

12 Maple Ave., Sussex, NB | axartscentre.ca

2024-2025

Ax

ARTS & CULTURE
CENTRE of SUSSEX

Annual Report



ARTS & CULTURE
CENTRE of SUSSEX

Where art and culture
come to life.

OUR MISSION

Present artists and promote arts and culture to enhance creativity and the quality of life in the Sussex region.

OUR VISION

To be the creative hub for arts and culture in the region, and a catalyst for community sustainability, vibrancy, prosperity and inclusivity.

2024-25 HIGHLIGHTS

- First year for our Gifted Holiday Showcase
- Increased community engagement
- Paid out more than \$50,000 to artists





aboutax

ABOUT AX

AX, the Arts and Culture Centre of Sussex, is a charitable organization and vibrant creative hub that serves a population of over 50,000 people within a 100-kilometre radius. Conveniently located between Saint John, Fredericton, and Moncton, AX offers a welcoming space for artists, businesses, and community groups. In a typical year, we welcome approximately 25,000 visitors through our doors.

Housed in a historic, town-owned building in Sussex, AX rents portions of the facility to help offset operating costs. As part of our mission to promote arts and culture in the region, we deliver a wide range of multidisciplinary programming—including visual arts, fine craft, literary readings, workshops, and live music performances. We are proud to feature a professional gallery space, a fully equipped ceramics centre, and we present an average of 70 events annually.

AX is dedicated to fostering opportunities for artists throughout New Brunswick. We regularly issue open calls for proposals across our exhibition, literary, music, and workshop programs, ensuring a balanced representation of both emerging and established artists. All program submissions are reviewed through a transparent jury process, involving independent, confidential panels of volunteers and professional artists.

Permanent staff members include Melanie Mitton, the Executive and Artistic Director, Emily Rioux, our Programming and Marketing Coordinator, and Joëlle Martin, our Boutique Manager. Our work is further strengthened by an engaged Board of Directors, over 50 dedicated volunteers, and seasonal staff, including part-time team member Megan Pearson, and students Kayla Collins and Meren Keith during the 2024/25 year.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Mark Webster

The fiscal year ending October 31st, 2025 continued on the course set in 2024, of strengthening and formalizing our policy and procedure guidelines. It was an area that needed to be addressed, and thanks to the input and leadership from many on the Board, we are now in a much better “place” in those areas.

After rationalizing our staffing levels in 2024, and returning to a “leaner but meaner” group of three, the office efficiency, program management and community engagement have witnessed a positive change of direction, and strong momentum throughout 2025.

The Arts will always be a challenging environment, but despite this, the AX staff have delivered very stellar results. Melanie Mitton (Executive and Artistic Director), Emily Rioux (Programming and Marketing Coordinator) and Joelle Martin (Boutique Manager) exemplified exceptional commitment and professionalism in growing the AX footprint in the Sussex area. Diverse and well-received programming, a strong marketing presence and ongoing community engagement have been the hallmarks of 2025.

Operational funding continues to be the biggest challenge, and THE biggest, unrelenting risk for arts organizations in the province. Reliance on provincial/federal funds, though crucial in the short term, is not the long term “crutch” we should rely on for the future.

Thus, our focus must continue to be on generating “recurring revenue”, including repeatable fundraising events that raise both revenue and public profile.

The AX Boutique is a shining example of how to create both recurring revenue and community profile. It has grown, in a very short time frame, to a “destination” asset for the organization.

To our Board members, a HUGE thank you for your guidance and support during a pivotal time in AX’s development. There is a palpable sense of growth and momentum that we must continue to push forward. I’m confident your leadership and commitment to AX will allow us to grow and succeed beyond current levels.

Finally, to the members and donors...we are so appreciative of your support, whether monetarily or through volunteer labour. Simply put, we could not exist without you. The challenges facing the arts are clear and constant, but we are truly excited and thankful for your continued support in moving AX forward and helping grow the membership and volunteer base.

Mark Webster
President, AX Board of Directors

EXECUTIVE AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Melanie Mitton



This past year has been one of growth, creativity, and strong community engagement for AX. Thanks to the dedication of our staff, volunteers, board members, artists, and supporters, we continued to expand opportunities for people in our region to experience and participate in the arts.

