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The Maine Humanities Council, a statewide non-profit organization, uses the humanities—literature, history, philosophy, and culture—as a tool for positive change in Maine communities. Our programs and grants encourage critical thinking and conversations across social, economic, and cultural boundaries.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Maine Humanities Council seeks to expand its list of potential nominees to fill future openings on its Board of Directors. The Council looks for a wide geographic representation and range of civic and/or academic experience. To notify the Council of your interest, please send a letter and a résumé to:

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The Maine Humanities Council is an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Front cover: Passamaquoddy elder Georgina Sappier-Richardson features in the upcoming documentary film Dawnland, a project about Maine-Wabanaki REACH and the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission. Read more about it on page 6. Location: Passamaquoddy Territory, Pembroke; Photo: Jeremy Dennis
In early March, the Maine Humanities Council held its 21st annual Winter Weekend program. More than 180 people from throughout Maine and beyond gathered on the campus of Bowdoin College for two days of lectures and discussion on Anthony Trollope’s 1875 novel *The Way We Live Now*. It’s a story of greed, power, fraud, and the allure of easy money—themes that participants found to be highly relevant to the way we live, still, now.

*Winter Weekend* is a marquee event on the MHC calendar each year, and it’s a great pleasure to gather with serious readers for a celebration of literature and its power to enliven and enlighten us during the long Maine winter. *Winter Weekend* also marks one of my favorite times during the year to pause and take a look back at the Council’s activities over the preceding months.

We’ve been busy. For example, during 2017 the MHC offered programs in partnership with 92 different public libraries across all 16 Maine counties. We are committed to doing whatever we can to strengthen the mission and work of our wonderful public libraries around the state. I’m proud to say that these partnerships are as strong as they’ve ever been.

Of course, libraries are not the only organizations we work with. A quick scan of our partners from the last couple years gives an idea of the range of partnerships and program offerings that have been at the heart of our work. During the past two years, we’ve partnered with 251 organizations. In addition to all those libraries, the list includes: Eastern Maine Medical Center; Family Violence Project of Kennebec and Somerset Counties; Heart of Biddeford; Hospice of Southern Maine; Kennebec County Correctional Facility; Literacy Volunteers of Franklin and Somerset Counties; Phippsburg Police Department; Maine-Wabanaki REACH; and many, many more.

All this is in addition to the grants the Council has awarded to nonprofit organizations around the state—113 for a total of around $220,000 in the past two years. These grants are not large—the median award is $1,000. But we take great pride in placing grant funding directly into local organizations in towns around the state, where a little can go an awfully long way.

I’m very proud of the persistence and hustle the MHC displays in its work throughout the state, and of our ongoing efforts to build and sustain strong relationships with Mainers and Maine organizations. I promise you that in the coming year we’ll continue to stretch and to reach toward our vision of the communities of Maine transformed through the power and pleasure of ideas. We believe it’s a vision critically important for the health and wellbeing of our state.

Hayden Anderson
Executive Director
Each year, on the third Saturday in October, we bring people together with expert guides to grapple with a big question.

On October 21, 2017, we spent the day exploring the question How can we know?

We started by looking at doubt—the feeling of knowing we don’t know something important.

From there we stepped into curiosity—because even though there are an infinite number of things we don’t know, every day each of us works to figure out what we can in order to do what we need to do. It happens in every possible field of endeavor…but we made do with just three for the Dorothy Schwartz Forum: flamenco dance, food history, and mycology.

And at the end of the day we reconvened to consider trust.

What was most striking that day is that everyone there had to be in on it. Since there are no fixed answers to a question that big—and knowing is an ongoing practice and process—we all had to work it through together: talking, listening, watching, trying things out. Everyone had to be a little unsure, a little curious, and then take a chance.

