

Mapping Our Road to Recovery

Part 2 - Facing the Future: A Collective Arts Strategy

Institute of Southern Georgian Bay

Wednesday, May 27th, 2020, 4:30-6:00pm via Zoom

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Partners: Institute of Southern Georgian Bay, Town of Collingwood, On the Bay Magazine/The New Classical 102.9FM

Moderator: Rosalyn Morrison, Board Chair with facilitation support from **Liz Rykert, Marilyn Struthers and Christy Deere.**

Report Presenter: Sarah Filion of the Matilda Swanson Gallery, Clarksburg presented highlights Arts & Culture Report which was generated from the fall 2019 gathering. The focus of the event last fall was to learn from cultural leaders from Owen Sound, Haliburton, Midland, The Blue Mountains, and Collingwood and explore the benefits of creating an Arts & Culture Strategy for Southern Georgian Bay.

For our May 27 event, the four sector speakers who made up the panel responding to the report highlights were:

- **Business Sector:** Robert Ketchin, Partner, Georgian Hills Vineyards and Managing Director, Ketchin Marketing, The Blue Mountains
- **Nonprofit/Charitable Sector:** Rob Uhrig, Board of Directors, Meaford Culture Foundation
- **Government Sector:** Jennifer Parker, Coordinator, Community Well-being and Inclusion, Town of Collingwood
- **Philanthropic Sector:** Stuart Reid, ED, Community Foundation Grey Bruce

Number of Participants was 77 including facilitators and presenters. Communities represented were Town of Blue Mountains, Collingwood, Clearview, Grey Highlands, Meaford, Midland, Owen Sound, Port Elgin, Simcoe/Muskoka and Wasaga. Of these 49 indicated they want to be involved in the follow-up action plan.

Upon registration participants were asked to respond to the question: Why does this discussion matter to you? The key themes included: Leading or volunteering with an arts organization, looking for information on how to support COVID recovery for their business or organization, being an artist, strategies for regional collaboration; sustainability, caring about the community, wanting to support cultural development and caring about the arts.

Introduction

Rosalyn Morrison welcomed everyone to the webinar and reviewed the purpose of The Institute of Southern Georgian Bay. To do this she shared the vision of the Institute: To *“Harness the power of*

people and place in Southern Georgian Bay to grow social and economic prosperity and be the smartest, greenest, healthiest and most caring region in Ontario.”

In her comments she noted how Arts & Culture are not only an economic driver, but they also nurture healthy and creative communities. She also reviewed the geographic region covered by the Institute including Meaford, The Blue Mountains, Collingwood, Wasaga and Clearview and incorporating communities everywhere from Owen Sound to Midland. Roz acknowledged the important support of the Town of Collingwood and On the Bay Magazine/The New Classical 102.9FM as partners with the Institute in planning and delivering this Webinar.

The Opening Chat

Liz led the conversation by asking participants to respond in the chat to the question: How have Arts & Culture supported you during this time? Some key themes included: finding meaning in making things, rediscovering or spending more time in the garden or the woods.

Presentation of the Report: [Arts & Culture: a significant driver for economic growth and creative and healthy regions](#)

Sarah Filion of the [Matilida Swanson Gallery](#) was introduced and Sarah walked participants through what happened at the gathering hosted at the Marsh Street Centre in Clarksburg on September 19th, 2019. Sarah produced a set of slides to summarize the report and reminded participants that the region is rich with artists and performers but also the many makers who produce the wines and foods and experiences that make the region what it is. She also noted that everyone in a community, whether they see themselves as artists or not, have a natural born ability to appreciate the beauty around us. Sarah emphasized the importance of Arts & Culture in our lives. It is an economic driver for employment and supporting local businesses and tourism in the region. It also impacts creativity and innovation in our towns and communities.

Sarah reviewed panelist’s and moderator highlights (Sandra Dupret, John Hartman, Dean Hollins, Erica Angus, Stuart Reid) and some key data points they shared with the audience. For example: 77% of Canadians agree arts experiences help them feel a part of their community, people who attend live music have a stronger sense of belonging and, those who rate arts and culture in their community as “excellent” are three times more likely to report and strong sense of belonging. Other data shared included the story of the Haliburton School of Art + Design which started with 14 students and has grown to 2400 students each summer and 100-150 students during the winter months, and the Midland Cultural Centre which has over 75,000 visitors each year attending festivals, concerts, art classes and more. It was also noted how these facilities create partnerships, build relationships with other businesses, and increase economic activity. Theatre Collingwood was also highlighted as a local professional theatre company which has grown since 1984 to having 5,000 subscribers and, in 2019, ten productions.

The lively Q&A that followed the panel discussion resulted in two key themes:

- a) How a Regional Arts Strategy leverages impact, and
- b) The importance of creating a cultural destination.