One highlight of the year was the launch of our first Gifted Holiday Showcase, which brought together a wonderful selection of New Brunswick artists and makers. The event created an exciting opportunity for community members to purchase locally made work while celebrating the creativity of our region during the holiday season. We look forward to building on its success in the years to come.

Throughout the year, AX also offered a full schedule of workshops that were both well attended and enthusiastically received. These programs provided valuable opportunities for participants of all ages and skill levels to learn new techniques, connect with artists, and explore their own creativity in a welcoming environment.

Our annual KickAX fundraiser, held at Cornhill Nursery, was another memorable moment. Surrounded by the beautiful gardens and with the support of many generous donors and attendees, the event raised important funds that help sustain AX's programming and operations. We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed to making the evening such a success.

This year we were also pleased to work in partnership with the Town of Sussex on a mural project that brought new public art to the community. Initiatives like this demonstrate the power of collaboration and the important role that artists play in shaping vibrant, welcoming public spaces.

None of this work would be possible without the people who support AX. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to our board of directors for their guidance and commitment, to our dedicated volunteers who generously share their time and energy, and to our hardworking staff whose passion and creativity sustain everything we do. Emily, Joëlle, Megan—you are all uniquely talented and essential to our team and I am thankful every day that I get to do this work with such wonderful people.

At a time when arts funding is being dangerously reduced in many places, the work of organizations like AX is more important than ever. The arts are not a luxury—they are essential to the wellbeing of our communities. Creative expression provides joy, connection, and meaningful outlets for people's mental health and happiness. Through exhibitions, literary readings, workshops, performances, and public art, AX exists to ensure that arts and cultural experiences remain accessible to people throughout our region.

Thank you to everyone who continues to support AX and believe in the value of the arts. Together, we are helping to build a more vibrant and creative community.

Melanie Mitton
Executive and Artistic Director, AX



axprograms

axexhibitions

Each year, AX presents six to eight professionally curated exhibitions, showcasing the work of established artists from New Brunswick and beyond. Our exhibition programming is guided by a dedicated volunteer committee composed of professional artists, who carefully review submissions through a juried selection process to ensure a high standard of artistic excellence and diversity.

We also collaborate with esteemed institutions, such as the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, to bring touring exhibitions to our community—broadening both our reach and impact. When resources allow, we engage guest curators to develop themed group exhibitions that add new perspectives and creative depth to our gallery offerings.

In the 2024–2025 season, our gallery featured a wide range of unique and engaging exhibitions that highlighted ceramics, printmaking, textiles, basketry, and beadwork. In total, we proudly showcased the work of 75 professional artists from across Canada, providing them with meaningful exposure while offering our visitors dynamic and inspiring visual arts experiences.

November 2024 – January 2025

Gifted: Holiday Showcase

For the holiday season the AX Boutique expanded into the gallery to bring you Gifted, a curated holiday collection of handmade art and fine crafts by over 60 artists from across New Brunswick. The year's lineup included new makers, returning favourites, and artists from our year-round AX Boutique.

From November through January, the community was invited to explore the inspiring array of unique, locally made pieces perfect for gifting and collecting. Featuring jewellery, pottery, textiles, visual art, glasswork, and more, Gifted offered something for everyone while celebrating the creativity of New Brunswick makers.

February – April 2025

Creation in the Dawnland

Creation in the Dawnland was an inspiring group exhibition showcasing the work of four talented Wabanaki artists: Mel Beaulieu, Nancy Oakley, Jolene Robichaud, and Natasha Sacobie.

This exhibition celebrated the creative brilliance of these artists who draw from the rich traditions of Wabanaki cultural practices, blending them with contemporary techniques to craft works that are both rooted in heritage and innovatively modern. Each piece invited viewers to explore the evolving narratives of Wabanaki identity, resilience, and artistry, demonstrating how traditional methods and materials can be reimagined to speak to today's world.

Through their art, these four creators honour the legacies of their ancestors while offering fresh perspectives that inspire new connections between past and present.

May 2025

Student Art Show

In the spring of 2025, AX was thrilled to showcase the creativity and talent of young artists in our Student Art Show. Featuring a diverse collection of works from students at Sussex Regional High School, Kennebecasis Valley High School, and Belleisle Regional High School, the show highlighted the passion, skill, and artistic expression of the next generation.