OUR GUIDES FOR THE DAY WERE:

DOUBT AND TRUST
Jonathan Cohen, PhD
Professor of Philosophy,
University of Maine at Farmington
Paul Han, MD, MA, MPH
Director, Center for Outcomes Research & Evaluation, Maine Medical Center

CURIOUSITY
Lindsey Bourassa (top, right)
Founding Director, Bourassa
Contemporary Flamenco Dance Studio
Don Lindgren (middle, right)
Owner, Rabelais Fine Books on Food & Drink
Seanna Annis, PhD (bottom, right)
Associate Professor of Mycology,
University of Maine
School of Biology & Ecology

October 20
For 2018 we’re asking the natural next question: WHO IS WE?
Join us on October 20 as we explore this question through LONELINESS, ENTANGLEMENT, and WONDER.

WHO IS WE?
The crucial differences that classic humanities programming makes could be the theme for this year of library programming. In 85 towns across the state, our Let’s Talk About It reading and discussion group, World in Your Library speaker series, and Read ME summer reading program connected participants with great books, profound ideas—and each other.

This program served 2,130 people across Maine in 2017.

NEW BOOKS, NEW READERS

New Books, New Readers—a reading and discussion program for adults who are not in the habit of reading—uses books at various, accessible reading levels to open the world of books and ideas. Participants are given a copy of every book in the series to take home and are encouraged to share their enjoyment with family and friends. In this way, New Books, New Readers builds community, helps personal and educational development, and serves as a social outlet, all at once.

This year, many sites read the new series Living with Little, which explores themes of community, priority, privilege, resources, and inner strength. The books take place across regions and time periods: urban and rural, pre-and-post- Great Depression, in America and in Kenya, and from a variety of perspectives.

Some questions that drive the series include: What does it mean to live with little? How does it feel to be without food? Without shelter? How can we deal with hunger and want? What does strain reveal about our relationships with others? What kinds of compromise are possible? How can we keep up our spirits even when we feel helpless? What attitudes are our most precious resources? It’s been a successful series for our constituents.

In 2017, New Books, New Readers had 1,337 participants in 13 towns across Maine.

"Though residents on occasion are able to travel to other towns for such speakers, sharing the event with their neighbors in their own community makes it more likely that they will carry on the conversations begun at and inspired by these gatherings."

- RURAL LIBRARIAN, HOSTING WORLD IN YOUR LIBRARY

"In discussions with others especially with my grandkids."

"Made me more knowledgeable and able to connect with other community members."

"More effort to respect others’ points of view and feelings."

- WORLD IN YOUR LIBRARY PARTICIPANT

"How has this experience carried over into your individual life?"

"I learn so much at every single meeting. I love hearing about how people think. It is just as fascinating to hear about points of view that are quite opposite of my own. I feel like this Let’s Talk About It program brings my community closer."

- LET’S TALK ABOUT IT PARTICIPANT

"I learn so much at every single meeting. I love hearing about how people think. It is just as fascinating to hear about points of view that are quite opposite of my own. I feel like this Let’s Talk About It program brings my community closer."

- LET’S TALK ABOUT IT PARTICIPANT

At Bath’s Patten Free Library, participants discussed texts in the Let’s Talk About It series “Violence and Belonging.” PHOTO: DAN D’IPPOLITO

Photo: Diane Magras

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- LET’S TALK ABOUT IT PARTICIPANT

At Bath’s Patten Free Library, participants discussed texts in the Let’s Talk About It series “Violence and Belonging.” PHOTO: DAN D’IPPOLITO

Photo: Diane Magras
Let’s talk books, because 2017 was the start of a major initiative to link reading and discussion programming for professionals—scholar-led book groups in medical centers, domestic violence resource centers, hospice organizations, and schools throughout Maine—through a common collection of books and themes. Not too far in the distant past, the MHC created tight book collections for each audience, targeting specific themes within their work. But in recent years, we’ve learned that books dealing with broader themes that connect with participants’ work (rather than represent their work outright) could be of much more use than books specifically about medical practices, domestic violence, end of life, and education. Stories of isolation, rural living, family struggles, and social justice, for instance, are common to the experiences of the participants of these four programs. The first scholar-led discussions using this new curriculum were in 2017 and produced new depth and new richness.

