Property

Thanks to the hard work and supervision of Eurithe Purdy, a lot of tasks got completed in the fall. And with Hawkeye Eurithe overseeing the work we know it was accomplished in true Purdy fashion—and at the best possible price. One of our key volunteers has stepped back because of serious health issues so Eurithe’s assistance really made a difference.

Many of our writers-in-residence have become friends with the couple who live next-door, Ken and Ev. On behalf of APAFA Eurithe approached Ken and he has agreed to be our caretaker, doing any necessary carpentry, painting, etc. and monitoring the property. We are so pleased to have this neighbour involved.

Over a period of weeks, Eurithe and her team cut up, gathered and disposed of thirteen loads of brush, garbage, furniture, old plastic pipe and lumber.

New—well, okay, not really new—Eurithe found used French doors that have now been installed on the lakeside and they look great. The living room has been freshened up with new couch and chair, new lighting and flat screen TV. The small bedroom is much improved with a fresh coat of paint. The black trim around the doors has been repainted and new door hangings have been installed.

Ken has scraped and re-silicone around the A-frame lakeside window frames, and given them another coat of black stain. Time does take its toll on the building, and there are other things that need attention, but all in all, a good and productive year for the property.

Finances

Our application to the Ontario Arts Council resulting in us receiving $12,000, the largest grant amount allowed under the program to which we applied, so we were pretty pleased about that.

Unfortunately the news about Canada Council is not cheery. An application to the Sector Innovation and Development program was recommended but didn’t receive
any funding. Several lengthy conversations with different CC officers made it clear that the A-frame residency program does not qualify for CC funding. Writers can apply for residencies but since many of our writers are submitting their first CC application the competition is fierce.

We began our current fiscal with a healthy surplus, which has been depleted. Our projected budget for the fiscal year beginning April 1, 2020 is tight but doable—barring unforeseen expenses. We are actively working on fundraising strategies for the long term.

Open House

In September we held the second Open House. This time we partnered with the Ameliasburgh Fall Fair, which happens the same weekend. The event was well attended, and hosted by Eurithe Purdy. This event is less costly and more manageable than the previous Annual Picnic. It allows us to welcome people to the A-frame project, and share its history.

Report from board member Brian Way: “Attendance numbers for ‘the house of a poet’ are outstanding. Remarkable in fact. And the people I talked with were incredibly keen and interested, with all kinds of cool questions about the A-frame, Al’s writings, and so on. Among others, I chatted with one couple from England and a woman visiting from Stockholm. And Eurithe seemed to be in her glory, sitting and talking with visitors and sharing the photo albums.”

At the Open House we launched our new brochure, “A Walking Tour of Al Purdy’s Ameliasburgh.” These brochures have been distributed throughout Prince Edward County and beyond.

The Alumni Anthology

In order to record, celebrate and sustain the new legacy of the A-frame, we are launching an on-line Alumni Anthology. Our goal is to create an archival website that chronicles all writers-in-residence who have lived in the A-frame and experienced life along the shore of Roblin Lake. We have created a webpage (not yet live) listing the A-frame writers-in-residence in chronological order including a “landing page” for each writer with the following information:
Photos, brief biography including what the writers have been up to since the residency, stories about the A-frame experience, writing sample, and links to websites, blogs and other online sites. We are very pleased with the way this project has developed and will let you know when it goes live. We have also done a complete edit and update of the website, which will be live soon.

Writers-in-Residence

Reviewing and reflecting on the final reports is always my favourite part. **Cornelia Hoogland** completed written work in poetry and prose as well as sound recordings. With the help of a friend she held an “interview” session with Al Purdy (represented by his leather coat draped over a chair—the coat is usually in the hall closet) and with cheap beer. Purdy’s “own randomly selected books and collected letters formed the basis of his responses to our questions.”

