

## **Town of Collingwood Arts and Culture Policy**

### **Background:**

The Town of Collingwood was established in 1858 and from the earliest years, residents stimulated activities of an artistic nature and brought cultural events into the daily life of the community.

From the first settlements in 1834, even before the Town was established, the Nottawasaga area has welcomed a unique cross-section of residents. The first immigrants were largely of Scottish, Irish, Dutch or German descent. Prior to the American Civil War, many black families arrived and settled in the community. Although the journey to this area was sometimes a long and difficult one, each immigrant, for their own reasons, was pursuing a better quality of life.

Despite language barriers, progressive attitudes established the community. Institutions were built, including a post office, churches and a school. The community's first recorded musical entertainment was a concert featuring Neil McFadzen performing his eight-song repertoire in Gaelic.

The arrival of the railway in 1855 prompted the statement: "*Transportation means civilization and all the trappings*". The community continued to grow as Andrew Mericle and Allen Cook opened taverns.

At this point in our history Collingwood could boast of an active cultural life. The Town had built its own Grand Opera House (at the site of the current Eddie Bush Arena in Downtown Collingwood), a 1400 seat facility owned by the Municipality but leased co-operatively to private citizens. The community newspaper, The Enterprise, regularly reported all events which took place in the Opera House. Events ranged from travelling theatre groups to a visit by the Prince of Wales in the year 1860. Patrons and ticket holders could hear soloists, piano duets and even minstrel shows. J.A. Castor owned an Art Gallery and Photography Studio, and many different activities were a part of life in Collingwood. The Nottawasaga Agricultural Society hosted annual outdoor exhibitions and the Trotter Club ran horse races across the ice each winter.

Nurtured by the determination to encourage the creation and appreciation of the cultural aspects of life, many arts-related and recreational groups were formed. These groups and organizations consisted of dedicated volunteers, church groups and choirs who were committed to providing the cultural identity of the community. Two such organizations, The Huron Institute and The Mechanics Institute, were formed. The Huron Institute was established to educate children about horticulture and collect curios for public viewing. The Mechanics Institute was established for a variety of purposes, the main object being to distribute books on loan to the public.

All this cultural activity took place prior to the turn of the twentieth century.

Throughout the twentieth century, the Town saw periods of alternating resurgence and decline in interest and ability to support the arts, dance, music, drama, heritage, literacy and culture. Despite the periods of decline, Collingwood citizens' belief in the importance of arts and culture as an integral part of community life ensured that they did not disappear. People understood the role that arts and culture play in the development of society as a whole.

During the 1970s Collingwood saw its culture scene develop with the establishment of a community concert series. Enthusiasm was also strong enough to foster the development of an Arts Council, and in 1974 the Blue Mountain Foundation for the Arts was founded with a strong volunteer base, to meet the needs of those interested in enriching life in the community. The Huron Institute has evolved into the award-winning Collingwood Museum, now holding over 17,000 artefacts in its collection, and offering programmes, exhibitions, lectures and education activities. The Mechanics Institute has evolved into the Collingwood Public Library, which provides programmes for all ages, information sessions, loans of books, films, tapes, magazines and compact discs, and computer and internet access. By the fall of 2009 the Collingwood Public Library will have a new purpose-built facility that will include expanded space for programmes and cultural activities.

The Town of Collingwood has taken a pro-active approach to formalizing recognition of culture within the community.

In 1985 the municipality restructured its Recreation Department to become the Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture. Acting as a facilitator, the Department assisted community organizations and individuals to achieve their cultural objectives by offering Town resources both monetary and in kind. Drafting of the first Municipal Cultural Policy was identified as a priority. As a result, through a community initiative spearheaded by the Blue Mountain Foundation for the Arts, a community-based task force was formed to research and prepare a policy for Collingwood Council. The resulting Municipal Cultural Policy document was presented and unanimously adopted by Council in 1991, and became the guideline for municipal involvement with the arts and culture sector in the community.