June – July 2025

Mary Pratt: Works on Paper from the Beaverbrook Art Gallery

This exhibition featured a selection of recently-gifted artworks to the Beaverbrook Art Gallery from the Pratt family; some having never before been publicly exhibited. Though most famous for her oil paintings Mary also worked at length with a myriad of media on paper: lithographs, silkscreen, woodblock prints, watercolours, pencil and ink drawings, among others.

The pieces showcased in this exhibition highlighted Mary Pratt's characteristic attention to detail and laser-like focus on the beauty and complexity found in the domestic. Each piece invited viewers to gain a further understanding of Pratt's unique world view and the breadth of her technique.

August 2025

gina'mating: Time Of Learning: An Indigenous Youth Beading Exhibition

This exhibition was the culmination of a six-month intensive beading program led by Melcolm Beaulieu at The Collective in Fredericton.

At the heart of this collection of work is the profound theme of kinship. In gina'mating, our time of learning, everyone has valuable experience and knowledge to contribute to the whole. Each artist found themselves drawn to honour kinship—through familial ties and intergenerational bonds, through kinship with the land as a living relative, and our shared responsibilities as global relatives.

This exhibition was a testament to cultural resilience, community, and the enduring power of traditional arts in contemporary Indigenous life as a means of connection.

August – October 2025

Earth and Fire: Smoke-Fired Works by Judy Blake

This exhibition featured a selection of recently crafted Saggar-fired vessels by New Brunswick ceramist Judy Blake. Saggar-firing is a type of smoke-firing in which each pot is enclosed and fired in a lidded container. The resulting surface of each piece is uniquely marked by organic variations in colour, pattern, and texture.



Gifted

Gifted.

Earth and Fire



gina'mating



Student Art Show



Creation in the Dawnland



Mary Pratt: Works on Paper



Earth and Fire





Fawn Parker

axliterary

AX presents a vibrant literary reading series shaped in collaboration with our dedicated literary committee. As part of our commitment to promoting literary arts, we also partner with the Frye Festival and the University of New Brunswick's Writer-in-Residence program to host free public author readings and community outreach events. These partnerships help us bring celebrated writers to Sussex and make literary experiences accessible to a wide audience.

Events

February 2025 – Brent Mason

April 2025 – UNB Writer in Residence: Donna Morrissey;
Frye Festival: Catherine Bush

May 2025 – Fawn Parker

June 2025 – Mila Maxwell Meet and Greet

July 2025 – Beth Powning

August 2025 – Danny Jacobs

October 2025 – Poets in Conversation Featuring Geoff Cook, Jim Johnstone and Shane Neilson

Monthly – AX Writing Group Meetings

Brent
Mason





Kylie Fox

The AX Music Series presents several shows a year which offer an intimate musical experience. We aim for a mix of talent, from blues to classical artists, and we also bring unique acts to Sussex that residents in our region would not normally get a chance to see live in our community.

Events

February 2025 – Elm City String Quartet;
Symphony NB

March 2025 – Kylie Fox

June 2025 – KickAX: Featuring performances
from Mudgie and the Sociables, James
Mullinger and The Olympic Symphonium



Elm City String Quartet



The Olympic Symphonium

axworkshops

AX offers a wide range of workshops designed to engage participants of all ages and experience levels in the visual arts and fine craft. Our workshops span multiple disciplines and are led by skilled instructors who create welcoming, hands-on learning environments.

In the 2024–2025 fiscal year, we hosted a total of 38 workshops—21 geared specifically toward children and teens, and 17 designed for adults. From introductory classes to skill-building sessions in ceramics, painting, jewellery, and more, our workshop program continues to foster creativity, learning, and community connection

Events

December 2024

Deck the Halls with Creativity: Ceramic Ornaments with Ed Tribe

Holiday Card Stamping with Ed Tribe

Dipped Holiday Treats with Emily Rioux

February 2025

Galentine's Day Bracelet Workshop with Emily Rioux

March 2025

Band Ring Workshop with Emily Rioux

March Break Workshops for Kids

Mug Night with Jen Pilon

Berry Bowls with Jen Pilon



April 2025

Wearable Mosaics with Carole Lulham

Lidded Jars with Jen Pilon

May 2025

Mug Night with Jen Pilon

Flower Stamped Necklaces with Emily Rioux

Band Rings with Emily Rioux

June

Intro to Ceramics Five-week Course with Michael Wood

June-August 2025

Summer Workshops for kids

September 2025

Watercolour Paint & Sip with Kayla Collins

October 2025

Foraged Fibre Basketry with Ralph Simpson

Fall Ceramics Mini Series with Jen Pilon

Acrylic Landscapes with Emily Knowles





AX Boutique

In 2024, the AX Boutique continued to grow as an important extension of the gallery's programming, supporting New Brunswick artists while contributing to the organization's sustainability. Curated by Joëlle Martin, the boutique features a carefully selected range of work by local artists and craftspeople, offering visitors a unique and locally rooted shopping experience.

