From the Desk of Emma Quin

February 14, 2011

To all OCC Members,

Here we are, basically one and a half months into our 35th anniversary year, and already with plenty to share. I'm going to be really honest and upfront again: apparently I can't do short…. You've received some long updates and long surveys over the past few months, but with lots of meaningful information. So, thanks for bearing with me!

First, a huge thank you to all who took the time to complete our 2010 Community Members Survey – we had a participation rate of approximately 14%, which represents 178 responses. I'd like to share the key findings with you:

Overall, members strongly agree with the statement that the Ontario Crafts Council is vital in its role of supporting Ontario's dynamic craft sector. In the concluding *'Any final thoughts?'* section, the responses indicated a strong commitment to and appreciation for the organization while providing thoughtful recommendations with realistic suggestions for improvement – there were very few negative comments.

In comparison to past member surveys, it's safe to say we've made some considerable headway in addressing key issues. Communication with membership ranked fairly poorly in both the 2000 and 2007 surveys, and by comparison it became practically a non-issue in the current survey with only minor mention to aspects of timing. Likewise, in the past there was clear frustration from our regional members about lack of regional programming, and a uniformed criticism that the OCC was Toronto-centric. This complaint still surfaces in the current survey, but is grounded on the recognition that we are trying. There is a strong desire to see regional GOCC programming take place as a permanent part of our annual operations.

The current survey does, however, point to some reoccurring issues:
1) an aging demographic within membership;
2) low annual earning levels – demonstrating that a high majority of our members make an income from their work that is below the poverty rate;
3) a significant need to create new markets and sales opportunities for membership, along with providing key skills for surviving and thriving in a craft business.

The most disappointing statistic is clearly that 55% of the respondents make a living of under $25K; a figure unfortunately shared across the entire arts sector. It is not surprising that there is such an

emphasis on the need for help in making money, selling work, accessing new markets, and for professional development in running a business.

At the same time, it is interesting to note that although this is a resonating theme throughout the survey, responses to the more specific questions indicated that members prioritized the following two points:

1) More exhibition opportunities (within Toronto, The Guild Shop, throughout the regions, and touring provincially, nationally, and internationally).
2) Increased awareness of craft and handmade objects by the public and within the government. The expectation is then that the OCC should work to engage and developing the next generation of consumers, expand CraftTalks lectures to other cities, demonstrate the vitality of craft to society, and produce a report on the contribution of Ontario's craft sector to the province's economy).

One such specific question was *"If our (OCC) financial resources were increased, where would you like to see priority given?"*, and the order was as follows:

1) Public exhibitions
2) Public marketing efforts to enhance the image of craft
3) Professional development
4) More retail opportunities
5) Raising the profile of craft with government agencies

There are a few other questions from the survey that received decisive answers, which were:

1) 88% think we should publish a craft directory and map (if funding permits); and 70% believe such a publication is very important;
2) 86% think we should keep one-time payments for membership instead of offering quarterly or monthly options;
3) 82% ranked our Growing Ontario's Craft Community (GOCC) project as very important; and
4) 58% ranked our involvement in the Cheongju International Craft Biennale as very important.

In analyzing member satisfaction of our current programs and services, they can be ranked in the following order:

1) Craftfl@sh
2) Studio Magazine
3) Call for Entries
4) Exhibitions
5) The Guild Shop
6) Portfolio of Makers
7) Awards & Scholarships
8) CraftTalks Lecture Series
9) Merchant Discounts (Visa, MC, Amex, Interact)
10) CraftSmarts
11) Marketing Your Craft

What is interesting when looking at this ranking is that #10 and #11 are professional development programs – and as mentioned above, professional development is communicated as an overwhelming need. This begs the question "why are these programs not being fully taken advantage of"? Obviously we need to assess the delivery method of this section of our

programming, ensuring it is accessible across the province, that the content is meaningful and intuitive, and that it addresses the diverse needs of our membership. Thanks to the survey results, I see this as a clearly defined goal for the organization to act on.

Of course at the same time, we'll continue in our efforts to organize fantastic exhibitions, develop programming in the regions, and fight to increase our budgets so that we can sustain GOCC programming as part of our regular operations. We'll also continually advocate for *Craft* because we firmly belief that it is an integral component of culture and the Canadian creative economy.