Literature & Public Life reached 164 medical, domestic violence prevention, hospice, and education professionals in 11 towns across Maine.

Naguib Mahfouz’s Palace Walk brought together a keen audience of readers for Winter Weekend 2018, the 20th anniversary of the MHC’s signature event. Filled with talks by New England and Maine scholars, and including a meal linked to the book, Winter Weekend inspired, educated, and delighted its participants. Professor Khaled Fahey of American University in Cairo was our keynote speaker (pictured at right).

Winter Weekend continues to bring an important cultural experience to this region and provides scholarships for teachers and librarians to encourage their valuable participation.

“Every Winter Weekend marks a year of reading, of study, and the Weekend to come, spent in conversation, reflection. In that way, the measure of its value should be multiplied by two. And the count of people touched by every Winter Weekend, in conversations and debates, in lapels grabbed and minds changed, might be amplified exponentially.”

-WINTER WEEKEND PARTICIPANT

Veterans Book Group is exactly what the program title suggests: a scholar-facilitated reading and discussion group for Veterans/Former Service Members, co-led by a Veteran and a discussion leader. The program takes place across Maine, usually in libraries or other community centers. In 2017, Veterans Book Group took place in Bangor, Sanford, and Portland, as well as in the Veterans Block of the Kennebec County Correctional Facility.

Readings represented a variety of eras and perspectives and included fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Examples include POWDER: Writing by Women in the Ranks, from Vietnam to Iraq, edited by Lisa Bowden and Shannon Cain; Tribe: on Homecoming and Belonging by Sebastian Junger; The Things They Carried by Tim O’Brien; The Odyssey, translated by Stanley Lombardo; and others, including poems by Brian Turner and Wisława Szymborska. Readings explore the nuances and complications of homecoming, reintegration, language, unity, dissonance, leadership, justice, loyalty, family, and more.

In 2017, we reached 47 Maine Veterans/Former Service Members.
How does society define criminal behavior, and who is a criminal? What do we want from our police, and how are they trained? What powers do we place in the hands of the state (police, legal system, prisons), and how do we monitor the use of those powers? Do communities suffer collateral damage from being policed, and do those who do the policing face emotional challenges of their own?

Held in bars and popular performance spaces, Think & Drink took series discussions about these issues to Portland and Bangor, and piloted single-session programs in Lewiston and Madawaska with the same themes.

For the fourth year, we partnered with Portland’s downtown SPACE Gallery, with Samaa Abdurraqib (Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence) as facilitator and emcee; Darren Ranco (University of Maine) returned for our third year in Bangor for sessions at the Nocturnem Draft Haus; and in Madawaska, Sheila Jans (nonprofit consultant and cultural development professional) brought these topics to life. Our Lewiston program focused on one issue alone—how different populations experience traffic stops—and was a mix of storytelling, panel discussion, and small-group conversation.

The program also returned to Biddeford with a single session program at Engine (pictured). Shay Stewart-Bouley (Executive Director, Community Change, Inc.) moderated a powerful conversation that grappled with how Biddeford can open itself up to having discussions about race, and how local experiences connect to national issues.

This program had 484 audience members joining the conversation in 2017.

Letters About Literature received 940 letters from towns across Maine.

