

THE POWER OF ARTS AND CULTURE:

A Strategy for Southern Georgian Bay and Beyond



INTRODUCTION

For a community of close to 100,000 persons, our region enjoys one of the largest concentrations of artists in Ontario. Considered by many as one of the most important sectors for building a vibrant and identifiable Southern Georgian Bay, we have seen that arts and culture binds us together. From woodturners to painters and photographers, from sculptors to ceramic and textile artists, from jewelry designers to actors, musicians, dancers, improv artists and writers, these remarkably talented people capture the beauty of our natural environment, share our stories with one another, reflect our history, and inspire us in so many ways.

Municipal boundaries are not barriers for artists. Shows appear in galleries, public spaces, halls, theatres, and arts centres situated in Meaford, The Blue Mountains, Collingwood, Grey Highlands, Clearview, and Wasaga Beach. The work is created, gathered, and presented from artists located in towns, settlements and rural areas across the region. And, this spirit shows what's possible...even during a pandemic.

Many great arts, culture, dining, and entertainment success stories exist across our region including: Blue Mountain Village, the Apple Pie Trail, Theatre Collingwood, Blue Mountain Foundation for the Arts, Butter Gallery, Meaford Hall Arts and Cultural Centre, Matilda Swanson Gallery and other Clarksburg/Thornbury art galleries, Creative Simcoe Street, Simcoe Street Theatre and the Tremont Studios, Gayety Theatre, Marsh Street Centre, and the South Georgian Bay Music Foundation. The arts and culture sector is increasingly recognized in many studies as a key factor in economic development, including its multiplier effect, which enhances economic activity for many other businesses.

Arts and culture, in all its forms, make our communities better places to live by helping people to better understand their identity and to connect through shared arts experiences. Through increased collaboration, communication and the building of a stronger network of support for arts and culture across Southern Georgian Bay, we aim to benefit all people, leaving no one behind.

Rationale: Why Create a Strategy?

- To access, connect, and share more knowledge, expertise, resources, and data,
- To map key elements of the arts ecosystem and unique regional influences to nurture growth,
- To showcase a broader range of talent to build and expand audiences regionally and beyond,
- To attract more investment from major sectors including: business, government, nonprofit/charitable, and philanthropy, and
- To nurture a healthy and creative next generation.

The Starving Artist Always Feeds Their Audience

Last year I was in my bed, and all around my bed
Canada was falling and falling
And I could hear America calling and calling
And I was told to turn inward but my insides were
appalling
And so I laid there, me and all the countries, stalling
and stalling

Too much time is frightening when you know it's
still never enough
To dig up the old roots, plant something that is
both soft and tough
So what do we do, the ones who were born to
create and make new,
When we woke up surrounded by too much space
and saw we might not be able to...

Well it is no wonder that the first thing beauty often
steals is our breath
As if to say doing anything, even inhaling, will bring
this moment to its death
Something beautiful, truly beautiful, makes
everything around it stop
And if you turn that equation on its head then
everything stopping, is what yields a new crop

A new batch of beauty, brand new ground for
artists to harvest
The ground might feel dense but, look behind, that
has never stopped us
Why do you think it is that more poetry gets written
during a war?
Because necessity is the mother of all invention,
and inventors artists definitely are

Taking life, our art, our performances, keeping
them full while fitting them on a screen
Taking forgotten lost ones and commemorating
them to give all this death some meaning
Taking reality and turning it around, making it a
place we still all want to live in
Taking the future and imagining it into someplace
different than where we've ever been

It is in these times that we refuse to wait for broken
systems to take care of us
We do it for each other, building virtual bridges
through devotion, love and trust
because we know community is not a plus
It is a must
I say these same words to no one and feel them
turn to dust
But I say this poem to you, offer it up, and
somewhere along the way it gains its potential
Somewhere artists are re-sketching what is
important, re-writing what it means to be "essential"

Without huge credentials we can still be influential,
because the ability for art to say the inexpressible
and bring about healing is exponential
Look at the articles written about the Inaugural
poem versus those on the President and tell me
that art is inconsequential
Right now, we the hopeful creators, are standing
on some kind of frontline even though it is
unconventional

Artists are crucial to the world we are hoping exists
beyond COVID-19
Who else can put into words, sound, and colour
that which we can't even see?

