



What We
Heard Report

ARTS AND CULTURE

JANUARY 2020



What We Heard Report
Arts & Culture
January 2020

Project Lunenburg
Town of Lunenburg Comprehensive Plan

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This report was prepared by Upland Planning and Design
in partnership with Janis A. Barlow & Associates.

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Arts and culture is an integral part of Lunenburg's identity, and the town has an abundance of cultural workers, organizations and programming. This industry creates social and economic benefits for the community and many visitors and residents are attracted by the robust arts and culture presence. In this What We Heard Report the Project Team sought to understand the existing state of arts and culture in the Town, how this meets the needs of Lunenburg residents, how the sector could be supported and improved, and what the future of arts and culture in Lunenburg could look like. This engagement was conducted as a partnership between the Lunenburg Foundation for the Arts and the Project Lunenburg team, and results from these activities will be incorporated into both a Cultural Action Plan and the Project Lunenburg Comprehensive Community Plan. The Project Team collected feedback and information in five ways:

- ▶ The Individual Arts and Culture Survey;
- ▶ The Cultural Sector Survey;
- ▶ The Lunenburg Individual Survey;
- ▶ Two Arts and Culture Roundtable Discussions;
- ▶ The Arts and Culture Open House; and,
- ▶ Social Pinpoint.

This What We Heard Report is the seventh in a series of nine Project Lunenburg consultation reports and summarizes the input from the community regarding arts and culture.

Who Was Involved & Engagement Results

Between February and November 2019, there were over 985 engagement interactions that contributed to this report. This included:

- ▶ 151 respondents to the Individual and Cultural Sector Surveys
- ▶ 262 respondents to the Lunenburg Individual Survey;
- ▶ Over 60 participants at the public meetings; and,
- ▶ 512 Social Pinpoint submissions.

Comments related to arts and culture were received throughout Project Lunenburg activities. Due to the extent of this engagement, the results are divided into two sections looking at both surveys and public meetings.

Within each section, comments are organized into several themes. Although comments were analyzed and categorized into one of the primary theme areas, many comments are relevant within several themes, and many comments were received both within the surveys and the public meetings.



Figure 1: Participants at the Project Lunenburg public meeting gather in discussion groups



Consultants for the Lunenburg Foundation for the Arts distributed two culture-specific surveys, made available in the summer through Project Lunenburg’s website, email list and several Facebook pages. In total, 151 people responded to these surveys and of these, 73% were year-round residents and 6% were seasonal residents. 4% of survey respondents lived outside the District of Lunenburg. While the Individual Survey was designed for non-cultural workers, respondents were asked about their ties to the cultural sector:

Survey Respondents	Relationship to Sector
11%	Artist or paid cultural worker
29%	Regular volunteer for a cultural organization or festival
24%	Occasional volunteer for a cultural organization or festival
37%	None of the above

When asked to speak to the benefits of the local arts and culture sector, respondents overwhelmingly felt that these activities are appreciated in Lunenburg, important both to individual self-expression as well as the community’s sense of identity. Respondents agreed that arts and culture are a major contributor to quality of life, and most believe in its importance to the local economy as well as the value of government support and investment. Participants in the public meetings felt that this economic role is something that Lunenburg does well, but also needs improvements. Survey respondents within the sector felt that increasing government awareness of this economic value could improve arts funding.

While the focus of this section is on the Foundation for the Arts survey, arts and culture was also a main theme in the Project Lunenburg individual survey distributed in the Spring of 2019 with 262 responses. When asked what makes Lunenburg a great place, 37% of respondents felt that local heritage was a key factor in the quality of life, while 21% referred to festivals and events and 19% referred to the architecture.



Inclusion & Finances

Inclusion and diversity was a key theme throughout many of the Foundation for the Arts survey questions, but was also the most mentioned topic among all open-ended question responses. When asked how inclusivity can be better cultivated in Lunenburg, several respondents suggested that the town needs to be more welcoming and accommodating of new residents from diverse cultural backgrounds as well as younger residents. These responses touched on the value this demographic provides to the town, particularly by establishing an active workforce. Many people in both the surveys and the public meetings expressed a fear that Lunenburg may become a “museum” if they are not able to attract young, full-time residents.

Several respondents in both surveys noted a need to appeal to and accommodate young people both in cultural programming and cost, and to welcome young artists and their unique points of view. While young people were the focus of this conversation, one respondent added that cost is often prohibitive for low-income seniors as well.

