

TOM THOMSON ART GALLERY

Strategic Plan 2021- 2023



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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



We gratefully acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Anishnabek Nation: The People of the Three Fires known as the Ojibway, Odawa, and Pottawatomie Nations and we further gives thanks to the Chippewas of Saugeen and the Chippewas of Nawash (now known as the Saugeen Ojibway Nation), as traditional keepers of this land.

About Owen Sound

The City of Owen Sound is located on the southern shores of Georgian Bay along the Niagara Escarpment. Owen Sound is renowned for its busy harbour, arts and culture, and unique environmental ecosystem which is home to a wide variety of unique geological characteristics, wildlife, flora, and fauna. Residents and tourists enjoy a variety of recreational activities including festivals, theatre, music, art, hiking, boating, fishing, swimming, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling.

With a residential population of 21,000 and a daytime population of nearly double that, Owen Sound is the largest urban community in Grey and Bruce Counties. Owen Sound is the seat of the County of Grey municipal government and hosts several regional, provincial, and federal government offices. The city also has elementary, secondary, and private schools as well as a Georgian College campus and a regional hospital.

ABOUT THE THE TOM THOMSON ART GALLERY

The Gallery was established in commemoration of iconic Canadian landscape artist Tom Thomson who grew up on the shores of Georgian Bay, in Leith, Ontario, just north of Owen Sound. The Gallery has a nationally significant collection of contemporary and historical art, including important Thomson works and artifacts.

Formerly a church, the basement structure at the present site was purchased by the Grey County Historical and Art Society in 1959. By 1964, the Gallery had collected several works by Thomson and members of the Group of Seven. The City of Owen Sound ratified the construction of the Gallery, as a Centennial project, atop the existing basement structure, opening the new Tom Thomson Memorial Art Gallery in 1967. With inadequate art storage and limited exhibition space, the City supported a second expansion and the Gallery was completely renovated in 1988 to include several exhibition halls, collection storage, and an educational studio.

In 1994, a bequest from a nephew of Tom Thomson, on perpetual loan from the Ontario Heritage Trust, added 11 Tom Thomson works to the Collection. The Thomson Room, a permanent space in the heart of the Gallery, was created to showcase Thomson's work year-round. In 1999 a private donation of 23 Group of Seven works was added to our holdings, including a version of Harris' Pic Island.

Building on a tradition of work which explores the concept of landscape, the Gallery developed an important collection of contemporary Canadian photography, paintings, and sculpture including seminal works by Carl Beam, Ed Burtynsky, Aganetha Dyck, Geoffrey James, Greg Staats, Diana Thorneycroft, Tim Whiten and others.

In 2004, a gift of 15 paintings and 44 prints from painter John Hartman designated the Gallery as an important repository for his work. In 2008 "Cities: John Hartman" was a major exhibition developed by the Gallery and won three OAAG awards. Other major accomplishments include the 2010 "George McLean: The Living Landscape" retrospective exhibition that toured in Canada and the United States.

The Gallery continues to explore new ideas inspired by the Canadian landscape, curating artists that push conceptual or material boundaries, reflecting dynamic advancements in contemporary art.

CURATORIAL VISION



Committed to the representation of Canadian artists at all stages of their careers, we will present exhibitions and projects that address current issues and topics through a range of media. Our curatorial program will reflect a balance of traditional and challenging topics, drawing inspiration from the community in which we serve as well as from the emergence of critical topics. We will actively pursue the priority directions of the City of Owen Sound, federal and provincial funders, our organizational strategic plan, and relevant stakeholders, to meet a range of needs and focuses.

Our goal is to make the Tom Thomson Art Gallery a dynamic centre for attracting diverse visitors and participants, creating cultural dialogue, and fostering the exchange of ideas through the interpretation of the work of Tom Thomson and his contemporaries and by presenting art which addresses the most pressing issues of our time. Our plan is to do this by presenting artistic practices in a variety of media and formats including formal exhibitions, events, activations, off-site projects, short term residencies, and time-based presentations, including film screenings and discussions.