So to you, just to you, I say thank you, I need you
Thrive might have an "i" in it, but it's a term created
for two
Like how the wind planted, the rain watered, and
they both watched as beauty grew
So too, right now, in this world that appears to be
all blue, we need many artists making us see all the
different hues

Claudia Ferraro, Poet Laureate, Town of Collingwood

This poem was written to inspire the final session for
the creation of the Regional Arts & Culture Strategy

[Click here for the video](#)

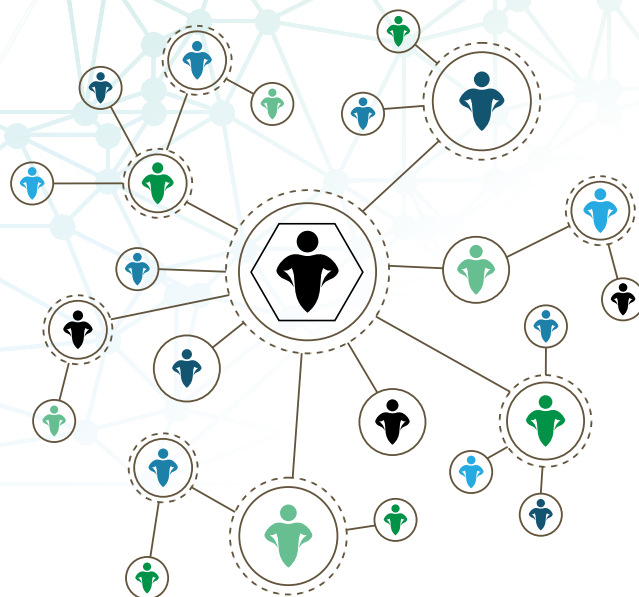
MISSION

To network creatives in Southern Georgian Bay to collaborate, support, and empower the arts and culture community to thrive.

The strategy exists to connect artists, makers, writers, performers, organizations and businesses to collaborate, support, and empower the arts and culture sector of Southern Georgian Bay. This happens through:

- weaving together a network of networks,
- creating a branding and marketing campaign, and
- building and sharing online digital resources to map and support the network as a region.

The network reflects a wide breadth of practice from those just emerging in their discipline or practice to people who have many years of experience.



CONTEXT

Multi-sector Community Discussions:

In September of 2019, the Institute of Southern Georgian Bay convened a group of 60 people from business, government, nonprofit and philanthropic sectors to learn about the impact of arts and culture on the lives of people living in Southern Georgian Bay. The participants generated 10 recommendations. Those recommendations were set to be acted upon when the pandemic began in 2020. The Institute responded by holding a virtual event for the arts and culture community as part of a larger series: *Mapping Our Road to Recovery*. The event revealed the importance of arts and culture in supporting wellness, often providing the place people turned to when they needed inspiration or hope. Jennifer Parker, Coordinator, Community Well-being & Inclusion, Town of Collingwood stated: "The pandemic has reinforced the importance of models such as collective impact, of building frameworks for collaboration wherein there is a shared vision, coordinated and reinforcing activities, continuous communication, measurement, and a backbone organization/facilitator."

Research and "Getting Through the Pandemic" Check-Ins:

Research shows "there is evidence that engagement with artistic activities, either as an observer of the creative efforts of others or as an initiator of one's own creative efforts, can enhance one's moods, emotions, and other psychological states" (Stuckey and Nobel, 2010). A substantial review of research done by the World Health Organization in 2019 concluded "Engaging with the arts can be beneficial for both mental and physical health" (Fancourt and Finn, 2019).