The top ten recommendations coming out of the event were:

- 1) Establish a follow-up meeting to continue to build relationships. There seems to be a consensus that we have the opportunity to be stronger together.
- 2) Gather arts, business, and government leaders, as well as philanthropists to contribute to the shaping of the strategy and include it in all the municipalities Economic Development planning.
- 3) Conduct fan-tours for Council members and municipal staff department heads. Consider the changes to Development Charge and the concerns of how they may be allocated. Make connections with the emerging Midland Cultural Alliance being supported by multiple municipalities.
- 4) Establish a much-needed Regional Professional Network to discuss exchange of programs and promotion, development of local statistics (aggregate) to build the business case. Keep it local. Include librarians especially those that are GLAMS (galleries, libraries, archives and museums) such as Blue Mountain's public library.
- 5) Create a cultural mapping process to identify assets and underscore gaps. Learn from the Midland and North Simcoe experience.
- 6) Ensure that ideas expressed, including a regional arts council and regional arts centre be explored.
- 7) Get all the municipal councils behind the idea of creating a Regional Arts Strategy and contribute funds.
- 8) Consider networking and pairing of events on the same weekends using an integrated website and advertising: visual arts, musical entertainment/theatre, plus dining opportunities/sports.
- 9) Continue to link the regional transportation. Regional transportation to arts events/ tours/ theatre would start expanding the horizons for the region's artists.
- 10) Don't forget about Clarksburg also known as "Artsburg"! Great examples. Build 100% grassroots art organizations and galleries.

The final slide in Sarah's presentation included some additional data points and more about the benefits of creating a Regional Arts Strategy.

The Future of Arts & Culture

- 270,000 Ontario jobs are in culture (4% of the workforce); 41.2% of culture jobs in Canada.
- Culture sector contributes \$25.7B GDP in Ontario; 47.8% of Canada's total culture GDP1.
- 65% of Ontario business leaders say that a thriving arts and culture scene makes it easier to attract top talent to their communities.
- Ontario is home to 39%3 of the Canadian population. Current federal arts and culture investments don't reflect this population growth or our diverse cultural landscape.



Benefits of creating a Regional Arts Strategy

- Accessing, connecting, and sharing more data, knowledge, expertise, and resources,
- Identifying key elements of the arts ecosystem to nurture growth,
- Showcasing a broader range of talent to expand audiences,
- Attracting more investment from major sectors including: business, non-profit/charitable, government, and philanthropy, and
- Nurturing a healthy and creative next generation.

Each panelist was asked to respond to three questions and to share an example of how the major sectors of business, nonprofit/charitable, government, and philanthropy are interconnected and how the interconnection can help move things forward. The three questions were:

From an Arts & Culture perspective what is/are the most important lessons learned through this pandemic?

What resonates most for you in the Arts & Culture Report?

What is the most critical step in advancing a Regional Arts & Culture Strategy?

The first panelist to respond was **Robert Ketchin**, Partner, [Georgian Hills Vineyards](#) and Managing Director, Ketchin Marketing, The Blue Mountains. He represented the business sector.

Robert opened his comments by acknowledging Sarah for her presentation and moving right to the first question by commenting “Well done us!”. During this time, he noted how those who could have kept their businesses open, while at the same time making adjustments for COVID-19 for themselves, families and staff. The pandemic has hit the service industry the hardest and this includes many low-paying frontline staff. He shared how arts and recreation are a big part of tourism and named many aspects of the experience in the region including sports such as skiing and hockey, restaurants and theatre, and noted how he includes sports as a part of culture. In thinking about making a trip to the Blue Mountains people’s health and safety is the biggest concern, including the health and safety of our own team as well as guests. We need to announce we are open. As truly an arts and culture region we have an amazing talent pool making and creating and producing as well as a beautiful shoreline, the mountains, trails and golf courses.

Robert noted that to recover from COVID-19 we need to take inventory of the talent pools, assets, and resources. These include a broad spectrum of things including our art galleries, restaurant facilities, hotels, staff, and staff housing. We need to do a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) of what it would take to get back up to 100%. We need to tell the world what we have, together. We need to sit collectively and decide what we need to do and build the plan.

The second panelist was **Rob Uhrig**, Board of Directors, [Meaford Culture Foundation](#) representing the Nonprofit/Charitable Sector.

