

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 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 synergistically had a profound effect on the health of the arts overall, delivering critical support to strengthen the Kingston Arts Council (KAC) while fostering a proliferation in arts-based programming and practice that has fostered professionalism and innovation.

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 and participate with culture in the ways that suit them as articulated in the Kingston Culture Plan: 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 Kingston Culture Plan (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.

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 and arts administrators (should we include the city appointed members of the public in here as well? (i.e. Lynne and Katherine) 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

Committee members have identified the following indicators for measuring the health and vitality of Kingston's arts community:

1. **On-going 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. **Recognition and Recompense:** Validation of artists, arts organizations and arts educators (who demonstrate excellence.....?) demonstrating excellence in their fields. The ability of artists to earn a living wage in Kingston.
4. **Teamwork and Partnership Building:** Open communication, information-sharing and partnerships between and among city departments/committees and local organizations, institutions and community groups on initiatives involving the arts.
5. **Networking:** Building connections to artists and arts projects in other communities.
6. **Education:** Programs and projects engaging and mentoring youth and emerging artists; access for all to educational opportunities that foster arts appreciation and empower creativity.
7. **Accessibility:** Accessible, affordable local opportunities for experiencing and creating art that recognize and are inclusive of differences in physical, intellectual, economic, and creative abilities.
8. **Diversity:** A thriving "cultural ecosystem" that includes arts organizations, collectives and individuals operating across a spectrum of levels of professionalism and innovation.
9. **Engagement:** Broad public participation and investment in the arts.
10. **Spaces:** Affordable housing, studio space and venues for artists to practice and showcase their work; safe and welcoming spaces where youth and the public at large may engage with the arts.
11. **Cultural Mapping:** Access to comprehensive information on local arts resources.

4. PROGRESS

2006:

A dearth of resources to support the arts in Kingston created 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"¹

Problems were 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".²

The Healthy Community Fund (HCF), administered by the Community Foundation of Greater Kingston (CFGK),³ distributed a mere \$93,000 for the arts in Kingston. 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 operating support.⁴

Lack of operating funds undercut promotion and advertising of programs, and limited organizations' abilities to provide educational (I don't think it was just educational programming that was affected by the lack of funds, perhaps more accurate to say 'and have limited organizations abilities to support quality programming including education, thereby) 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 an example.

Despite these significant problems, positive steps were being taken. The establishment of the Kingston Prize and the Nan Yeomans grant through the Kingston Arts Council marked new opportunities for artist recognition. Renewal of the Grand Theatre began as part of the "Group 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 provided core funding to the KAC, strengthening its infrastructure and capacity. Administration of the HCF was transferred to the United Way in 2007.⁵ 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

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

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

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

4 Advocacy Committee, April 2006

5 Lance Thurston, May 2008

2008-2009, KAC reported that \$3.4 million was spent by arts groups and projects funded in part by CKAF.⁶

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 2008-2009.⁷ New and improved local festivals emerged, including the Kingston Multicultural Arts Festival and an expanded and revamped Kingston WritersFest. Enhanced resources for promotion and infrastructure increased participation: in 2008-2009, attendance at CKAF-funded events totaled more than 68,000.⁸ Comprehensive, quantitative evaluation of growth in Kingston's arts community was limited by the lack a "cultural map" providing detailed data on arts resources.⁹

At the municipal level, the AAC was established (should say 'continued' since it came into existence 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 JK Tett Centre redevelopment plan brought various city departments and committees together with local stakeholders in the community, 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, around 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 of the KCP furthered research on models of arts and culture support in other municipalities.

2012:

Municipal funding for the arts in Kingston is at an all-time high, with the CKAF awarding nearly \$500,000 in operating and project funding in 2012. Kingston arts groups and organizations continue to leverage 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 project funding have led to a proliferation of arts-based collectives, groups and organizations representing a spectrum of professionalism and innovation. Kingston offers a never-before-seen number of affordable public festivals and activities, from Culture Days and Open Doors Kingston to Youth Arts Week and the Kingston Jazz Festival. Affordable and accessible educational 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

6 City of Kingston Arts Fund Impact Report, 2011

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*

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

Centre redevelopment is anticipated to provide great 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 through programming that draws together local artists, such as its Cultural Kaleidoscope, Building Arts Communities in Kingston and Pecha Kucha events.

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 Modern Fuel 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 has been identified as a priority by numerous stakeholders, including City Council and the AAC. It's successful implementation by the City will fulfill a key step toward evaluating successes and challenges of local arts initiatives while developing a strategy for improved access to and engagement with the arts.

5. GOALS

1. **On-going Municipal support:** Continue to increase funding for CKAF on an annual basis as recommended in the KCP (Recommendation #44). Explore options for multi-year funding and core funding to key cultural organizations also as recommended in the KCP (Recommendations #45 and #46).
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 disseminate information on funding opportunities. Within 5-10 years, local arts organizations and groups should be able to leverage municipal funds into \$4.6 million invested annually into arts and culture by private and public sector sources.

3. **Recognition and Recompense:** Facilitate the development and implementation of a Mayor's Arts Awards as identified in the KCP (Recommendation #41), while maintaining and strengthening other recognition programs. Support the creation of conditions that allow artists to earn a living wage through employment opportunities directly related to their artistic practice and/or through the specialized skills they possess.
4. **Teamwork and Partnership Building:** 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 partnerships and collaborations between local arts groups.
5. **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 as a crossroads or meeting place among artists touring between Ottawa, Toronto and Montreal, and beyond. Support Kingston arts organizations so that they are able to provide work opportunities that will make the city attractive to a greater number of artists, rather than a peripheral player suffering from a "brain drain" of creative talent.
6. **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.
7. **Accessibility:** 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.
8. **Diversity:** Strengthen new and underserved arts projects by fostering support for innovation and emerging talent. Focus on engagement with marginalized constituencies, creating a nurturing environment for arts development as an integral part of a healthy "cultural ecosystem."
9. **Engagement:** Emphasize marketing, promotion and information-sharing in multiple formats to attract greater public participation in and enhance the accessibility of the arts. Support arts activities in underserved neighbourhoods through the creation of Community Cultural Hubs, as recommended in the KCP (Recommendation #22), and through promotion of events through community service organizations working with different populations.
10. **Space:** 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 the JK Tett Centre and the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts. Prioritize increased access to live-work space and affordable housing in zoning matters.
11. **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.

6. CONCLUSION

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

- **Funding:** A long-term, sustainable model that includes core funding for key organizations.
- **Teamwork:** Breaking down silos within City departments and between the City and community.
- **Accessibility:** Affordable and inclusive programs and events.
- **Engagement:** Enhanced promotional/communications tools for arts groups and organizations.
- **Space:** Affordable housing, studio/rehearsal space and venues for artists.
- **Cultural Mapping:** A comprehensive inventory identifying arts and culture resources and gaps.

The AAC looks forward to continuing to support 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.