In the summer of 2020 a small group gathered to start building the strategy. Given the pandemic and the uncertainty it created, people were not ready to volunteer for working groups. Instead the building of the strategy was developed by connecting on a regular basis. Members of the arts community were invited to a series of four check-ins: ***Getting Through the Pandemic – Connect, Support, Survive and Thrive***. By "arts" we mean: ***an artist, maker, writer or performer or people working in an organization or business that supports and contributes to the arts and culture of Southern Georgian Bay.***

Over the course of four events, the participants confirmed many of the original ideas from 2019 as important next steps. These gatherings enabled relationships to develop and created opportunities for collaboration, partnership, and learning. ***At the one-year anniversary of the pandemic, the recognition of the role arts and culture has played in soothing the weary, inspiring the isolated and calming the restless has been undeniable.*** Arts and culture has also brought beauty, life and creativity into the lives of everyone. Through arts and culture, we can find a source of well-being even when the challenges are great. The arts also provide a bridge to diverse perspectives. Through creative expression, rooted in one's own cultural traditions and heritage, each artist contributes to a wide spectrum of shared experiences, building our community story, fostering inclusion and belonging.

As an arts community in Southern Georgian Bay at this point in time, the future may not be entirely clear. What is known are the core elements needed to support the community to continue to grow, reflect and adapt.

