

In recognition of Dawson City Arts Society 20th anniversary

Hon. Mr. Silver: I rise today on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly to pay tribute to the 20th anniversary of the Dawson City Arts Society. Twenty years ago, born out of an impromptu chat between neighbours John Steins and Greg Hakonson, a group of Dawson artists united to fulfill a need in their community for an organization to promote and facilitate arts education, creation and exhibition.

Banding together as the Dawson City Arts Society — DCAS — the group wasted no time establishing a multidisciplinary Klondike Institute of Art and Culture, taking possession of the historic Odd Fellows Hall as the headquarters and creative space.

In pursuit of their stated aim to act as a catalyst for the instruction, promotion and celebration of art in all of its forms, DCAS's efforts have resulted in the foundation of the ODD Gallery, the Macaulay House artist's residence, as well as the Arts for Employment and the Youth Art Enrichment programs. Together with Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in and Yukon College, they also provide oversight for the Yukon School of Visual Arts — SOVA — the first accredited institution for fine arts north of 60.

For more than 10 years, SOVA has brought students from across the country and the world to learn and to be inspired by our landscape, culture, history and people. Working within a small and collaborative environment, students receive a broad and challenging art education, with opportunities to pursue an art career through other studies.

There are also many events that have been inspired by DCAS's vision of year-round programming in Dawson for performing, literary, media and visual arts. These include the Dawson City International Short Film Festival, the Yukon Riverside Arts Festival, the Print & Publishing Festival and numerous gallery exhibitions, readings, film screenings and workshops.

Beginning this year, Mr. Speaker, as DCAS turns 20, and continuing into 2020 when KIAC celebrates its 20th year, both organizations have lined up a series of exciting and innovative events and exhibitions for the 2020 celebration and fundraising campaign. It all kicked off with a concert to reopen the Palace Grand Theatre, followed by the SOVA alumni show and performances by The Sadies at this summer's Riverside Arts Festival.

Further events we can look forward to include live script reading, a children's art day and a dance marathon, all capped off with a revival of the event that kicked it all off back in the year 2000 with the New Year's Eve's Odd Ball. Beyond DCAS's recognition for the important role that arts play in capturing the spirit, history and evolution of the Yukon, DCAS also understands the contributions that art makes to the social, cultural and economic fabric of our territory and how it enhances the overall quality of life.

This is evident in the commitment to events and programs and the extensive and devoted volunteer base the organization inspires. DCAS also continues to seek out and create opportunities to strengthen and grow the arts-based component to Yukon's economy and shift modes of thinking in this regard, creating a new economic engine, as its founders put it.

It cannot be overstated just how important DCAS's work has been in the development of Yukon art and culture and the delivery of arts education. In the 20 years since its inception, with a proven track record of community engagement, accomplished alumni and an established suite of year-round arts programming, the Dawson City Arts Society is without question an institution of both territorial and national significance. DCAS continues to build on its impressive legacy of dedication to the growth and development of the arts and cultural community.

The Government of Yukon is proud to support and stand alongside all board members, artists, curators, organizations, volunteers and community partners who provide continued assistance to DCAS as they build capacity in our communities and develop creative opportunities that enrich the lives of all Yukoners. From the beginning, DCAS has been collaborative in spirit and function — a team effort through and through.

Before I conclude my remarks, I would be remiss if I didn't pause to recognize the contributions of one member of the team in particular — long-time DCAS and KIAC champion Karen DuBois, who will be retiring as the executive director as of December. Ms. DuBois has served in this role since 2008 and in that time has been a true architect of the vision and direction of this exemplary organization and its offering.

Thank you, Karen, for your invaluable contributions to arts in Yukon. We wish you well in your future endeavours. Thank you to everyone who is involved in DCAS. We wish you another 20 years of continued art success, creation success and exhibition success.

Applause