One very important question from the survey was 'how should we celebrate our 35th anniversary?', and by a resounding consensus, you wanted a party! So, we're going to give you one…

The *Maker Shaker*, our annual silent auction fundraiser is moving to a new space, and this year it is going **BIG**. Plans are in the works to make this the most excellent party the OCC has ever hosted, and we need your help to pack the house! Mark your calendars, tell everyone you know, and help make this a party to remember. This is a martini party, so be prepared for some fun… Tickets include refreshments, oysters, food galore, great entertainment and amazing displays - at $25 in advance/$35 at the door it's an absolute steal. Stay tuned for a special block of student priced tickets – just $10… cheaper than a movie and way more fun!

When: Wednesday, May 11, 2011|Doors open at 7:30pm |Auction bidding starts at 8:30pm
Where: Neubacher Shor Contemporary
5 Brock St, Toronto, ON (just behind Stampede Grill)

You can start buying your tickets *now* - for more information, or to get your hands on these hot tickets in advance, please contact either Caitlin Plewes at 416-925-4222 x 222 / cplewes@craft.on.ca, or myself at x 223 / equin@craft.on.ca. We can't wait to see you there!

Finally, if you've not yet seen our newly designed 35th anniversary logo – here it is! (look for it at the top of this communication) Although we tried to run a competition for the design, we decided to pull it in-house after we received very few entries. Our Communications Coordinator, Maxine Bell, with guiding input from Alexander Rosa (thank you!), created a logo about celebration, and recognition of 35 years – we think it's a fabulous reinvention and hope you do too.

Now for some very important member services information. Back in the latter part of 2009 we began to research ways to improve our Association Management Software (how we keep track of you all in the computer), and how we could interface this system with our website to provide greater user/member interaction. So without further ado, I'd like to announce the launch of our online members' login, and improved navigation of our website. On March 1, 2011 I encourage you all to visit www.craft.on.ca and take the newly improved site for a spin – while you're there please take the time to log-in and set up your username and password. What will all this mean to you? You'll be able to securely pay for your membership online, update your profile with us, register and purchase tickets to events and workshops, have access to our programming calendar, and as time progresses you'll be able to access member specific materials (ie. Archived CraftFl@sh newsletters, podcasts, and professional development materials). For more information, or to get assistance with

this process please contact Maxine Bell, Communications Coordinator, (416) 925-4222 ext. 224 / mbell@craft.on.ca.

Now I could run on forever with updates about all aspects of our programming and operations – but I'll keep it at four pages. So my final update will be about our regional programming, and then I'll leave you to visit our website and read CraftFl@sh for all the other tidbits of information.

Growing Ontario's Craft Community (GOCC) has officially launched in Northern Ontario, and in our last C*raft is Happening* email I introduced you to the Northern Team. I'll list them all again once more, this time with their contacts details.

Jonathon Knapp, *Northwestern Regional Coordinator*: 1-855-620-3905 (toll free) or jknapp@craft.on.ca

Jude Ortiz, *Northeastern Regional Coordinator*: (705) 949-2301 ext. 4222 or jude.ortiz@algomau.ca

Stephanie Gardiner, *Community Officer*: (705) 476-2444 or sgardiner@craft.on.ca

Please join us in welcoming them on board! So what's on the horizon in the north? A *Business of the Arts* conference in Thunder Bay on June 17-18, 2011, presented in partnership with the Ontario Crafts Council and the Cultural Career Council of Ontario; the *Masterworks North* exhibition – watch out for the call for entry which will be posted very soon; and community consultations and meet & greet events. Our team is just getting down to business and settling into their roles, but I'm certain if you have ideas, suggestions, or an interest to get involved on the Northern Regional Steering Committee, they'd love to hear from you.

I should also report that we've managed to keep Mary Calarco on a 6 month part-time contract, and have expanded her reach beyond the Southwest to Central Ontario (excluding the GTA – because we've got that bit of the puzzle firmly covered already). Mary will be rolling out a series of professional development workshops throughout this time period, so keep an eye open for what's coming up in your community.

Well as always, it's been a great pleasure to share this information with you. I remain open to your thoughts, comments, and input and you can reach me any time at (416) 925-4222 ext. 223 or equin@craft.on.ca

All the best for 2011!

Kindly,

Emma Quin