Students from elementary to high schools all over the state participated in the Civil Rights Team Project this year, a program from the Office of the Maine Attorney General for which the MHC annually partners. We provide a humanities perspective to discussions, as well as books, and run the content part of trainings and conferences. Our collaborative fall trainings (at right) served 142 schools and 1,545 students this year. And the May 2017 conference brought 550 students (and over 100 adults from their 54 schools) for a day of sharing, education, and encouragement. Jerome Bennett, Policy and Technical Assistance Coordinator at the Maine Youth Action Network (now MHC Program Officer), provided the keynote, speaking about the difference between looking and seeing, and how crucial it is to make the effort to truly see the issues and the individuals they affect. The Civil Rights Team Project helps students think and talk about issues related to protected civil rights: race and skin color, national origin and ancestry, religion, physical and mental disabilities, gender (including gender identity and expression), and sexual orientation.

Each year, the MHC presents Letters About Literature to Maine. It’s a program from the U.S. Library of Congress in which 4th to 8th graders write letters to authors (living or dead) about what the author’s books have meant to their own lives. The letters are deeply moving, and sometimes heartbreaking. Students share their deepest thoughts about their experiences. From the 2017 winning letters in Maine:

**FIRST PLACE, LEVEL I (GRADES 4 – 6)**
Excerpt: Macy Young to Jacqueline Woodson, Brown Girl Dreaming

While I was reading your book I had to pause, think, re-read, and then repeat. Like a delicious food, I could only read small bits at a time, savoring every last word. Your book has changed the way I view the world and myself in many different ways.

**FIRST PLACE, LEVEL II (GRADES 7 – 8)**
Excerpt: Digby Roberts to Bill Konigsberg, Openly Straight

This wonderful, emotionally-packed story has moved me and I have changed for the better. It has encouraged me to work towards coming out by teaching me that the only way to be truly happy is to be yourself. Ben Konigsberg, thank you for your time spent writing.

**FIRST PLACE, LEVEL III (GRADES 9 – 12)**
Excerpt: Grace Roberts to Charles Bukowski, The People Look Like Flowers at Last

I am not a writer—just a turbulent person with two hands, who only ever read one poet and has not looked back since. I do not write to make people comfortable anymore. I write to make them feel. And if all I am good for is writing lefty and splitting jaws, then I think perhaps that is my gift.

Letters About Literature received 940 letters from towns across Maine.
In 2017, the MHC awarded $71,935 in 40 grants to nonprofits in 28 towns for humanities projects in Maine, including lectures, exhibits, and other programs that encourage deep community conversations. Go to mainehumanities.org and our blog to find descriptions of all the grants we gave in 2017. Here are a few highlights:

- Arts & Humanities programming
- MHC Mini grants
- MHC Major grants

### PRESQUE ISLE

- **$1,000** | **Talking Wires: The Social Impact of the Telephone Switchboard in Northern Maine**
  
  The Presque Isle Historical Society restored an antique telephone switchboard for a permanent exhibit that explores the impact of the telephone on rural life in Aroostook County. The exhibit featured an oral history component with retired local switchboard operators, historic photographs and memorabilia from the local telephone office, and a collection of antique telephones.

  ![Presque Isle Historical Society](photo)

### JACKMAN

- **$300** | **Moose River Valley Historical Coloring Book**
  
  Artist Gail McDougall created a coloring book featuring locations and artifacts of historical importance in Jackman’s Moose River Valley. The Jackman Historical Society plans to distribute the books free of charge to local elementary students as a way of preserving and sharing their local history.

  ![Jackman-Moose River Historical Society](photo)

### NORTH HAVEN

- **$1,000** | **We Belong Here**
  
  We Belong Here is a web-based oral history project exploring relationships on the island of North Haven, Maine. The project focuses on ways members of the summer and year-round community relate to the island and to each other. A featured website includes audio interviews and photographs.

  ![North Haven Historical Society](photo)

### PASSAMAQUODDY TERRITORY, PEMBROKE

- **$5,000** | **Dawnland**
  
  Dawnland is an independent feature documentary tracing the complex journey of the Maine Wabanaki-State Child Welfare Truth & Reconciliation Commission, the first such body in the United States to ever investigate Native American experiences in State child welfare. It’s the story of stolen children, cultural survival, and the historic truth and reconciliation process for Wabanaki and Mainers. Dawnland goes behind-the-scenes with Maine-Wabanaki REACH, the organization responsible for the commission and the implementation of its recommendations.

