

# Creative Nonfiction Collective Society Annual General Meeting 2021

## Minutes

### 1. Call to order

Determine Quorum: 5% of 385 membership = 19.25

Members in attendance: 42

Quorum met.

### 2. Acceptance of Agenda

Darryl Whetter motions

Judy MacFarlane seconds

No Objections; Passed

### 3. Reading and Approval or Correction of 2020 AGM minutes

Beth Motions

Sarah B seconds

No objections; Passed

### 4. Reports from Members of the Board and Executive Director

#### a. Motion to approve CNFC 2021 Financial Statements and 2022 Budget

### **President: Margaret Lynch**

Hello and welcome! Let me start with a big THANK YOU to our members, our board, and all the volunteers who supported us over the past year during a time that's been challenging for all of us individually and for CNFC as an organization. Thank goodness for Zoom, which has supported our gatherings throughout the year, including today's AGM.

Our community is stronger than ever. As of today, we number 385 members. We've added 144 new members this past year, including people who rejoined after a hiatus, new members from across Canada and from Spain, Finland, and the US. In an online world, geography is no longer a barrier. And all of our activities have been online this past year.

When the 2020 conference was cancelled, we had hoped we could reconvene in person in 2021. However, as the pandemic continued throughout the past year, we made the decision to move our 2021 conference online. That event wrapped up yesterday. 130 members participated in a fun-filled weekend with a keynote, panel, several craft-focused workshops, and a talk by Harold Johnson last night that was spellbinding. My thanks to the members of the original 2020 Conference Committee who successfully moved the event online for 2021: Christopher Moore, Beth Kaplan, Catherine Gourdier, and Pamela Couture. Bravo team! And I'd like to take the opportunity to extend a special thanks to our executive director, Jenny Plecash,

who acted as technical producer for all our online events this year. In part, the conference was so successful because we had plenty of practice this past fall and winter when we hosted a monthly series of webinars exclusively available to our members. This programming grew out of an initiative started by Cathy Cooper, my predecessor as CNFC president. Last year, she engaged Chelene Knight and the Breathing Space Creative team to survey our community and find out how we could better support our members. In response, we've updated our website with a comprehensive list of resources, including lists of literary magazines, publishers, and podcasts. The workshops were a way to connect with members throughout the year, and Zoom made that remarkably easy. Other recommendations we implemented include regular curated blog content and more visibility on social media (Big thanks to Lesley Buxton for her engaging Facebook posts). Another recommendation we're still investigating is the idea of offering mentorship opportunities to our members. We also focused on partnerships and expanding our community this year. Perhaps because more people were at home and had more time to write, we received a record number of submissions to our 2021 CNFC nonfiction contest that was run in partnership with the Humber Literary Review. With 150 entries of unpublished literary journalism, memoir, and personal or lyric essays, our contest readers had some difficult decisions to make. The long list of eight writers was recently posted on our website, and we plan to announce the shortlist and winner by the end of May.

I'm thrilled to announce the multi-year partnership agreement between CNFC and the University of King's College in Halifax. King's will provide financial support. In return, they will be acknowledged as a sponsor for a number of our online webinars, as well as a sponsor for the 2022 conference scheduled to take place next year in Edmonton. For this year's conference, King's donated a writing course that was raffled off yesterday. We gratefully acknowledge the support of the University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies. They also donated a writing course, which will be raffled off to an AGM attendee at the end of this meeting. Thanks to Beth Kaplan for securing that support, based on her relationship with UofT where she teaches.

Financially, we ended the year on a high note. While we added technology costs to support our online events, expenses were lower without in-person conference expenses. With the revenue from increased membership, our balance sheet is strong. Many thanks to Ruby Swanson, our Treasurer, who manages the financial aspects of our organization, and makes it look easy. She will walk you through the Treasurer's Report in more detail.

We are still pursuing our designation as a registered charitable organization through our application to NASO (National Arts Service Organization). If successful, CNFC would gain charitable status, making us eligible to obtain multi-year funding and to issue tax receipts for donations. This activity was initiated 2 years ago by former CNFC president, Judy McFarlane. Shelley O'Callaghan has headed up the process, and we thank her for her efforts. Unfortunately, NASO has almost come to a halt during the pandemic, and there's been no progress this past year. We haven't been denied yet, so we wait and anticipate a positive outcome in future. It's been a busy year for CNFC and I'm excited to be involved with such an energetic and enthusiastic community. As the only Canadian writing organization exclusively focused on nonfiction, CNFC is committed to expanding our community, and to provide the

support and professional development opportunities our members need. We could also use your help, so if you'd like to volunteer on the board or one of our committees, or to help out in any way you can, please send Jenny an email at [admin@creativenonfictioncollective.ca](mailto:admin@creativenonfictioncollective.ca).

