

Fort St. John Cultural Scan Results

June, 2006

Prepared by the Fort St. John Community Arts Council

Fort St. John Cultural Scan Process Overview

Representatives of the City of Fort St. John and members of the Fort St. John Community Arts Council invited cultural champions representing various cultural-related organizations in Fort St. John to develop a template that would be used to conduct a Cultural Scan. The purpose of the template was to carry out a survey to assess the current state of culture in Fort St. John. The organizations that were represented at these focus meetings included the following channels: arts, sport/health/wellness, heritage, education and business. Focus group meetings for each channel were held over six weeks, meeting once a week and a survey template was developed, under the guidance of Bob Yates, a consultant with Yates, Thorne and Associates. It was important that the template and cultural assessment be tailored to address the strengths and gaps relevant to the community of Fort St. John. The organizations were then asked to complete the survey templates and the data was compiled by the Fort St. John Community Arts Council.

Cultural Scan Summary of Findings:

Profile of Cultural Organizations

- There are **42 Arts & Culture organizations** representing advisory, education, gallery, dance, festival, film/video, literacy, heritage, music, craft, performance, textile, theatre and visual arts.
- There are **386 related arts and culture businesses**
- There are **68 sports organization**
- There are **46 Community and Wellness organizations**

Facility Assessment

- 38% of arts organizations own their space, 48% rent and 10% are homeless (relying on residential homes) and 4% have in-kind space.
- 71% of the survey respondents indicated that their facilities are inadequate or temporary
- Specific art group needs include affordable studio, storage, rehearsal and workshop/programming space

Expenditure Assessment

For the 2005-06 season expenditures by arts and cultural organizations to support facility and programming will be \$1,692,154.

- 18% for facility rental
- 25% production costs
- 36% instruction/workshop fees
- 13% travel
- 6% office and administrative supplies
- 2% advertising

Revenue Assessment

- 13% generated by grants
- 29 % through fund raising efforts
- 40% ticket sales and earned revenue

- 15% government
- 3% corporate sponsorships

Overall the survey identified significant gaps in the areas of facilities, funding and programming.

- Lack of workspace, showcase space and storage space
- Lack of programming to mentor youth
- No opportunity for gifted artists
- Lack of volunteer training
- Ethnic groups not being tapped
- Lack of corporate investment

For Cultural Scan results in greater detail see below:

What is a Cultural Scan?

A snapshot of the current state of the culture in Fort St John (See it/ Feel it/ Live it/ Believe it/ React to it). "Culture is what defines us: we do not define it, we simply try our best to describe it." The goal was to get a footprint (to borrow a term from environmentalism) of the culture of Fort St John at this moment in time. What we hoped to get from the focus groups were questions that, when answered, would show how deep an impression their cultural channel (that is, their group as well as groups like theirs) creates on the city. It was the intention that the Cultural Committee obtain a "plaster cast" of the total footprint through the answers to these questions.

Targeted Groups or CHANNELS:

- Arts – Cultural Centre, Dance Studios, Arts Groups
- Heritage – Historical Society, Museum, Aboriginal Groups, Natural Landscape
- Media – Radio, Newspaper, Television, Film Society
- Literary – FSJ Library, NL College, Lit. Society
- Community – Churches, Meeting Spaces, Diversity Society
- Schools – School District #60
- Businesses – Chamber, Realtors, Tourism, Industry
- Sports – Sports Council
- Health/Environment – Oil Wives Club

CULTURAL SCAN SURVEY RESULTS

1) A Profile of the Cultural Organizations in Fort St. John and the People Involved

The survey showed that the Fort St. John arts, culture and heritage sector contributes in a significant way to the quality of life of Fort St. John residents, according to 82 % of the respondents. The results also showed that this sector strongly contributed (above 82% for all respondents) to educational experiences and life-long learning, social and recreational opportunities as well as community involvement for Fort St. John residents from preschoolers to seniors.

Number of Arts and Cultural Organizations in Fort St. John - Overall, the City of Fort St. John has 42 Arts and Culture Organizations, 68 Sports Organizations, 46 Community/Wellness

Organizations, 365 local Arts and Culture Related Businesses, 22 Schools (which include arts programming into their Ministry approved curriculum) and 39 listed Individual Artists.

Number of residents receiving direct arts education - According to 22 arts related organizations, 2808 people or 16% of the population are directly registered in arts programming. The survey also revealed that the arts/culture sector is inextricably linked to education with 26% of all school-aged children receiving direct arts education. [This figure does not include children's library attendance figures, school based performance attendance or attendance of children to informal arts activities such as the July 1 Art in the Park Program, where 500 children, or 10% of all school aged children, are annually in attendance.]The study shows that 46% of all registered school aged children visit the library yearly, which greatly increases the number of children directly participating in arts-related activities.

