over 100% growth in our programming, and sales and general revenue since last year.

VOLUNTEERS Twenty five volunteers have given of their time and energy to work in shop, help with gardening, maintenance of interior and exterior of building. We continue to need volunteers to manage the shop. When we are able to increase our volunteer staff, we will increase hours of opening.

FINANCIALS

Business plan is being formulated by the committee after visiting several other art galleries and learning their strategies. Cathie Chenoweth is in process of creating a comprehensive list of revenue streams which include:

Fund raising events: We are considering initiating a \$20,000 prize Raffle and weekly Bingo sessions

Commented [L9]: This information would work well in the *Growing and Changing* section—it could highlight the transition from Alberta House to the new building in the Cultural Circle.

Commented [L10]: This is a really exciting—and important—piece of news about your rebranding. I think it would make sense in the *Where We Are Going* section, and moving it to earlier in the document would also allow you to highlight this change and prevent any confusion for the reader (who may be seeing this logo on the newsletter before they know about the change!).

Commented [L11]: I think that this information would enhance your discussion of the move to the new building and its inclusion in the Cultural Circle—so adding it to the *Where We Are Going* section would make a lot of sense. This would also mean you are introducing the capital campaign much earlier in the document, which is a good thing.

Commented [L12]: The exciting news of moving from all volunteers to having paid staff would fit well in the *Growing and Changing* section.

Commented [L13]: In our discussions, you have mentioned how very important the volunteers are to SAAC (indeed, it wouldn't exist or operate without them). It might make sense to have a separate section about the history and importance of volunteers, or perhaps this information could be right up front in the *Who We Are* section—the volunteers make SAAC what it is, so they are, essentially, who we are—or the *Where We Come From* section where you describe the roots of the organization.

Commented [L14]: I like having these details at the end of the report so that those who are inclined can find them. I suggest titling this section *Managing & Raising Funds*.

Annual appeal letter

Kohl's Volunteer Incentive program. Kohl's offers to pay a nonprofit institution \$25/hr for the time that any of their staff volunteer at that institution. Our volunteer, Kathleen Maine volunteers in the shop one day per week and has brought in X\$ for her time at the Art Center

Bank accounts –SAAC account and Olive M Craig Gallery accounts were merged

Grant and Sponsorships We applied for and received grants from private sponsors and government agencies.

Community Donations

Bay Mills Indian Community \$1500

Cloverland Electric Cooperative \$500

Walmart \$200

Convention Bureau \$250

Government grants

We were awarded two grants from the Michigan Arts and Culture Council (MACC): *ART CAMP 2023* (\$3500) and *Operations Support* (\$5927).

ART CAMP 2023 was held for one week during July at the Cultural Center of the Bay Mills Indian Community. Thirteen children aged 8-13 attended. Children were exposed to seven different art forms including drawing, painting, clay, photography, woodworking, fiber art, and Traditional Native beading. The Camp was an enormous success as evaluated by students, teachers, and families. The project served as a proof of concept for developing future art classes for children at the Art Center. We will be holding twice monthly Saturday art classes for children during the school year.

Operations Support grant, Operational Support is a competitive grant program that provides operational support to arts and cultural organizations only. This grant application, submitted by Scott Laursen, scored 97% and thereby made SAAC eligible to receive \$5927 this year and for the next two years to receive 55% of our rolling average annual unrestricted revenue.

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) awarded us \$10,000 to hold "The Soo Collects: Art for All". Planning for this project which will take place in September 2024 has begun.

Commented [L15]: I understand the inclination to include this here because of the MACC grant, but this is a fabulous way that SAAC is reaching out to the youth and filling a need that exists in the community. I think the majority of this information should therefore be moved to the **Fostering Artists & Teaching Skills** section or combined with the discussion of the Youth Creates exhibit to create a new section—Budding Artists.

Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) awarded our anonymous benefactor, Five Thirty-Eight, LLC, a downtown Revitalization grant of \$1,000,250. Our benefactor will supply matching funds for the rehabilitation of 536-540 Ashmun St, an historic mixed-use building in Downtown Sault Ste Marie. The first floor of this complex is slated to become the Sault Art Center's future home when the project is completed in August 2025.

Veterans Administration granted SAAC \$3970 to cover tuition for any veterans attending any classes

Sponsorships

We sought, and received, \$500 from local businesses to sponsor nine of our 10 monthly Gallery exhibits.

FUTURE PLANS

The excitement is mounting with anticipation of selling Alberta House and moving to what will be known as the Cultural Circle of Sault Ste Marie. We will be next door neighbors to the Soo Theater. 538 Ashmun St is across the street from the River of History Museum and around the corner from the Bayliss Public Library. We are approximately 4 blocks from the soon to be opened Soo Locks Children's Museum. Renovation work is scheduled for completion in August 2025. Finishing work will then have to be done in our space and we expect that to take an additional six months with an anticipated move-in during Spring 2026.

Our immediate plans over this coming year are to organize a capital campaign. We will comprehensively identify our specific building-out needs, obtain cost estimates, create blueprints, drawings and pictures, identify and build a relationship with two or 3 big donors who are willing to provide matching funds, submit relevant grant applications, define a Governance Board, and prepare a Public Statement outlining what services we will provide and how these services will be delivered.

Commented [L16]: This really is so exciting—and such big, big news. While I understand the inclination to include this section at the end of the report (onward and upward!), I think that including these exciting developments at the beginning of the report will compel your reader to keep reading. Buoyed by this exciting news, they'll be more interested to see how this journey has happened and what SAAC has been up to. I suggest including this section after the **Who We Are** and **Where We Come From** sections and calling it **Where We Are Going**.

Dashie, you have done a wonderful job documenting all of the successes that SAAC has experienced this year (and throughout its history, really). As a first-ever annual report, you have a lot to tell your reader. Guiding them through this information in a more story-like format, as I've proposed here and in the Editorial Letter, will help keep them engaged throughout.