**Vice President: Christopher Moore**

I was elected to a two-year term as vice-chair of CNFC in 2019, after having been a member-at-large on the board. As vice-chair, I have cooperated with other members of the executive on various administrative matters, and I have tried to play a supportive role to Cathy Cooper, Margaret Lynch, and the board in general. Both Cathy and Margaret, each of whom has done great things as CNFC president, have been great to work with.

This year I also chaired the committee preparing the annual conference for 2021. Our initial plan was to invite all the speakers for the cancelled 2020 conference to appear in 2021 instead. As we realized that an in-person conference was unlikely in 2021, we pivoted to a Zoom conference. Happily, all our 2020 speakers agreed to work within our new virtual format. Working out how to hold a three-day conference online has kept us busy and learning.

Last year we agreed to ask Chelene Knight and her organization Breathing Space to review CNFC's operations. Chelene surveyed our membership and made excellent recommendations early in 2020, particularly about doing more outreach to our own members and to underserved communities. The pandemic lockdown, which forced us to cancel the 2020 Toronto conference, underlined the need for developing activities other than the annual conference.

As a result, our conference planning committee also became a Programming Committee. In the fall of 2020 we launched our series of monthly webinars. The enthusiastic response from our members -- and the opportunity to gather regularly, even if only virtually -- has been proof of the strength and reliance of the CNFC and the commitment of our members. We chose to offer these sessions exclusively to members at no charge, and from the start the webinars have brought in a surge of new members.

We believe that regular online events will long outlive the end of the pandemic and become a regular part of CNFC activities. Thanks to Beth Kaplan, Catherine Gourdier, and Pam Couture for long and dedicated service on the 2021 conference committee and the Programming Committee We do look forward to handing over conference planning to the team preparing for Edmonton 2022!

Margaret has asked me to seek re-election as vice-chair, and I have agreed to do so. I look forward to more growth and development at CNFC. It has been a pleasure to work with all committee members and board members.

**Treasurer: Ruby Swanson**

CNFC 2020 Treasurer's Report – Presented by Ruby Swanson

This was my second year as CNFC Treasurer. I am grateful to have had the pleasure of

working with Jenny Plecash, Executive Director, Cathy Cooper, former President, Margaret Lynch, current President and members of the CNFC Board. Thank you for your enthusiasm, support and friendship.

The May 2020 Toronto conference was rescheduled in response to COVID restrictions. A few months later the University of Toronto informed us their facilities would not be available in May 2021. The Toronto conference committee “pivoted” and put together a webinar series and virtual conference, all firsts for our organization.

CNFC carried forward a balance from January 1, 2020 of \$20,528.27. Revenue was \$28,883.51 and expenditures were \$23,602.17. The bank balance as of January 1, 2021 was \$25,809.61 with one outstanding expense. See the attached Balance Sheet. Many thanks go to Access Copyright and the Canada Council for the Arts for their ongoing financial support.

As per Alberta law, two members are required to review this year’s financial report before it can be submitted to Services Alberta. Two financial reviewers were nominated: Cathy Cooper and Christopher Moore both from Ontario. Thank you so much for agreeing to review the report.

**Motion to accept the Treasurer’s report:**

Lesley motions

Darryl Seconds

No opposed; Passed

**Membership Coordinator: Lesley Buxton**

- This year I have gotten the chance to actually interact with members
- Focus has been on social media. Has been able to put out a post every week, but has a goal of posting more often.
- Social media has had a great response.
- If anyone wants to work with Lesley on social media, let her know!
- Also been working on the blog
  - But Lesley doesn’t want to write it all, because we are surrounded by writers!
  - If anyone has anything they want to talk about, news, books they want to talk about, please contact Lesley

**Member at Large: Beth Kaplan**

After four years on the conference committee and two on the board, it’s time for me to step down. It has been a joy to spend time with the wonderful CNFC team. I salute all the hard work done by the volunteers who keep us going: our President, Vice-President, and Treasurer, and my fellow members of the board and the conference committee. I’d like to give special thanks to our past president Judy McFarlane and our executive director Jenny Plecash.

This year, as a board member at large, I persuaded the University of Toronto School of Continuing Studies, where I teach memoir writing, to donate a \$600 course as a raffle for our members; I hope this is the start of a long-lasting partnership. For the blog on our website, I interviewed board member Lesley Buxton about her new book, and wrote a three-part article about the journey to publication of my latest memoir, in the hopes that the details of this tortuous process would be of interest to our members.

As a member of the programming committee, I've been a cheerleader for the monthly webinar initiative that's been so successful under the leadership of Christopher Moore, and for this fabulous conference.