A major highlight this year was the launch of Gifted, our first holiday boutique expansion, which ran from November 21, 2024 to January 25, 2025. Developed within a short timeline and without a prior model, Gifted expanded the boutique into the gallery space and increased artist participation from 21 to 58. The showcase featured a diverse group of New Brunswick artists, both anglophone and francophone, and demonstrated strong community engagement.

Throughout the year, the boutique continued to connect artists with new audiences while informing a more strategic approach to curation based on customer response and sales patterns.

Looking ahead, the focus will be on refining the boutique's selection by working closely with artists whose work resonates strongly with our community, and supporting the development of pieces that align with local demand. Building on the success of Gifted, the AX Boutique will continue to evolve as both a creative and economic asset for the organization.



Ceramics

AX welcomed ceramic artists Jen Pilon and Michael Wood as our artists-in-residence during the spring and summer. The residencies provided dedicated studio time in our fully equipped ceramics centre, while also allowing the artists to engage with the community through workshops and open studio events. Their presence enriched the creative atmosphere at AX and offered valuable opportunities for local artists and visitors to learn from their expertise.



Public Outreach

At AX, we are deeply committed to community engagement and making the arts accessible to everyone. We strive to offer free artmaking opportunities and events whenever possible, often in collaboration with other local nonprofits and provincial arts organizations. These initiatives allow us to break down barriers to participation and foster a stronger, more inclusive cultural community.

Fundraising and Special Events

AX successfully secured a number of annual program grants in 2024–2025 that helped support a wide range of activities. We received funding from the Province of New Brunswick’s Department of Tourism, Heritage and Culture, the Canada Council for the Arts, and Canadian Heritage. These grants played a vital role in sustaining our ceramics, literary, music, and exhibition programming—allowing us to fairly compensate participating artists and maintain a high standard of artistic excellence.

We also accessed wage subsidies and employment grants at various levels of government, which enabled us to hire temporary staff throughout the year. These positions were essential in helping us manage programs as well as administrative and maintenance tasks during AX’s busiest seasons.

In addition to grant funding, we were excited to bring back our major annual fundraiser, the Kick AX Concert. This year’s event was held at the beautiful Cornhill Nursery and was a great success. We also continued our beloved holiday fundraiser, 10,000 Lights at AX, inviting the community to help us light up the trees outside AX throughout November and December. Thanks to the generosity and support of our community, we were able to raise essential funds while creating a magical seasonal display for all to enjoy.





Financials

Finance Committee volunteer Chair: Delanie Pearson

AX is a charitable organization deeply committed to supporting professional artists by offering meaningful programming and ensuring fair compensation for their work. While we do charge fees for certain offerings such as workshops and concerts, the majority of our programming—including exhibitions, literary readings, and community outreach events—is provided free of charge to make arts and culture accessible to all.

To sustain this model, AX actively seeks funding from a diverse range of public and private sources. We take an entrepreneurial and strategic approach to fundraising, and have successfully secured numerous grants to support our visual arts, music, literary, and ceramics programming. These funds are essential in helping us deliver high-quality, inclusive cultural experiences to the greater Sussex region.

However, like many arts and culture organizations across New Brunswick, we continue to face challenges in securing stable, long-term operational funding. While project-specific grants enable us to deliver outstanding programming, consistent support for core staff and essential infrastructure remains a pressing need. AX continues to advocate for more sustainable funding solutions that will ensure the continued growth and impact of our centre in the years to come.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Board of Directors of
Arts And Culture Centre Of Sussex Inc.

Qualified Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Arts and Culture Centre of Sussex Inc., which comprise the statement of financial position as at October 31, 2025, and the statements of revenues and expenditures, changes in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In our opinion, except for the effects of the matter described in the Basis for Qualified Opinion section of our report, the accompanying financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the organization as at October 31, 2025, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations (ASNPO).