Suggestions include lowered costs for participation, subsidized venues, tax rebates for local art, and increased taxation and regulation for short-term rentals and seasonal residences. These ideas were echoed by meeting participants.

Respondents note a need to improve inclusivity by actively improving accessibility for all, something that was echoed in the public meetings. This includes the physical accessibility of venues and events, engaging newcomers in local activities, showcasing diverse cultures and creating a focus on affordability.

One respondent suggests that by offering more dynamic history and perspectives, Lunenburg should take the cultural emphasis away from colonial settler history. Education around Indigenous and African Nova Scotian heritage and a celebration of diverse artists and cultural workers were suggested.



Programming & Promotions

Culture is an important feature of local recreation, education and entertainment. The resident survey results suggest that, like many Canadians, local residents engage with arts and cultural activities in a variety of ways. People find out about these activities and events in many ways, but responses suggest the most common forms of promotion are word of mouth (with 74% referencing this source), posters (at 70%), and the South Shore Community Bulletin Board on Facebook (66%).

Respondents want to see more diversity of representation in their programming as well as a greater variety of genres and mediums. A couple respondents note the importance of good public spaces as venues, and suggest encouraging free outdoor programming in parks and along the waterfront as well as a marina and waterfront vendors. This could be one way to grow arts tourism, as one respondent mentions the desire for experiential activities for visitors. While most respondents feel that local arts and culture does an adequate job of catering to residents, there is a need to balance programming for both residents and visitors, and some respondents want to see extended programming in the shoulder season and throughout the year.

Some gaps were also identified in local facilities, and respondents noted the desire for a local theatre, public gallery and cinema. These concerns were echoed throughout all methods of engagement and some suggested a multi-purpose arts centre which could serve multiple purposes and reduce the costs of construction and management.



On the other hand, some respondents valued the diversity of decentralized offerings, and several participants pinned locations on the map that could house new arts and culture facilities. Suggestions included;

- ▶ A new life for the underutilized Opera House, such as an arts venue or conference centre;
- ▶ An amphitheatre at the 250th Anniversary Park or Blockhouse Hill;
- ▶ A theatre or museum in the existing Public Works location;
- ▶ A botanical or sculpture garden at Blockhouse Hill around Upper Campground;
- ▶ An Oceans Museum in the old Zwicker Building; and
- ▶ Expanded use of the Academy Building.

Several respondents added that one source of information for promotions would improve access to arts and culture. Some suggestions included;

- ▶ A new centralized website or app; Expanded use of the Academy Building.
- ▶ Improvements to the Town and Board of Trade websites;
- ▶ Additions to the electricity bill mailouts; and,
- ▶ A focus on social media and instagram.



Figure 2: A small outdoor ampitheatre



Figure 3: A sculpture garden within a park



Management & Implementation

Respondents to the Sector Survey were asked to comment on the implementation of the Cultural Action Plan and which bod(ies) should be responsible for this management.

There were diverging thoughts on the involvement of the Town, with some feeling the local government should be left out of this management role entirely, and others feeling it should be involved as oversight or part of a coalition. Some respondents suggested a singular entity such as the Lunenburg Foundation for the Arts or an individual with arts organization experience, while many respondents were convinced of the need for a more varied amalgamated group. This could include a diverse steering committee or coalition, and participants added that the group should reflect the full spectrum of arts mediums, genders, age, race and culture, as well as for- and non-profit organizations. Some respondents focused on the local context while others felt it would be important to expand this management to a wider geographic area to express the reach of arts and culture assets.

While public meeting topics were not as specific to the Cultural Action Plan, these events garnered similar discussion of arts and culture management. Meeting participants suggest a local or regional Arts Council, which reflects some of the ideas raised in this survey portion.



Cultural Activities

Survey respondents were asked what cultural activities they and their families enjoyed. The most popular cultural activities identified were attending concerts (at 80%), spending time at the harbour (79%) and reading (76%).