I'm immensely proud of the way CNFC was able to shift direction during the crisis of this past year and provide valuable programming, month by month, for our members. I look forward to the treat of seeing everybody in person next year, in Edmonton.

**Member at Large: Darryl Whetter**

I am delighted to have joined this dedicated board, beginning my two-year term in Spring 2020. Unfortunately, family illness and death have seen me less involved as I would have hoped to have been. My primary contributions this past year have largely been to consult on the vibrant webinar workshop series directed by our tireless peer Christopher Moore. As a Creative Writing professor, I was able to make some teaching partnerships, with a recent CNF student of mine, now member, Sandra Phinney, successfully applying to the Writers' Trust Mentorship program to have me engaged as a mentor on a new nature-writing project of hers. Sandra will be the Writer-in-Residence at the Joggins Fossil Cliffs in Nova Scotia this year. As I was the editor of the UNESCO nomination dossier for the Joggins Fossil Cliffs, and as my own poetry collection *Origins* is set there, Sandra and I keep making COVID-vulnerable plans to meet at Joggins to discuss her writing *in situ*. My own projects this past year have included: (i) releasing my climate-crisis novel [Our Sands](#) in North America, with Penguin; (ii) applying to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for a Research-Creation grant for my own memoir-in-progress (results still pending); (iii) and, as we speak, completing final edits on my next book, an anthology of Creative Writing teaching essays with Routledge entitled [Teaching Creative Writing in Asia](#). In January, in an example of globalised Web-based learning, I will supervise a CNF master's thesis for an Indian investment banker turned ultra-marathoner turned memoirist studying in Singapore to earn a Creative Writing master's degree from Goldsmiths, University of London with me, a supervisor living in rural Nova Scotia

**Member at Large: Akberet Beyene**

Not present

**Member at Large: Nabila Huq**

Called away- not present during sharing

**Executive Director: Jenny Plecash**

As difficult as this pandemic has been, I have had several highlights since becoming the Executive director this year. Everyone has already talked about all the specifics that we have done but I'd like to highlight a couple of things: We have been really focused this year on creating more value for our members, most obviously through the free-for-members Webinar series. But we have also greatly increased our social media presence and grown our online community, offered more content through our blog and newsletters, continually updated our resource lists. We were able to go from not knowing if we were having a conference at all, to putting on an amazing virtual conference that had attendees across Canada. We have had massive growth in our membership; last year at this time we had 241 active members, and today we are up to 385 active members.

I would like to thank the board for volunteering so much of their time to support the CNFC. The growth we saw this year would not have been possible without their effort, creativity, and dedication. I would also like to thank all of our members for supporting us during this exceptionally difficult year.

I also just want to make a quick note about the proxy forms. CNFC is registered in the Province of Alberta, and therefore by law our AGM's are "held" there. We are a national organization, and many of our members would find it difficult to travel to Alberta every year to attend the AGM. To maintain our Alberta status, we have regularly used proxy forms to allow our members to attend and participate in our AGM in the city of our conference or online. The proxy allows a member living in Alberta to submit other member votes on AGM business and permits us to meet the minimum attendees for the required quorum in the province of Alberta. So thank you to everyone who has filled out a proxy form so far, and if you have not, please fill out the form. You can find it at the bottom of your AGM package, or in the chat box right now: <https://form.jotform.com/211017282578253>

**Motion to accept reports:**

Dora Dueck motions  
Sarah B Seconds  
No opposed; Passed

5. New business

a. 2022 Conference

- June 9-12 at Lister Hall at the University of Alberta
- Committee has been meeting since last September. The committee is mostly made up of Albertans
- Have a keynote speaker booked- it will be a surprise later!
- Our focus is on Alberta writers, then going beyond to Western Canadian representation
- Members will be asked to submit proposals later on in the year, probably sometime in the winter
- Theme: Radical Curiosity

- Important to have some younger members on the committee to give different definitions and connotations to Radical
- Why June? Because we wanted it to be!
  - The Solstice is amazing in the North- it stays light until 11 p.m. and experiencing the solstice is beautiful
  - Edmonton is close to so many other travel locations- Jasper, Banff, Calgary
- b. 2023 Conference
  - We are realizing we have to start thinking about this
  - We would like to have input from our members
    - City, venue, topic, and host are all going to be included in the post-conference survey.
    - Keep in mind- the cost of flying speakers in can be cost prohibitive
      - Potential for hybrid online/in-person components for conferences
- c. Ongoing Webinar series
  - We are looking to recruit some new people to join the planning team
    - We meet via Zoom and talk via email
    - If you have any ideas, please consider joining us!
  - We intend to start in October 2021 for our next webinar

