

Town of Three Rivers Arts & Culture Plan

Arts and Culture Plan REPORT

Report submitted to



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TCI Management Consultants

Background

In late 2020, the firm **TCI Management Consultants** was retained by the Town of Three Rivers to develop an **Arts and Culture Plan** for the municipality. The purpose of this Plan is to provide guidance to the Town regarding how it should help support its Arts, Culture and Heritage sector (hereafter referred to as the ACH sector) for the benefit of its residents. The guiding philosophy underlying this Plan is that, like the provision of parks and recreation facilities, investment in ACH pays dividends by providing residents with a full range of cultural amenities and activities – thus helping to create a healthy community and enhanced quality of life. The consultants worked closely with the Town’s Festivals, Arts, Culture and Events (FACE) Committee from February through May, reporting to the Committee approximately every two weeks.

This Report

This **Arts and Culture Draft Plan** report begins by presenting the results of consultations held with various ACH constituents during Phase 1 of the Town’s Arts and Culture Plan. It collates and analyses these consultations into major themes, significant issues, and notable opportunities. From this, a Plan was developed consisting of 24 recommended actions grouped into six Action Areas or ‘Pillars’.

Consultation Process

The philosophy underlying the consultation process was to ‘cast a wide net’, providing everyone with a range of opportunities for input. Accordingly, several consultative activities were undertaken, including:

- interviews with selected administrative officials at the Town, and selected individuals at the provincial level
- the compilation of an ‘Asset Inventory’ of key facilities and organizations to establish a consistent base of information
- interviews with representatives at several of the major ACH assets in the municipality (i.e., facilities and organizations)
- a community survey, which was widely promoted and featured many incentives, eliciting nearly 400 responses
- three focus groups with representatives from the visual arts, performing arts, and heritage sectors, respectively
- a ‘cultural café’ gathering where representatives from all ACH sub-sectors were invited to share ideas about collaboration among the sectors, along with what they desired for the Plan

In addition to this consultation, a best-practices assessment of other communities with success in developing their ACH sector sought to identify initiatives that we, as consultants, believed would be especially relevant to Three Rivers.



Arts & Culture Plan

A **Vision** for Arts, Culture and Heritage (ACH) in Three Rivers:

To develop Three Rivers as the leading centre for ACH activity on Eastern PEI and to establish the Town as a destination of choice, enhancing residents' quality of life while stimulating economic development through place-branding, amenity migration¹ and tourism.







The **recommended role for the Town** in helping to achieve this Vision is:

To facilitate the development and growth of the ACH sector in Three Rivers through the provision of venues, complemented by an operating grants program and special project programs, aligned with the sector's needs. And, where deemed appropriate, to engage in direct delivery of ACH programming in collaboration with local artists and ACH organizations.

The recommended **strategy for the Town** to follow to embrace this role is shown overleaf.

¹ “[Amenity Migration] may be succinctly defined as people moving to places they perceive as having higher quality of natural environment and/or distinctive culture, with the expectation that their quality of life will be enhanced”. – from the introduction to **Global Amenity Migration: Transforming Rural Culture, Economy and Landscape**. L.A.G. Moss & R.S. Gloriosso, eds. www.amenitymigration.org/publications, 2014.

Arts & Culture *Plan-at-a-Glance*

Six Pillars of the Plan		24 Specific Recommendations
A) <i>Enabling Resources</i>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Hire an Arts and Culture Development Officer 2) Increase the budget for ACH operating grants each year 3) Develop longer-term funding agreements with qualifying ACH organizations 4) Undertake an Asset Review Strategy to examine the Town's under-utilized properties with a view to their potential use for arts and culture activities 5) Arrange capacity-building workshops for ACH groups
B) <i>Creating Product</i>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6) Develop a community-wide studio art tour 7) Develop a policy for the preservation of heritage buildings 8) Create, over time, new events in the off-season and shoulder seasons
C) <i>Enhancing Town/Sector Collaboration</i>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9) Convene an ACH Roundtable 10) Maintain a directory of ACH support programs 11) Host an annual Culture Summit 12) Develop an annual ACH volunteer appreciation program 13) Develop an annual ACH awards program
D) <i>Fostering Innovation & Experimentation</i>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 14) Create an artist-in-residence program 15) Explore the feasibility of an artist live-work facility; and/or artist-run gallery 16) Develop a percent-for-public-art policy
E) <i>Promoting the Sector</i>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17) Create a directory of local artists and other cultural workers 18) Develop ACH 'welcoming packages' for Town newcomers 19) Develop a signage and way-finding program for ACH assets (e.g., reader board) 20) Promote Three Rivers as a potential film shoot location 21) Improve coordination with Points East Tourism
F) <i>Advocating for the Sector</i>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 22) Undertake an assessment of the economic value of supporting the sector 23) Explore Holland College offering selected outreach, arts-related programs 24) Join the Creative City Network of Canada

