

Niagara Falls Cultural Forum

October 13, 2016

MacBain Community Centre

28 people signed into the event

Linda Babb emceed the event

Agenda

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Niagara Falls Cultural Planning Priorities
3. Short term and long term action timelines
4. 2016 & 2017 activities
5. Discussion Topics
6. Wrap Up

Introductions

City Staff present included Kathy Moldenhauer (Director of Recreation & Culture), Clark Bernat (Culture & Museums Manager), Alicia Kilgour (CEO/Head Librarian) & Laura Shtern (Community Development and Programming, Library)

Carolynn Ioannoni, Councillor

Jennifer Hay, Province of Ontario

Arts, Culture & Museum Committee (ACMC) members were also introduced (both present and not) - Laurie Moffat & Dino Fazio – co-chairs Pricilla Brett, Brent Goodwin, John Harkness, Margaret Mingle, Dianne Munro, Gord West, Sheri Armstrong, Debra Attenborough, Linda Babb, Laurie Crain-Anez, Jordan Fry, Angela Heppner & Wayne Campbell, Council representative

Cultural Planning Priorities

Kathy Moldenhauer provided an overview of the 24 recommendations in the Five year Cultural Plan for the City of Niagara Falls.

She explained that it was accepted by Council in 2015 and it is a broad plan that represents the full spectrum of activities

The Top Priorities are:

1. Feasibility Study for a Cultural Hub
2. Increased Funding
3. Facilitation of a Cultural Summit
4. Dedicated Cultural Staff

Short Term 2016-2017

1. Capacity building workshops
2. Funding programme for cultural activities
3. Funding programme for festivals & events
4. New Public Art Policy developed by the Public Art Advisory Task Force
5. Arts web portal
6. More effective web presence for culture
7. Build a linkage to the tourism industry

Long Term 2018-2020

1. Undertake a feasibility study for a cultural hub
2. Develop a marketing campaign for culture in the City
3. Develop relationships between the BIAs and Culture
4. Dedicated Cultural position in the Recreation & Culture Department

2016 Activities

Capacity Workshops

The Arts, Culture & Museum Committee and staff worked with the Small Business Enterprise Centre to develop several workshops. There were two presented in the spring. And they were based on surveys and questions asked here and of people on our email list. The sessions titled “Marketing Yourself” included such takeaways as: The Lean Business Plan, SWOT, Telling your Stories and Sharing it and Marketing Basics.

There will be another workshop on social media on October 17th.

Niagara Falls Cultural Development Fund

This new fund was introduced in 2016. There were six projects that received funding totaling \$20,000 this year. There was a range of projects including 2 visual arts, 3 music focused and 1 heritage. The plan is to continue with this program in 2017.

There were brief presentations by several of the recipients of this year’s fund to showcase what their funds went towards. They included;

Ashley Standish representing Perpetual Peace Project (Culture Jam)

Rafik Guirgus representing Livestock

Debra Attenborough representing Niagara Falls Art Gallery (Seniors Teaching Seniors)

Jim Doherty representing the Niagara Military Museum (Escape Room)

Shelley Glica representing Porchfest

Communications

This year we introduced our “Cultural Currents” newsletter and continued with an annual meeting to review and look at new directions.

Other 2016 Activities

The ACMC continued with the Allister Young Arts & Culture Endowment Fund (2016 recipient was Tristain Zammitt) and the Arts & Culture Wall of Fame. The Committee also reintroduced a City Art Show and worked with Rick Tisi on developing an [Artists Database](#). This last initiative was at the request of the community at the previous Cultural Summit. To date, not many have entered information into the database. The database had 360+ visits but only 17 artists posted.

Street Performers Pilot Project

Diane Munro reported that a subcommittee of the ACMC was struck to look at this issue on September 15th. Diane gave an overview of the issues at play and the direction that the subcommittee will be going over the coming weeks and months.

2016 Cultural Summit

Notes were provided to attendees to the previous Summit. That summit examined some of the city-wide issues and looked at how culture can assist some of these issues. There was also specific requests to attendees to provide some ideas on the cultural funding program and capacity workshops. There was clear workshop requests that came out of the Summit, including the need for grant writing, marketing, social media, finances and volunteers.

2017 Actions

1. More effective Web Presence for Culture
2. Better connections between tourism and culture
3. Continuing the workshops
4. Continuing with previously discussed actions

Discussion

“A more effective web presence for Culture should be maintained”

It was discussed that the City of Niagara Falls home page gets 750,000 visits/year and events are free to be placed there. Currently the City page that deals with Arts & Culture also pulls events that are relevant and posted on the city page to their page as well. It was also discussed that there are several public and private sites that are available free (gobeweekly.com, The Sound STC, cNiagara.ca) and what presence are people looking for.

What would a more effective web presence mean?

Where are people posting their events?

What is missing?

What are the challenges?

Responses;

Look at sponsored social media ads

Need for Niagara Falls Arts & Culture to have a social media presence

One suggested that our events should be closer to how the City of St. Catharines lists theirs

Individuals and organizations should ensure SEO and have heavy video content

Ensure that some is dedicated to marketing

Better linkages on City page between artists, arts organizations and more

Look at Craft Ontario for linkages – developed by the Ontario Craft Guild

It was also discussed that postering is an issue in this city – by-laws do not allow for posters on city poles, however is there an opportunity to get event posters up in the tourism core or a special city bulletin board that is managed and maintained. Perhaps a permit process.

Tourism & Culture

Linkage to the Tourism Industry: While this Culture Plan was developed primarily by the community (through the extensive data collection undertaken) and for the community, there are nonetheless elements that may have significant potential to attract additional tourism to the area. One of the roles of the Recreation & Culture Department staff should be to liaise regularly with the tourism-related organizations and agencies in the area (e.g. the Regional Tourism Organization (TPN), Niagara Falls Tourism, etc.) to ensure that they are kept apprised of relevant development and activities on the cultural and heritage front. (And vice versa.)

What role can culture play in the expansion of tourism?

Responses;

Need for areas to post events – postering

Need to develop activities that have high economic impact – festivals, events and other activities

Need to sit down with tourism and find out what they are looking for and what they want

Develop a calendar of events as a collective

Develop shoulder season events

Work with Clefs d'Or members in city

Wrap up

L. Babb wrapped up the meeting and discussed a few upcoming events