Creative City
NETWORK

Action Plan

Culture-L seems to be something of a success story and we've been getting a remarkable number of testimonials to its value. The best evidence of its growing importance of course is the frequency of its use and the range of issues and questions that everyone is dealing with. It's been great to see such a number of professionals, sharing information, best practices, and ... not least important ... support.

And that's the real point. *It's not so much Culture-L that's the success story, it's this group of people. We've become what is now referred to as a Community of Practice (CoP)—in the simplest terms: a group of people with similar mandates, facing similar challenges, applying similar tools. Culture-L (bless it) is just a technological system that supports the communication necessary for our community to do its thing ... and do it better.*

Burke Taylor, City of Vancouver

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A Brief History

1998
Culture-L,
national listserv
for municipal cultural
development professionals,
co-founded by Cities of
Vancouver and Toronto

1999
The arts and
culture community
in Greater Vancouver
identify the creation of a
Greater Vancouver Cultural
Information Network as a priority
action for the region

2000
At a national meeting
of cultural development
professionals from cities
across the country, interest
is expressed in a national model
of the cultural information network
planned for Greater Vancouver and asks
the City of Vancouver and Les Arts et la Ville
to lead the initiative

2001
Completion of
the Pre-Feasibility
Study Final Report for
The Canadian Cultural
Information Network

2002
Evolving from Culture-L to the
Creative City Network

*Looking forward to the next step with enthusiasm and thank you so much for all your efforts. **The Creative City Network—bring it on!!***
Sue Galimberti, City of Regina

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Goal

To develop the capacity of municipal cultural development staff across Canada through providing opportunities for sharing best practices and experiences, developing new partnerships, and through nurturing a collaborative and supportive "community of practice."

Project Description

The Creative City Network will be a national human network of municipal cultural development professionals, supported by appropriate technological tools that will enable these professionals to more fully interact as a "community of practice."

The work of these professionals is central to municipalities' capacity to address the cultural needs of their communities, to nurture the development of cultural organizations in their communities, and to ensure residents' and visitors' ability to participate in cultural activities and experiences. Through supporting the work and interaction of this community of practice, these individuals will be better able to support local artists and cultural organizations and to better serve the residents of their communities.

The Creative City Network encompasses two components, intimately linked, that will create entirely new levels of engagement, knowledge transfer, sharing of experience, comparative research, and networking for municipal cultural staff from all regions of Canada:

1 the creation of a new **DIGITAL HUB** networking tool where online sharing and information dissemination occur seamlessly
2 a face-to-face **CONFERENCE** that brings together the active municipal cultural players that make up this community of practice.

This national bilingual network will incorporate and interlink regional networks as appropriate, and link to external resources and organizations of value to this group.

DIGITAL HUB

1

Creative City NETWORK

The Creative City Network (CCN) Digital Hub
Building an evolving knowledge resource

A Internet-based electronic network and resource will be created that takes the idea of a simple and easy-to-use listserv to a new and innovative level for sharing information and experience. This (mostly) self-organizing web site tool will allow cultural workers to forge new ways of working together by enabling them to:

- Access channels of "just in time" assistance and advice from peers across the country.
- Develop a central location designed and customized to cater to issues and needs specific to this community of practice.
- Collectively build knowledge resources on topics of shared interest and needs.

The site will be a location designed, evolved, and managed to address the issues and meet the needs specific to this community of practice. Through this network, members will be in continuous and immediate contact with their peers in cities across Canada with instant access to information, data, advice, or experiential knowledge from them.

Collectively, this community of practice will build knowledge resources on topics of shared interest and needs, partly through archived reports of conversations and exchanges, and also through members' ability to personally post (or link) policies, plans, program information, best practices, reports, studies, presentation slides, and other relevant items to an evolving central site. The site will integrate knowledge resources built by this community with links to outside information sources frequently used by cultural planners. The CCN site will offer convenient and flexible online meeting spaces and communication channels to support members' collaborative project work and through which online seminars could be offered.