In 2000 the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department was renamed to become the Department of Leisure Services. During 2006-2007 the Department undertook an update to its Leisure Services Master Plan, and called upon a group of arts and culture champions in the community (nicknamed the Gang of 25), to research and supply information for the Master Plan consultants on the pulse and needs of the artistic and cultural community. The resulting updated Leisure Services Master Plan, which for the first time included an Arts and Culture component, was adopted by Collingwood Council in 2008. It further defines the role that the municipality will play in the future development of the arts and culture sector in our society. The municipality has now engaged staff to further develop the capacity of the arts and culture sector.

What began with volunteer organizations has evolved into a wealth of arts and cultural activities. Church organizations and choirs continue to play an active role in the cultural life of the community. Volunteer cultural organizations such as the Blue Mountain Foundation for the Arts have encouraged the formation of more groups, including the Blue Mountain School of Landscape Painting, Theatre Collingwood, the Georgian Bay Association for the Creative Arts, and Collingwood Music Festival. As Collingwood's citizens have volunteered their time, energy and expertise to produce quality cultural and artistic events and experiences, our community has become a destination for writers, actors and artists, and for people looking for a rich array of cultural and artistic experiences.

Entering the twenty-first century, Collingwood must continue the support of and capacity building for arts and culture, and development of facilities. This will enhance Collingwood as a community that attracts people for its quality of life, and ensure its future as a vibrant cultural tourism destination.

## **Purpose:**

The Arts and Culture Policy provides a clear framework within which the Town of Collingwood will define and take action on its commitment to support arts and culture in the Town.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide a framework for Council's consideration, decision-making and allocation of municipal support for arts and culture;
- Provide a vision that inspires and calls everyone to action, including Town of Collingwood Council, staff and volunteers, the arts and culture community, and Town residents and visitors, to support and develop arts and culture in Collingwood;
- Provide a means for the arts and culture community to engage and act in partnership with the Town.

## **Definitions:**

### **Context**

The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines culture as follows:

*"... the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. Culture comprises the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group, and includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, fundamental rights of human beings, value systems, traditions and beliefs." (www.unesco.org)*

For the Town of Collingwood, Arts and Culture will be defined as follows:

- Arts include design arts, visual and performing arts, music, literary arts, electronic arts, communications and media, crafts, festivals and events.
- Culture includes arts, built and natural heritage, the history of the community, ethno-cultural identity and expression, language and literacy, urban design, artistic expression and creativity in all sectors of the economy and the community.

## **Mission and Vision:**

### ***Mission***

The Town of Collingwood is dedicated to enhancing Arts and Culture as an integral part of our community.

### ***Vision for Arts and Culture in the Town of Collingwood***

A vibrant, dynamic arts and culture community, as established in the Sustainable Community Plan, is essential to the growth and overall good health of the Town of Collingwood.

Collingwood supports and encourages arts and culture through policy development, research, advocacy, education and financial support. The goal is to help individuals, groups and organizations realize their full creative, social and economic potential to the greater benefit to all citizens. Collingwood's Vision includes:

- **Downtown Collingwood as a vital arts and cultural core**, a source of pride for the residents and a recognized arts and culture destination;
- **Opportunities and access to arts and culture as the right of every person**;
- **Recognition of the value creativity and imagination** as necessary to a vibrant, developing community; supporting the development of the human imagination through arts, culture and education;
- **Arts and cultural festivals and events throughout the year** to enrich and enhance our downtown, neighbourhoods, parks, public spaces and places of work and as a valuable economic engine for our community;
- **Communication networks** that link artists and artisans, arts groups and organizations to one another and to the community at large; an infrastructure that includes databases, resources for education and funding, media and promotions;
- **Our evolving identity** as a sense of place, heritage, innovation, diversity and inclusiveness, celebrated and explored through the arts;
- **Long-term investment and collaborative planning (including capital partnerships with the Town, organizations and groups)** that sustain Collingwood's cultural health and the strength of its vital cultural organizations; where support for our arts community promotes Collingwood as a significant arts destination sustaining artists and cultural institutions into the future.