Number of residents attending culture presentations - A total of 14,931 people attended performances, exhibitions or arts and cultural events which equates to 83% of the population attending arts related activities. These figures do not reflect whether different individuals attended only one event or if the same individuals were attending different events.

No statistics were calculated for public band concerts and commercial music group events although both are significant in Fort St. John. Had these figures been accessed, they could only increase the number of people attending arts related activities. The figures, however, are not broken down so that individuals are only counted once as a yearly spectator of a cultural event.

It is unknown how many residents attend annual cultural events such as July 1st Celebrations and the Fall Fair.

Gap – Musical events attendance numbers - No statistics were calculated for band concerts which would increase these statistics as well. The figures, however, are not broken down so that individuals are only counted once as a yearly spectator of a cultural event.

Fort St. John residents or 79% of the Fort St. John population is benefiting from some form of arts or cultural educational experience ranging from dance or music instruction, workshops, visual art, spinning and weaving, quilting, ice carving, and a host of other cultural opportunities.

- 27% of Fort St. John publicly listed organizations are directly related to Arts and Culture.
- 44% of Fort St. John publicly listed organizations are directly related to Sports (as listed by the City of Fort St. John website).
- 29 % of Fort St. John publicly listed organizations are directly related to Community Involvement (as listed by the City of Fort St. John's website).
- 49 % of Fort St. John Organizations (Arts/Culture, Sports and Community) are directly and indirectly related to Arts and Culture. (76 organizations).

Local partnerships that currently exist:

Partners

- *North East Native Advancing Society* – Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourist Association, Treaty 8 Tribal Association, University of Northern British Columbia, Northern BC Tourism, City of Dawson Creek, BC Assembly of First Nations, BC Indian Chiefs, Cultural Village
- *Fort St John Association for Community Living* – Theatre B.C., Fort St John Community Arts Council, Stage North Theatre Society, Peace Gallery North, Moose FM, North Peace Cultural Centre
- *Northern Dance Theatre Society* – Studio 2 Stage, Peace River North Festival Association, Fort St John Community Arts Council

- *North Peace Potters Guild* – City of Fort St John, District of Taylor, Northern Lights College, Fort St John Community Arts Council
- *North Peace Spinners & Weavers* – Fort St John Community Arts Council, Peace Country Spinners & Weavers, North Peace Potters Guild
- *Fort St. John Country Quilters Guild* – Fort St John Community Arts Council
- *The Move Dance Society* – Fort St John Community Arts Council
- *Slainte Society of Irish Dance* – Fort St John Community Arts Council
- *Fort St John Irish Dance Society* – Watt School of Irish Dance, Western Canadian Irish Dance Association, North American Irish Dance Association, Irish Dance Commission Dublin, Fort St John Community Arts Council, Rotary, local business, local storytellers, local and British Columbia musicians
- *Stage North Theatre Society* – Local Business, Theatre BC
- *Fort St. John Film Society* – Fort St John Community Arts Council, Aurora Cinema, Cosmic Grounds, Toronto Film Festival Circuit
- *North Peace Arts Group* – Peace Gallery North, Peace Arts Gallery Society, North Peace Cultural Centre
- *Fort St John Public Library* – Friends of the Library, Fort St. John Community Arts Council
- *Central School Parents Advisory Council* – Fort St John Community Arts Council, North Peace Cultural Centre, Dhara Belly Dance Troupe, School District # 60
- *School District #60* – Fort St John Community Arts Council, Northern Lights College, Doig River First Nations, Business (Construction program, Heavy Equipment program)
- *Oil Wives* – N/A
- *Sport Council* – 15 member groups, City of Fort St. John Recreation Department, Kidsport
- *North Peace Gymnastics Association* – Fort St. John Community Arts Council, Sports Council, Business, Rotary, FSJ Figure Skating Club

Volunteers

- Every group who responded relies heavily on the help of volunteers.
- Average age for most groups 25-60.
- Burnout is a factor for some – but a concern for all
- No group ever has enough volunteers.
- Most have no training other than mentoring from those who have 'been there'.
- Volunteers provide Leadership/Administration/Finance for most groups.
- Predominantly volunteers are adult females.
- One group has mandatory volunteerism in various forms.

2) Programming and Facility Assessment

Arts programming available to residents of Fort St. John is strong.

Local arts programming - The survey showed that residents of Fort St. John have access to membership of 42 arts and cultural organizations. There is diverse local programming available to the public which includes dance, music, visual arts, textile arts, theatrical and literacy instruction and programming as well as media arts (film) programming. However, film instruction is only available for students attending Bert Bowes Junior Secondary School.

