

Arts Advisory Committee: Report Card 2012

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The creation of the Arts Advisory Committee (AAC) in 2007 has had a transformative impact on the visibility of the arts in Kingston, amplifying the voices of Kingston's arts communities at the City level while enhancing mutual understanding and collaboration within and among City departments and local arts organizations. The City of Kingston Arts Fund (CKAF) has had a profound effect on the health of the arts in Kingston, delivering critical support to strengthen the Kingston Arts Council (KAC) while cultivating a proliferation of arts-based programming and practice fostering professionalism and innovation. Key markers include:

- ▲ An increase in municipal arts funding from \$93,000 to \$500,000 per year, 2006-2012.
- ▲ \$3.4 million spent by arts groups and projects funded in part by CKAF 2008-2009.¹
- ▲ 600 public arts activities offered in Kingston by CKAF-funded organizations and projects in 2008-2009.²
- ▲ 68,000 people attending CKAF-funded events in 2008-2009.³

Notwithstanding these striking developments, challenges remain, particularly in the areas of accessibility and engagement. Further resources are required to ensure that the City's support for arts and culture is inclusive, delivering a variety of opportunities for people to engage with culture in the ways that suit them, as articulated in the Kingston Culture Plan (KCP): as audience members, co-creators and creators.

Education programs and local festivals are making headway in these areas, but greater support is needed for grassroots arts organizations and community-based initiatives that increase and diversify the nurturing, welcoming, accessible, affordable and safe spaces available for experiencing, appreciating, and creating art. It is these types of projects and programs that turn our neighborhoods into inviting, engaging, healthy, safe and attractive communities.

Through the ongoing implementation of the KCP, and a long-term commitment to a sustainable level of arts funding in Kingston, City Council has a crucial role to play in the development of Kingston as a hub of cultural and creative vitality.

1 City of Kingston Arts Fund Impact Report, 2011

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*

2. INTRODUCTION

The AAC serves as an avenue of communication and consultation between the arts community and the municipal government, it being understood that the arts involve creative expression in all media, including visual and media arts, performing arts such as theatre, music and dance, literature, film and craft. Composed of artists, arts administrators and city-appointed members of the public drawn from diverse disciplines in the community, the AAC's mandate includes:

- ⤴ Monitoring the impact and effectiveness of the City of Kingston arts programs;
- ⤴ Providing recommendations regarding existing programs and new initiatives;
- ⤴ Making staff and Council, through the Arts, Recreation and Community Policies Committee, aware of changing conditions and opportunities in the arts; and
- ⤴ Advising Council and staff, through the Arts, Recreation and Community Policies Committee, of the present and potential impact of non-art programs and policies on the arts sector.

As the AAC enters its sixth year, it takes this opportunity to measure municipal progress in fostering cultural vitality through the arts in our city.

3. INDICATORS

AAC members have identified the following indicators for measuring the health and vitality of Kingston's arts community. They have been organized sequentially to emphasize the need for financial investment and resource development that is required to achieve a range of outcomes and impacts that benefit the arts sector directly as well as the Kingston community more broadly.

1. **Municipal support:** Local government funding for and recognition of the arts as a critical component of a healthy, sustainable community.
2. **Multi-level funding:** Access to a range of governmental and non-governmental funding opportunities for arts projects, groups and organizations.
3. **Cultural Mapping:** Comprehensive, accessible information on local arts resources.
4. **Recognition:** Validation of artists, arts organizations and arts educators who demonstrate excellence in their fields; opportunities for professional artists to earn a living wage.
5. **Spaces:** Affordable housing, studios and venues for artists to practice and showcase their work; safe and welcoming spaces for youth and the public at large to engage with the arts.
6. **Partnerships:** Open communication, information-sharing and teamwork between and among city departments/committees and local organizations, institutions, businesses and community groups on initiatives involving the arts.
7. **Networking:** Building connections to artists and arts projects in other communities.
8. **Education:** Programs and projects engaging and mentoring youth and emerging artists; access for all to learning opportunities that foster arts appreciation and empower creativity.

