



THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF COURTENAY

STAFF REPORT

To: Council

File No.: 7800-20

From: Director of Recreation, Culture and Community Services

Date: September 13, 2023

Subject: Strategic Cultural Plan Update – What We Heard Report

PURPOSE: To provide Council with a summary of the community engagement findings for the Strategic Cultural Plan in the attached *Courtenay Strategic Cultural Plan - What We Heard Report*.

BACKGROUND:

The Strategic Cultural Plan is a 2023 Council strategic priority; the purpose of which is to provide a framework and roadmap to support arts and culture in Courtenay over the next ten years. Staff are leading the project with Nordicity, a consulting firm that specializes in planning for the arts, culture, and heritage sector. The Strategic Cultural Plan will seek to ensure that arts and culture is integrated into the community and representative of all residents. The development of the Cultural Strategic Plan will assist the City in achieving the following key outcomes:

- Highlight importance of cultural services, cultural awareness, and cultural activities
- Evaluate and benchmark impact of the cultural community
- To build investment and promotion of cultural tourism, economic development, and social cohesion
- Identify cultural service needs, and analyse facilities options
- Identify best practices to inform cultural service policies
- Develop an implementation plan: identify roadmap, timeline, and responsible party(ies)

The development of the plan involves a five-phase process, involving desk research, community engagement, analysis (including facility options and economic and social impact analysis, municipal benchmarking), followed by the development of a draft strategy and recommendations for community feedback and review, and lastly, the creation of a final plan.

Phase One included an in-depth review of historic strategic City documents that inform the development of the Strategic Cultural Plan. Background documents included the Cultural Services Review (2019), Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2019) and the Official Community Plan (2022), as well as other regionally relevant documents. Phase Two was completed from May to July, 2023 focusing on inclusive and diverse community engagement. The attached *Courtenay Strategic Cultural Plan: What We Heard Report* (Please see Attachment 1) provides a detailed summary of the community engagement approach, activities, and findings.

Staff and Nordicity continue to work on the Strategic Cultural Plan including completing the analysis phase and working towards the creation of draft recommendations, with a final strategy and recommendations expected to be completed in Winter 2023 / 2024.

DISCUSSION:

The *What We Heard* report shares the community engagement research findings for the Courtenay Strategic Cultural Plan based on the community engagement activities completed May through July, 2023. It summarizes findings from the community engagement research, highlighting community-identified needs relating to arts and culture in Courtenay. The findings will be used to develop recommendations on how the City of Courtenay can support artists, arts and culture organizations and creatives, as well as support wider community priorities through arts and culture.

Community engagement was guided by Courtenay’s OCP Cardinal Directions and sought to ensure that a diverse and representative range of voices was heard through inclusive community consultation with an equity lens. Historically under-represented groups and individuals were connected with through community organizations representing equity priority groups as intermediaries including Indigenous peoples, people of colour, people with disabilities, youth, new and emerging artists, people who are unhoused, 2SLGBTQIA+, and newcomers.

Nordicity carried out the following public engagement activities to help benchmark the community’s arts and culture impact and identify needs and gaps in the community:

Table 1: Engagement Activities

Engagement Activity	Number of People	Dates
Arts and Culture Round Table Focus Group	38 participants	May 9, 2023
1 on 1 interviews with cultural service providers, City staff, arts and culture interest groups, and equity priority groups	24 interviews & 54 participants	May to July 2023
Group conversations with equity priority communities. Public drop in event.	28 participants	July 2023
On-line community survey	~700 respondents	June to July 2023

The City is currently in the process of engaging with K’ómoks First Nation Chief and Council regarding the development of the Strategic Cultural Plan. The City is committed to working collaboratively with K’ómoks First Nation to ensure the plan is representative of Indigenous values and supportive of our work towards reconciliation. The City recognizes the colonial aspects of having a specific and limited timeframe which can create barriers to meaningful engagement and as such the City hopes to continue to work with K’ómoks First Nation to define a path forward. The ambition for the Strategic Cultural Plan is that it will become a living document rather than a static, one-time report – one that is open to adjustment to ensure KFN priorities are included in the process. The City will continue to work collaboratively with K’ómoks First Nation to develop a framework and process for continued engagement in the development of the Strategic Cultural Plan.

