

## Intra-Provincial SIG Meeting

April 25, 2024

7:00pm – Zoom

**Present:** Crystal Kolt (Norman – chair), Maureen Britton (Central MB), Michelle Chzyk (Westman), Andrée Dagenais (Westman), Carolyn Gwyer (Westman), Naomi Russell (Westman), Jenny Steinke-Magnus (Winnipeg – recording)

### Background on the Intra-Provincial Special Interest Group

- Definition of *Special Interest Group*: A group of community members drawn or acting together because of a common interest, concern, or purpose (as opposed to a committee). Group discussion from these groups informs MCA's organizational policies and operations.
- MCA created this group to provide an opportunity for members from around the province to come together to share what is happening in their communities and discuss ways that MCA can better support choirs around the province, and ways that the choral community can better support each other.
- Crystal is the Intra-Provincial Director on the MCA board, and part of her role is to chair this SIG.
- Our first meeting was last January, and at the meeting folks expressed a desire to meet a few times per year, which has been hard to plan with all the busy-ness of the choral season. Going forward we want to commit to holding these meetings at minimum three times/year.
- We are a truly vast province, so it is important to think about different perspectives when planning MCA programs. Naomi is our new President and since she is in Westman, she brings a regional perspective to the board as well.

### Check-ins: How are things going in your region?

- There are not a lot of choral opportunities in Portage la Prairie: no high schools have choral programs right now. Hopefully that can be built up again.
- In Westman, not enough elementary music educators are being hired. Administrators are quick to cancel programs when teachers retire, and there is no one to fill spots. It is easy to no longer have music programs. There will be a ripple effect into the middle/senior years programs because of this. Recruitment for elementary music will be crucial. That will affect the entire province as well.
- Some people don't want to move from their backyards. Graduates from BU, for example, in choral stream, they are well prepped in all methods, but don't want to leave Brandon. Choral specialists are taking band jobs too. How can we counteract that?

- This year has given pause and hope to Crystal in Flin Flon. Angela came to Flin Flon Community Choir and was at a level that she could take over the choir. She also has young children, and wanted to ignite children's choir, and that has been successful.

## **What supports would be beneficial for our choral communities?**

### **ADVOCACY**

- How do we advocate for schools to keep music alive? If people want a choral program in a small town, schools would be the ideal place to start. Maybe a community could ask for someone to come in and ignite a community? Sometimes there are people in the community who could do it, but they might need someone to support them to start it. Parents might want it, but not necessarily the administrators. University students, for example, could have a seasonal choir before Christmas or before Easter.
- MCA could write letters of support/encouragement for succession when retirements happen so programs are not cancelled/lost.

### **RESOURCES**

- Can MCA create a Choir 101 toolkit for communities to use when they want to start a choir? Or provide a resource list of people in their region they can connect with?
- Alliance chorale du Québec has built a curriculum for elementary school teachers who want to teach music/start a choir. Perhaps we can model ours off of this.
- It would be helpful to compile a list of people who are strong or good at a specific skill, or who have been consulted by choirs in the past, ex. choreography from specific cultures, languages. This list may be challenging to keep up to date though, and you would need permission from everyone to appear on it.

### **CONNECT CHORAL SPECIALISTS WITH COMMUNITIES**

- Could we create a list of people who could be willing to go to communities to work with choirs? We can find regions where this would be needed. Choral Canada used to have a directory listing for contacts for clinics. Maybe MCA could start one too.
- With all the retired folks in MCA's membership, maybe we can connect them with choirs or communities where they may want to help start a choir. Maybe people don't know where to start.
- It could be a tourism experience for the conductor and/or choir. And maybe other music groups might be interested in traveling too, not just choirs.

## CONNECT CHOIRS WITH EACH OTHER

- Choirs could go on tour around the province. Winnipeg choirs could pair up with regional choirs and create choral communities. It could be kind of like an “Adopt a Choir” program. Choirs may need to be polled to create a list of interested choirs.
- Choirs could select a masterwork, something that is too much for 1 choir to learn. Each choir could prepare 1 or 2 movements, then all the choirs would sing together.
- We could create something similar to Folklorama, involving repertoire from choirs of different traditions. Choirs from those traditions could participate in song sharing and cultural exchange.
- Carolyn would like to talk to school choirs, to see if there are dead spots throughout the province, and then take choirs to those communities to perform. We could create a report on the kinds of touring people have already been doing, what is working in different areas, and excite them about touring within Manitoba. We could also share ideas for how to plan a tour.

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

- One idea to support regional singers is to offer a special rate to MB Sings singers coming from outside Winnipeg. It would be a statement of support to offer a discount to out-of-town singers.
- MCA can facilitate a session to explain FCMM funding (already in the works). FCMM doesn't cover transportation costs, but they will cover almost everything else. Andrée will check with FCMM about whether a clinician's travel could be covered to go work with a choir, rather than a whole choir traveling (which would not be eligible).
- Choirs should be encouraged to apply to Sing Canada Harmony (they won't fund transportation costs either, but if the program has to do with children, it might have a good chance to receive funding).
- Calm Air could maybe offer free/reduced flight for programs that fly people to the North.
- The MAC Artists in Schools program needs to be enhanced to include choral specialists. Currently in catalogue there are no choral folks! This program resonates with administrators so having choral specialists be part of it would be advantageous.

## OTHER

- For some choristers who are alone, not part of a choir, we need to entice them to attend something.
- The MCA website/newsletter is missing stories from people. We do a good job of reporting things that have already happened through eNotes, but it would be nice to feature more stories.
- We should continue to nurture choral events like Toss-a-Toonie events, Singers Helping Singers, and more. Could we revive them?

### **Moving forward, what would you like to see with this group?**

- If we meet more often, we won't go back to ground zero each time we meet.
- The group would like to start by meeting 3-4 times per year. This is a valuable opportunity to connect with others across the province.
- Meetings should take place on different nights of the week each time. Perhaps choose August, January, and April/May to start.