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Cultural Steering Committee
**CULTURAL POLICY
DEVELOPMENT PROJECT**

Phase One
CULTURAL SCAN

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information

An overview of the work taken, including outcomes sought.

- The City of Fort St. John and the Fort St. John Community Arts Council are committed to increasing participation in the arts in the community, to increasing its economic value and organizational capacity, and assisting individual artists and arts organizations be the very best that they can be.
- Increasing the organizational effectiveness of the arts in Fort St. John requires better arts planning, and closer and more effective collaboration among artists and arts organizations, and between the arts community and the public and private sectors.
- This cultural planning is underway, and the cultural scan will move it one step closer.

In partnership with various arts and culture groups, individuals and organizations, the City of Fort St. John developed a comprehensive Cultural Scan to assess and inventory the existing local cultural groups and their programs. The process will lead the City to be able to articulate the potential and work with the cultural groups to design a Cultural Plan to reach that end through long term planning. The City of Fort St. John recognizes the importance of economic, social, educational and environmental benefits that arts, culture and heritage bring to the community and residents. The City is committed as a partner in creating the opportunities that bring greater vibrancy of arts activity and appreciation to the community.

The Development of a City of Fort St. John Cultural Plan will address the following needs:

The Arts and Culture Sector is increasingly being recognized by communities across North America and around the world as providing numerous benefits beyond the enjoyment of performer and audience. These social and economic benefits justify municipal investment in the culture sector.

- Encourages community identity and pride
- Directs revitalization
- Helps to ensure quality of life
- Assists in the recruitment and retention of residents
- Sends a positive message to potential partners
- Creates a plan for infrastructure development
- Provides opportunities for cultural participation and expression
- Measures the impact of the cultural sector
- Articulates strong leadership of the City of Fort St. John

1.2 Benefits of a developing a Cultural Plan:

- Strategically places Fort St. John in a position to take advantage of opportunities in a timely manner.
- Identifies strengths and weaknesses, gaps and opportunities.

How would you rate your level of success?
Does your group have long-term plans? What are your goals?
What are the three key activities which the City and/or its cultural groups should undertake in order to build a stronger cultural system in FSJ?

Vision:

Aboriginal galleries along Alaska Highway to tell story along Alaska Highway Scenic Bi-way.

Aboriginal tourism framework

strong market position

consumer focus

enhance status of Aboriginal tourism

Aboriginal tourism secretariat (similar Marketing Agency)

For more information on Aboriginal tourism framework, see

Needs:

Space between families to tell their own story.

Conceptual gallery

******(Sum of all activities) Urban ecology – village ecology – watershed/cultural ecology (based on Aboriginal value system – way we perceive it and interact with it) – reclamation, cumulative integrity, watershed (full integration).

Urban activity – arts, sports, business

House Identity – move forward through healthy ecology. Identity is based on boundary of family. Life experiences affect identity.

(Families have social contract to House. Interfaces between family – house – province to sustain identity of Aboriginal community).

relevance of Aboriginal culture

village/cultural/watershed ecology

Challenges:

First Nations – Area of Critical Community

family landscapes

traditional use of lands

traditional use studies – only captured Western ideas to define.

Successful

Annual reports

Markers to evaluate success (quantitative measurements)

Aboriginal quality of life increases

Family healthier

Family landscapes

Aboriginal knowledge framework (everything is connected)

Applying to tourism

Three suggestions for cultural enhancement:

non-alcohol based cultural programming

lack of children camps-

environmental/service camps who run one-week camps.

Annual camps

Spring break

Summer camps with focus areas

more book clubs/films focused on stimulating knowledge/interests.

North Peace Cultural Centre

3 ideas for changes within the arts community as pertaining to the North Peace cultural Centre (Society)

- a. A "Performing Arts Society" that can better anticipate the community's wants with regard to performances and concerts. Currently, this is handled by one person and run more as a business.
- b. A better event schedule or communications, so the many organizations within the community are not overlapping or attempting to do the same type of things at the same time.
- c. A greater commitment to both funding and physical mandates from the regional political bodies to the arts.

FSJ Assoc. for Community Living

Challenges – limited to performing at NPCC.