Bilingual Capability

The CCN will be accessible and usable by both French and English readers:

- Key information will be available in both languages (professionally translated)
- Other information will be available in language of submission
- Software will have sophisticated built-in computer translation program for translation on the fly

Knowledge Resource Development

Collectively, this community of practice will build knowledge resources on topics of shared interest and needs such as:

- Comparative policies, procedures, programs and practices in areas such as:
    - ✳ Funding support (grants: operating, project, incentive)
    - ✳ Cultural facility development and maintenance
    - ✳ Cultural facility programming
    - ✳ Public art in civic, private sector and community contexts
    - ✳ Planning for culturally diverse communities including First Nations
    - ✳ Youth involvement in arts, culture and heritage activities
    - ✳ Mechanisms unique to municipalities (facilities and program development)
    - ✳ Festivals and special events
    - ✳ Film development / Cultural industries
    - ✳ City / non-profit partnerships (facility mgmt., fee for services, etc..)
    - ✳ Integration of arts, culture and heritage considerations into broader municipal planning contexts and thinking
    - ✳ Museums and Heritage site planning and operations
    - ✳ Health and safety issues
- Reports and studies
- Cultural statistics
- Comparative budget information
- Marketing strategies
- Audience surveys
- Programming ideas

Targeted to meet the needs of this Community of Practice

In developing a central location designed and customized to the issues and needs specific to this community of practice, this site will integrate knowledge resources built by this community with outside information sources frequently used by cultural planners such as:

- Program information, studies, reports, policies etc. produced by government bodies including Canadian Heritage, Canada Council and provincial government cultural departments
- Studies, reports, news, and articles from Canadian Conference of the Arts
- City websites that provide cultural affairs information
- Statistics Canada reports and data
- Studies and resource tools developed by university centres and faculty
- Inventories of cultural resources pertinent to the professional needs of members
- Resources available relating to planning practice, governance, facility management, audience development and citizen involvement

www.creativecity.ca

13 Fundamental Elements of successful communities of practice which technology can affect

TIME AND SPACE
Presence and visibility
A community needs to have a presence in the lives of its member and make itself visible to them.

Rhythm
Communities live in time and they have rhythms of events and rituals that reaffirm their bonds and value.

PARTICIPATION
Variety of interactions
Members of a community or practice need to interact in order to build their shared practice.

Efficiency of involvement
Communities of practice compete with other priorities in the lives of their members. Participation must be easy.

VALUE CREATION
Short-term value
Communities of practice thrive on the value they deliver to their members and to their organizational context. Each interaction needs to create some value.

Long-term value
Because members identify with the domain of the community, they have a long-term commitment to its development.

CONNECTIONS
Connection to the world
A community of practice can create value by providing a connection to a broader field or community that its members care to keep abreast of.

IDENTITY
Personal Identity
Belonging to a community of practice is part of one's identity as a competent practitioner.

Communal Identity
Successful communities have a strong identity that members inherit in their own lives.

COMMUNITY MEMBERSHIP
Belonging and relationships
The value of belonging is not merely instrumental, but personal as well: interacting with colleagues, developing friendships, building trust.

Complex boundaries
Communities of practice have multiple levels and types of participation. It is important for people on the periphery to be able to participate in some way. And inside communities too, people form sub-communities around areas of interest.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Evolution: maturation and integration
Communities of practice evolve as they go through stages of development and find new connections to the world.

Active community-building
Successful communities of practice usually have a person or core group who take some active responsibility for moving the community along.

2 CONFERENCE

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> *It is such a validating and confidence building experience to know that other municipal cultural staff, across Canada, are facing similar challenges, experiencing similar small triumphs, and are willing to share what they have learned.*

Anne Russo, Arts Manager CRD
ARTS Development Office
Victoria, BC

The CCN Conference
Strengthening a community

A national founding conference will be held in Vancouver, British Columbia, on November 7-9, 2002. It will bring together approximately 100 municipal cultural planners and administrators from across Canada to participate in professional development, networking, and opportunities to "connect" and create ties that will strengthen the ongoing cultural development capabilities of municipalities coast to coast.

In addition to presenting a series of professional development sessions, the conference will also provide opportunities to exchange and discuss comparative policies and practices, to begin work on collectively building a database of comparable statistics and practices related to municipalities' involvement in cultural development, and to receive mentorship training regarding on-line knowledge networking and collaborative resource development.

Face-to-face contact and interaction at the conference will reinforce and grow a cohesive community of peers. Face-to-face discussions on topics of shared interest and concern will foster interaction among cities of all sizes, as individuals are identified separately from the size of community in which they work. This desire to bridge communities of all sizes is also a consideration in the selection and treatment of issues to be discussed at the conference. Issues specific to particular sizes and types of cities, as well as those shared by the large and small cities, will be appropriately addressed.