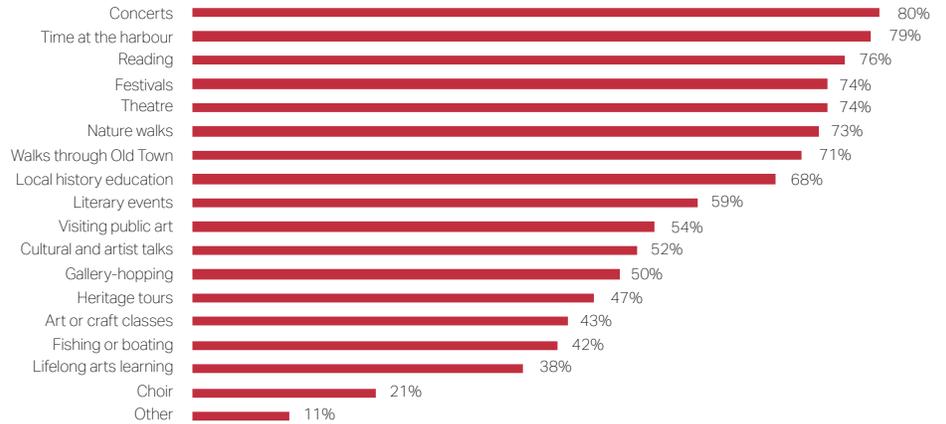


Figure 4: Cultural Activities

Cultural Site Visitation

Of the following six cultural sites, the Farmers Market had the highest visitation, with more than 67% of respondents stating they visit it “often” and 27% visiting “occasionally.” Knaut-Rhuland House had the least, though 63% have visited at least once. The site reports a high percentage of non-local visitors, so this is not necessarily reflective of overall visitation. Some participants throughout the engagement suggested that further funding is needed to support this valuable resource.

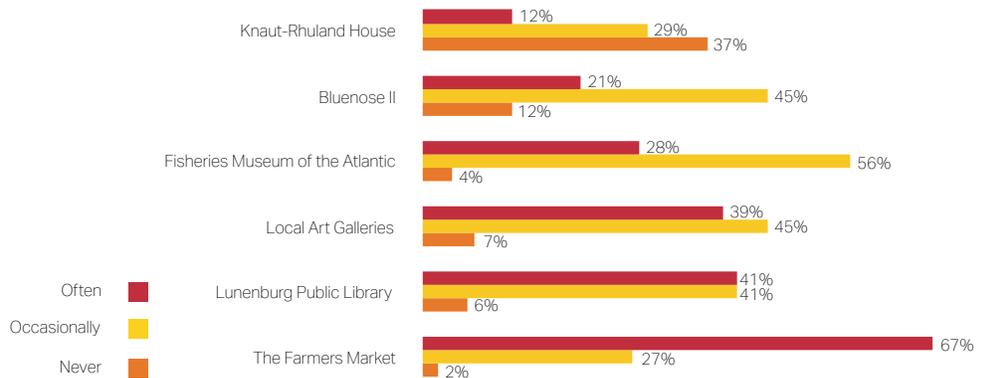


Figure 5: Cultural Site Visitation



Festival Attendance

The Folk Harbour Music Festival and the Street Festival were identified as the most often attended events, while those attended by the fewest respondents include the Lute Festival and Mi'kmaq Powwows. Some engagement participants pinned locations on the interactive map that could accommodate new or existing festivals, including the campground area and waterfront parking lot.

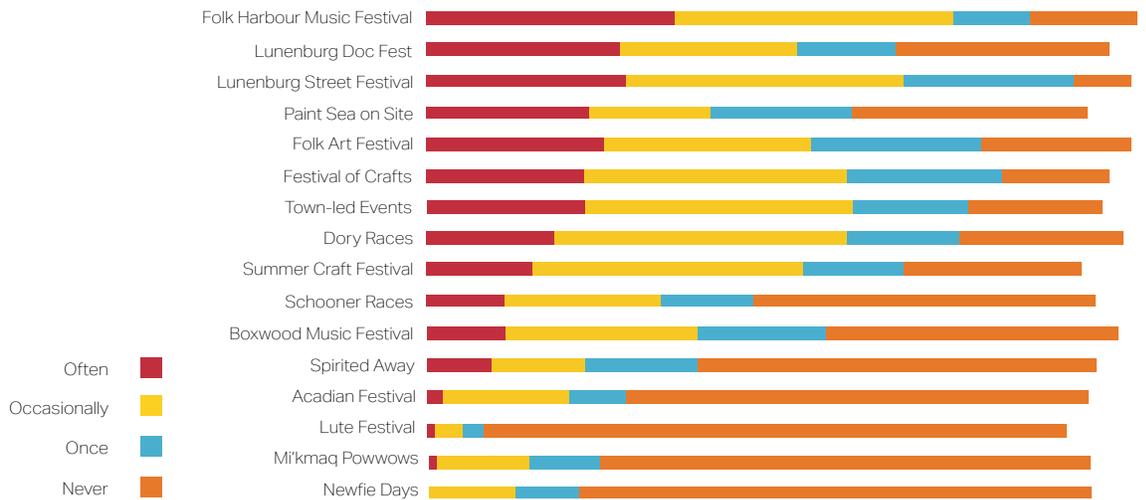


Figure 6: Festival Attendance

Arts Experiences

As is standard within the industry, events produced by arts and heritage organizations are not as popular, however, participation is still fairly high among respondents. LAMP concerts have been attended at least once by 84%, South Shore Players experienced by 82%, and book launches attended by 63%.