## 6. Board Elections

### a. CNFC Board member slate

- \* Halfway through 2-year term:
  - Margaret Lynch (president), Darryl Whetter, Nabila Huq, Akberet Beyene (members-at-large)
- \* Nominated for 2022 board:
  - Chris Moore (vice-president), Lesley Buxton (membership coordinator), Fiona Campbell (member-at-large)
- \* Open board position:
  - Treasurer
    - Beth Kaplan stepping down- Member at Large open, Fiona Campbell nominated
    - Treasurer- requires special competencies, so if you are interested please get in touch

### b. Further nominations

No further nominations

**Motion to approve new board of directors as presented:** Chris Moore (vice president), Lesley Buxton

- Darryl motions
- Pat Butler seconds
- No opposition; Passed

## 7. Acknowledgements

- Thank you to the board, especially Chris and Ruby for making the transition to president easy for Margaret
- King's College, for being open to partnership
- Humber Literary Review and Eufemia Fantetti for the contest
  - And the contest readers- Eufemia, Margaret Nowvackuk, Beth Kaplan, Darryl Whetter, Susan Scott, Shazia
- Jenny Plecash
- Pamela Couture and Catherine Gourdier for working on the conference committee

## Other Business:

- Judy McFarlane: Thank you to the board and conference committee for doing a fantastic job during the pandemic
- Pat Butler: Was hoping there would be a place where she could connect with people who are writing things similar to what I am writing – Is there some kind of database?
  - Facebook group would probably be the best place to find the support
  - Our membership database currently does not record that type of information
- U of T Course winner: Catherine Gourdier!

## 8. Motion to Adjourn



**Treasurer's Report  
Creative Nonfiction Collective Society  
January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020**

**BALANCE SHEET**

**March 30, 2021**

**Balance on January 1, 2020**

Bank Balance	20,528.27
<b>Total Balance January 1, 2020</b>	<b>\$20,528.27</b>

**Revenues & Expenditures  
January 1 – December 31, 2020**

Revenues	+\$28,883.51
Expenditures	-\$23,602.17
<b>Balance on December 31, 2020</b>	<b>\$25,809.61</b>

**Balance on December 31, 2020**

Bank Balance	25,809.61
Outstanding	-525.00
<b>Total Balance January 1, 2021</b>	<b>\$25,284.61</b>

**Treasurer's Report  
Creative Nonfiction Collective Society  
January 1 to December 31, 2020  
Statement of Income and Expenses**

**Balance Forward January 1, 2020**                      **\$20,528.27**

**REVENUE**

**Operating**

Membership dues                                      18,730.00  
Contest    1,473.51

**Total Operating Revenue**                              **\$20,203.51**

Grants    8,500.00  
Webinar    130.00  
Member ads    50.00

**Total Revenue**    **+28,883.51**

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**Total Funds**    **\$49,411.78**

## EXPENSES 2020

### Operating

Admin	7,807.77
Payment service fees	630.66
Bank fees	59.32
Insurance	1,635.00
Website/IT	1,861.76
Membership software	1,336.68
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$13,331.19</b>

### Contest

Award	750.00
Judge/readers	1,150.00
Payment service fees	415.68
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,315.68</b>

<b>Consultant</b>	<b>\$2,450.00</b>
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<b>Total Operating Expenses</b>	<b>\$18,096.87</b>
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### Programming

Conference refunds	4,865.00
Travel related fees	60.30
Webinar honoraria	550.00
Facebook Ads	30.00

<b>Total Programming Expenses</b>	<b>\$5,505.30</b>
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<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>- \$23,602.17</b>
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<b>Net</b>	<b>\$25,809.61</b>
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**Creative Nonfiction Collective Society**  
**PROJECTED BUDGET 2021**  
**January – December**

**Balance Forward January 1, 2021**            **\$25,809.61**

**REVENUE**

**Operating**

    Membership dues                            19,670.00

    Contest                                        2,375.00

**Total Operating Revenue**                    **22,045.00**

**Conference**

    Registrations                                9,375.00

**Total Conference Revenue**                    **9,375.00**

**Total Revenue**                                **+ \$31,420.00**

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**Total Funds**                                    **\$57,229.61**

## PROJECTED EXPENDITURES 2021

### Operating

Administration	8500
Payment service fees	500
Bank fees	75
Insurance	1635
Webhosting/IT	1100
Membership software	1630
Advertising	350
Misc supplies	200

**Total Operating** **\$13,990**

### Contest

Award	750
Judge/readers	1350
Payment service fees	250

**Total Contest** **\$2,350**

### Online Webinars

Presenters	1,650
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### Virtual Conference

Presenters	4,300
Administration	600
Misc.	100

**Total Webinars/Conference** **\$6,650.00**

**Total Expenditures** **- \$22,990.00**

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**Projected Balance December 31, 2021**

**\$34,239.61**