



## HALIFAX ARTS SUMMIT 2010

Saint Mary's University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada  
3 June 2010

### Summary of the Proceedings

Halifax Arts Summit 2010 was organized by the Nova Scotia Cultural Action Network to work towards finding common ground and a common voice for Nova Scotia's culture sector.

Invitations were sent to over 100 key players from the province's culture sector. The 66 who attended represented all major aspects of the sector – from visual, literary, and performing arts to architecture, film, video, and publishing plus several arts consultants. Those attending did so as individuals, not as representatives of any organization. In order to ensure frank and open discussion among those who work in the sector, politicians, civil servants, and the media were not invited. A full list of participants can be found in Appendix A.

The agenda for the afternoon, reproduced in Appendix B, included a presentation on the creative economy, a panel on the current "state of the arts" in Nova Scotia, and another on planning for the future. Each was followed by ample time for questions, answers, and open discussion.

Revisiting old debates was discouraged, and strong emphasis was placed on constructive dialogue, forward thinking, and positive solutions. This approach proved to be successful.

#### Opening Remarks – Robin Metcalfe

For the past four years NSCAN has been actively working to articulate a cultural future for Nova Scotia. This included production of a major report on the creative economy and a development strategy to guide its implementation. These were the starting point for Summit discussions.

The lack of unity and a common voice in the sector were noted, as was the diversity of the Summit participants and of the sector itself. In response, NSCAN aims to bring the sector together to devise visions, priorities, and strategies that will have broad support, both within the sector and from government itself. The model presented by NSCAN emphasizes (1) that all aspects of the creative economy are vitally dependant on one another, and (2) that different parts of the sector need varied instruments in the form of government programs and policies to ensure their vitality.

The general approach is to "bake a bigger pie" rather than fight over one that is far too small. To that end, the focus of the Summit was not on the frustrations and challenges of working in the cultural sector, but rather on what can be done about it, on models and strategies that will move the sector forward.

#### The Creative Economy – Andrew David Terris

This presentation was based on NSCAN's report on the creative economy and the development strategy that was developed from it. It charted the rapid growth of the creative class, presented David Throsby's concentric model of the creative economy, gave some "real world" examples of how this economy functions, offered economic data showing its significant provincial, national, and international impact,

and gave multiple reasons why the province should be supportive of it. It also demonstrated the very low level of current provincial investment and suggested benchmarks for future investment. Finally, it offered a detailed development strategy for building the creative economy in Nova Scotia. Specific recommendations included:

- Appointment of Creative Economy Task Force to develop a holistic development strategy.
- Establishment of a Creative Economy Development Agency at arm's-length from government.
- Significantly increasing the per capita funding for culture in Nova Scotia to bring it up to a level commensurate with that of the leading provinces.

### **Discussion of the Creative Economy**

Discussion following the presentation identified a number of key factors in the development of the arts and the creative economy in other provinces:

- A strong collective voice for the arts and culture community.
- Significant public investment by all levels of government.
- Investment in core creation by arm's-length arts councils.
- Ample arts education in the public school system.
- Public awareness of the role of the arts in fostering creativity and innovation.

In general, Nova Scotia was seen to be lacking in all of these areas.

### **Status Report: The Current Situation – Chris Shore, Gregor Ash, Eryn Foster**

There were a number of general themes running through the presentation by this panel:

- The lack of provincial funding is a significant problem. The sector is growing and new groups are emerging. Organizations are being asked to do more with less and end up fighting over resources that were inadequate to begin with.
- Funding issues are not just provincial. All three levels of government are important since funding from any one leverages funding from others and from the private sector.
- Provincial cultural programs are not well developed, partly because there is inadequate cultural policy expertise within government, and partly because there is no clear sense of strategy and direction.
- Many artists are struggling to survive, and this makes it hard for them to realize their full creative potential.
- There is not enough affordable space for creative activities, and that which exists is slowly disappearing.
- The absence of a collective voice for the sector is a serious problem.
- Culture sector leaders are not well recognized or rewarded.
- The public is not sufficiently aware of the importance of the arts in society.

