



March 10, 2020 we held our usual monthly meeting, closely gathered together in the studio. A week later the Tett was closed - our studio projects stalled, workshops cancelled along with study groups and other traditional gatherings that are an important part of our community. There was much uncertainty for all of us at that time and it was difficult to make any plans.

Gradually, with the support of Tett staff and a close working relationship with the Kingston Health Unit, we established protocols for members to safely access the studio. Without workshops and our community demonstrations, we were concerned about revenue and how we would meet the ongoing expenses. Fortunately, our members promptly renewed their memberships, and many also made donations. The Tett indicated that as a landlord they would apply for rent relief if we met the eligibility requirements.

We began to turn our attention to our membership and find ways to keep connected. Initially this began as a fresh email thread each Thursday for a group who typically attend our Open Studio. The discussion and photos ranged from items found during house cleaning - gardening and occasionally some spinning or weaving. We offered some limited curb side rental and return of equipment. Members could borrow from our library (cleaning and isolation followed the return of all items).

Board members brainstormed possible changes and additions to our operations with the primary goal of meeting members' needs. One outcome from that brainstorming grew into a successful application for a Kingston Heritage Grant and spring 2021 finds us advertising for 2 part time research assistants to help with this exciting oral history and online exhibition project.

In good weather we were able to have some outdoor (distanced) gatherings for spinning and study groups. A new study group started with a focus on local fibre and dye options so foraging and farm visits made it possible to maintain our sense of community.

Our annual general meeting was delayed from May to September and we were able to have some members meet in person, and some online. In general, we transitioned our monthly meetings and open studio gatherings to virtual options which have allowed more members to participate regardless of distance and weather. However, many members are challenged with unreliable internet access. We have adopted an app that allows us to easily share photos of our work. We continue to explore how we can use technology to provide workshops and learning opportunities. As part of our provincial organization, we were to help host a conference in Kingston in October 2021 – it will now be online and organizers and instructors are working to adapt the conference experience.

Again working with Tett staff and input from the Health Unit, we organized and conducted a very successful COVID conscious sale in November. Customers told us they appreciated being able to visit in person and took the opportunity to explore and be welcomed to other areas and artists in the Tett.

COVID 19 has been a major disruptor for us as individuals and for our not for profit organization. It has reaffirmed for us, the importance of sharing and working together within a caring community. Looking forward, we have reserved dates for our November sale, and are planning to add a spring sale date as well. We are also beginning to plan for our 75th anniversary in 2023!