Internal Challenges – It takes some actors two or more years to develop enough confidence and skill to assume major roles. We cope by having the self-advocate understudy the role. Recently, the understudy was not ready for the role of Pip (the wizard's apprentice) and as the scene partner had to be out of town on the booking date of Nov 25, we had to cancel the booking for the Elves Christmas. This is a setback as we are seeking to perform for the general public.

Challenges: To find a way to maintain Cynthia's services as the demands of her role are beyond the demands of an unpaid volunteer.

Our most recent success is our premiere of The Melancholy Wizard as part of October is Community Living Month. Open to both members of the FSJ ACL and to the general public.

Long Term Plan – strategic planning is underway with Cynthia, Peter, Cindy Mohr (Executive Director) and a board member: discussions include seeking arts funding, development of promotion material and a marketing plan for 2006-2007 for The Melancholy Wizard.

Developing a stronger cultural system:

Continue to use what we have. Joining the North Peace Arts Council has helped us tremendously increase our profile.

Cost sharing for special training: Perhaps groups could share training of costs for special training, especially if the trainer is from out-of-region and travel and accommodation costs are required (we know we need training on voice projection basics).

Encourage media (print, radio, or tv) to do a series on different cultural groups in the City.

Northern Dance Theatre Society

Core of dedicated volunteers. Productive collaboration with Studio 2 Stage provides expanded opportunities in dance.

Money and the effort and volunteer hours it takes to meet our budget is an ongoing concern.

Build our membership, expand opportunities for dancers to excel. Build the profile of dance in the community.

Increase funding. Encourage opportunities for artists to display and/or perform. Promote recognition for achievements of local artists and performers. Promote interaction between local artists and those outside the community.

North Peace Potters Guild

The Potter's Guild offers the community dedicated, long-time members who are willing and eager to share their expertise. As the studio develops we will be in a position to offer instruction.

The main, and only real, challenge currently facing the North Peace Potter's Guild is a lack of adequate space. Our long term plan is to acquire a permanent expanded space to house all of our equipment, as well as a gas kiln. The space allocated to the Potter's Guild must be a dedicated, lockable space, both inside and outside.

North Peace Spinners & Weavers Guild

Strengths - Keeping Heritage skills alive – weaving, spinning, dying – and introducing them to the general public with demonstrations, classes, etc. Support as we can local arts and culture and Arts Council.

Challenges – finding suitable venues for activities, recruiting new members (to some extent), maintaining the levels of activity and learning that we aspire to. Equipment wanders off because Guild has no "home". Dependent on members to open home and if someone doesn't keep track of equipment, it can get lost.

Success: fair to moderate – we've lasted nearly 30 years and hope to see the guild continue.

Long term plans and goals – to keep the Weavers Guild alive and we and to pass it on to our "heirs". To continue to support the Arts Community of Fort St. John to the best of our ability.

Activities to support Guild – The Municipal/Arts Council Grants are invaluable. Without them, we would hard pressed to have built or maintained the library and equipment stores we have assembled over the years for members to use, nor would we have been able to bring in instructors as frequently, or of comparable scope.

It would be wonderful to have some kind of facility availability to arts groups to use as studio/meeting space. At one time, it was anticipated that what became the Cultural Centre would provide such space, but it became a reality, there was little scope for those functions – or at least, much less than had once been hoped.

FSJ Country Quilters Guild

Large group of willing quilters (for own projects)

Time

Individual participation (eg. Volunteer positions).

Dhara Bellydance Troupe Our group offers the community a chance to see and learn a form of dance that is unique. Our biggest challenge is funding. We are a very successful group, and our long term plans include: continuing to perform for the public; and one day to host dance workshops, bringing in high-calibre instructors, and students from all over BC, Alberta and the far north to FSJ for instruction, and to have professional shows.

- City might host a 'cultural fair' for the city, so that the public can be made aware of all the different groups and opportunities available.
- City should put more funding into the arts! Make it a priority.

Slainte Irish Dance Society

We promote Irish Culture and provide an excellent recreational and competitive opportunity for children and adult dancers.

Our greatest challenge is separating ourselves from the profit business of Pomeroy Academy of Irish Dance.