Key Engagement Findings

The *What We Heard* report provides a detailed description of the engagement activities, survey results, and community identified needs, challenges, strengths, and opportunities.

With approximately 700 responses, the community survey provided opportunities for both members of the public and those who work in the arts and culture industry to provide feedback. As such, responses are sometimes separated to show the unique perspectives of these groups of respondents. Additionally, the survey reached a wide range of identities as demonstrated by individuals identifying as Indigenous (17%), racialized (Black or person of colour) (16%), and or 2SLGBTQIA+ (14%) which is greater than the Statistics Canada Census Profile for the City of Courtenay which shows that 8% of the population identify as a visible minority and 8% of the population are of Indigenous ancestry.

Survey highlights include that a high number of respondents are culturally engaged and that arts and culture encourage social participation and sense of belonging. Barriers to accessing culture included limited options nearby, limited options of interest, and not having enough time while critical needs identified by the culture sector respondents include more space for performance / exhibitions, more rehearsal and creation space, and supportive bylaws and policies for arts and culture. Respondents would like to see more live performances, more education, programming and workshops, and more Indigenous arts and culture in the future, with recommendations to prioritize the areas of enhancing indoor and outdoor space for arts and culture and using arts and culture as a way to enhance community wellbeing.

The survey also asked respondents to identify which arts and culture facilities and spaces they had visited in the past two years and their level of satisfaction with those spaces. Specific feedback regarding accessibility, affordability, facility condition, programs and events, and safety was gathered for the Sid Williams Theatre, Courtenay & District Museum, Comox Valley Art Gallery, and Centre of the Arts – Comox Valley Community Arts Council facilities given that these are City facilities and the organizations receive funding from the City of Courtenay. Feedback regarding these facilities will be shared with the operators and inform strategic planning, capital planning, and future management and operating agreements.

The combined findings from the community engagement activities identified strengths, challenges and gaps when it comes to arts and culture in Courtenay, as outlined in the report. In addition, community identified priority needs are described in the *What We Heard* report as follows:

- Engaging K'ómoks First Nation, Metis, Inuit, and other Urban Indigenous Communities
- More cultural spaces / facilities, and better availability and affordability
- Developing more diverse and affordable cultural programming
- Further promotion of community partnerships and collaboration
- Increased municipal support – financial and in-kind, local, and regional
- Further development of cultural tourism
- Attraction and training of technical cultural workers
- Development of a Public Arts Policy

Interview and group conversations with equity priority groups including Indigenous community members, newcomers and immigrants, unhoused community members, people with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQIA+ community members highlighted specific needs which are described in the report.

While the City's engagement with K'ómoks First Nation is in the early stages and will be ongoing throughout the Strategic Cultural Plan development and beyond, the City met with K'ómoks First Nation Chief and Council in the summer to discuss how the City can work with K'ómoks First Nation to ensure their priorities are reflected in the Strategic Cultural Plan. While a framework and process would need to be developed with

K'ómoks First Nation Chief and Council which would include Elders and Knowledge Keepers, the following initial collaborative opportunities were identified:

- Murals and public art;
- Enhancing the City's role in National Indigenous People's Day;
- Signage that respectfully acknowledges that visitors are on K'ómoks First Nation territory (following a new policy developed with K'ómoks First Nation's input);
- Education opportunities; highlighting First Nations history and preserving K'ómoks First Nation culture, language and traditions;
- Addressing critical issues in our community, including climate change, harm reduction, and developing a joint response to racism and racist acts; and
- Seeking joint grant funding.

The City looks forward to our next opportunity to meet with K'ómoks First Nation Chief and Council to discuss next steps and how we will work together.