The CCN plans to hold this conference in the first two years of the Network and then consider moving to every other year. This is based on considerations of long-term sustainability, limited travel budgets of municipalities, and limited time and energies of CCN staff. Alternate years can explore alternate development of innovative on-line events, engage in major research projects, or hold regional conferences. However, if CCN members decide during the second year that they need an annual conference, the conferences will be held annually.

Proposed Conference Content

- Explore comparative practices in various aspects of municipalities and the arts
  - ✳ What is cultural planning? Perspectives and opportunities
  - ✳ Working with non-profits
  - ✳ Grants as a tool for cultural development
  - ✳ Capital support mechanisms (grants as one tool)
  - ✳ Direct service vs. arms length delivery
- Municipal advocacy for the arts: why and how? Examples
- Political support: words from politicians (potential pre-conference item)
- In-house vs. arms length local arts agencies
- How arts and cultural development at the Provincial level is different from arts and cultural development at the Municipal level
  - ✳ Peer review vs. staff adjudication of grants/project funding
- Amalgamation: lessons from the front lines
- Community and neighbourhood – where do the arts fit in
  - ✳ What are "community arts"?
- Research and networking
- How to use the electronic components of the Creative City Network
- Facility operation / facility development
- How does arts work in a Parks and Rec context – trials and challenges
- Cultural planning for First Nations and diverse cultures

Integrating face-to-face and online experiences

The two components combined are much greater than the sum of their parts, each contributing to the ongoing process of knowledge sharing and interaction of this geographically dispersed community of practice. As networking tools, opportunities for exchange, and platforms for relationships, the digital hub and the face-to-face conference provide complementary opportunities to connect informationally and humanly.

1 DIGITAL HUB ✚ 2 CONFERENCE ＝ *Digital & Human* NETWORK

From an information perspective, the content and knowledge needs identified through the community's ongoing electronic exchanges will guide the content of the conference. The electronic channels will also facilitate members' ability to suggest topics and speakers, give feedback, and offer assistance for the conference sessions. The presentations and discussions during the conference will provide opportunities to address these shared issues and concerns in a thorough manner, and to delve more fully into the comparative practices of municipal cultural development in Canada. The content and outcomes of the conference will then form the basis for new online materials and collective initiatives using the capabilities of the digital hub.

Being there. From a human perspective, face-to-face interaction at the conference enables bonds of trust and camaraderie to deepen, casual conversations and chance encounters to occur, and relationships to be built. These exchanges and relationships are then taken back into the online environment and the community is strengthened.

> *"I know that each municipality is unique, but I find it amazing to see how many shared preoccupations we have, and how much material presently exists, that we just need to continue to share. **Additional networking face-to-face and electronic are huge steps in the right direction** in my opinion—such as the fall conference ... and a website or electronic or real library of materials that relate to municipalities. It would be wonderful to have a place where all of this could be located."*
>
> **Christine Picard,**
> Community Development Officer, City of Moncton

Benefits of the Creative City Network

Benefits for the professional

- Improved professional effectiveness, efficiency, and general practice through the ability to easily access and use the resources, knowledge and experiences of their colleagues in their work

- Sympathetic level of support, both human and technical

- Provide opportunities to expand the creative potential of every cultural planner through learning from peers

- Professional development: Building capacity, skills, and collective knowledge of the community of practice through the creation of an informal, evolving, and responsive professional development environment and networking opportunities

- Nurturing a community of practice where shared experience and a strong feeling of "I am not alone" exists

Benefits for the community

The Creative City Network will strengthen the ongoing cultural development capabilities and practices of municipalities across the country. It will improve municipalities' ability to address the cultural needs of their communities and to offer appropriate cultural development services for residents and visitors. Through improved access to innovative and cost effective cultural development options and greater awareness of municipal cultural development practices across the country, municipalities will become more involved in cultural development, which will result in healthier communities, positive economic benefits, and enhanced quality of life for these communities.