We will seek to balance a roster of exhibitions and projects in four key areas which are:

- (1) Contemporary art: working with established and mid-career artists with an ongoing commitment to emerging artists; and focusing on exhibitions that offer ideas and reflections on important issues such as environment, culture, identity, social justice, community, and accessibility.
- (2) Tom Thomson and the Permanent Collection: present new research and curate dynamic presentations of artworks held within the Collection; provide expanded access to the Collection through a regular series of exhibitions, projects, and talks; and develop an overall commitment to interpreting, exploring, and expanding this Gallery cornerstone.
- (3) Community: committed to curating exhibitions and projects by regional artists and groups; caring for existing relationships and striving to establish new ones within the community in order to offer spaces for new voices; and working across disciplines to bring key issues to the foreground in accessible ways.
- (4) Diversity and Reconciliation: working with artists of diverse representation including Indigenous artists to provide spaces for increased awareness of cultural histories, methodologies, and practices; and developing meaningful relationships to expand our understanding of complex histories and contexts.



THE PROCESS

Creating a strategic plan starts with the desire to do things well, to create a road map that effectively aligns effort and resources in a way that supports the Gallery to be the best that it can be.

The strategic planning process builds on a clear understanding of the current state to chart the desired future course. This strategic plan will guide the Gallery in how it operates and delivers its exhibitions and programs over the next two years.

We have selected a short two year time-frame for this plan, acknowledging that we are navigating unprecedented circumstances with respect to the global pandemic. This plan focuses on achieving our Curatorial Vision by addressing our immediate needs outlined in the SWOT analysis and through growing within our identified strengths, and committing to our defined values and priorities in every aspect of our operation and delivery.

Resources

This plan was developed by staff in consultation with the Tom Thomson Art Gallery Advisory Committee with reference to the Curatorial Vision and the following funder documents:

City of Owen Sound Strategic Plan
Ontario Arts Council Strategic Plan
Canada Council for the Arts Strategic Plan

VISION

To be an open landscape for exploring art.