Our goal is two-fold: one is support all our dancers in every way to participate in competitions, and second to foster the love of Irish Dance in our community

Three key activities which the City and cultural group can build a stronger cultural system are:

Support the local Arts Council through grants or promotion of groups.

Make the cultural center more affordable for local artistic groups, in order for the space to be utilized more effectively. Example would be Tonnie Tuesday where each week a local group is offered the theatre to perform for the cost of the technician and janitorial staff.

Provide a link to the Arts Council or FSJ Now on the municipal web.

FSJ Irish Dance Society

Our society supports the Watt School of Irish Dance which provides the community with a competitive level dance school. We strive for excellence and recognition locally, nationally and internationally.

Because of our remote location our group faces challenges associated with travel. As it is not economically viable to charter a

bus, our families are responsible for the cost of driving or flying long distances so that the dancers can compete, some as far away as Ireland.

Our goal is to provide our dancers the opportunity to compete at the regional, national and international levels.

In order to build a stronger cultural system in FSJ, it would be helpful to promote more of our local talent. To show support to the community by inviting them to participate in more cultural events so that their talents could be showcased would also bring more people to some of the events that don't necessarily attract a wide audience. For example, if a local group or individual were to perform at an event that would normally only appeal to a small audience, ticket sales would go up, thus benefiting the venue, the featured performer/performance, the individual, and the community at large.

Also, the venue has been a problem in the past. Some shows need to be in the arena because of size, but the acoustics in the arena are not conducive to a good show. Either offer two shows in the cultural centre or make some changes in the arena that would greatly improve the "cultural experience".

Does the Arts Council work with the Branding the Peace initiative? This may be a way to get exposure for local artists and their wares, or may already be happening, but just thought we'd mention it...

Visual Artist – Mike Kroecher (North Peace Art Group)

Strengths

FSJ will be looked upon elsewhere as a centre of the arts
Opportunities are there – beautiful scenery, long winters for performing, rural setting, Aboriginal traditions.

Challenges

Lack of facility space
Administrative support
Need increased involvement of local people to draw upon the talent
Artists put under pressure to fill administrative duties
Transporting work is tedious.

Rate personal level of success (Mike Kroecher)

High rate of success
Happy
Painting is enjoyable
Enjoy positive response from public
Sells paintings through shows at Peace Gallery North.

Three key activities

City should not determine cultural development alone and should work in partnerships with cultural organizations. (provide support through finance/facility)

Fixed support – certain percentage (%) of the City revenue should be allocated to Arts/Culture including expansion possibilities.

If the City controls Cultural Centre – it must expand to meet growing arts needs. Not status quo.

** Areas B and C attend facilities but don't fund Arts/Culture (Regional Funding Policy?) so City carries financial burden.

FSJ Public Library

Long term vision include plans for a large community literacy building which includes:

- Library
- Literacy society
- Northern Lights College
- N.E.N.A.S.
- Cultural Centre

Ecole Central P.A.C.

Motivated group of parents/volunteers who are interested in creating and enhancing arts related programs for students, fostering culture at a very early stage in life.

Everyone is very busy with so many other things of daily life.

Level of success – very good

Start and expand an after-school arts program as well as literacy

1. Formally/officially recognize the contributions of volunteer groups towards making FSJ a better and more attractive place to live.
2. Encouragement of initiatives by e.g. providing lower rental rates for NPCC, free advertising, etc.
3. Have a center/organization which brings together all arts and cultural related activities – such as the Arts Council.

School District #60/ Central School**District**Challenges

- Education for children
- Attracting qualified staff
- Having a coherent vision for cultural programming
- Finding the necessary number of students taking fine arts programming.

Level of success

Moderately successful for cultural programming

Long-term cultural plans

?

3 key activities

- More collaboration among schools
- Stronger partnerships with community fine arts organizations
- Networking with other successful schools and districts which have excellent fine arts programs.

CentralChallenges

- Fine arts spaces for dance, music
- Qualified staff from year to year for fine arts programming
- Diverse programming and diverse population

Level of success

Moderately successful as a fine arts school

Long-term cultural plan

Fine Arts Plan in progress.

3 key activities

- Networking with other successful fine arts schools
- Creative use of space eg. Cultural Centre

Clear vision of where the fine arts school should go.