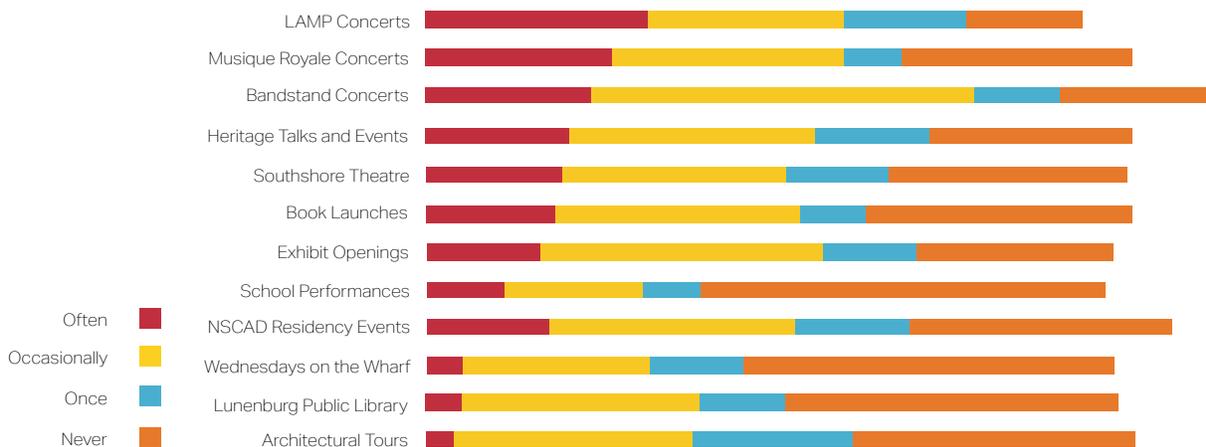


Figure 7: Arts Experiences Attendance



Arts Education

Lunenburg is home to remarkable arts educational institutions and organizations. Boxwood Music Festival, while a seasonal undertaking, has international reach, just as LAMP has. The Lunenburg School of the Arts is also a well-respected source of arts workshops, development and experiences for enthusiasts. As well, private sector schools exist that attract residents and visitors to their programs.

Survey respondents were asked if they had participated in classes or workshops at any of the following locations. Nearly 50% of the respondents had attended a class at the Lunenburg School of the Arts, and almost 40% participated in a workshop at the Lunenburg Public Library. Both sites host educational activities run by organizations without facilities – the survey did not distinguish who produced the educational program. Many respondents in the Project Lunenburg individual survey suggested that Lunenburg has an opportunity to become an educational hub, and want to see arts learning promoted and expanded in the Town.

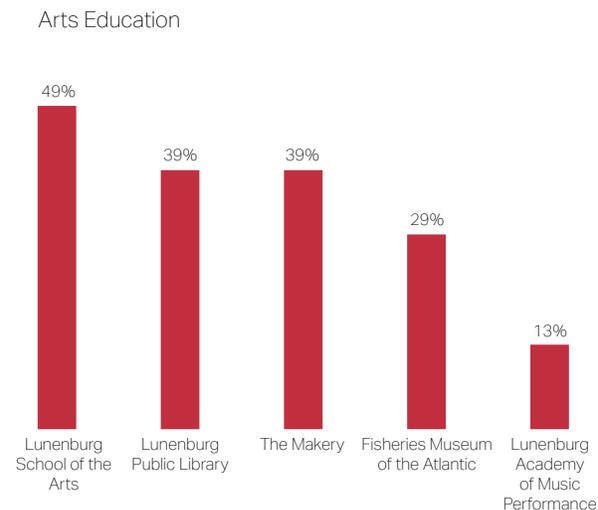


Figure 8: Arts Education Participation



Two roundtable discussions kicked off the public engagement in August, followed by a public open house in November. The roundtables asked broader questions, while the open house focused on specific priorities for arts and culture. Over 60 people participated in these meetings, and the results from this are enriched by comments added to the Social Pinpoint interactive map open between September and November.