For Rob, the most important lesson has been how dependent we are on the Arts & Culture sector. Meaford Hall attracted 13,500 people last year and fifty-five percent were non-local. Research has shown how a cultural tourist will spend twice as much per trip. This impacts all sectors. Rob gave an example of the impact of the pandemic on musicians as an example of how it has impacted the sector as a whole. Quoting data from the [Tourism Industry Association of Ontario](#), Rob highlighted that 100% of musicians reported losing a portion of their income when the pandemic hit. Twenty percent lost 100% of their income, while another 27% lost 75% to 99%. Ninety percent lost at least one live performance cancellation, and 32% lost more than 13 cancellations. He noted with optimism that every similar disaster has been followed by a period of great economic recovery and that we need to be prepared for that recovery.

One of the things that resonated in the report for Rob was how the region of approximately 100,000 people has one of the greatest concentrations of artists in Ontario. Stating while statistics aren't sexy they are important to illustrate the case. He shared that:

“On a provincial level, a 2016 Stats Can report showed that the Arts & Culture sector represented \$27.5 billion or 3.7% of Ontario’s GDP. To put that in perspective that is larger than the Utilities industries; mining, quarrying, oils and gas extraction industries; and agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting industries combined!

It comprises almost 287,000 jobs in Ontario; and 89% of North American tourists with travel experience in Ontario seek an arts or culture activity on their trips. Most importantly, the Southern Georgian Bay area is within an approximate 2-hour drive for 8 million of Ontario’s 14.5 million residents”.

We are extremely well-positioned to attract those valuable arts and culture tourists.

Moving forward Rob stated clearly the importance of taking a co-operative approach for the region. We need a strategic plan that does not just understand but promotes a cooperative approach to attracting arts and culture tourists to our region. He reminded participants that arts and culture tourists will travel and attend multiple events. As he said, we can't be myopic.

The biggest lesson from COVID is how invested in culture we are.

The third panelist representing the government sector was **Jennifer Parker**, [Coordinator, Community Well-being and Inclusion, Town of Collingwood](#). In addressing the most important lessons learned Jennifer highlighted the resiliency she has seen in the community including the launch of [Collingwood Together Volunteer Database](#) that matches volunteers with organizations or services that need them during the pandemic. She also noted the ability of residents, local business and public service organizations to assist with finding or in some cases making masks, gowns and face shields as well as sourcing the supply and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE). The community collectively shared their praise of essential workers through window messages, parades of fire trucks and the banging of pots and pans. She described how arts and culture was brought alive with poetry readings, murals and messages of hope found on the many community trails. Jennifer described how we challenged ourselves to be innovative. In looking to leaders, connectors, doers and change-makers together she described how the community began to transform systems.

The thing that most resonated from the report was the theme of collaboration and building a common brand for the region. As a self-described science geek, she singled out the concept of an “arts ecosystem” capturing the complexity and interconnectivity of this moment in time. The other theme that really stood out for her is the role arts and culture plays in supporting a sense of well-being. Jennifer cited the Canadian Index of Well-being which includes Arts & Culture as one of eight categories it tracks to measure health and well-being. Jennifer also described other examples of where the literature on well-being references arts and culture including:

- Stimulating the regeneration of economically or socially depressed neighbourhoods
- Empowering youth
- Supporting independent living of seniors
- Building positive perceptions of one's health

- Offering a therapeutic modality for those who have suffered trauma
- Inviting cultural engagement and creative expression
- Creating a platform for communication

In terms of critical next steps Jennifer referenced an approach called [Collective Impact](#). It is an approach to collaboration that seeks to identify five key aspects of collaboration including: a common agenda; shared measurement; mutually reinforcing activities; continuous communication; and the support of a backbone organization. Jennifer shared how they have created the Social Service COVID-19 Roundtable inclusive of organizations from across sectors including health, food access/security, safety, housing, mental health, faith-based organizations, employment, disability, early childhood and municipal government. Together they have worked to track needs, provide support, build a communication campaign. It is through collaboration we can have the greatest impact.

The fourth and final panelist, **Stuart Reid**, Executive Director, [Community Foundation Grey Bruce](#) (CFGB) represented the Philanthropic Sector. Using slides, Stuart described the Foundation, its relationship to Community Foundations Canada (CFC) and its involvement in supporting arts and culture. As part of a network of Community Foundations across Canada, CFGB is guided by CFC's mission of "Relentlessly pursuing a future where everyone belongs." This is being accomplished through three key approaches: Shifting Power; Strengthening Community; and Taking the Long View. CFC and their CEO Andrea Dick have set a tone through the pandemic to act more boldly than ever before recognizing the need to give more than they have ever given. They see the pandemic as a marathon rather than a sprint.

A survey of local charities and non-profit organizations in Grey Bruce revealed 87% of respondents revealed the cancellation of fundraising events a challenge; 40% of organizations are facing financial difficulty; 60% have closed until restrictions are lifted; the loss of income and jobs was identified as the biggest concern; and, they reported collaboration and new ways of working will be the key to moving forward. More details are in the slide presentation.