Basis for Qualified Opinion

In common with many not-for-profit organizations, the organization derives revenue from fundraising activities the completeness of which is not susceptible to satisfactory audit verification. Accordingly, verification of these revenues was limited to the amounts recorded in the records of the organization. Therefore, we were not able to determine whether any adjustments might be necessary to fundraising revenue, excess of revenues over expenses, and cash flows from operations.

We conducted our audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are independent of the organization in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in Canada, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our qualified opinion.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT, continued

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with ASNPO, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the organization's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the organization or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the organization's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements. As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, we exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- ♦ Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- ♦ Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the organization's internal control.
- ♦ Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- ♦ Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the organization's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the organization to cease to continue as a going concern.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT, continued

- ♦ Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

Woodstock, New Brunswick

January 15, 2026

Lenahan McCain + Associates

Chartered Professional Accountants

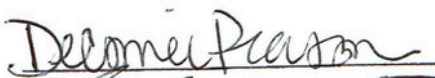
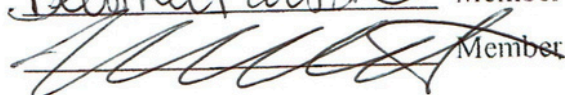
ARTS AND CULTURE CENTRE OF SUSSEX INC.
SCHEDULE 1 - STATEMENT OF REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES BY FUND
YEAR ENDED OCTOBER 31, 2025

	General Fund	Capital Fund	Endowment Fund	2025	2024
Revenues					
Grants	139,297	-	-	139,297	251,226
Boutique revenue	49,509	-	-	49,509	24,155
Fundraising	14,055	-	-	14,055	24,143
Rental income	22,508	-	-	22,508	22,350
Donations	22,670	2,889	-	25,559	19,257
Events	1,095	-	-	1,095	9,512
Interest	7,207	-	-	7,207	8,468
Workshops	17,531	-	-	17,531	6,031
Memberships	1,998	-	-	1,998	720
Other revenues	13,146	-	-	13,146	124
	<u>289,016</u>	<u>2,889</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>291,905</u>	<u>365,986</u>
Expenditures					
Wages and benefits	184,360	-	-	184,360	295,773
Artist commissions and honoraria	45,189	-	-	45,189	41,290
Rental	36,000	-	-	36,000	28,800
Exhibits, workshops and fundraising	14,595	-	-	14,595	26,804
Professional fees	6,670	-	-	6,670	6,038
Depreciation of tangible capital assets	-	4,091	-	4,091	4,207
Insurance	3,754	-	-	3,754	3,472
Travel	2,005	-	-	2,005	3,450
Interest and bank charges	1,417	-	-	1,417	1,589
Telephone	1,283	-	-	1,283	1,976
Business taxes, licences and memberships	1,018	-	-	1,018	1,908
Repairs and maintenance	728	-	-	728	2,521
Office	672	-	-	672	9,869
Utilities	348	-	-	348	463
Marketing	337	-	-	337	615
Board expenses	107	-	-	107	191
Donations	-	-	-	-	450
	<u>298,483</u>	<u>4,091</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>302,574</u>	<u>429,416</u>
Excess (deficiency) of revenues over expenditures	<u>(9,467)</u>	<u>(1,202)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(10,669)</u>	<u>(63,430)</u>

ARTS AND CULTURE CENTRE OF SUSSEX INC.
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
AS AT OCTOBER 31, 2025

	2025	2024
<u>ASSETS</u>		
Current assets		
Cash and short-term investments (Note 3)	\$ 101,449	\$ 131,891
Accounts receivable (Note 4)	6,189	-
Prepaid expenses	2,655	2,655
HST receivable	1,751	1,689
	112,044	136,235
Tangible capital assets (Note 5)	4,190	8,281
	\$ 116,234	\$ 144,516
<u>LIABILITIES</u>		
Current liabilities		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities (Note 7)	\$ 11,582	\$ 8,281
Deferred revenue (Note 8)	12,798	33,712
	24,380	41,993
<u>NET ASSETS</u>		
General Fund	92,236	101,703
Capital Fund	(382)	820
	91,854	102,523
	\$ 116,234	\$ 144,516

APPROVED

 Member
 Member