

President's Report 2016

2015 was a very good year for the Elizabeth Bishop Society and I am pleased to have been a part of it.

Our major event this past year was our 2015 Arts Festival on Aug. 8th, 2015. I want to say thank you to all the writers, painters, poets, storytellers, musicians and crafters who gathered to share their work and their love of the arts. All of the artists and artisans had some kind of connection with Elizabeth Bishop, but the purpose of the festival was to celebrate the incredible artistic diversity and excellence in Nova Scotia and we certainly did that. The day started with breakfast and comedy and ended with an amazing Suzie Leblanc concert. The festival could not have happened without our many volunteers (many who are here today) who gave of their time and talents whether it was greeting visitors, directing traffic, putting up signs and setting up equipment, helping folks get off and on the horse wagon, hosting musicians who needed a place to stay after the concert. The society is grateful for all the many hands who helped in so many ways.

The festival received financial support from The Charles and Mary MacLennan Foundation, the Municipality of Colchester County, the Nova Scotia Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage, and from a number of private donors. The EBSNS is profoundly grateful for their generosity. These funds were almost exclusively used to support the artists who took part in our Festival.

The EBSNS were also able to support the St James Church Preservation Society by working with them to provide food for the many hungry people that came through the church doors. August the 8th was the "In The Village" Cafe's most profitable day of the summer.

Another pleasant action that happened because of the festival was the twitter and Facebook page that Laura Sharpe was hired to set up and look after. Laura did an excellent job and she was contacted by an artist from Belarus by the name of Natalia Polayaeva who had never encountered the works of Elizabeth Bishop. Natalia started reading the works of EB and has created many delightful illustrations inspired by EB. She gave us the rights to the delightful imagine that is on the magnets that we have for sale.

In the late summer and fall of 2015 the EBSNS board had many meetings to discuss the possibility of taking on the responsibility of ownership of the Elizabeth Bishop House. On the October 29th, we met with a lawyer, Martina Munden and after much discussion it became apparent, that many of our board members were not willing to consider taking on the ownership of the house, even if the purchase cost was covered by way of a charitable donation. The prospect of long term maintenance and ongoing fundraising to cover that maintenance, even with the help of those outside the society, was an overwhelming and daunting prospect and maybe beyond our board's capacity. It was generally agreed that the best approach for the board, the one

that we felt most comfortable with, was lending our support to another owner or group of owners who wanted to make the house available to the public in some manner. It was decided to wait until the November 1st board meeting before making any formal decisions. At the board meeting, a brief follow up discussion occurred about the meeting with lawyer, Martina Munden on Oct. 29th. It was decided to formalize the board's position on the EB House. Bruce Gray moved: "We agree to accept a gift of ownership of the Elizabeth Bishop House and that we accept responsibility for fundraising to pay for the maintenance and expenses related to the ownership of the building." Cathy Mazur seconded it. After asking for further discussion, of which there was none. The vote was taken - if favour- none, and contrary minded- unanimous - and the motion was defeated. This was indeed a very tough decision for everyone.

Thanks to Sandra Barry and Patti Sharpe for scanning all the newsletters from 1994-2015. They are now available on our new and improved website.

Thank you to everyone for your support and understanding as I complete this final term as president of the Elizabeth Society of Nova Scotia. It has indeed been an honour and a privilege. I now hand the presidency over to a very capable person....Patti Sharpe.