Commenting on these findings, Stuart noted the long-term concerns organizations identified. For example: the impact of closure or the potential need to close, the levels of activity, responding to increasing need, and, the difficulty of getting volunteers involved due to social distancing.

Stuart reviewed two funding opportunities: The Investment Readiness Programs for social enterprise, a loan program, and The Emergency Community Support Fund to agencies serving vulnerable populations disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

Going forward Stuart identified collaboration as key. He acknowledged the ongoing challenges of access to WiFi in rural settings, understanding the key role technology will play going forward. Stuart noted with technology what is local can sometimes also be global, supporting people to find common interest and support.

At the end of the panelist responses to the report Rosalyn Morrison asked panelists to share an example of how they have seen the four sectors in society working together.

Robert Uhrig described the response in Meaford, where he is on the board of the Meaford Culture Foundation. He described how the organization had to pivot, supporting people to share music on social media and the Chamber of Commerce helping business to access PPE. They have also set up a regular

time for the local MP and MPP to have a Zoom call with local business to help them understand what is happening and how they can access resources and supports. He noted a local recovery group has included the BIA and the Cultural Association pulling together. He called for the opportunity to share across municipalities so people can learn from the experiences of others. He indicated government can be top down and having a way to have regular opportunities for residents to communicate with government would be helpful. He also said he was disappointed to see so many events cancelled and hoped more could pivot to the online venues.

Roz shared how Arts & Culture played a major role in Toronto's tourism recovery post-SARS 2003/2004 and brought together different levels of government, business, and non-profit organizations <https://www.civicaaction.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/T03Assessment.pdf>

The possibility of a roundtable of local municipalities was identified to share information and collaborate.

We need to think about a ten-year goal. We need to consider how to engage the rich talent pool we have and develop a ten-year plan for recovery together. One participant in the chat asked: Given that discussions and recommendations for developing a regional arts strategy and also a regional arts centre have gone on locally for over 30 years, what can we now do differently that gains traction? Another said: I agree Sue Miller, businesses and industry can collaborate with the region's arts community to cross market - that is essential.

Also in the chat, looking at other regional models was recommended: There are some excellent regional models out there Alberta The Big Three skiing... which involves communities of Canmore, Banff, Lake Louise, Jasper all feeding to a centre goal. Includes infrastructure accommodation, staff, transportation, collaboration with all stakeholders on a joint mission. Passionately!!

We need to find ways to engage youth and vulnerable populations in the process. Youth were also identified as a population to engage in the webinars. One suggestion from the chat was: On Marilyn's vulnerable people question and using technology, that is something the local entrepreneurial community might help facilitate. Maybe it is hubs and orgs that help deliver the technology connection.

From the chat it was noted: A regional post-COVID plan will help us to announce we are open for business.

Other Chat Highlights

There was also a rich stream of ideas and connections happening on the chat supported by the facilitation of Christy Deere and Marilyn Struthers. Some of the highlights include:

On the meaning of art and culture during this time:

The pandemic has given permission for everyone to be an artist without boundaries. Advertising has picked up on this which has served to normalize it. Arts has also been a way of recording our journey through the pandemic. Art knows no boundaries! That's the beauty of it! Arts & Culture is universal! I am amazed at how creative people are being and expressing themselves during this time.

The opportunity by local museums to collect artifacts and experiences: A museum in Guelph has requested that community members share items that will create a current and future historical representation of this unprecedented time. You can share your COVID experiences through the Collingwood Museum as well: <https://www.collingwood.ca/culture-recreation-events/heritage-museum/collingwood-museum>

Kudos to Town of Collingwood on Developing the Economic Support & Recovery Task Force paper worth reading deals with COVID impact outcomes and action to get us all back on track!
https://www.collingwood.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/economic_support_and_recovery_task_force_-_presentation_-_may_19_2020.pdf

The role of local news coverage. CollingwoodToday.ca and many of the other Village Media sites are making efforts to bring many things Online to a VIRTUAL version of events with great success .. We are bringing LOCAL news to everyone here in the area .. Covid has brought everyone looking for news online daily As you can imagine readership is up ... now to 200,000 users and 1.2 Million pageviews.. If anyone would like to chat please connect with me ... stuart@collingwoodtoday.ca

It was acknowledged by participants that once you hear the conversation you see how everything is connected.

Next Steps

Roz reminded participants about the next session and acknowledged partners and volunteers who have been working to produce these webinars.

The next one will be **June 10th** and will focus on **Strategic Investments: Municipal Collaboration for Recovery**. The questions that will be explored include: What is a strategic investment? How are we going to build back better than we were before? How do we create a more sustainable future here in the region?

There will be one more session on **June 24th** which will set out the plans as we look to the fall.