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MEDIA RELEASE

CULTURAL AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

The stars shone on stage and off as the City honoured its arts and heritage champions during the Owen Sound Cultural Awards celebration at the Roxy Theatre tonight. Artists and cultural supporters from throughout the Owen Sound area were nominated in ten categories at the third annual awards ceremony.

Visual artist and children's book illustrator Elly MacKay claimed the Emerging Artist Award, which included a \$500 cash prize. Other Creation Award winners included essayist Bob Giuliano, DanceMakers, visual artist Joan Hawksbridge, filmmaker Jesse Gibbons, and the Youth Theatre Coalition.

In the Cultural Pillar Award category, Georgian Bay Symphony archivist Donna Steinacher was recognized with the Patron Award, and the Cultural Heritage Award went to Anishnawbe author, historian and impresario Basil Johnston. As the final presentation of the evening, famed wildlife artist George McLean was honoured with the Lifetime Achievement Award.

Each winner received a handcrafted wooden box, its cover inlaid with a marquetry design called "Georgian Bay Shore", designed by Owen Sound artist Diane Edwards.

The awards celebration included entertainment by the band "1969" playing the music of the Sixties, joined by the Hit the Beat Dancers, 2010 Music Award winner Richard Knechtel, and Owen Sound Poet Laureate Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm.

More information about the Cultural Awards, and the complete list of nominees and award winners, are posted at www.owensound.ca/culturalawards.

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See attached backgrounder with biographical details.

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Cultural Awards web page:
www.owensound.ca/culturalawards

BACKGROUNDER

Biographies – 2011 Owen Sound Cultural Award Winners

CREATION AWARDS

DANCE AWARD - DANCEMAKERS

DanceMakers has been a fixture in Owen Sound for over 16 years. The studio has grown and expanded under the direction of Mijka Hooper. DanceMakers offers ballet, jazz, hip hop and acro to over 225 students. This year 14 of them travelled to Italy to compete in 'Dance Grand Prix Italia'. They earned a First in Contemporary dance, First in Music Choreography, and Third in Ballet.

MUSIC AWARD – THE BEARCATS

The Bearcats are a legendary group in the Owen Sound area and beyond - known not only for their music and musicians, but also for their longevity. They have been together for over 20 years, with three sold out albums and over 2500 performances, including many major festivals around Ontario. In addition they have headlined and produced the annual Peanut Butter Jam, raising over \$10,000 for the Food Bank. Currently the group, led by Kevin Dandeno, includes Dave Fearnall, Dan Jeffares, and Ed Morrow. Past long time members were Rod Ramsay and the late, great "Mr. Blues" - James Wayner - the founder and driving force for many years.

LITERARY AWARD – BOB GIULIANO

Bob Giuliano is a retired United Church of Canada minister who moved to Owen Sound with his wife Betty in 1998. A former professor of Preaching and Pastoral Theology at Huron College in London, Ontario, Mr. Giuliano's career included 14 years of parish ministry as well as extensive experience as a chaplain in hospitals and prisons. Bob is the author of *Elpidio*, published by The Ginger Press, and writes a weekly column for The Sun Times. His voice is that of the people, committed to uplifting the individual and building community. His writing is insightful, well crafted and full of wisdom. By writing of his and others' life's journey, Bob has touched many hearts and minds.

VISUAL ARTS – JOAN HAWKSBRIDGE

Joan Hawksbridge has had a 40 year art practice with solo and group exhibitions in galleries in Canada and Sweden. She has taken part in an artist residency at the Banff Centre for the Arts. Her work is in private collections in Australia, Britain, Canada, Spain, and USA, as well as the permanent collection of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery.

MEDIA ARTS – JESSE GIBBONS

Jesse Gibbons is an award-winning documentary filmmaker, born and raised in Owen Sound, who became interested in film while at West Hill Secondary School and went on to graduate from the New Media program at Ryerson University. One of his recent films, *Gentle Men*, was one of 34 films chosen out of 300 for special recognition at the Columbia Gorge International Film Festival in Washington State. At the Anthem Libertarian Film Festival in Las Vegas, *Gentle Men* won the juried prize for best documentary short. It has also been shown, to great acclaim, at film festivals in Edmonton, Illinois, Berlin, Guelph, New York City and Owen Sound.

THEATRE AWARD – YOUTH THEATRE COALITION

Since 2009, the Youth Theatre Coalition has provided opportunities for local youth to showcase their talents in theatre and musical theatre, on the stage and in all aspects of production. With little assistance from adults, this group of young people, all under the age of 20, has performed a number of memorable productions with outstanding professionalism, including *Another Opening*, *Peter Pan*, and most recently, *Fireworks: a Pop Music Production*, all at The Roxy Theatre. Y.T.C. has also tackled serious drama, with *The Glass Menagerie* as its upcoming production in December.

EMERGING ARTIST AWARD – ELLY MACKAY

Elly Irvine MacKay grew up in Grey County and went on to earn a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Nova Scotia School of Art and Design and the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, and a Bachelor of Education degree from Nipissing University. Back home in Owen Sound, Elly works as an artist-illustrator with exhibits in Canada, Australia and the USA. She promotes and sells her work through the internet, teaches workshops to children, and has many publications to her name, including a KidsCan publication, to be released next Spring. This year, Elly was awarded an Ontario Arts Council exhibition grant.

CULTURAL PILLAR AWARDS

PATRON AWARD – DONNA STEINACHER

Donna Steinacher has spent most of her adult life in Owen Sound as a school teacher, mother and spouse. In the early 1970s, a string ensemble started by Donna as a night school class evolved into the Georgian Bay Community Orchestra, now known as the Georgian Bay Symphony. In its 40th season, the Georgian Bay Symphony is a treasured cultural institution. Donna has been the Symphony's dedicated archivist since its beginning, and continues to play in local music ensembles.

CULTURAL HERITAGE – BASIL JOHNSTON

Basil Johnston's work explores the richness and breadth of Anishnawbe culture. He has received the Order of Ontario; honorary doctorates; an Aboriginal Achievement Award for Heritage and Spirituality; and a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Anshohk Aboriginal Literary Awards. Author of 5 books in Ojibway, 15 in English, he was instrumental in the creation of *"Fulfillment of a Dream: A Festival of Native Arts"* and collaborated with Grey Roots Museum on the exhibition *"The Good People: Know our Stories, Know Us"*.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD – GEORGE MCLEAN

George McLean is one of Canada's greatest artists. For over forty years he has devoted himself to painting the animals and their habitat around his home, here in Grey County. With an exacting eye and amazing technical skill, McLean is equally adept at capturing the natural world as it truly is – whether it be the immense majesty of a black bear and her cubs or the intimate and intricate delicacy of eggs in a wren's nest. His work is currently the subject of a travelling retrospective exhibition that has toured Canada and is opening at the National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson Hole, Wyoming later in November.

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