### **Discussion of the Status Report**

The overriding issue raised in this discussion, expressed in many different ways, was the lack of sector unity:

- Disunity is a problem; the sector is fragmented and reactive; there is no unity and no agency to address the big picture.

- There is no collective provincial voice, no collective Halifax voice, and significant disagreement on who speaks for sector.
- The sector needs to create a united front and a collective voice so it can send a unified message to government.

One participant, a writer and historian, saw the fragmentation of the culture sector as symptomatic of the larger social and economic fragmentation of the province.

Funding levels were also identified as a perennial issue. The sector is growing and the cost of doing creative work is increasing, but public support is not keeping pace. Some felt that the sector is “treading water”, while others had grave concerns about its general health.

The absence of comprehensive cultural statistics and inadequate data collection was noted as a serious impediment to development of the creative economy.

There were also questions about the Nova Scotia Arts and Culture Partnership Council. One former member felt that it is flawed, inflexible, and unrepresentative; that there are voices that are not at the table. This individual felt that the old NS Arts Council was more in tune with the sector and more inclusive. A current member agreed that the Partnership Council is not the collective voice of the sector and has serious communication problems but still has an important role to play.

Despite these difficulties, Nova Scotia is seen as a small province with a large creative voice that reaches around the globe.

### **Moving Forward: Planning for the Future – Wendy Lill, Christopher Majka, Barbara Richman**

The members of this panel made several key points on what the sector must do to move ahead:

- The sector needs a unified voice, a broad representative organization, and a strong commitment to finding common ground.
- The sector requires proactive leadership and an arm’s-length vision of development.
- The sector has to think big and re-envision its relationship to government. We want our ideas heard, and we expect government to listen. Sector organizations have to actively advocate on the sector’s behalf.
- We should have much higher expectations of the NDP government. We should insist that they actively support the sector and honour their commitment to increase funding and re-establish an arm’s-length arts council.
- Some form of arm’s-length agency (not necessarily an arts council) and additional funding are essential for creative development. The arts council debate weighs us down. We should focus on a few new ideas.
- Planning, communication, and adequate resources are important for building a dynamic creative ecology.
- The sector should look globally at sources of funding – all levels of government, foundations, and private sector – and analyze how to gain broader access.
- The distribution of resources must be more equitable.
- It’s important to improve the condition of artists and expand arts education.

Questions were also raised regarding the upcoming culture sector consultation. Summit participants were advised not to simply accept whatever questions were asked by the consultants. This led to the point that the sector needs a proactive consultative body and a consultation process that the sector actually leads.

## Discussion of Moving Forward

The response to the remarks of the Moving Forward panel fell into several categories.

### Overarching Goals and Principles

- Nova Scotia has to foster creativity and innovation and build the green/creative economy of the future.
- Art is a social good, inherent to developing identity. Citizens have a right to culture, and broad public access to it is important. The arts are about quality of life and are not separate from the broader community.
- Leading a creative life is a fundamental right. We have to celebrate our cultural ecology, and we have to foster the conditions to create excellence.
- Sector unity is a top priority; we have to move into the future with a unified position. We need a united front and a multi-sector approach that includes health, rural development, etc.
- Any sustainable arts endeavor must be arm's length, fully articulated, inspiring, and responsive. It has to have integrity and vision.

### Sector Planning

- Nova Scotia needs a post-industrial vision and strategy.
- Long term planning is vitally important; the sector needs a coherent and visionary plan.
- The sector has to determine its own future; that's where the expertise lies. It has to organize itself, devise creative solutions, and develop focused strategies.
- The sector needs an arts council, good policy makers, and strong advocates.
- We have to bring government and the sector together. It may require an external eye to help devise a solution to the current impasse.
- There should be an expert sector panel to advise government.

### Creative Economy

- Core creation has to be fully integrated with the other layers of Throsby's concentric model of the creative economy. However, funding the creative core has to be the first priority, and external resources have to be directed there. The creative core is the ultimate source of the ideas that drive the cultural and creative industries, and they will be creatively and economically impoverished if the core is not well supported.
- Creators represent a significant portion of the population and generate significant wealth.
- Investment in the culture sector has definable benefits for all sectors of Nova Scotia.
- Enhanced arts education is fundamental for the future development of the creative economy.