Workshops/Seminars - On an annual basis, 77% of the respondents organize workshops and seminars, 73% organize community events and 86% provide scheduled programs and classes.

Open/Closed Membership - Of these programs, there is both open and closed membership. 53% of the groups have open participation, in that the general public does not have to be a member of the organization, and 47% require membership to their organization.

Advertising - The respondents utilize several venues of advertising that are available to them, with the majority of groups (65% of respondents) relying on word-of-mouth success. 35% of respondents pay for advertisements in the local paper and radio, 22% actively recruit membership, and 26% publish public newsletters. Advertising is available both in-kind and paid through the Alaska Highway News, North East News, The Northerner, Coffee Talk, Fort St. John Leisure Guide, Moose FM Radio, Standard Radio, Sheh Television and Shaw Cable Television.

Staffing - Of the 23 organizations interviewed, 30% employ staff and 22% instructors.

Materials - Materials that are necessary for programming purposes are purchased both locally and out-of-town (Grande Prairie, Edmonton and Vancouver predominantly), 33% of groups can purchase materials locally, 57% can not rely on local suppliers and 10% did not respond to this question.

Gap - The respondents addressed a gap in programming in Fort St. John for spinning and weaving, pottery and painting/drawing instruction which would be more prevalent in Fort St. John if facility space was available. In Artspace, adults are able to participate in visual arts instruction at an amateur level, but mentoring opportunities between established artists by the North Peace Arts Group are lacking. The North Peace Spinners and Weavers Guild, North Peace Potters Guild and North Peace Arts Group have trained and willing teachers to provide programming in their respectable areas but space is deterring this type of instruction. The Spinners and Weavers are able to organize yearly workshops but not instruction because they do not have permanent space to store and use their looms on a regular basis.

The North Peace Cultural Centre's design did not provide for enough space to really be a "Centre" for all ongoing arts activities. This pertains to visual and performing arts. Storage space is minimal, and due to funding, many areas must be rented out "Commercially" (meetings, etc.) rather than having these spaces as areas for additional arts endeavors and organizations within the community.

Specific Points made by respondents regarding Positive and Negative Influences on Programming

- **Positive Influences**

1. Authentic Aboriginal experiences available locally (N.E.N.A.S.)
2. The general public is becoming increasingly aware of the existence of local arts organizations.
3. Arts and culture activity supports local economy.
4. Arts and culture activity provides for social and volunteer opportunities
5. There is growing community support and interest in traditional dance forms such as Irish and Scottish Dancing.
6. The Peace River North Performing Arts Festival provides students opportunities for performing publicly.
7. There is a strong level of corporate support of theatre activity.
8. Public is open to view films that address controversial topics.
9. City of Fort St. John has a continuous influx of newcomers who are bringing new ideas and approaches.
10. The public library is active internally and provides outreach programs.

- **Negative Influences**

1. Aboriginal families need to protect cultural resources to sustain the cultural ecology distinct to Aboriginal culture.

2. Attracting and retaining new members – there is more demand than what can be accommodated.
3. Public bias – theatre groups, such as Association for Community Living, are continually working at being accepted as doing “legitimate” theatre.
4. Stereotyping – the Dhara Bellydance Troupe, like the group above, has to dispel stereotypes of the true meaning and purpose of bellydancing.
5. Rehearsal space is limited for Association of Community Living.
6. High cost in time and money for participants in some arts activity such as gymnastics and dance.
7. Lack of funds to purchase traditional costumes (Irish Dancing).
8. Convincing potential local audience to choose live theatre as a viable and preferable entertainment alternative.
9. City Council has little representation of new residents to Fort St. John.

3) Facility Assessment

There is a significant need to address cultural facility issues in Fort St. John, ranging from small to large arts and cultural organizations, from amateur to professional and for support in arts education and community-based arts.

Own/Rent Space - The survey showed that 38% arts organizations owned their own space, 48% rented space, 10% were homeless and relied on residential homes and 4% had in-kind space. The North Peace Cultural Centre is a very valuable space for public theatre productions and other live performances such as dance recitals and the Peace River North Performing Arts Festival. The Cultural Centre also provides a venue for Artspace classes and meetings held by the Fort St John Community Arts Council.

Infrastructure Concerns - Other areas of infrastructure, however, are lacking. 71% of respondents to the survey including individual artists, arts organizations and other non-profit organizations identified their facilities as “completely inadequate” or “temporary situations”. The response clearly reveals that careful consideration to the needs of small and large non-profit organizations and the wide range of genres that this includes from pottery to theatre to textile arts be ensured. Only 29 % of all respondents indicated that their facilities were “adequate for their needs”. **Particular needs were identified as a lack of storage space, rehearsal space, and affordability.** In addition, the survey addressed that there is a need for studio art space, with suitable lighting, for individual visual artists in Fort St. John.