9. **Inclusion:** Accessible, affordable opportunities to experience and create art that recognize and are inclusive of differences in physical, intellectual, economic, and creative abilities.
10. **Diversity:** A thriving "cultural ecosystem" that includes arts organizations, collectives and individuals operating across a spectrum of levels of professionalism and innovation.
11. **Engagement:** Broad public participation and investment in the arts
12. **Growth:** The economic benefits of increased arts and cultural activity such as festivals, performances and exhibitions are reflected in increases in tourism, in opportunities for meaningful employment and in support for local businesses.

4. PROGRESS

2006:

A dearth of resources to support the arts in Kingston led to a critical situation. In response to a perceived lack of "positive engagement" with the arts community, the Advocacy Committee of the Kingston Arts Council petitioned the Arts, Recreation and Community Policy Committee for a "coherent, rational and forward-looking arts policy"⁴

Problems had been addressed by municipal bodies in isolation and in response to crises. Both the Advocacy Committee and FOCUS Kingston recommended the creation of a community-based advisory committee for arts and culture, as well as "an immediate audit of existing arts services and funding".⁵

The Healthy Community Fund (HCF), administered by the Community Foundation of Greater Kingston (CFGK),⁶ distributed \$93,000 for the arts in Kingston each year. Arts organizations and groups relied heavily on provincial, federal and foundation grants to compensate for a lack of local resources being directed toward the arts, yet were placed at a disadvantage in competition for these funds by the absence of municipal support.⁷ Lack of operating funds undercut promotion and advertising of programs, and limited organizations' abilities to provide educational programming, thereby restricting public engagement. The Advocacy Committee described "gross erosion of the social and physical infrastructure" needed for the arts in Kingston, citing deterioration of the JK Tett Centre as a prime example.⁸

Despite these significant problems, positive steps were being taken. The establishment of the Kingston Prize and the Nan Yeomans grant, administered through the KAC, marked new opportunities for artist recognition. Renewal of the Grand Theatre began as part of the "Group

4 Delegation of the Advocacy Committee of the Kingston Arts Council to the Arts, Recreation and Community Policies Committee, April 2006

5 FOCUS Kingston Community Strategic Plan 2000-2006 Progress Report, August 2006

6 Report from Lance Thurston to the Arts, Recreation and Community Policies Committee, May 2008

7 Advocacy Committee, April 2006

8 Advocacy Committee, April 2006

of 7" community priority projects. Further, the critical challenges facing local artists and arts organizations brought together individuals who may otherwise have operated in isolation, enhancing dialogue and providing an impetus to research arts infrastructure in other municipalities.

2010:

The establishment of the CKAF in 2007 quadrupled municipal funding for the arts. Administering the fund in partnership with the KAC enabled the City to provide core funding to the KAC, strengthening its infrastructure and capacity. Administration of the HCF was transferred to the United Way in 2007.⁹ The CFGK evolved into the Community Foundation for Kingston and Area (CFKA). Now 3 local bodies demonstrated support for arts and culture initiatives in Kingston, allowing local groups to further leverage provincial, federal and foundation grants. In 2008-2009, KAC reported that \$3.4 million was spent by arts groups and projects funded in part by CKAF.¹⁰

Availability of both operating and project funding nurtured a diverse array of local groups and projects, ranging from the collective of emerging artists living and working at the Artel, to artists with disabilities practicing at the H'art School. Nearly 600 public arts activities were offered in Kingston by CKAF-funded organizations and projects in 2008-2009.¹¹ New and improved local festivals emerged, including the Kingston Multicultural Arts Festival and an expanded Kingston WritersFest. Enhanced resources for promotion and infrastructure increased participation: in 2008-2009, attendance at CKAF-funded events totaled more than 68,000.¹² Nonetheless, comprehensive, quantitative evaluation of growth in Kingston's arts community was limited by the lack a "cultural map" providing detailed data on arts resources.¹³

At the municipal level, the AAC was established in 2007 to provide community consultation on the arts, delivering key input for the development of the KCP and the redevelopment of the JK Tett Centre. The consultative processes leading to completion of the KCP and the Tett Centre redevelopment plan brought various city departments and committees together with local stakeholders, opening new channels of communication while identifying areas where greater coordination was required. The City launched an Education and Community Engagement program offering new learning opportunities in city-owned spaces for students, educators and the public at large; and in 2008 re-opened the Grand Theatre as a venue for the performing arts. The City also forged new partnerships with Queen's University to launch the artignite festival and construction of the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts.