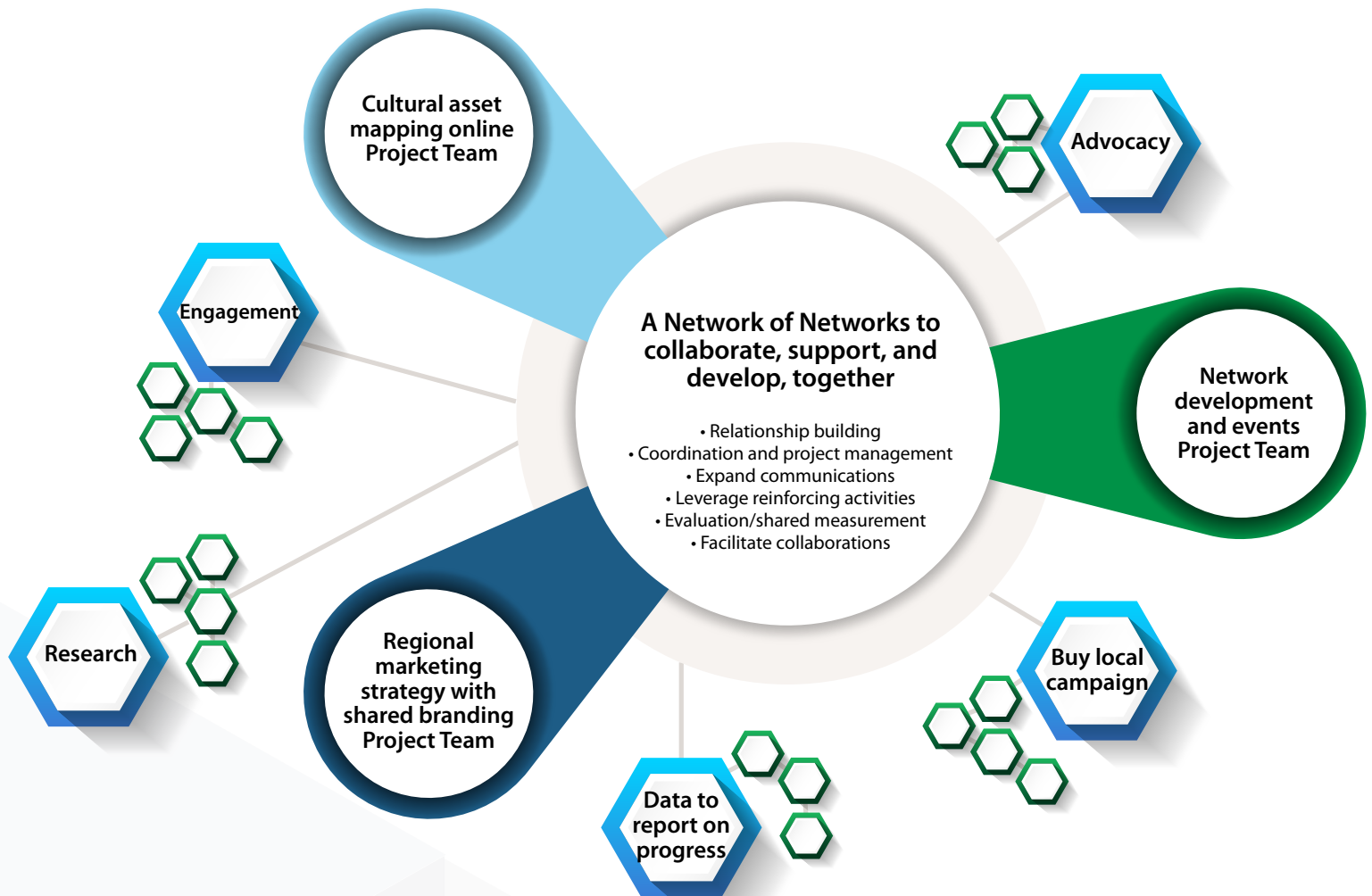
REGIONAL STRATEGY CORE ELEMENTS

- A Network of Networks to promote collaboration, mutual support and development,
- A marketing strategy and shared branding including a buy local campaign, and
- Online digital resources to map cultural assets and support the Network.

Regional Arts Action Network

MISSION: To network creatives in Southern Georgian Bay to collaborate, support, and empower the arts and culture community to thrive.

With thanks to B. Butler, First 2000 Days Network



NETWORK CHANGE LEADS

Active leaders creating interactions amongst nodes in the Network
– create alliances, link back to core in a structural way.



NETWORK PARTICIPANTS

Individual, organization or initiative participating in activity to support the Network's shared measures and mutually reinforcing activities.



CHANGE COLLECTIVE

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

1 Name and launch the network with clear definitions of membership and plan for how it will structure and govern itself reflected in a Terms of Reference. The Design Team that has been leading development of the Strategy has been using the name Regional Arts Action Network or RAAN. This needs to be revised to reflect the geographic location and embrace the power and benefit of being a part of the network.

2 Identify and confirm key partners to assist with administration and support. Reach out to municipalities, bordering regional arts and culture groups and networks to maintain and/or establish relationships and opportunities for mutual collaboration.

3 Develop and support a regional marketing campaign with a common tagline and logo.

4 Develop a common online platform to gather and share the cultural asset map (initial and ongoing), link to regional events and marketing and, provide tools such as online discussions, an electronic newsletter and information about the regional arts and culture community.

5 Identify key subsectors and leaders in each area to invite to join and engage with the network.

6 Identify an initial set of activities and actions. For example, a regional festival or set of celebrations, a recognition occasion or system to identify and celebrate people and activities or an annual learning event or professional conference to convene all parts of the community.

7 Identify what success would look like for each core strategy element and develop data to track and report progress.

8 Advocate to regional municipalities for collaboration, shared understanding of the importance of the sector, and the allotment of resources to support the network.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) reports that “arts, culture and heritage improve the ability of municipal governments to influence local economic development by attracting and retaining a skilled and talented workforce.” Policy Statement on Social-Economic Development, FCM, March 2016.

Cultural Activities



KEY VALUES

- **Shared Leadership** - within networks everyone is potentially a leader. Leadership is fluid and reflects the development of small projects and collaborations that build and support the network.
- **Complex Reciprocity** - this concept describes the notion that within networks one offers resources, skills and talent to the project or opportunity at hand without assumed direct reciprocity knowing the larger system being supported will offer or extend needed support or resources in the future.
- **Peer-to-peer** - values the equity of each person within the network and the contribution they can bring regardless of formal structures or hierarchical systems that might otherwise attribute power and control. Aiming for an inclusive group that reflects the diversity of our community. A peer-to-peer approach is one that values one for who they are and what they can offer to the network.
- **Self-organization** - this concept results from the emergent interaction of autonomous members of the network engaging and interacting with one another based on the ideas, topics, domains and areas of interest that drive their passion and inspire their intellect and growth. The system reflects the patterns established through these interactions as well as the natural cycles of the creative process from ideas to development to presentation and income generation.
- **Mutual sharing and support** - with networks, the value of sharing and support is the basis upon which one builds trust and honesty and shared vulnerability. Seeking to extend support to those who seek it and together strengthening creative opportunities and potential impact is what drives the generative and adaptive nature of networks. The values and a network structure reflect the natural and organic ways the arts community grows and adapts over time. The network of networks approach supports the intentional collaboration across boundaries within and adjacent to the region.