Detailed Recommendations

The Plan developed to achieve this Vision over time consists of 24 recommendations in 6 Action Areas (Pillars). These are:



A) Enabling Resources

- 1) **Hire an Arts and Culture Development Officer** to steward all the Town recommendations itemized herein and to lead the Town's overall effort to develop and grow the ACH sector. This position should work in close collaboration with the Town's existing Recreation and Events Coordinator.
- 2) **Increase the Town's budget for ACH operating grants each year.** Three Rivers' current level of ACH investment is insufficient to grow and sustain its ACH sector. By way of example, Summerside – with a population of 15,000 – invests approximately \$53 per capita in its ACH sector. By contrast, Three Rivers invests approximately \$20 per capita. The vision to establish Three Rivers as an arts and cultural hub in Eastern PEI – and accrue the lifestyle and economic dividends therein – cannot be achieved with this level of investment. Accordingly, we propose a modest 10% increase in operating funding for Three Rivers' ACH events and organizations per year as a reasonable target for the first three years, followed by 5% per year thereafter for the next two years. At that point, the Town's funding going forward can be re-examined.
- 3) **Develop longer-term funding agreements** (i.e., service agreements) for provincially designated Signature Events (such as the Kings Playhouse and Cloggeroo – The Island Folk Festival), and for other events or institutions with sound fiscal management and high artistic standards demonstrated for a minimum of three years. Such a protocol would enhance each organization's capacity for long-term planning.
- 4) **Undertake an Asset Review Strategy**, with input from the ACH community, to examine all of the Town's under-utilized properties (e.g., Brudenell School) with a view to their potential use for arts and culture activities. These activities could include an artist-in-residence program, an artist-run gallery space, a space for musical or theatrical rehearsals and performances, or whatever needs are voiced by the ACH sector.
- 5) **Arrange capacity-building workshops** for local ACH groups. These workshops could address needs identified by the groups themselves (e.g., building audience through effective use of social media, strengthening organizations through effective board governance). The Town would arrange these sessions for several groups at once, thus encouraging networking and communications among those involved, while breaking down geographic and sectoral silos. These workshops could be part of the Culture Summit referenced below (#11).



B) Creating Product

- 6) **Develop a community-wide studio art tour.** This initiative would begin by examining other communities that have established similar tours, then determining the season, the duration of the event, and guidelines for participation in a Three Rivers Studio Art Tour.
- 7) **Develop a policy for the preservation of heritage buildings.** Working closely with the Planning Department, create a policy for the preservation and interpretation of heritage buildings throughout the Town.
- 8) **Create, over time, new events in the off-season and shoulder seasons.** A cuisine-themed event (which is not as dependent on good weather as a summer event) could be appropriate in this regard.



C) Enhancing Town/Sector Collaboration

- 9) **Convene an ACH Roundtable** with a loose mandate of networking, information sharing, brainstorming on potential initiatives, and advocacy on behalf of the sector. A monthly or quarterly gathering of this kind could also help overcome the fractures that exist among organizations and individuals who feel a limited allegiance to the Three Rivers amalgamation. Advising the Arts and Culture Development Officer regarding the development of a **calendar of all arts, culture and heritage activities** and a directory of local artists (see Recommendation #18) would be a logical activity for this group to spearhead. Another initiative might be a **mentorship program** connecting older and established artists with younger individuals.
- 10) **Maintain a directory of ACH support programs** (grants and other) at the provincial and federal level, plus corporate and non-profit foundations (such as the PEI Community Foundation), and ensure this information is available to the ACH community by posting it on the Town's web site. Also ensure that **clear guidelines for obtaining municipal funding and other support** are widely available as well. In addition, where possible, municipal funding deadlines should be aligned with those of higher levels of government for greater convenience and efficiency for organizations seeking funding.
- 11) **Host an annual Culture Summit** to celebrate the diversity of arts and culture in Three Rivers and to discuss ways and means of improving and strengthening the ACH sector.
- 12) **Develop an annual ACH volunteer appreciation program** recognizing the importance of volunteers to the sector. Also, a 'volunteer matching program' should be considered, to connect organizations needing specific volunteer skills with individuals willing to offer these talents.
- 13) **Develop an annual ACH awards program**, showcasing significant contributions to the sector during the previous year. Conceivably, this could be combined with the volunteer awards program.