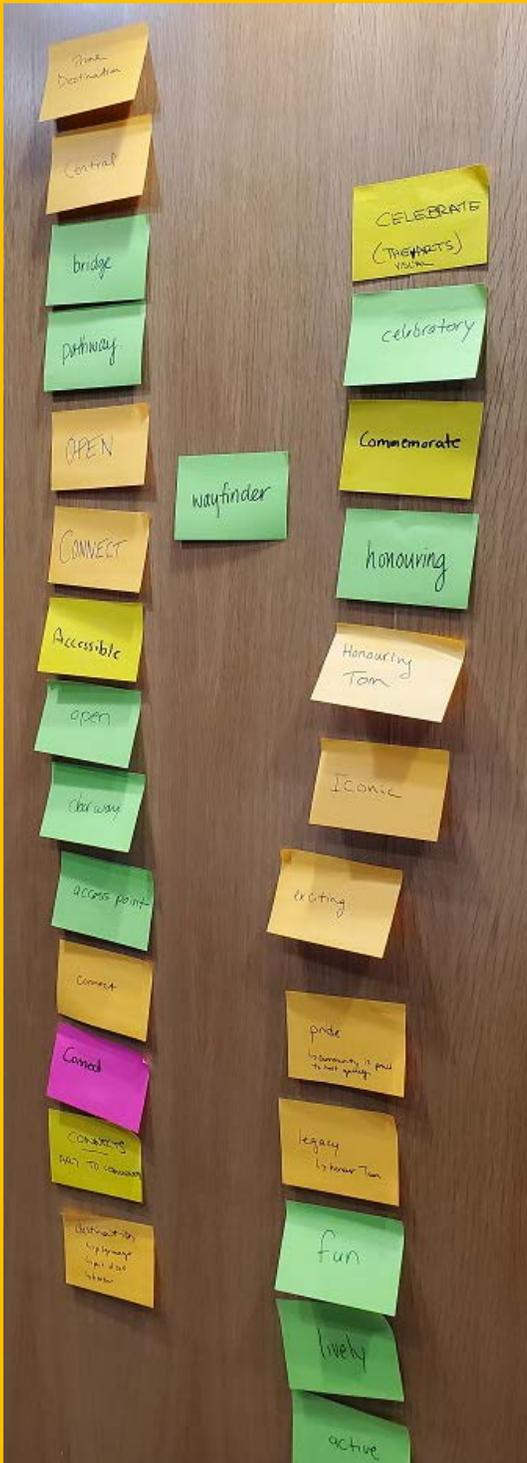
Mission

The Tom Thomson Art Gallery develops exhibitions and programs that enrich the region and contribute to national visual arts discourse. We promote and support emerging and professional artists, advocate for the creative sector, and actively research, preserve, develop, and exhibit the collection to promote scholarship and to generate and explore new ideas. We are committed to welcoming and inspiring people of all representations, ages, backgrounds, and abilities.

MANDATE

Tom Thomson Art Gallery is a public art gallery operating within the municipality of the City of Owen Sound with an Advisory Committee comprised of members of the public and City Council dedicated solely to supporting the programming and operation of the Art Gallery. The Gallery is funded by the City of Owen Sound and by provincial and federal Arts Councils through operating grants. Named in commemoration of iconic Canadian landscape artist Tom Thomson whose work and legacy inspired the founding of the organization, the Gallery presents exhibitions and programs, and conserves a nationally significant collection of contemporary and historical art for the public.

VALUES



Caring

We care about the communities that we serve and we are committed to being an open, inclusive, accessible, and safe space. Our exhibitions and programs offer important creative modalities of expression, healing, and dialogue.

Creativity

We support artistic exploration and we are responsive to important social topics. We are passionate about art and the process of creating. We engage in innovation at all levels of our organization.

Integrity

We are committed to responsible, accountable, leadership that is built on respect, trust, and sustainability. All of our decisions are educated and consciousness.

Collaboration

We build capacity, resiliency, and growth through strong partnerships and by working openly and collaboratively with others.

PRIORITIES



- **Truth and Reconciliation**
- **Contemporary Social Justice Topics**
- **Regional Artists**
- **Emerging Artists and Arts Professionals**
- **Environment**
- **COVID-19**

CITY OF OWEN SOUND

THE FOUR PILLARS: SOCIETY & CULTURE

The City of Owen Sound Strategic Plan defines four pillars: Economy, Environment, Finance, and Society & Culture. The Tom Thomson Art Gallery falls under the Society & Culture Pillar: *We will continue the conservation and promotion of our heritage and will uphold Owen Sound's reputation as one of Canada's best places for arts and cultural activities. We will encourage lifelong learning opportunities and ensure a safe community that is welcoming, inclusive, and age-friendly. And we will strive to foster pride of place for residents promoting the City as a great place to live – attracting people, tourists, and entrepreneurs along the way.*

The Tom Thomson Art Gallery is a key cultural asset for the City of Owen Sound. Tom Thomson (1877-1917) is considered one of the most important and influential Canadian artists. Together with members of the Group of Seven, he created a distinct approach to portraying rugged Canadian landscapes. Thomson, grew up and is buried in the Owen Sound area (Leith). This important legacy is represented and continuously explored by the art gallery, named in his honour.

In the spirit of Thomson's passion for the exploration of new artistic expression, the Gallery curates exhibitions and programs that both inspire and challenge. The Gallery supports the City's Strategic Pillar through upholding a national and international reputation for artistic activities as well as through the development and implementation of programs and practices that are fundamentally inclusive.



IN CONCLUSION

We are committed to being accountable to the communities we serve. The responsibility of the Strategic Plan is shared between the staff and the Tom Thomson Advisory Committee.

Implementing the Strategic Plan involves the systemic coordination and alignment of resources and activities grounded in the Vision, Mission, Mandate, Values, and Priorities.

Staff will report on the progress to the Advisory Committee throughout the duration of this plan at each meeting. Ultimately, the success of this Strategic Plan will be measured through its ability to fulfill the Vision, demonstrate our Values, and address our Priorities.

CONTACT

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