STRATEGY DESIGN TEAM MEMBERS

This document was created through the collaborative effort of a dedicated design team and the many people who participated in online fall and winter events of 2020 and 2021. Together, we reflected, we laughed, and we imagined a collective future, where the arts and culture of Southern Georgian Bay would thrive. The Design Team Includes:

Erica Angus, Executive Director, Theatre Collingwood, Arts Advocate

Patrice Clarkson, Artist, Photographer, Poet, and working on being a Videographer - Join me in Creating!

Susan Cook, Co-Chair and Manager, Blue Mountain Foundation for the Arts, Board member of The Institute of Southern Georgian Bay, and Arts Advocate

Victoria Evans, Passionate about the role of arts and culture in empowering local communities, Operations Coordinator, Midland Cultural Centre

Dean Hollin, Co-Chair and Entertainer, music historian, broadcaster, emcee and educator

Heidi Light, Author, Artist, Counsellor and Advocate heidilight.com

Lory MacDonald, ART POWERED Helping people stay connected to their Arts Community, Artist, President of Artfest Ontario, Arts Educator, www.shop.artfestontario.com

Rosalyn Morrison, Chair, The Institute of Southern Georgian Bay www.tisgb.com

Stuart Reid, Co-Chair. Stuart believes that access to the arts is essential for a healthy community

Kate Russell, Creative community activator and volunteer with The Institute of Southern Georgian Bay

Liz Rykert, Systems Change Facilitator and volunteer with The Institute of Southern Georgian Bay

Beverley Smith, an artist in a few mediums. While loving the solitude being an artist brings, Bev also loves her involvement in the Arts and Culture Council in Blue Mountains, especially hanging shows at the L.E. Shore Gallery

The team also benefited from the dedicated support of **Brandon Houston**, Collingwood Foundry who provided the Zoom Platform, unflappable technical support, and advice, and the expert facilitation skills of **Christy Deere** who helped both with shaping the online events and animating them with skill and aplomb.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Top Ten Recommendations from Arts and Culture Event September 2019

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.

Appendix 2: Ideas generated by participants from the four Check-In events 2020/2021

Develop local networks and connect them together into RAAN (working title)

- E.g. www.tinyartcollective.ca is a collective working together

promoting each other through social media, they also are planning small events together for the summer, mentorship, strength in numbers; sharing experiences; would like a Q & A site for artists to get answers

- Support One Another, Work together e.g. Saugeen Valley Artists Group once a month online
- Zoom rooms for arts sectors
- Networking to complement events, not competing - share details with each other
- Collaboration across region
- Stop working in isolation
- More of these kinds of meetings - maybe specific topics

Develop digital shared resources and assets

- Creative online fundraising events (Blythe 10x10 painting sale was an example, gave tax receipts to artists who donated a piece full value of sale)
- Collective access to online sales of art
- Develop and share digital resources – learning, grants (Digital Mainstreet), tools
- Resources list of assets available - space/meetings/groups that meet/arts groups online with speakers etc.
- Venue availability list for outdoor/large space to meet the requirements of space restrictions etc. (similar to Arts Build - Space app)
- Clarify rules on gatherings outside, summarizing and sharing public health information

Create local marketing campaign including "Buy Local"

- Reinforce how important it is to buy local, support local artists
- Develop "Tourism at Home" Campaign
- Make sure artist's supplies remain available locally, support your local arts supply store
- Reach out to media (radio) to help coordinate
- Example from CBC Windsor – Performance and hot meals

Appendix 3: Arts and Culture Research and Mapping in Southern Georgian Bay

Putting Culture on the Map: South Georgian Bay Cultural Mapping Project by AuthentiCity, 2010

This project was a regional collaboration among the Towns of Collingwood, The Blue Mountains, Wasaga Beach and Clearview Township. It was part of a larger Regional Economic Development Strategy funded by the Ontario Ministry of Economic Development that will build on the assets of the four communities; guide economic development decision-making; and facilitate investment attraction and economic growth in the Region.