D) Fostering Innovation and Experimentation

- 14) **Create an artist-in-residence program** (e.g., for a month, or the summer season) following the model of other communities with similar initiatives.
- 15) **Explore the feasibility of an artist live-work facility; and/or artist-run gallery**, using available property(ies) in Three Rivers.
- 16) **Develop a percent-for-public-art policy** (e.g., 1% of the Town's annual capital budget would be set aside and dedicated to public art) – stipulating that there be a preference for art created by local and regional artists. This policy would fund both the development and maintenance of the art. A **town-wide mural program** was suggested as one possibility in this regard, but other (and perhaps more imaginative and innovative forms of public art) should be contemplated as well. The inclusion of **Mi'kmaq themes and artists** or recognition of Mi'kmaq culture through plaques is a public art opportunity waiting to be realized.



E) Promoting the Sector

- 17) **Create a directory of local artists and craftspersons** and post it on the Town's website. Again, this also promotes the image of Three Rivers as an arts community.
- 18) **Develop ACH 'welcoming packages'** for new residents to introduce the range and diversity of the ACH sector. Consider discount coupons to local restaurants and events, thereby reinforcing the notion of Three Rivers as a hub for arts and culture.
- 19) **Develop a signage and way-finding program** featuring the image and branding previously recommended. Signage and way-finding for ACH facilities and activities throughout the municipality is weak – and in some cases non-existent. Particular areas where signage can be strengthened are the highway turnoff, and in downtown Montague. Consider a **directory at the Montague Waterfront** with a 'You Are Here' reader board to direct visitors to local attractions.
- 20) **Promote Three Rivers as a potential film shoot location**, and work with the Province to determine how best to showcase the Town to the industry. As well as serving as an economic generator, a film development initiative for Three Rivers would further build the culture-friendly reputation of Three Rivers.
- 21) **Improve coordination with Points East Tourism**. The Town can become a more effective liaison between the ACH community and destination marketing activities, thus avoiding involvement in destination marketing itself. At the same time, the Town can place information about its arts, culture and historical assets on its website (i.e. directional information, descriptions, contacts and links) – complementing and reinforcing the messaging of provincial and regional tourism information through an 'in-market' promotions campaign.



F) Advocating for the Sector

- 22) Undertake an assessment of the economic value of supporting the ACH sector.** Such an assessment would consider the expenditure of tourists in the community, and the economic activity generated by non-profit cultural entities. Assess the return-on-investment (ROI) vis-à-vis the Town's investment in the sector. Approach the province to fund this analysis on a pilot basis, as a model for other Island communities.
- 23) Explore Holland College offering selected outreach, arts-related programs** in Three Rivers. During the visual art focus group, it was brought to our attention that discussions to this end have already taken place. We encourage the Town, along with those who have been involved, to investigate this opportunity.
- 24) Join the Creative City Network of Canada.** The Creative City network is a collaboration of communities large and small across Canada that recognize the social, cultural and economic benefits of providing for the arts and culture needs of their residents. Membership in the network provides a continuous stream of ideas and opportunities from other jurisdictions engaged in cultural planning and development.

Implementation

The Report concludes with a final section outlining a detailed implementation plan specifying roles and responsibilities; timing and critical path; resource requirements; and evaluation criteria in terms of targets and outcomes.

Conclusion

For a Town its size, Three Rivers has been remarkably prescient in seeing the need for, and desirability of, the development of an Arts and Culture Plan for its residents. The consultation process underscored the enthusiasm, talent and innovative spirit in the Three Rivers community and the receptive environment that awaits the implementation of this Plan.

As articulated in the Vision Statement, Three Rivers is positioned to establish itself as an arts, culture and heritage centre on the eastern coast of the Island. This Plan will serve as an effective guide to ensure its success.

