

**To:** Tom Thomson Art Gallery Advisory Committee

**From:** Mary Anne Alton, Fundraising Team Chair

**Date:** October 22, 2024

**Re:** Fundraising Team Update

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### **2025 Calendar**

The fifth edition of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery annual fundraising calendar continues to be available at the TOM and at retailers across Grey Bruce Simcoe. As previously noted, \$100,000 has been raised during the 5 year calendar campaign to support the TOM. *Water Spirits*, the theme of the 2025 edition, showcases 13 pieces from the Gallery's permanent collection.

### **A Deadly Pairing**

The Art Gallery partnered with Coffin Ridge for another remarkable evening of wine, food, and live music at the Winery on Friday, September 6. The event included 10 tasting stations from 5pm – 8:30pm that featured wine, cider, and beer paired with chef and sommelier curated food followed by dancing and music with Higher FunKtion as well as a silent auction. In keeping with the theme of Tom Thomson, the Live Auction featured unique Rustic Experiences including escapes to the Bubble Grove Sky Camp, a French River stay, and a Harrison Park Cabin stay.

For this event, the Gallery managed to secure 10 Table Sponsorships and attracted approximately 100 people. The attendance to this event was significantly lower than in the previous year which saw approximately 200

people attend, however there were no Table Sponsors in 2023 which made a big difference in supporting the success of the event this year. The cost of securing vendors for the tent, restrooms, music, and food increased from the year prior, also contributing to a lower revenue generation for this event.

The Fundraising Team met to evaluate the successes and challenges of this event in September and recommended that some changes be explored, including:

- Change of dates from September to May
- More focus on sponsorship at the beginning of the year to offset costs, including securing a lead/presenting sponsor
- Securing required COI and partnership and rental agreements/contracts well in advance of the event

Despite the lower attendance, the overall feedback from attendees was extremely positive. General feedback from those who did not attend was that it fell at a busy time of year when they were away or had too many things going on (following the Labour Day weekend).

### **TOM Trivia Night with Ross**

Staff are rescheduling the Trivia Night to the new year. The Fundraising Team agrees that this event is focused on reaching a younger demographic as opposed to being a revenue generator and therefore felt that we wanted to examine the possibility of hosting it at the TOM and reducing the cost of the tickets to attend in order to better engage that audience. We had originally wanted to include pizza in the ticket price (\$50) but feedback was that some people just want to go for the trivia. Also, we will work with Ross to determine a better date when there are no competing events.

### **Fundraising Challenges 2024**

Recognizing that this year has presented many challenges to the Fundraising Team goals, a special Art Gallery Advisory Committee meeting has been

established for October 30 which will include the Fundraising Team, Mayor and/or Deputy Mayor, and staff, to think strategically and creatively about how to move forward in this challenging economic climate. A verbal report will be provided at the November 7 Advisory Committee meeting by the Director and Chief Curator.

The Art Gallery raises approximately 40-50% of its total budget from grants and fundraising, which is significant. Over \$650,000 is the basic operating cost of the Gallery, including only wages, benefits, and building costs (not including the costs related to programming, exhibitions, or collections management). The Gallery receives an allocation from the City of approximately \$430,000 and the rest is intended to be raised through grants, fees, and fundraising. This is a significant challenge for the staff and small volunteer team dedicated to the TOM. Fundraising is very vulnerable to changes in economic climate and the Fundraising Team believes that we are seeing the effects of the current financial pressure. It is further acknowledged that the Art Gallery staff complement has been reduced by 1.4 positions this year and there is no position dedicated to fundraising or development efforts. This adds to the difficulties in achieving success within the scope of the expectations set out by the current service level.

The Fundraising Team looks forward to the outcomes of the October 30 meeting and working with the Advisory Committee to help mitigate the shortfall in revenue for 2024 and in planning for success in 2025.