



# MACLARENARTCENTRE

Enhanced Engagement:  
Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023





## Foreword

Museums not only reflect the communities they serve, they have the capacity to create community through building a sense of ownership; reflecting local issues and histories; offering relevant, living formats and open representations; and emphasizing visitor experience.

As a public art gallery, we strive to bring people to art and art to people in ways that are engaging, enriching and enjoyable. Our hope is that this new strategic plan will help us to identify, prioritize and design contemporary visual arts experiences that are meaningful, representative and inclusive for new Canadians and culturally diverse audiences and that foster a sense of belonging. We are excited about what our future holds and deeply grateful to all those who helped to shape this vision.

Warm regards,

Carolyn Bell Farrell  
Executive Director  
MacLaren Art Centre



## Our Vision

*As an innovative regional public art gallery, and a cornerstone of Barrie's cultural community, we explore new ways to connect people to art and art to people.*

## Our Mission

*To engage and enrich the immediate and larger community by providing innovative and relevant contemporary visual arts programming at the Gallery, in Barrie and across the County of Simcoe.*

## Our Strategic Directions

- 1** Enhance ways to share our stories
- 2** Enhance our curatorial focus
- 3** Enhance our engagement with new and diverse communities



## Enhanced Engagement

### 1 Enhance ways to share our stories

- Build enhanced relationships and communication with our audiences
- Provide greater physical and intellectual access to the artwork on view by offering audiences a wide range of innovative entryways
- Ensure that the MacLaren is a partner in community planning processes

### 2 Enhance our curatorial focus

- Build the exhibition and collection programmes on the theme of “reading through place”
- Co-create new narratives about this region with our cultural partners
- Explore narratives that represent diverse voices

### 3 Enhance our engagement with new and diverse communities

- Expand partnerships and enhance outreach to engage new and diverse communities in Barrie and the surrounding area
- Develop interested, engaged and return users from diverse community groups and help them feel comfortable at the Gallery
- Enhance the diversity of our board, staff, volunteers and artist instructors

## About the Process

The MacLaren Art Centre is the regional public art gallery serving the residents of Barrie, the County of Simcoe and the surrounding area, engaging over 53,000 people each year in activities at the Gallery, in the schools and in the community. The MacLaren presents a year-round programme of exhibitions, workshops and special events that nurture artistic talent, inspire creativity and stimulate intellectual curiosity. Each year we deliver over 650 arts education activities for audiences of all ages, interests and abilities.

The MacLaren recently completed a strategic plan that focuses on its collection of contemporary Canadian art held in trust for the public. Our top strategic objectives were to enhance the ways we conserve, store, manage, build, animate and document our collection. Now, with many of these goals met, we are moving forward with new strategic directions that will guide our operations and programme activities.

A well-developed strategic plan benefits all those that the MacLaren serves now and in the future; it helps us to further our mission to engage and enrich the immediate and larger community by providing innovative and relevant visual arts programming; to build capacity; and to meet the growing demand for our programmes and services.

With generous support from the County of Simcoe's Arts, Culture and Heritage Grant Program and the Ontario Arts Council's Compass Program, the MacLaren was able to hire cultural consultant Micheline McKay to assist with our new strategic plan (2019 to 2023). McKay possesses tremendous expertise, with clients that include the City of Toronto, Ontario Arts Council, Canada Council and the Ontario Museum Association, where she led the task force to create a ten-year strategic plan for the Ontario museum sector.

In June 2018, McKay led board and staff, artists, service volunteers and community stakeholders through a series of facilitated sessions. Five strategic planning sessions took place on June 7, 8, 21 and 28 at the MacLaren with 36 community members, including board, volunteers, artists, artists and other stakeholders. We also organized an online survey from June 7 to 17, emailed to our 2700 subscribers, with 171 respondents. McKay conducted one-on-one interviews with Barrie Mayor Jeff Lehman, Karen Dubeau, Director of Creative Economy for the City of Barrie, local artist Sean George and MacLaren Youth Council Member Tara Friel.

During these community consultations, we reviewed our mission; our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges; the changing demographics of our community; our current and potential audiences; and ways to measure and evaluate our progress. Responses were very positive and indicated that the MacLaren is viewed as well managed, highly resourceful and responsive. Focus was largely placed on the need for enhanced accessibility, inclusivity and outreach, specifically: increasing physical and intellectual access to the Gallery, to our collection and to our artworks on view; developing a more focused curatorial direction, embracing regional art and issues while exploring new ways to engage local artists; and building new partnerships to extend programming in the community. We look forward to developing these new initiatives, and to sharing our outcomes with our community.







## Survey Responses

*Keep doing what you do so well. A welcoming and informative staff is always an asset.*

*Overall the MacLaren is a great place, but I think there is a lot of potential to reach a wider audience*

*Continue to showcase, support and, encourage regional artists. Continue excellent education programming.*

*Attending the weekly classes gives me something to look forward to every week!*

*A space dedicated to creativity is an essential element in a community's growth and emotional well-being. Thank you!*

*Perfect the way it is.*







# START THINKING ART

Photography: Andre Beneteau

Artist Talk by Elinor Whidden for *Re-enact*, Janice Laking Gallery, July 6, 2017.

*VanGo Gallery Programme* tour, February 2, 2017.

*Storytelling for Families: Myths and Legends of Regional First Nations Communities with Indigenous Storyteller Will Morin*. *Winterfest*, February 7, 2016.

Taking Flight Camp, July 7, 2017.

Curatorial Tour by Rachele Dickenson for *Reading the Talk*, December 3, 2015

Curatorial Talk by Andrea Fatona for *Settling in Place*, July 5, 2018.

*Off The Hook: Silent Art Auction*, November 18, 2016.

*Family Day Workshop*, February 20, 2017.

Exhibition reception for *Settling in Place*, July 5, 2018.

*Kempenfest*, July 30, 2016.

The MacLaren Youth Advisory Council's *Spring Youth Coffee House*, March 30, 2012.

Reading by author Michael Redhill at the 2017 Legacy Dinner, September 21, 2017.



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