Preamble

This contextual section of the Arts and Culture Plan provides an orientation to some of the foundational ideas underlying the development of any Arts and Culture Plan in any community: What are the concepts of culture and creativity? What principles guide the development of such a Plan? And what is the responsibility of the municipality and local arts, culture and heritage organizations in the creation and implementation of a Plan? This section outlines the philosophy that TCI Management brings to a project of this type, which fundamentally ‘sets the stage’ for the Plan itself.

The Concepts of ‘Culture’ and ‘Creativity’

1. What is Culture?

The term ‘culture’ can mean different things to different people. It can be the formalized expression of visual, performing, literary, and media arts activity in the community, as expressed in places such as art galleries, theatres, libraries, and museums. It can be the customs, history and heritage (including built heritage) of a community – particularly when represented by a critical mass from a certain cultural tradition or background. It can be the energy and ‘buzz’ created through nightlife, festivals, events, and creative industries in downtowns and other focal points in the community. The Arts and Culture Plan described herein considers ‘culture’ to encompass all of the above.

2. What is Creativity?

Several key terms are commonly heard in contemporary discourse on culture and creativity in a municipal context. Foremost among these terms are ‘creative class’, ‘creative economy’, and ‘creative cities’.

Creative Class: In our knowledge-based economy, innovation and creativity is driving the creation of new products, new services, new businesses, and new jobs. A new class of entrepreneurial workers — coined the ‘creative class’ by economics guru Richard Florida — is now powering the economic growth of North America’s cities. The defining characteristic of the creative class is that its members work with ideas. They are also young, highly educated, self-motivated, and entrepreneurial. Creative class workers include academics, medical professionals, financial analysts, high-tech workers, and those who work in the cultural sector: writers, filmmakers, actors and artists. This group has grown tremendously in the last century, from 10% of the working population in 1900 to over 30% today. (In fact, according to Richard Florida, there are more Creative Class workers today than blue collar workers.)

Creative Economy: The creative economy refers to the various economic sectors that draw in large part upon the energies and talents of the Creative Class. These economic sectors include private sector enterprises involved with the creation of new products and services: advertising agencies, new media and software development, engineers and architects, and

commercial art galleries. However, the creative economy also embraces the non-profit cultural sector: arts and heritage organizations, museums, theatres, festivals, public art galleries, and arts education.

Creative Cities: Creative cities refers to both an intentional stance as well as an outcome. The intentional stance occurs when a municipality strives to proactively provide for the cultural and creative needs of its residents. The outcome is that the municipality attracts and develops its creative class and its creative economy.

Seven Principles Underlying the Provision of Municipal Cultural Services

Within the context of these definitions of ‘culture’ and ‘creativity’, there are seven principles that comprise our beliefs about the importance of culture to a fulfilling and meaningful life, and the ways in which governments should provide cultural services for their residents:

1. **Everyone has the potential to be a creative individual** — Following from the extensive work of Charles Landry² and others, we believe that everyone has within them a creative potential (and beyond that, a basic need and desire to express that creative potential). Cultural activities in communities should be an important and accessible outlet for this potential creativity.
2. **Municipalities (as well as other levels of government) have a responsibility to develop cultural amenities for their residents** — It follows from the foregoing that healthy communities concerned with providing for the full range of needs of their residents will provide a range of opportunities for engagement in culture and creative opportunities, for persons of all ages and backgrounds³.
3. **Investment in culture is an economic development strategy** — Beyond providing for the essential needs of residents, investment in culture is an economic development strategy for communities. The work of Richard Florida⁴ and others has amply shown that communities with a high quality of life—of which cultural opportunities are an essential component—attract the ‘Creative Class’, who in turn invest in businesses, create jobs and contribute in myriad other way to the health and vitality of the community.
4. **Now is the time to invest in culture** — Especially in a time of economic downturn, there is a natural tendency for decision-makers to regard investment in culture as an ‘inessential frill’, something that can easily be deferred in favour of addressing more immediate priorities. We hold that, given the evidence of culture-led regeneration in cities across North American and Europe⁵, and given the scope of opportunities

² See Charles Landry, *The Creative City – A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, Earthscan, 2000.

³ Again Charles Landry, this time *The Art of City Making*, Earthscan, 2006.

⁴ See, for example, Florida’s *The Rise of the Creative Class* (Basic Books, 2002) and *Who’s Your City?* (Random House, 2008).

⁵ Notable examples are Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; New Haven, Connecticut; Glasgow, Scotland; and Bilbao, Spain.

available in Three Rivers, investment in culture is a vehicle for economic development that can provide a significant return. Moreover, from a purely practical point of view, if monies are to be spent on public infrastructure, today's low interest rate environment offers cost savings in both capital and labour. As such, infrastructure investments can spur the creation of new jobs.