Lunenburg residents access arts and culture in countless ways within and outside of the Town boundaries. Participation ranges from facilities within Lunenburg to those across the South Shore, Nova Scotia, and internationally, not to mention online offerings.

The definition of arts and culture is broad and changes depending on one's perspective. According to engagement participants, culture is formed over the long-term, and takes place in-situ, determining both who we are and what we do. Culture is determined by our values, heritage, spirituality, dialect, food, sport, industry and trade. The arts were distinguished by their creativity and transience; arts are multi-media, and participants describe it as being more solitary and mobile than culture.

Authenticity

When tasked with determining what makes Lunenburg culture *authentic*, participants discussed the local reliance on the ocean, the unique dialect, the Lunenburg Dory, schooners, food such as sauerkraut and seafood, and the heritage buildings and streetscapes. This authenticity is defined by being true to place. Connections with one's community, history and traditions came up again and again. One participant adds that accurate interpretations of cultural history are key to this authenticity; Lunenburg's current culture is a culmination of hundreds of years of changing perspectives. Participants emphasize that a community's culture is closely tied to residents' past experiences, but is constantly evolving as new people move in.



Figure 9: Participants at the Project Lunenburg public meeting



Programming

The discussion around arts and culture programming centred on inclusion. One participant writes that diversity enriches traditional culture in Lunenburg, and several comments discuss the importance of Mi'kmaw, Acadian and African Nova Scotian heritage and on the area's arts and culture. The nearest Mi'kmaq reserve, Acadia First Nation, contains rich cultural and artistic traditions, and one participant adds that Mi'kmaq artists such as Sandra Racine and Alan Syliboy have an important presence in the local industry.

There is a dichotomy between those that feel the current representation and acknowledgment of the area's Mi'kmaq culture (past and present) is sufficient, and those that feel it is priority for Lunenburg to expand visitors' and residents' cultural knowledge, and showcase more diverse artists. Some suggestions include improved education around Mi'kmaw heritage, dedicated space in museums and art galleries, tours and interpretation, as well as experiential learning and workshops. There is an understanding among participants that it is up to Lunenburgers to educate themselves on this pre-colonial history, and galleries and other facilities must play a role in unpacking biased history and re-framing it with plural voices. One person asks, "what role can arts and culture play in bringing us together?" Participants point out that this work towards inclusion and inter-cultural dialogue needs to avoid empty words in order to be truly meaningful.

In order to improve access to arts and culture, participants recommended equipment loans which could be acquired through a combination of donations and sponsorships. A survey respondent offered a similar suggestion for a resource bank open to arts organizers. Participants perceive a lack of affordable programming for children in particular, and suggest more organizations coordinate with schools to offer opportunities for children and youth. Participants want to see more exposure to traditional culture and crafts available to all ages. As one person added, there is a perception that the town is averse to change, but "heritage and innovation are mutually supportive". More broadly, participants hope to build on Lunenburg's strong educational sector and see more arts influence in curricula.



Facilities

Participants know that existing cultural sites and organizations are the town's biggest strength, and hope to take advantage of local expertise in order to offer more professional arts and culture experiences. Many participants felt that improved advertising or promotions of existing facilities (through the Lunenburg Art Map and other avenues) would help residents to maximize the use of these spaces. This may involve information sharing for the wider community as well as within the sector.

In addition to the existing amenities, participants had a chance to provide input on opportunities for new facilities that may help ease gaps. There was especially strong support for encouraging the adaptive reuse of churches and halls, and one participant pointed out the need to support churches as some of the Town's most crucial arts venues. The NSCAD residency was discussed throughout the meetings as one of the Town's valuable resources, but participants feel that in order to sustain this program it needs some attention and consideration regarding the management and programming. The loss of community access to the Pearl Theatre was noted by several people, as there is currently no space in town that ideally suits theatre performances.

Participants were interested in innovative solutions for these facilities gaps and recommended providing permits to at-home studios, assistance in creating affordable studio space, and creating more live / work spaces for cultural workers. One participant wondered if the Community Centre and Academy building may have spare room available to support arts programming, while another suggested that not all facilities need to be directly within the Town. With so much programming serving a wider region (such as the South Shore Players), the participant felt that centralized facilities could best serve the area but would require more communication with neighbouring communities.