## **Principles:**

### **1. Importance of Arts and Culture**

**Arts and Culture will be recognized, nurtured, encouraged and promoted as an integral part of life in Collingwood. The Town of Collingwood recognizes and endorses the following:**

- Arts and Culture is one of four pillars of sustainability
- Arts and Culture is a fundamental core component of community identity, and contributes strongly to sustaining community quality of life.
- Arts and Culture is important as it encompasses many elements, including arts, built and natural heritage, the history of the community, ethno-cultural expression, language and literacy, urban design, artistic expression, and creativity in all sectors of the economy and the community.
- Collingwood's unique cultural assets and identity strengthen the community as a cultural tourism destination, supporting and enhancing other attractive features of the Town.
- Collingwood's arts and cultural activity, organizations, resources and products are key elements for educating residents and visitors.
- Collingwood's arts and culture represents a diverse range of components which will enrich the lives of all of its citizens.

## 2. Sustainability and Growth of Arts and Culture

**Arts and Culture is integral to quality of life, sustainable development and tourism in Collingwood. The Town of Collingwood recognizes and endorses the following:**

- A vibrant arts and culture sector helps to attract and retain creative, entrepreneurial, skilled, committed and enthusiastic businesses, workforce and volunteers.
- An environment supportive of creativity is a catalyst for innovation and imagination, inspiring renewal, growth, prosperity and vitality.
- The arts and culture community is comprised of a diverse group of artists, artisans, organizations, arts and cultural workers and volunteers who are involved in the creation, production, presentation and distribution of arts and culture. Whether professional, semi-professional or non-professional, all are important and valued.
- The Town of Collingwood's Arts and Culture Policy requires ongoing planning and development, and annual evaluation of its arts and cultural activity and growth.
- As the advocate and steward for arts and culture in Collingwood, the Town will create an environment in which the arts and cultural community can be sustained and nurtured through economic investment and cultural renewal.
- The Town will develop an effective marketing and communications strategy for promoting Collingwood's arts and cultural activities to further community involvement in and awareness of arts and culture.
- The Town will promote Collingwood's arts and cultural activities in its tourism and economic development initiatives.
- Cultural identity is important to providing a framework for sustainable growth. A community that embraces and protects its sense of identity is able to respond to the evolving dynamics and needs of its citizens both young and old.
- Growth of a vibrant arts and culture community requires strategic partnerships with private and public investors, and alliances between the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors.
- It is important to recognize and celebrate volunteers, arts and cultural achievements and initiatives.
- Supporting the creation and enhancement of arts education programmes within the work of arts organizations encourages cultural renewal and growth.

## 3. Economic Impact of Arts and Culture

**Arts and Culture provides significant contributions, both directly and indirectly, to economic development, community sustainability and tourism in Collingwood. The Town of Collingwood recognizes and endorses the following:**

- Culture is an important pillar of a sustainable community.
- The quality of life, augmented by the community's cultural products, attracts business, industry, new residents and consumers of cultural products. *"The arts community make significant contributions to our economy. According to a recent study commissioned by Business for the Arts:*
  - *Currently, government investment in the performing arts sector earns a positive return of over 200% based on direct and indirect benefits.*
  - *The real beneficiaries of cultural investment are Canadian communities. The multiplier effect on a region's economy is 8.5 when induced benefits are included."* (Canadian Arts Coalition)
- The tangible benefits of "cultural tourism" make significant contributions to our economy. For example, the Stratford Festival has developed into an industry for a community which was failing. Collingwood has seen the economic benefits of the Collingwood Elvis Festival,

Theatre Collingwood and the Collingwood Summer Music Festival. *“When \$1.00 is invested directly or indirectly in cultural activities it generates \$3.20 in economic activity.” (Canadian Arts Coalition)*