**Anna Swanson** had planned to do a poetry program for the community at the Wellington Library based on garbage collection at the Wellington Beach but arrived to find that particular beach almost pristine, so she worked with the library to deliver the proposed alternate program at the Picton branch of the library. This program also worked with found poetry, but instead she asked participants to use magnetic poetry words to build a poem on images cut out of discarded library books. These collages were created on sheet metal ‘tablets,’ and then photocopied to create a black-and-white poetry collage poster for participants to take away. Most participants created multiple projects, some up to 5 or 6. Approximately 22 students, plus several school staff/teachers participated. Feedback from the Picton Library: “Thanks again for your fabulous workshop this morning! The kids obviously really enjoyed it, and Mrs. Baker just could not stop talking about how beneficial it was.” Cornelia also did a school presentation and we are so pleased our writers are connecting with local classrooms.

As so many writers before have said, **Damian Rogers** found the space to be incredibly inspiring. “Part of my attraction to the house was the fact that I had never spent more than a week or two at a writing residency before and so had never had the opportunity to deeply immerse myself in another life rhythm beyond the length of a restorative working holiday. Also, critically, I had no previous
experience with living outside the context of a big city for any significant amount of time and I have long wanted to explore how a rural environment might shift my writing process. From the first moment I stepped into the A-Frame up to the moment I pulled my car out of the driveway to head home five weeks later, I had no desire to be anywhere else. The first thing I noticed was what the conditions of the space did to my sense of physicality: my breathing slowed. My eyes adjusted to the horizontal line of the lake outside the window after years of living alongside a landscape dominated by vertical lines (construction cranes, condo towers, etc.). Living in cities has been central to my idea of myself as an artist, and so it was fascinating to be in a space that was explicitly designed to support the production of art in a natural setting. But not a natural setting devoid of human community — I was aware of the interdependence of the neighbours around the lake. My first few days, I worried my voice might carry through my open windows and through the open windows next door when I was up late talking too loudly. Luckily, the Hennesseys [that’s Ken and Ev, told ya] are wonderful people, open, generous, and sensitive. I am grateful for many kindnesses they extended to my family and myself (including inviting us on their boat for a guided tour of the lake and convincing my 6-year-old son Levi to drive the boat for a few minutes!). And of course, one of the greatest thrills was learning how to share (outdoor) space with the non-human residents. Twice I saw a raccoon heading to bed up the big willow just as I was sitting down to write with my morning coffee. I felt like we were trading shifts, the raccoon clocking out as I clocked in. I watched for the herons, each visitation a special occasion. Every evening we watched a shocking number of fireflies announce the night (while contending with a shocking number of mosquitoes, which bit into the magical fantasy quality of the lightshow somewhat). Levi and I watched a hummingbird flit in front of the main window. The house inspired a constant state of active observation. I spent a lot of time watching, and taking notes. This heightened sense of attention allowed me to live in an extended compositional space that was always there in the background of my days, even when my family was with me, even when I was cooking dinner, even when we were swimming. This radically reorganized how I thought about my practice.”

Damian and Levi kept track of all the wildlife. Levi’s animal count and his drawing are at the end of this report.
During Brian Brett’s residency a CBC crew showed up to record an interview with Michael Enright. Brian was his usual enthused and gregarious self about the A-frame experience. He knew Al Purdy very well, but had never been to the A-frame. As you might imagine, it was a pretty profound and special experience. Living in the County, and in the house, enlarged Brian’s understanding of Purdy’s work.
Animals we saw in or near Roblin Lake:

- Herons
- Kingfishers
- Blue jays
- Cardinals
- Crows
- Hummingbird
- Osprey
- Swallow-tail
- Monarch
- Turtle
- Tree toads
- Fireflies!
- Mosquitoes
- Catfish (dead)
- Sunfish
- Bass
- Minnows
- Raccoon
- Deer
- Chickadees
- Sparrows
- Grackles
- Goldfinch

On Roblin Lake
We kayaked
Leo drove a pontoon boat!
Saw
Fished

At Eurthe Purdy A-Frame
July 7 - August 10