Organization Funding Assessment

The projected total expenditures by arts and cultural organizations to support their facility and programming for 2005/2006 will be \$1,692,154.00.

The survey revealed that arts and cultural organizations have a strong economic impact on the community of Fort St. John through direct organizational spending as well as individual spending to support arts and cultural programming.

Expense Breakdown - Of these expenses, 18% of the budget will be dedicated to facility rental, 25% to production costs, 13% for travel, 2% for advertising, 36% for instructor/workshop fees and 6% for office and administrative supplies. The survey indicates that advertising is the least area of expenditure by the collective of arts and cultural organizations.

Revenues - Organizational revenues to support cultural programming are projected to total \$838,715 (excluding the North Peace Cultural Centre which is estimated at \$900,000.00 alone).

According to the respondents, 13% of the total revenues will be generated by grants, 29% by fund-raising efforts, 15% by municipal/government, 3% by corporate sponsorship and 40% through earned revenue and ticket sales.

Gap - A gap exists regarding the percentage of corporate sponsorship of arts and cultural programming and activity. It is quite low at only 3% of the total revenue generated by local arts and culture organizations.

Costs relating to costumes, supplies and instruction by individual participants.

- There are 160 competitive dancers registered in 4 dance schools each paying \$1,500/year in costumes which totals \$240,000.00.
- An additional 426 students dance recreationally who also buy or rent costumes at an average of \$150/year which totals \$63,900.00.
- On an annual basis, \$303,900 is spent in total on dance costumes by local residents of Fort St. John.
- The City of Fort St. John has 94 active actors who also buy and rent costumes from local costume businesses as well.
- It is estimated that each actor spends \$150/year on costumes which totals \$14,100 spent annually on theatre costumes.
- Travel costs incurred by competitive dancers equals \$480,000 annually and \$37,550 for gymnasts which totals \$517,550.
- The yearly cost incurred by parents to enroll their children in competitive dance or gymnastics is \$10,000/annually which totals \$1,900,000.00/annually.
- The survey also shows that 107 textile artists are spending \$600 year on supplies which totals \$64,200 spent locally at material and yarn stores.
- It was also revealed that visual artists spend an average of \$100 per painting (\$500 annually at a minimum).
- There are 39 listed individual artists in this survey but a significant number of hobby artists who would also spend \$500 on average a year on arts supplies.
- Estimation can be made that 100 individuals are spending on average \$500/year on arts supplies for a total of \$50,000.00/annually.

In-kind volunteer work by parents of children enrolled in arts programming - Individual parents who enroll their children are highly active in supporting the community and arts programming initiatives. Parents who have a child enrolled in direct arts programming spend 5 hours/week on average volunteering in-kind hours. Some of the activities that are included in-kind are: instructional time, providing free meeting space, parent use of vehicles for traveling, ticket sales, raffle sales, providing equipment or supplies such as books, web design and labour such as building maintenance, cleaning facilities and organizing events.

Overall Gaps – Programming, Facility and Funding Assessment:

- Lack of workspace in which to network and work together
- Lack of programming to mentor youth
- No local opportunity for gifted artists
- Not drawing on wonderful native talent
- Art seen as a 'minority'.
- Ethnic groups not being tapped – Mennonites, Russians, etc
- Lack of space to demonstrate/showcase.
- North Peace Cultural Centre is fully occupied.
- Need to 'tap' into the local talent in Fort St John– no need to outsource for workshops
- Art is seen as a medium that is dependant on donations.
- Lack of volunteer training.

- Lack of space in which to have interested community members come and try out your art/watch the product being created.
- The North Peace Cultural Centre's design did not provide for enough space to really be a "Centre" for all ongoing arts activities. This pertains to visual and performing arts. Storage space is minimal, and due to funding, many areas must be rented out "Commercially" (meetings, etc.) rather than having these spaces as areas for additional arts endeavors and organizations within the community.
- Corporate sponsorship should be higher (currently only 3% of total arts revenue).

4) Corporate Support Assessment

The businesses that were interviewed responded that they support community initiatives, which includes arts and culture organizations. Duke Energy and Urban Systems support local arts initiatives financially. Duke Energy has a program that involves pitch-in days where volunteers will provide labour for clean-up or revitalization projects. There were no responses from businesses indicating that a specific budget was allocated for donations. Quality of life is used as a promotional tool to attract new employees to Fort St. John by all respondents.