" WOW…

leadership and vision are such a powerful combination ...
glad to be part of such a dynamic Community of Practice... "

Beth Gignac, City of Mississauga

One Scenario

A CCN member is writing a new strategy document (or discussion paper, or cultural plan, or policy, or support program) and needs to know what other cities are doing regarding the topic of cultural planning for culturally diverse communities. She quickly searches the evolving knowledge hub and finds a folder dedicated to this topic that contains samples of policies and programs from six Canadian municipalities, links to innovative programs in some UK and Australian cities, and links to reports on the issue of cultural policy and cultural diversity from Canadian Heritage and the Provinces of Quebec and Nova Scotia. She also finds a summarized outline of some of the main points made by her colleagues when they discussed the issue last year.

She scans the documents and advice posted here, and decides that she'd like to know if anything more was created in the past 6 months or from any of the "new cities" that joined since that time. She sends out an email to her colleagues on Culture-L explaining her situation, noting that she's already looked through the digital hub, and requesting that they send her materials that they feel might be relevant to this task.

Within an hour of posting the request, individual members of the community of practice begin sending her examples of their cultural policies, programs, and other documents that might be helpful for their colleague to reference. Some of them had been approved within the month. The operating system captures all responses to this query and saves them in the folder created for the topic.

Our cultural planner finds that a lot has happened during the last 6 months— across the country—and also notes that it would have been impossible to collect together such a useful collection of documents to reference, and so quickly, without the CCN. She is thankful that the limited time she has to devote to this important task can be spent thinking and analyzing the reports, and reflecting on their applicability to her own community, rather than spending her time calling, surfing, and generally collecting samples of things that look like they might be relevant.

She posts her new document on the site when completed and approved, lets her colleagues know about the positive endorsements it received in her community, and thanks them for all their assistance and advice.

Noting the flurry of postings in the "cultural planning for culturally diverse communities" folder, a member of the associated "community of interest," an academic in Saskatchewan, decides to write a paper on the work being done in this area in municipalities across Canada and internationally, including a comparison of the nature of the approaches taken, their compatibility with traditional social planning work for communities, and an evaluation of their impacts in the various community contexts. When he completes and publishes the paper, he submits a link to its online location and a full reference to the paper-based location in the "cultural planning for culturally diverse communities" folder.

The Chief Editor of the site notices this addition, highlights it as "news" on the site, and includes it in the next "what's happening" e-newsletter. Discussion on this topic flourishes in the community of interest forum, and some community of practice members drop in to scan the discussion and post comments as they find the time.

During the face-to-face conference a few months later, a special panel session is scheduled consisting of members of the CoP with particularly innovative and effective programs in this area, and the academic mentioned above.

> *Having this connection has been inspiring*
>
> **Billie Stewart,**
> Winnipeg Advisory Arts Council

Timeline – Year One

CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 2002
Survey Culture-L Listserv on preferred dates for Fall 2002 Conference
Confirm Conference location (hotels, meeting rooms)
Draft Conference program based on survey of Culture-L members

MARCH 2002
Development of Communications plan
Hire Conference Coordinator
Call for proposals for speaker/moderators
Refine Conference content and program

APRIL 2002
Hotel and Conference contracts signed
Design of Conference promotional materials
Printing of promotional materials

MAY 2002
Program content finalized
Website launched with online content for Conference
Promote at CCRN conference in Toronto

JUNE 2002
Print brochures mailed
Early registration begins

JULY 2002
Invitation followup

AUGUST 2002
Gathering of Conference speakers/presenters bios, photos, etc.

SEPTEMBER 2002
Design of Conference programme

OCTOBER 2002
Site visits by Conference Coordinator, Tech Director, support staff
Creation of conference materials (badges etc)
Printing of Conference programme

NOVEMBER 2002
CONFERENCE November 7-9

DECEMBER 2002
Transcribe Conference proceedings

JANUARY 2003
Analyze Conference feedback and begin planning next one

DIGITAL HUB

FEBRUARY 2002
Finalize proposal/information document on project
Finalize budget
Report Culture-L survey results
Formally announce new initiative "creativecity.ca"

MARCH 2002
Begin organization of new site with input from Culture-L members

APRIL 2002
Begin testing "Simplify" software with select Culture-L members
Determine hosting needs for server and arrange for installation

MAY 2002
Refine structure and "look and feel" of "Simplify" software
Announce coming site at CCRN Conference in Toronto

JUNE 2002
Roll-out beta version of creativecity.ca site to all Culture-L members
Developing tools for self or aided assistance on using the website