- Cultural tourists stay longer and spend more than other tourists.  
*“Leisure travellers who include a culture/heritage activity in their trips travel longer distances, have longer stays and higher spending per trip compared to other leisure travellers.  
“From jazz festivals to world-class heritage sites, Canadians love culture and will travel great distances in their own country to attend certain events or experience unique parts of Canada’s history or culture.”  
(Statistics Canada, Quarterly Bulletin from the Culture Statistics Program, Focus on Culture, Summer 1998).*
- Arts and culture are "cornerstones of the creative, knowledge-based economy".  
*(Conference Board of Canada, Valuing Culture: Measuring and Understanding Canada’s Creative Economy, August 2008).*

#### **4. Municipal Support and Capacity Building for Arts and Culture**

**The Town of Collingwood has committed to investing in Arts and Culture. The Town of Collingwood recognizes and endorses the following:**

- Support of artistic and cultural activities may be represented by both financial and other resources.
- By virtue of funding, the Town lends groups, artists and not-for-profit organizations credibility and accountability. This recognition raises the status of artists, projects and organizations in the eyes of other potential supporters, funding groups, levels of government and the private sector.
- Recognition through financial and other resources encourages capacity building of events, activities and programmes within the community.
- Public art must be developed and maintained in order to enhance the quality of public spaces in Collingwood.

#### **5. Availability of Facilities**

**The Town of Collingwood is committed to ensuring the availability of facilities and venues where Arts and Culture can take place. The Town of Collingwood recognizes and endorses the following:**

- The full development of arts and cultural resources demands adequate facilities.
- All individuals, groups and organizations are entitled to participate.
- All artistic and cultural activities may take place in a variety of venues and spaces, indoors and outdoors, fully accessible to the public.
- Where possible, the Town will incorporate planning for artistic and cultural programmes in future developments of public facilities.

#### **6. Access to Arts and Culture**

**The Town of Collingwood recognizes the importance of making Arts and Culture available to all. The Town of Collingwood recognizes and endorses the following:**

- It is important to provide cultural organizations with support and assistance, in a pro-active manner, for promotion, advertising, and marketing of cultural opportunities, activities and events happening in Collingwood for the residents of our community and beyond.

- Clear communication is necessary between the Town and the cultural organizations, to ensure the circulation of information about cultural opportunities, activities and events offered in our community, as well as facilitating the inclusion of cultural information with materials and brochures about the Town.
- Making arts and culture available to all is valuable and important, particularly to those with barriers to overcome or limited opportunities for exposure to cultural experiences and activities, in order “to foster social inclusion and cultural diversity” (from the Town of Collingwood’s Sustainable Community Plan).
- The Town will seek to respect the rights of Indigenous peoples to own and control their heritage, including Indigenous images, design, stories and other cultural expression.<sup>1</sup>
- It is necessary to assess gaps and plan to address needs on an ongoing basis.

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<sup>1</sup> Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian visual arts, Australian Council for the Arts, NSW, September 2007, p9

## Resources and References

- Town of Collingwood Leisure Services Master Plan Update 2007
- Town of Collingwood Municipal Cultural Policy 1991
- Town of Collingwood’s Sustainable Community Plan and Project Update, April 10, 2008
- Canadian Arts Coalition website ([www.canadianartscoalition.ca](http://www.canadianartscoalition.ca))
- Conference Board of Canada, *Valuing Culture: Measuring and Understanding Canada’s Creative Economy, August 2008*
- Statistics Canada, *Quarterly Bulletin from the Culture Statistics Program, Focus on Culture, Summer 1998*
- United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) website ([www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org))
- Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage Project, 2015. Think Before you appropriate. *Things to know and questions to ask in order to avoid misappropriating Indigenous cultural heritage*. Simon Fraser University: Vancouver
- Protocols for producing Indigenous Australian visual arts by the Australian Council for the Arts, 2007. Australian Council for the Arts: NSW

## Municipal Cultural Policies Referenced

- Municipal Cultural Policy for the City of St. Catharines, October 1999
- Building a Creative Future, A Plan for Culture, April 2006, City of Barrie
- Discussion Paper The Municipal Role in Orillia’s Culture, January 2003
- An Integrated Community Arts and Culture Plan for the Town of Ajax, July 2006
- Culture Plan II, 2005, City of Kitchener