5. **The dual nature of the leadership role of the municipality** — We see the role of the municipality in the development of the cultural life of the community as being twofold: first, it is to demonstrate leadership in consultation and policy development—through assessing what the community is saying it wants and needs by way of cultural facilities and services. (This is leadership in the sense that Charles Block sees it: creating the conditions for, and convening, a conversation with the community to identify what is needed.⁶) The second role is to respond by providing facilities, programs, services, etc., in accord with community needs, tempered by the wisdom of municipal staff and elected officials regarding what is affordable and reasonable at the time.
6. **The community creates its own culture** — Notwithstanding the municipality's essential role as a provider of key cultural facilities and services, ultimately it is community-based organizations and individuals that create the culture of a community; municipalities are 'enlightened enablers'. Accordingly, municipal politicians and staff must keep their ears to the ground and ensure that new and innovative organizations that reflect areas of emerging need in the community are nurtured and given a chance to grow.
7. **Accountability is critical** — Any plan for investment in municipal infrastructure and services must monitor and evaluate progress, and demonstrate the return on investment of the funding and staff time expended. In this regard, one very useful framework is the Triple Bottom Line (TBL framework) that examines benefits in a multidisciplinary context considering social, economic and environmental benefits⁷. (A TBL framework is suggested as a potential framework for accountability.)

Responsibilities of Cultural Organizations

The discussion that follows highlights areas in which the municipality is encouraged to invest, and help develop, the cultural life of the community. Three Rivers can provide leadership, policy, facilities, staff support and funding. However, in keeping with the philosophy articulated at the outset of this report, ultimately the cultural life of the community is shaped by the participating individuals and organizations that call Three Rivers their home. The Town cannot 'create' culture in Three Rivers: that is only possible through the active involvement and participation of organizations and individuals.

Recognizing that the role of the Town is to provide certain essential elements for the cultural life of the community, the role of cultural organizations and individuals should be:

⁶ 5. See Charles Block, *Community – The Structure of Belonging*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2008.

⁷ See Andrew Savitz, *The Triple Bottom Line*, Jossey-Bass, 2006.

- To become familiar with the plan developed and articulated here, and provide input and guidance to help shape and fine-tune it on an on-going basis
- To work in cooperation with the staff resources allocated by the Town to implement this plan: participate in networking, communications and coordination activities; and provide updated information
- To continue to develop and provide the diverse and range of programming that at present exists across the sector
- To support one another's efforts by attending events and festivals and purchasing works of art, and advocating formally and informally on behalf of specific organizations
- To act as ambassadors for Three Rivers culture both within and outside of the community
- To speak, wherever possible, with a collective voice in discussions with the Town of Three Rivers concerning key issues related to culture and the Arts and Culture Plan

These statements reflect the underlying philosophy and resulting attitudes that all members of the consulting team have brought to this assignment.

Return on Investment from Arts and Culture

The 12 ROIs from local government investment in ACH

The following are the 12 most commonly cited returns on investment (ROIs) found in the literature of cultural planning and development. Beneath these ROIs is a sunflower diagram providing a visual representation.

1. Economic dividends by attracting the Creative Class of educated, entrepreneurial workers through a diversified base of ACH amenities (i.e., amenity migration)
2. Capacity for greater differentiation in place branding leading to a competitive advantage vis-a-vis other communities
3. Attraction of educated, affluent retirees from larger communities seeking smaller communities with lifestyle offerings that include access to ACH amenities
4. Retention of youth through provision of ACH amenities more commonly associated with larger population centres
5. Economic dividends through developing the community as a cultural tourism destination
6. Repurposing and regenerating under-utilized civic spaces for ACH activity
7. Inflow of ACH funding from other levels of government leveraged by local government investment
8. Direct expenditures by cultural organizations on salaries, contracts, and production costs that ripple through a community as indirect and induced rounds of spending
9. Ancillary spending by arts attendees on pre-show dining, after-show drinks, costs of babysitting

- 10. Enhanced pride-of-place and social cohesion through celebrating the community's unique ACH assets
- 11. Preservation of the community's identity and continuity with its past
- 12. Enhanced community health and individual well-being through intellectual and emotional enrichment via ACH participation

The 12 ROIs