### Nova Scotia Cultural Action Network

- NSCAN has done excellent research on the creative economy.
- The creative economy report and strategy lay a strong foundation for future development.

### Government Consultation with the Sector

- The upcoming consultation should be "bottom-up" process. The sector should provide the framework and should not be directed by an externally imposed one.
- The consultation will be an opportunity to forge a collective voice. We have to develop a unified voice that delivers a coherent message.

- The sector should strategize about the upcoming consultation process. It should be about values and not just about more money.

### **Provincial Arts Council**

- An arm's-length arts council is important for sector development. It works for large portions of the sector, but it isn't meant to address all parts. It cannot be everything to everyone, but it does have an essential role as part of larger strategic vision.
- There is not universal support for an arts council, but there would be broad support if it is properly funded.
- The terms of reference and the legislation for the original NS Arts Council were excellent and should be reviewed.
- In developing programs, the first priority should be to fund the creator.

### **Status of the Artist**

- Nova Scotia must address the socioeconomic status of artists. Artists are not volunteers and should be paid for their work.
- We have to look to senior members of the arts community for their expertise, shared knowledge, and values. We have to see them as senior members of the larger community.

### **Cultural Statistics**

- Data collection is essential for economic development.
- There should be consistency of data collection across federal, provincial, and municipal jurisdictions. All three levels must participate in data collection.
- Data should be available on an annual basis and as soon as possible after collection.
- We need to emphasize the social value of the arts and find ways to measure that value.

### **Advocacy**

- Thinking by the sector has been too small. We have to start thinking big, outside the box, and push enterprising new ideas. We have to develop a vision that is inclusive with overarching structures so that government can understand and evaluate what is wanted.
- We have to educate the public because public opinion has a strong influence.
- We have to frame the issues in language that speaks to what people care about. We need simple, powerful models to explain the sector to government and the public.
- We have to look at the overall creative ecology. There is too much focus on charts, graphs and a bureaucratic approach. We have to infuse our message with the language and passion of the arts.
- We have to get out there, be more provocative and colorful, and bring the fire and imagination of artists to the community. Our arguments have to be presented in a creative way, demonstrating the creativity of the community.
- We have to promote an atmosphere that recognizes that the creative impulse is expressed through the arts.
- We need a strategy to communicate Nova Scotia's varied and excellent cultural ecology.
- We need to establish a representative task force to speak for the sector. We need some form of sectoral "communications committee".
- We have to bring onboard the entire caucus and government, not just one or two ministers.
- We should employ the media to press government to act on our strategy proposals.

Questions were raised about artists always having to justify their work in economic terms since the arts are also extremely important for a host of social, cultural, intellectual, and spiritual reasons. The arts are also about celebration, and several participants indicated that they are pursuing this aspect.

## Summit Summary

While unanimity is often elusive, there seemed to be consensus on a number of important points:

- **Vision and Voice** – The lack of a collective vision and a unified voice for the sector were clearly the most pressing issues at the Summit. Without these, the sector will find it difficult to move forward in an effective manner, and addressing them should constitute an immediate priority for the sector.
- **Creative Economy** – The creative economy concept and the associated concentric model were well received as an analytic approach for future development. However, there was also a strong feeling that support for the arts should not be justified on economic grounds alone since they have social, cultural, intellectual, and spiritual benefits that are just as important as their economic ones.
- **Funding** – The low level of provincial investment in the culture sector is a chronic problem that was widely acknowledged at the Summit. While it was felt that investment across the sector should be more equitable, funding for the creative core should be a priority. The sector should also take a global approach and look beyond the province to other levels of government, foundations, the private sector, etc.
- **Arm's Length** – There was general support for an expansion of the arm's-length relationship between government and the sector. Some felt it should take the form of an arts council, while others thought that new agencies are called for.
- **Advocacy** – There were many suggestions and recommendations regarding advocacy. This is clearly something that the sector sees as an important priority for future development.
- **Data** – There is a growing appreciation of the need for reliable, timely, comprehensive cultural statistics, especially if economic development is an important priority.

## Next Steps

The immediate priority, from which all else follows, is the creation of a forum that can start to develop a common vision and voice for the province's culture sector.