  Learn more about Dawnland at dawnland.org. And to learn more about and support Maine-Wabanaki REACH’s ongoing work, go to: mainewabanakireach.org.

  ![The Upstander Project](photo)

### GREAT CRANBERRY ISLAND

- **$1,000** | **Chart of the North Atlantic**
  
  With design assistance from Willoughby Hastings, archivist Anne Grulich composed an exhibition of Great Cranberry Island’s 19th Century maritime history centered around a collection of ten 1855-1877 nautical charts used by Captain Meltiah Richardson and Mrs. Carrie Stanley Richardson during trans-Atlantic voyages in 1878 and 1879.

  ![Great Cranberry Historical Society](photo)

- **$1,000** | **Fall Shabbaton**
  
  A weekend of art exploration, community building, and Jewish learning, the Shabbaton was an opportunity for people of all ages and backgrounds from across the state to immerse themselves in Jewish culture.

  ![Center for Small Town Jewish Life](photo)
M AINE Humanities Council donors take the humanities throughout Maine, to communities small and large, traditional humanities sites and entirely new ones. Thanks to them, we inspire, encourage, educate, and delight, helping the people of this state better understand themselves, one another, and the world beyond. It’s a joint effort, and we’re deeply grateful for our supporters’ generosity.

If what you’ve read within these pages inspires you to make a gift, please:
• Fill out the enclosed envelope, or donate online at mainehumanities.org, or
• Contact Diane Magras, Director of Development, at 207-773-5051 or diane@mainehumanities.org.

Every gift counts, and so we’re proud to thank every donor at every level of giving. Whether your gift was $10 or $10,000, you’ve helped to make a difference.

Gifts that the MHC received during Fiscal Year 2017 (11/1/2016 – 10/31/2017) are represented on the following list. If you donated after this time, you will be thanked in our next Annual Report.

Asterisks (*) denote Maine Humanities Council Board Alumni during FY17.
URING Fiscal Year 2017, the Maine Humanities Council had operating income of $2,052,499 and operating expenses of $1,813,579. Grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, including highly competitive grants, made up an important component of the budget. This support was supplemented by a diverse range of other income streams, from the Library of Congress, the State of Maine, generous support from private foundations, the individual contributions highlighted in this report, and program income. Both the income and the expense figures reported in these charts and in the Council’s audited financial statements include in-kind contributions of time, mileage and materials, valued at $590,235.

The Maine Humanities Council is the state affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.
All journeys begin here, Madawamkeetook, home,
beside the good river, rocky at its mouth.
Stone shards, bone stratum
buried deep, our ancient cenotaph,
Old Meductic Fort, traceless memorial.
on the shores of Wolastoq.
Now St. John.
The naming taken, baptized in ink and parchment.
They say he knew water transformation;
it gives life.
A thousand years and more, we paddled
the Old Meductic Trail; the water road.
Nomads, they called us,
citing “most ancient evidence” of our passage;
“the solid rocks have been furrowed
by the moccasins of the native tribes.”
A signpost, our chalcedony flesh.
Blue veins you call Nature’s highway,
the map flowing inside our bodies,
the Thoroughfare; Chepneticook lakes to
Mattawamkeag and onward to the Penobscot,
where a girl became a woman.
Her body craves the past.
Its water seeking the cool flow, ancestral memory,
where tributaries meet, flooding
undernourished roots that cling to her edges,
eroded year by year with forgetting.
Remember Meductic and the Water Road.
Birch bark, chert and bone melded with riverbank clay,
merging in the rippling shallows where canoes slide,
silent, among water lilies and pickerel grass.

THIS POEM APPEARED IN THE SEPTEMBER 2017 ISSUE
OF NOTES FROM AN OPEN BOOK