Kingston continued to turn to other cities for examples of sustainable arts development. In 2007, KAC hosted Ontario Conference on Regional Development for the Arts. Development

9 Lance Thurston, May 2008

10 City of Kingston Arts Fund Impact Report, 2011

11 *Ibid.*

12 *Ibid.*

13 Community Foundation for Kingston and Area's Vital Signs, 2010

of the KCP furthered research on models of arts and culture support in other municipalities.

2012:

Municipal funding for the arts in Kingston continues to grow, with the CKAF awarding nearly \$500,000 in operating and project funding in 2012. Kingston arts groups and organizations leverage this municipal support into broader-based funding from provincial and federal levels as well as local, regional and national foundations and individual donors.

Increased opportunities for funding have cultivated a proliferation of arts-based groups and organizations, fostering innovation and professional development. Kingston offers a never-before-seen number of public festivals and activities, from Culture Days and Open Doors Kingston to Youth Arts Week and the Kingston Jazz Festival. Affordable and accessible learning opportunities such as conferences, workshops and classes have increased. The naming of Eric Folsom as Kingston's first Poet Laureate in 2011 provided the city with an official spokesperson for literary arts. The JK Tett Centre redevelopment is anticipated to provide new opportunities for tenants to enhance partnerships, programming and memberships.

The AAC is working to dissolve silos between groups involved in arts and culture initiatives, sharing knowledge and delivering input on issues affecting the arts community, ranging from by-law enforcement to public art policy. The AAC is strategizing the most appropriate means of increasing stakeholder input and community engagement.

The KAC is strengthening information-sharing and reach within the arts community, through its on-line Interactive Arts Portal and events that draw together local artists, such as Cultural Kaleidoscope, Building Arts Communities in Kingston and Pecha Kucha.

Kingston has turned a corner, from looking to other municipalities for leadership, toward drawing artists from afar to engage with the city's thriving arts scene, through projects and groups including Corridor Culture, X-Curated Curatorial Collective, the Multicultural Arts Festival and ModernFuel Artist Run Centre's Vapours concert series. Further, Kingston artists are earning recognition on a national and international scale, from the purchase of Mike Bayne's paintings by the Art Gallery of Ontario, to the naming of Paul Saulnier as one of the "Top 100 Guitarists of All-Time" by SPIN magazine.

Nonetheless, challenges remain in the areas of promotion, public engagement, partnership building and accessibility. The proliferation of arts programs and events delivers an increasing number of choices for the public, while technology fundamentally alters traditional modes of communication and engagement with the arts, posing challenges to organizers and creating new avenues as well as barriers to accessibility and affordability. Not all individuals, neighbourhoods and groups have equal access to arts activities and opportunities in our city. Barriers exist particularly for youth and people with disabilities. These issues are beginning to be addressed through initiatives such as the creation of a youth strategy for Kingston, but much work remains to be done toward realizing a healthy "cultural ecosystem" in Kingston.

In progress but still incomplete, the cultural mapping project outlined in the KCP and the Kingston Cultural Resource Mapping plan has been identified as a priority by the AAC and City Council. It's successful implementation will fulfill a key step toward evaluating local arts initiatives to develop a strategy for increased access to and engagement with the arts.

