

April 13, 1983

To: Five-Year Planning Committee Northern Lights College

From: Fort St. John Community Arts Council

Dear Committee Members,

The cultural elements of Fort St. John have flourished in the last five years mostly due to the strength and support of Northern Lights College arts presence. The Northern Lights College Performing Arts and Visual Arts influence has given the community the professional input so necessary for development.

The Community Arts Council has increased its membership to twenty-two member groups and acts as an umbrella organization for interaction with the local, provincial, and federal funding sources and encourages local artists to improve their work. Since the Fort St. John Arts Council has worked closely with NLC arts departments and has performed according to the provincial definition of arts councils, Fort St. John received the largest portion of the \$12,000 from the B.C. Cultural Services Branch allotted to the Peace Region for arts development.

Stage North and the Performing Arts Department of Northern Lights College have increased the awareness of the performing element in the area. The development during the last five years was recently demonstrated in the "Wizard of Oz" involving more than 200 families and leaving, at least, 300 people unable to get tickets, even though additional performances were scheduled. Because of this overwhelming response to viewing local productions and the obvious increased interest in performing, a children's arts program of music, drama, crafts and dance for youngsters from 3 to 12 years of age is in the planning. Federal, provincial, and local arts funding sources will be involved in this first time program sponsored by the Fort St. John Arts Council for the North Peace children.

The Artspace has been developed through the joint effort of Tucker Enterprises, Fort St. John Arts Council and Northern Lights College Resource Development. The Artspace is the first "home for the arts" in Fort St. John and serves as an art gallery and exhibition area for arts as well as all community non-profit groups. The space is located in a prime downtown area and is used for some NLC classes and special events. The benefit of having a downtown location with an arts focus partly coordinated by the college is important to both the NLC/community relations and arts development.

Within the past three years, the Regional Arts Advisory Board has been developed with the help of the Northern Lights College Community Education Department and Arts Departments. The arts organizers province-wide are looking to the unprecedented cooperation of the Regional District with Arts Councils and NLC in establishing a regional arts body.

The fore-going developments in the arts and many more unnamed successful projects can not be measured in dollars or numbers of full-time students. The issue in Northern Lights College arts involvement is the influence the college has had in Northern British Columbia in establishing and nurturing arts development. In a time when many regions in the province are "marking time" in the arts, we have been able to create new programs, win over new audiences, set up an arts centre and provide a focus for arts organizers province-wide.

Northern Lights College should be maintaining their current strengths in the arts. Due to the economic atmosphere, we understand that increased budgets for the arts are not feasible. However, cut-backs to the point of extinction will not allow for a healthy revival when the economy improves. Therefore, the Fort St. John Community Arts Council requests the committee for the next Five-Year Plan for Northern Lights College carefully examine the importance of the arts in the quality of living in Peace Region and become totally aware of the vital role the college has played in arts development in the last five years. The next five years will be the time of establishing well the development of the last five years and creating a new arts focus as the community demands. Development will only take place with the assistance of the expertise the Northern Lights College has been able to provide.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Popesku Secretary
On behalf of the Fort St. John Community Arts Council

c.c. Peace River Liard Regional District
Bob Bennetts B.C. Arts Board
Jack Anderson B.C. Cultural Services Branch
Virginia Cleary B.C. Touring Council