Led by municipal staff, planners and local stakeholders it documents the impact of the Arts and Culture Sector and makes a series of recommendations to further advance the impact of

Arts and Culture in the region. These recommendations included building a regional Cultural Roundtable and local network of artists and organizations and businesses supporting the arts and culture sector. It also recommended online resources to support ongoing capacity to map and share regional arts and culture assets. The report includes a helpful framework and matrix for organizing and analyzing cultural and arts assets.

Grey Highlands Culture Plan, 2013

This plan was created to develop a clear focus on culture in Grey Highlands. It includes specific targets and activities to drive both access to cultural resources for visitors and local residents. Cultural resources are linked in the report to their impact on economic and environmental outcomes. The report establishes benchmarks for tracking progress and maps the specific cultural assets in Grey Highlands.

Appendix 4: More Research, Resources, and References

- a) Evidence for Arts and Culture Contributing to Well-being
- b) The Value of Arts and Culture
- c) The Impact of COVID-19

Evidence exists that demonstrates the benefits of a vibrant and healthy arts and culture sector. This includes creating and sustaining local employment and economic development, attracting talented people to a region and encouraging them to stay and, building community engagement, social equity and inclusion (Ontario Arts Council, Meaford Culture Foundation).

As people have locally turned to the arts to make their way through the pandemic it has primarily been local municipal councils who have led the way with funding support and infrastructure (Jeannotte, 2021). As we emerge from the pandemic, research by University of Ottawa researcher M. Sharon Jeannotte suggests “that culture, arts, heritage and media should be assigned a more prominent role in the ‘new normal’ as the world plans its recovery from the pandemic.”

Jeannotte also references sustainability in her analysis of the role of the arts sector. To address the breadth and complexity of the four areas you need a broad and inclusive approach.

New research by artist and researcher David Maggs for the Metcalf Foundation and the City of Toronto, points out “the sector is dealing with the effects of not just one disruption, but four: COVID-19, rising social unrest, the digital revolution and the sustainability crisis”.

In an article describing the coming research by Maggs titled *Eight Ways to Fix the Arts Industry, Postpandemic*, the need for new models and collaboration is highlighted (The Globe and Mail, March 13, 2021). Maggs notes the need to recognize when one is holding on to old ways of doing things simply because they are comfortable. There is an opportunity now to

allow our organizations and the individuals who lead them to adapt to the new realities we see ahead. Together we can build the systems and venues and methods we need to generate and experience the richness of the arts and culture within and around us going forward.

a) Evidence for Arts and Culture Contributing to Well-being

Meaford Culture Foundation - Art Facts

<https://meafordculture.ca/performing-art-statistics/>

Public Benefits and Social Impacts of the Performing Arts:

- 95% of Canadians believe that arts are an important way of helping people think and work creatively.
- 95% of Canadians believe that arts experiences are a valuable way of bringing together people from different languages and cultural traditions.
- 94% of Canadians believe that arts and culture make a community a better place to live.
- Festival attendees are twice as likely as non-attendees to volunteer, even accounting for other factors.
- In general, arts goers have better health, higher volunteer rates, and stronger satisfaction with life.
- Adults who attend live arts performances, art museums or art galleries are far more likely than non-attendees to vote [38% more, in the case of live arts attendees], volunteer, or take part in community events.
- Participation in the arts, especially as audience, predicts civic engagement, tolerance and altruism.