JULY 2002
Development and population of site content
Outreach to more municipalities

AUGUST 2002
Development and population of site content

SEPTEMBER 2002
Soft launch of creativecity.ca website

OCTOBER 2002
Develop online learning presentation for Conference

NOVEMBER 2002
CONFERENCE – OFFICIAL WEBSITE LAUNCH
Present session on using the creativecity.ca site

DECEMBER 2002
Distribute Proceedings from Conference

JANUARY 2003
Develop/expand based on Conference feedback

Timeline – Year Two and Beyond

The digital hub of the network will continuously evolve and grow through the ongoing interaction of the members of this community, as they plan for and react to the changing circumstances, opportunities, and challenges in their municipalities; request information and advice; and contribute new policies, plans, programs, reports. etc. A second face-to-face conference is planned for 2003 (year 2) and then every other year, or as needed by the members of the Creative City Network.

Over time, the Creative City Network can be expanded to support other communities of practice, organizations, and networks in the cultural sector, for example:

Community partners in cultural development, such as:
- Working with FCM and Les Arts et la Ville, develop a national network of local elected officials interested in cultural development
- Municipal cultural development "community of interest": those individuals interested in the work and issues of this CoP, e.g., consultants, academics, local arts (and other) organizations
- Non-profit professional arts service organizations / networks
- Local arts councils

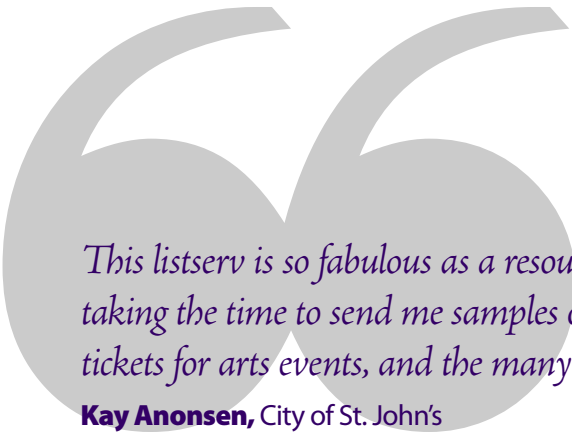*Other partners in cultural development, such as:*
- Other communities of practice in the cultural sector, e.g., managers of art galleries, other cultural facilities
- Cultural researchers (a community of interest, perhaps some CoPs) (CCRN, INRS)
- Managers/administrators of non-profit arts organizations (discipline-specific and/or spanning disciplines)
- The Centre for Cultural Management at University of Waterloo
- Local independent bookstores and publishers
- Government policy makers and planners (at all levels) with overlapping interests and responsibilities

At the same time, the Creative City Network will also be reaching out to and appropriately linking with other networks and organizations, and exploring the complementaries in our activities and operations, including:

- Canadian Heritage Information Network
- Canadian Cultural Observatory
- US Urban Arts Federation
- Eurocities Culture Committee
- Many others

The CCN also plans to facilitate members' ability to collaboratively build knowledge resources that are identified as priority needs by this community of practice. These projects may include, for example, the development of:

- Research streams creating comparative data/statistics regarding cultural development involvement by municipalities
- Comparative statistical profiles of the composition, health, and vitality of the cultural sector in major municipalities
- Trend analysis and mapping, e.g., of audience behaviour and dynamics
- Cultural tourism information and support infrastructure, such as dynamic interactive maps with integrated events listings and e-commerce capabilities

This listserv is so fabulous as a resource and I thank everyone for taking the time to send me samples of artist contracts, policies on tickets for arts events, and the many other requests I have made.

Kay Anonsen, City of St. John's

I have watched themes emerge over the months as staff in different localities, at different times, return to subjects like public art policy and sources of funding, terms of reference for advisory committees, job descriptions for staff, and cultural planning processes. Each posting adds a new or unique perspective, and a fuller understanding.

Anne Russo, Arts Manager CRD, ARTS Development Office, Victoria, BC
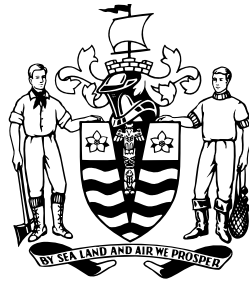
CITY OF **VANCOUVER**

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