In the short term, this could take the form of a sector driven task force comprised of various sector stakeholders. Its role would be to advise the provincial government on the development of a permanent sector council which would be broadly constituted and mandated to address all issues affecting the health and vitality of the sector, including government policy, programs, and priorities. In effect, it would become the democratically constituted voice of the Nova Scotia's culture sector.

The sector must also work to ensure that the upcoming provincial consultation actually addresses the needs of the sector. Attempts should be made to develop a unified message to present to government. The sector should also monitor the process to ensure that appropriate questions are asked and the answers are fairly recorded and represented.

Based on the offerings of some participants at the Summit, there may also be opportunities for the sector to get together on an informal basis to continue the momentum developed during the Arts Summit's discussions.

**APPENDIX A**

**List of Participants**

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**Architecture**

Peter Henry

**Consulting**

Andrea Arbic  
Leah Hamilton  
Janet Larkman  
Tim Leary  
Keith McPhail  
Barbara Richman  
Andrew Terris

**Dance**

Paul Caskey  
Lisa Cochrane  
Susan Cook  
Gay Hauser  
Sheilagh Hunt  
Dianne Milligan

**Film**

Gregor Ash  
Alan Collins  
John Houston  
Chuck Lapp  
Geoff Le Boutillier  
Neal Livingston  
Teresa MacInnes  
Kent Nason  
Jasmine Oore  
Chris Spencer-Lowe

**Museums**

Anita Price

**Music**

Ronald Bourgeois  
Barbara Butler  
Paul Cram  
Shelley Fashan  
Lulu Healy  
Steven Naylor  
Sageev Oore

**Publishing**

Peggy Walt

**Theatre**

Erick Bickerdike  
Claudia Buckley  
Susan Leblanc-Crawford  
David Overton  
Andrea Ritchie  
Chris Shore  
Mary Vingoe

**Video**

Brendan Dunlop  
Siobhan Wiggans

**Visual Arts**

Katie Belcher  
Wallace Brannen  
Briony Carros  
Rachael Collier  
Peter Dykhuis  
Eryn Foster  
Sue Gibson Garvey  
Linda Hutchison  
Daniel Joyce  
Garry Kennedy  
James MacSwain  
Sarah Maloney  
Michael McCormack  
Robin Metcalfe  
Susan Tooke

**Writing**

Sandra Barry  
Silver Donald Cameron  
Wendy Lill  
Christopher Majka  
John Reid  
Hillary Titley  
Margo Wheaton

**APPENDIX B**

**Summit Agenda**

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**LET'S TALK!**  
**HALIFAX ARTS SUMMIT 2010**

Thursday 3 June 2010  
12:00 Noon to 6:00 PM  
Room 260, Sobey Building, Saint Mary's University  
903 Robie Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

**The goal of HALIFAX ARTS SUMMIT 2010 is to find common ground and a common voice for Nova Scotia's culture sector.** Most of the afternoon will consist of a series of short presentations by key individuals followed by facilitated open discussion. The emphasis will be on positive, constructive ideas that can unite the sector. The detailed agenda is as follows:

**Halifax Arts Summit**

12:00 Noon      Registration  
1:00 PM          Welcome, Introduction, Background, Goals, Procedures

**Building the Creative Economy**

1:15 PM          Presentation  
1:45 PM          Facilitated Discussion

**Panel #1 – Status Report: The Current Situation**

2:15 PM          Panelists – Gregor Ash, Eryn Foster, Chris Shore  
2:30 PM          Facilitated Discussion

**Intermission**

3:15 PM          Coffee and Conversation

**Panel #2 – Moving Forward: Planning for the Future**

3:30 PM          Panelists – Wendy Lill, Chris Majka, Barbara Richman  
3:45 PM          Facilitated Discussion

**Conclusions**

4:30 PM          Summary, Conclusions, Closing Remarks

**Reception**

5:00 PM          Food, Drink, and More Conversation in the SMU Art Gallery

**A full public report on the event, including a list of participants, will be published and widely circulated in the days to follow.**

The Summit is being hosted by the Nova Scotia Cultural Action Network (NSCAN) and Saint Mary's University Art Gallery.