NEXT STEPS:

Having completed the first two phases of the Strategic Cultural Plan development, Nordicity and staff are currently working through the analysis component including facility needs assessments, economic and social impact, and municipal benchmarking. This work will be combined with the findings of the community engagement research to produce draft recommendations which will be presented at a community check in event planned this fall. It will also be supported by an online survey to capture feedback on the draft strategy from those who cannot attend the community check-in event. A draft strategy, including prioritized recommendations and implementation plan will be then be presented to Council for approval.

Below is a timeline summary of the next steps to the development of the cultural strategic plan.

Activity	Date
What We Heard Draft report	September 2023
Community Check in Event	Fall 2023
Draft Strategic Cultural Plan	November 2023
Launch Online Cultural Mapping Tool	November 2023
Final Strategic Cultural Plan	Winter 2023/2024



It is important to highlight that this timeline may need to be adjusted to allow for relationship-building and meaningful engagement with K'ómoks First Nation and other Indigenous peoples in our community. This is a long-term process that aligns our work with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

At the October 26, 2020 Committee of the Whole meeting, Council adopted the following resolution (excerpt below):

Be it resolved that the City of Courtenay adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as its framework for indigenous reconciliation.

To demonstrate the City’s commitment to reconciliation with K’ómoks First Nation and other Indigenous people in the community, staff and Nordicity have aligned the development of the Strategic Cultural Plan with UNDRIP as its framework for reconciliation. To ensure this project also includes other Indigenous peoples who live within the community, the City will align with the distinction-based approach adopted by the Province of BC. This means that our work respects and acknowledges the unique cultures, histories, rights, laws, and governments of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. To this end, we will work with KFN to ensure that K’ómoks First Nation’s land rights are met, while also ensuring that newcomers, settlers, and other members of the Indigenous community also feel welcome and can celebrate their unique cultures.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Strategic Cultural Plan project budget is in the 2023 Operating Budget.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

This project is part of the department’s core duties and has been identified in the staff members annual work plan. Involvement from other City departments will be required as draft recommendations and implementation strategies are developed.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

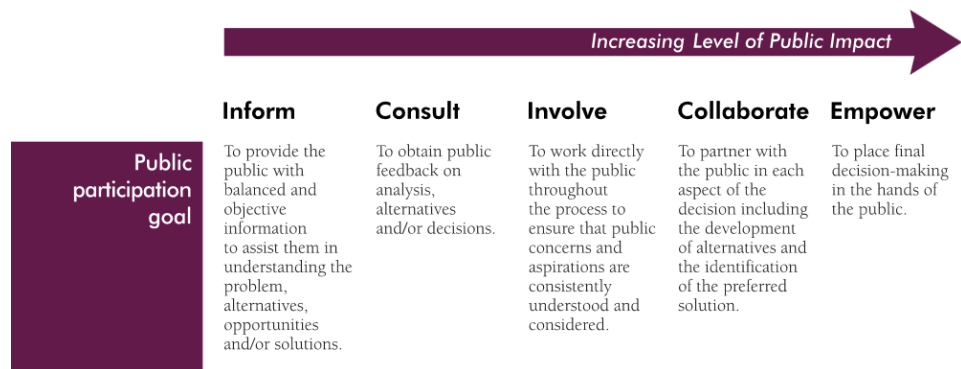
This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Arts, Culture, and Heritage - Complete Strategic Cultural Plan
- Good Governance - Develop a Reconciliation Framework

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Following direction provided by the Courtenay’s Official Community Plan, 2022, staff have applied an equity lens for community participation in the development of this plan.

Staff would consult the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



CONCLUSION:

With the initial community engagement activities completed and Council's receipt of the *What We Heard Report*, staff will continue to work with Nordicity on next steps which include drafting recommendations, and co-facilitating a community check in event in the fall, supported by an online survey. Following these initiatives, the draft Strategic Cultural Plan will be developed and presented to Council for approval.

OPTIONS:

1. THAT the Courtenay Strategic Cultural Plan What We Heard Report (Attachment 1) be received for information. **(Recommended)**
2. THAT Council provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Courtenay Strategic Culture Plan – What We Heard Report

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