



## The Story of the Haliburton School of (Fine) The Arts

As is the case with many great things, the Haliburton School of The Arts is borne of humble beginnings.

Ron McCaw, an avid photographer, came to Haliburton in 1966 to be the Minister of the United Church. He quickly gained an appreciation for the inspiring nature of the Highlands and envisioned an art school that would become the Banff of the East. His vision became a mission and his enthusiasm became infectious. In 1966 a small but fiercely dedicated group of people gathered in a Haliburton living room...

A committee was struck, support was sought, pleas were made and, in tandem, offerings planned for the fall of 1967. What was then called the Haliburton School of Fine Arts was launched with sponsorships, memberships and volunteerism but there was awareness that more was needed if it was to grow and be sustained.

Addressing this need was a broad communication effort that included local taxpayers, the Highlands of Haliburton Arts Group, the Banff School of Fine

Arts in Alberta, the Community Programs Division of the Department of Education, retired Premier Leslie Frost, directors of other art schools, the Province of Ontario Council for the Arts, and the Ontario Council of Regents for Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology.

Encouragement and assistance was forthcoming in varying degrees and formats but the commitment from Sir Sandford Fleming College would stabilize the foundation upon which the school would be built. Late in 1967 it was announced in the year-end report that the Haliburton School of Fine Arts would run as an Extension Division of Sir Sandford Fleming College. That same report included a financial statement disclosing a total income of \$2779.40 and total expenses of \$1954.53, netting \$824.87 in 1967. A weekend workshop cost \$15 and ran from Friday evening to Sunday. A week long course cost \$35.

Another economic sector that could trace roots to the beauty of the area was lodge accommodation. Many dotted the shores of lakes and attracted visitors. In the absence of school committed space, these establishments would play a role for many years. Those first offerings in 1967 were held at Royal View Lodge on the shores of Lake Kashagawigamog. The brochure noted that "There will be accommodation of a great variety available in the area at this time ranging from approximately \$5 without meals to \$20 with meals per day." Ensuing years would see courses, faculty dinners, entertainment and art auctions hosted at many local lodges, among them: Deer Lodge, Wigamog Inn, Chateau Woodland, KenMar Lodge, Bonnie View Inn, and Domain of Killien.

What would become known as Summer School began in 1969 with nine courses held at the Haliburton Highlands Secondary School which was noted as being “a modern, attractive building overlooking Head Lake in the village of Haliburton.” Children could be introduced to arts and adults could choose from drawing, painting, weaving, ceramics, printmaking, sculpture, creative writing, photography and movie making. Interestingly, those techniques can all still be found within the program. In the year 2000 the name of the school was changed to Haliburton School of *The Arts*, signifying the inclusion of more than visual arts. Although it remains primarily visual arts based, dance, music and other creative pursuits are valued and well-attended options.

Over the past 48 years dedication, co-operation and committed effort on the part of many have taken the school from 53 students in the fall of 1967 to over 2500 students studying art full and part-time annually. What began as four weekend workshops and a week long course has become more than 300 workshops and courses, nine 15-week certificates, two diploma programs, and two Ontario College Graduate Certificate programs. A reputation for excellence has been firmly established.

In accordance with a long history of growth, one of the diploma programs and one of the graduate certificate programs noted above are being launched in 2014. A unique diploma in Integrated Design will address material culture, sustainability and fine craftsmanship in an accelerated, 3-semester format. A new 15-week Studio Process Advancement certificate will enable emerging artists, visual arts graduates and established practitioners to further develop their work. The evolution of the school continues.

This impressive school is now housed in an award-winning, architecturally unique campus located in lakeside parkland and surrounded by the Haliburton Sculpture Forest. Occupied in 2004, the campus was made possible through generous donations of property and money, combined with government funding. After 37 years the school finally had a home. Additional spaces continue to be rented for Summer School but on a year-round basis the Haliburton School of The Arts now houses creativity, challenge, growth and aspiration within walls that are already expanding to accommodate the future.

Locally the school has become an economic force and cultural asset but its effects span borders both national and international. Students attend from all over Ontario, across Canada, and have come from as far away as Australia, Switzerland, Mexico, the United States, and Israel. In addition to the Haliburton program, courses have been offered at a variety of locations in Ontario and as far away as Mexico.

It's the Highlands of Haliburton that are at the heart of the school though. That small but fiercely dedicated group of people was absolutely right in 1966. The inspiring Haliburton Highlands are the perfect setting for an arts school.

*The Journey*, by Cheryl Wray was referenced in the composition of this document.