5. GOALS:

1. **Municipal support:** Continue to increase funding for CKAF on an annual basis, while exploring options for multi-year funding and core funding as recommended in the KCP.¹⁴
2. **Multi-level funding:** Encourage local artists and arts organizations to leverage funding from the City into support from other levels of government, charitable foundations and private sources. Support the KAC's work to distribute information on funding opportunities.
3. **Cultural Mapping:** Complete the cultural mapping project by 2014, to create a centralized inventory of arts and culture resources, as recommended by FOCUS Kingston, the Advocacy Committee of the Kingston Arts Council, the KCP and the AAC. Utilize this resource to enhance public awareness of Kingston's vital arts communities, and to facilitate data collection and evaluation on the state of the arts.
4. **Recognition:** Facilitate the development and implementation of a Mayor's Arts Awards by the KAC as identified in the KCP,¹⁵ while maintaining and strengthening other recognition programs. Support conditions that allow professional artists to earn a living wage through employment opportunities related to their artistic practice and specialized skills.
5. **Spaces:** Ensure that the Cultural Services and Recreation and Leisure departments work together to increase access to arts and cultural programming in underserved communities, while the AAC monitors completion and opening of new venues at the JK Tett Centre and the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts. Prioritize increased access to live-work space, studio-rehearsal space and affordable housing in zoning matters.
6. **Partnerships:** Continue to explore ways of dissolving silos and enhancing information exchange within City departments and between community stakeholders and the City concerning the arts. Streamline committees and departments overseeing arts and culture initiatives. Increase incentives for teamwork and collaboration between local arts groups.
7. **Networking:** Position Kingston as a "cultural hub," encouraging collaborations and projects that invite touring and visiting artists to engage with our communities. Capitalize on Kingston's location along the travel corridor for artists touring between Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal, and beyond.
8. **Education:** Support opportunities for children and youth to access arts education and programming, fostering arts appreciation while empowering creativity. Prioritize projects and programs that create teaching, mentoring and training opportunities for established artists.
9. **Inclusion:** Work to ensure that venues and programs provide accessible opportunities for experiencing and creating art, inclusive of differences in physical, intellectual, economic, and creative abilities. Support conditions that allow grassroots, amateur and educational organizations and artists to gain access to opportunities related to their artistic practices.

¹⁴ Recommendations #44-26, Kingston Culture Plan, 2010

¹⁵ Recommendation #41, Kingston Culture Plan, 2010

10. **Diversity:** Focus on engagement with marginalized constituencies, creating a nurturing environment for arts development as an integral part of a healthy "cultural ecosystem." Support new and underserved projects that cultivate innovation and emerging talent.
11. **Engagement:** Emphasize marketing, promotion and information-sharing in multiple formats and targeted to different populations to enhance accessibility and attract greater participation in the arts. Support arts activities in underserved neighbourhoods through the creation of Community Cultural Hubs, as recommended in the KCP.¹⁶
12. **Growth:** Engage with stakeholders in the community (businesses, non-profit organizations, academic institutions, community groups) to develop a blueprint for maximizing and measuring the beneficial economic impacts of arts and cultural activity on tourism, employment, and business.

6. CONCLUSION

The support of the City of Kingston through investment in the CKAF, creation of a dedicated Cultural Services department and the establishment of the AAC has led to an unprecedented flourishing of arts and culture: a phenomenal development that we may take pride in. At the same time, rapid growth leaves local arts groups and organizations vulnerable without sustained effort on key issues:

- ⤴ **Funding:** A long-term, sustainable model including core funding for key organizations.
- ⤴ **Cultural Mapping:** A comprehensive inventory identifying arts and culture resources.
- ⤴ **Spaces:** Affordable housing, studio-rehearsal space and venues for artists.
- ⤴ **Partnerships:** Dissolving silos within the City and between the City and community.
- ⤴ **Inclusion:** Accessible, affordable and welcoming programs and events.
- ⤴ **Engagement:** Enhanced promotional and communications tools for the arts.

The AAC looks forward to continuing its support for the City's work on these matters through the fulfillment of its mandate that includes the ongoing monitoring of the impact and effectiveness of the City of Kingston arts programs; providing recommendations regarding existing programs and new initiatives; making staff and Council aware of changing conditions and opportunities in the arts; and advising Council and staff of the present and potential impact of non-art programs and policies on the arts sector.

16 Recommendation #22, Kingston Culture Plan, 2010