Fancourt, Daisy and Saoirse Finn. Health Evidence Network synthesis report 67, 2019, ISBN 978 92 890 5455 3 CHF 25.00 Order no. 13400211

Can you dance your way to better health and well-being? For the first time, WHO studies the link between arts and health. World Health Organisation. Available from: <https://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/sections/press-releases/2019/can-you-dance-your-way-to-better-health-and-well-being-for-the-first-time,-who-studies-the-link-between-arts-and-health>

Quotes from report: In relation to health research, engagement with the arts has been proposed as consisting of five broad categories:

- performing arts (e.g. activities in the genre of music, dance, theatre, singing and film) (4);
- visual arts, design and craft (e.g. crafts, design, painting, photography, sculpture and textiles) (4);

- literature (e.g. writing, reading and attending literary festivals) (4);
- culture (e.g. going to museums, galleries, art exhibitions, concerts, the theatre, community events, cultural festivals and fairs); and
- online, digital and electronic arts (e.g. animations, film-making and computer graphics) (4).

Note: Clear logic model connecting components, responses and outcomes.

Heather L. Stuckey, DEd and Jeremy Nobel, MD, MPH. The Connection Between Art, Healing, and Public Health: A Review of Current Literature. *Am J Public Health*. 2010 February; 100(2): 254–263. accessed Mar 12 2021 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2804629/>

b) The Value of Arts and Culture

The Ontario Arts Council, What is the return on Ontario's investment in the arts? <https://www.arts.on.ca/research-impact/impact-of-the-arts-in-ontario>

- 93% of Ontarians believe that arts activities help enrich the quality of our lives
- 92% of Ontarians agree that exposure to arts and culture is important to individual well-being.
- 88% of Ontarians agree that participating in arts activities builds a shared sense of community identity.
- 80% of Ontarians agree that an active local arts scene helps communities attract business
- 88% of Ontarians agree that arts and cultural activities are important to a community's economic well-being.

c) The Impact of COVID-19

Ontario Arts Council: Almost all (94%) of the responding organizations have cancelled or postponed performances, exhibitions, screenings, readings or other events due to COVID-19. *Audience Outlook - WolfBrown Study* June 2020 - March 2021 <https://www.arts.on.ca/research-impact/research-publications/wolfbrown-covid-19-audience-outlook-monitor-ontario?lang=en-ca>

M. Sharon Jeannotte, *When the Gigs are Gone: Valuing Arts, Culture and Media in the COVID 19 Pandemic*. Social Sciences & Humanities Volume 3, Issue 1 (2021) 1000972 Accessed Mar 12, 2021 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590291120300863>

David Maggs, The Philanthropist: Art After Virus: Seven Questions for a Sector on the Edge, July 20, 2020. <https://thephilanthropist.ca/2020/07/art-after-virus-seven-questions-for-a-sector-on-the-edge/>

Marsha Lederman, Eight Ways to Fix the Arts Industry Post-Pandemic, The Globe and Mail, March 13, 2021. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/article-eight-ways-to-fix-the-arts-industry-postpandemic/>

Jennifer Parker, Speaking Notes, The Institute of Southern Georgian Bay, *Mapping Our Road to Recovery* 2020.

Kate Taylor, *When the music's over: COVID-19 decimated the arts in Canada, and the worst may be yet to come*. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/article-when-the-musics-over-covid-19-decimated-the-arts-in-canada-and-the/>

Kelly Hill, *Canadians' Arts Participation, Health and Well-being*. Hill Strategies Research, Statistical Research on the arts #53. February 2021. Prepared for the Canada Council for the Arts <https://canadacouncil.ca/research/research-library/2021/03/canadians-arts-participation-health-and-well-being>

"While the research reflects data from a 2016 survey, it shows important linkages between the arts and well-being, linkages that are particularly important within the current pandemic and eventual post-pandemic recovery. The pandemic has also raised awareness that many socio-economic factors (e.g., income, age, Indigenous identity, racialized groups) can have a substantial influence on individuals' health and well-being. This report extends the discussion by investigating whether cultural activities are another factor in Canadians' health and well-being. If cultural activities are related to health and well-being, then equitable access to culture can be related to equitable health outcomes."

Network Structure and Governance

Network Governance as an Empowerment tool by Blythe Butler and Sami Berger, October 6, 2020, Nonprofit Quarterly <https://nonprofitquarterly.org/network-governance-as-an-empowerment-tool/>

Network Values, June Holley, Networkweaver.com