Management

Engagement participants held a variety of concerns around management including leadership, advocacy, support, community engagement, and literacy and education. Participants want to see facilitated leadership which empowers all cultural workers to make collective decisions. Round table discussions also suggested that the high levels of volunteerism in this sector necessitate a paid position to support the industry. There was a discussion among participants about the possibility of an Arts Council which could manage these responsibilities within the sector. The main question brought up in this discussion was whether an Arts Council would serve the Town or the entire District of Lunenburg. While one large entity encompassing all disciplines and professional levels of arts and culture was suggested, another participant felt this may become too difficult to coordinate. Questions were also raised about the role of the Board of Trade in representing the arts, and participants wondered if it might be possible to hire a representative for this duty.

There is a perception within the industry that the sector sees a lack of support and responsibility on behalf of the government. Some participants noted that one barrier is the Town's limited tax base juxtaposed with the large catchment area of the local arts and culture scene. Sponsor fatigue is an issue in the Town, and participants showed support for a fundraising strategy. Recognizing the importance of arts and culture to local tourism, another financial tool which garnered enthusiasm from participants was visitor packages and marketing.

Acknowledging the effect property prices have on arts and culture, comments focus on both housing and facilities. Participants add that this issue is seen clearly among tech workers and artists who have trouble finding housing locally. To further assist in securing suitable housing, participants showed a lot of support for short-term housing to accommodate visiting artists and seasonal workers.



Coordination

There was some talk about coordination between organizations and venues to avoid conflict amongst events, such as two concerts happening on one night. While one participant feels this is a straightforward issue easily solved by apps and other software, another believes this type of coordination would be complex and unnecessary. This participant adds that many events are not flexible with the date (particularly when an artist is in town as part of a tour), and overlapping programming showcases the richness of Lunenburg's offerings.

Although there is some debate about the importance of coordinating events, the round table discussions raised the need for more communication and knowledge exchange within the sector and between organizations. Some felt that cultural workers have a lack of time and energy to collaborate which results in siloed groups. In order to overcome this barrier and the competitive spirit which sometimes hinders the industry, participants feel conversations like this help to establish shared values.

Multiple participants suggested the value of coordinating more diverse arts and culture offerings and multi-cultural celebrations. A coordinator that could reach out to cultural communities within the Town would go a long way in welcoming newcomers and expanding the local program. This was a common thread amongst all discussions, and participants showed support for a Community Inclusion Strategy that would help to advance these goals.

Almost all of the work included in arts and culture programming, management and coordination, relies on volunteers at one point or another. While Lunenburg's large base of retirees is perceived as a strength, volunteer fatigue is often an issue. Participants add that this dependence on unpaid labour is a vulnerability, and the aging population poses a risk for the future of this volunteer base. Meetings illuminated an impression that young people are not interested or too busy to participate, while young people report feeling excluded from opportunities. Young people are often involved in organizations as staff, but these groups also face difficulties during the shoulder season as students return to school.



The Project Team heard from a range of residents and stakeholders within Lunenburg and the surrounding area. Participants included those working within the arts and culture sector and those outside of it. There is a great deal of support for the industry, and residents are pushing to advance Lunenburg's role as a cultural centre. These results show varying ideas about how to proceed with improvements, but several themes emerged.

Residents want to see the inclusivity of arts and culture improved through diversity, accessibility and affordability of offerings. This means education around Lunenburg's cultural heritage with a focus on truth and reconciliation; programming which celebrates the diverse cultural workers throughout the town and region; programming that is accessible to all ages and abilities; and housing and facilities which are affordable and encourage artists to stay in Lunenburg. Young people and youth often feel singled out in Lunenburg's aging population, and programming and opportunities which cater to this demographic could further the inclusion of new artists and cultural workers as well as the overall sustainability of the industry.

While the Town has many facilities and venues which serve the sector, participants noted some challenges such as the lack of local theatre space, cinema and a public gallery. Some suggestions focused on the possibility of forming a multi-use venue which could be adopted for these purposes, or utilizing space in existing buildings.

Participants identified another gap in the promotions of arts and culture, and want to see information and scheduling about opportunities centralized in one location. Promotions is one of the reasons some participants suggest forming an Arts Council which could serve Lunenburg or the greater region and improve communications within the sector.

Planning for the future of arts and culture will require balance and cooperation, but it is clear that the preservation and expansion of this industry is important to the community.



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