



FINAL ADJUDICATION LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AND ARTS CHAMPION AWARDS

JURY REPORT

April 13, 2021

BACKGROUND

This report is an overview of the discussion and decision of the volunteer citizen jury that met on the afternoon of Tuesday April 13, 2021 to determine which of the short-listed 2021 City of Hamilton Arts Awards nominees should be selected to receive awards in Lifetime Achievement and Arts Champion categories. Following a major program review in 2020 which included stakeholder consultation, the existing approach to nomination and adjudication was adjusted to allow for more flexibility in award categories. This creates opportunities for the awards to be more inclusive and responsive to the evolving arts community. An annually rotating jury - comprised of discipline-specific artists, arts professionals and community leaders – are key to the selection of recipients in each category. The Final Jury listed at the end of this report is the first group to participate in this pilot process.

The adjudication session was facilitated by arts service organization Cobalt Connects Creativity and audited by a member of the Arts Advisory Commission to ensure a fair and transparent process. The conflict of interest policy was reviewed, and no conflicts were declared. The adjudication process was outlined, wherein aggregate scores are shared as a jumping off point for discussion and final decisions are made through consensus. The Jury was given the option to request more information should they deem it necessary to make a final decision.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

One (1) Lifetime Achievement Award is conferred annually to recognize living artists or arts managers who have contributed substantially to the artistic vitality of the city over the course of a career, and have inspired others through their leadership, creativity and artistic excellence. These individuals' experience and impact may be local, national or international in scope.

After a lengthy discussion of both shortlisted nominees' careers and impact, the jury decided to confer the 2021 Lifetime Achievement Award to **Tom Wilson**.

JURY COMMENTS

The jury appreciate the nomination of 12 individuals or duos by the public in this category and recognize the work of the Arts Sector Review Panel in developing an extremely strong Short List. They are very pleased with the shortlisted nominees that chose to proceed to this final stage of adjudication and find both nominees to have extremely strong merit in terms of their accomplishments and impact as outlined below.

The jury selected **Tom Wilson** as the 2021 Lifetime Achievement recipient due to his exceptional accomplishments and excellence as both a musician and storyteller. They feel that Tom is genuine and honest in his craft and acknowledge the powerful vulnerability he demonstrates in exploring his Indigenous heritage through his art. His impact is felt to echo both nationally and locally. The jury appreciate Tom's contribution to the local community such as his sponsorship of an Indigenous student scholarship at McMaster University. They believe it is fitting to confer the Lifetime Achievement Award to someone who has deep roots in Hamilton and has demonstrated a lifetime commitment to advocating for local arts and music; Tom Wilson shows Hamilton artists what its possible to achieve.

The Jury would like to make a special mention of **Ronald Weihs and Judith Sandiford**, who were also shortlisted for the Lifetime Achievement Award. In their words, "*If Tom Wilson excels on the stage, Ron and Judith built the stage*". Artword Artbar, their celebrated multi-arts venue off James Street North, made a clear contribution to the vitality of city at a critical moment and was essential to artists of all skill levels having a space to share and grow their practices. The jury would like to acknowledge Ron and Judith's impact on the local community and express appreciation for their deep generosity and support.

ARTS CHAMPION AWARDS

Up to four (4) Arts Champion Awards may be conferred annually to living individuals who are outstanding supporters of the arts in Hamilton as volunteers, advocates, or board members. This is a non-monetary award and recipients will be given a special gift of recognition. This award is open to students and youth over 14 years old.

JURY COMMENTS

The jury reviewed the seven shortlisted nominees' history of work in the community and considered their impact. They agree that each nominee has made significant contributions to their communities and the arts sector and appreciate their exceptional

service. The jury decided to award four 2021 Arts Champion Awards to: **Bradlee Henry, Erica Commisso, Judy Marsales** and **Nancy McKibbin Gray**. Their rationale for selecting these individuals is outlined below.

Bradlee Henry – At 15 years old, the Jury are amazed at the extent of Bradlee’s accomplishments, having volunteered with multiple arts events and organizations and performing as a singer and drummer from the age of five. They feel his commitment to championing Indigenous arts and traditions is remarkable and serves as a beautiful example of leadership for other Indigenous youth and to youth in general. It is important to the jury to fully support Bradlee’s work in his efforts to mitigate harmful narratives about Indigenous peoples. They want to recognize Bradlee as a role model in order to inspire other youth to connect with their creativity and heritage and become more engaged in the arts.

Erica Commisso – The jury are similarly impressed by Erica’s accomplishments at a relatively young age as an enthusiastic advocate of Hamilton indie music artists. They feel that in her volunteer position at McMaster Radio – Erica has gone above and beyond in encouraging interest and excitement for indie music and young local acts - a key part of Hamilton’s music sector. Jurors with experience in college radio note that this work can be gruelling and find it impressive that Erica would put in full-time hours during the day and then attend shows, events and festivals after hours, making videos to help promote the artists. They find her commitment and intentionality in her work admirable and inspiring.

Judy Marsales – The jury unanimously applaud the magnitude of support that Judy has given the arts community over several decades, deeming her “*a true Arts Champion*”. While she is known for her generosity in financially supporting the arts as a business person, for this award the jury recognize her commitment and involvement in a broad range of voluntary activities, including the establishment of a venue for performance. Moreover, they feel that Judy has raised the profile of the arts in Hamilton’s business and political communities and has served as a fierce advocate for Hamilton as a City of Music. Overall, the jury appreciates Judy’s genuine love for the arts that shines through in all that she undertakes.

Nancy McKibbin Grey – The jury celebrate Nancy’s unique dedication to championing the arts from behind the scenes. Nancy’s contributions to the arts across Hamilton have been instrumental in making several vital arts institutions come to life and stick around over time. With regards to her role in the Carnegie Gallery, the jury acknowledge the difficulty of leading an artist-run space and express deep admiration for Nancy’s role in keeping going over decades. They also feel that her support of a wide range of artists practicing in drama, dance, craft, visual art, and literature clearly demonstrated that she is someone who loves the arts in its many forms.

THE JURY

Scott Barnim
Gary Barwin
Pamela Edmonds
Ryan Ferguson
Sara Froese
Heather Kanabe
LTtheMonk
Taien Ng-Chan
Cher Obediah
Bryan Prince
Kirk Starkey
Josh Taylor

Fine Craft
Writing / Music / Public Art
Visual and Media Arts (Curator)
Film / Arts Management
Client-based art / Music / Fine Craft
Theatre / Arts Management
Music
Media Arts / Writing
Film
Lifetime Achievement Recipient / Writing
Music
Dance and Performance, Arts Education

Regrets

Yvonne Felix
Colina Maxwell

Community Art / Public Art
Community Art / Arts Management

Jury Auditor

Monika Ciolek

Arts Advisory Commission

Advisors to the Jury:

Kim Selman, Cobalt Connects (Facilitator)
Ken Coit, City of Hamilton
Jen Anisef, City of Hamilton