

CONVERGE:

CULTURAL TOURISM AND MARKETING IN THE COMOX VALLEY

CV/ARTS
COURTENAY | COMOX | CUMBERLAND | CVRD

Cultivating
Creative
Diversity



ACKNOWLEDGMENT



The authors and contributors of this report acknowledge that we are on the Unceded traditional territory of the K'òmoks First Nation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
Comox Valley Arts	2
Background Information	3
Community Groups	3
Civic Partners	3
Cultural Service Review and the Fee for Service Agreement	4
CURRENT TOURISM & CULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS	5
CVA/ CVEDS Memorandum of Understanding	5
A PROBLEM OF SCALE AND SCOPE	6
A lack of engagement with key cultural partners	7
Imbalanced focus on CVEDS-produced events	7
Leveraging of existing events for the benefit of CVEDS	7
Inadequate support for local events	7
Low-level grants with too much focus on MRDT revenue	8
Lack of focus on Arts & Culture	8
PUTTING COMOX VALLEY ON THE MAP	8
A Collaborative Approach	8
Timeline	9
Short Term (1-2 years)	9
Mid - Long Term (3-5 years)	10
SUMMARY	10
APPENDIX A - References	10
APPENDIX B - Cultural Opportunities	12
APPENDIX C - Letters of Support	14

INTRODUCTION

The Comox Valley (CV) has a rich and vibrant creative community that makes this area unique to Vancouver Island, British Columbia and in turn, the rest of the country. From world renowned Indigenous artists, live theatre, music, and visual arts to the future graduates of North Island College Fine Arts, the CV is an inclusive environment that fosters collaboration, creativity, and commerce between many of its community members. This diverse, open, and creative community is one of the many reasons thousands of tourists are drawn here from around the country and the globe each year. Within this expansive tourism sector - the arts, culture and heritage play a key part in the economic expansion of the CV both directly through dollars spent on artistic experiences and products as well as the ancillary spending that occurs through more traditional tourism indicators such as overnight hotel stays, restaurant spending etc.

With tourism being such a key economic driver for many communities across the province the competition for those dollars tends to pit each municipality or region against each other. When combined with initiatives such as the Municipal and Regional District Tax (MRDT) program, we begin to see a need for an effective and collaborative approach to attracting tourists. One that includes ongoing input from all economic and cultural sectors through the valley focused on a balanced and proportionate approach to exposure, marketing, and funding.

The following report aims to emphasize the importance of arts and cultural tourism in the CV while highlighting some of the perceived strengths and identified gaps within the current tourism and marketing approaches, funding models and their related distribution. It is the intent of this report to provide an analysis of the current situations while also providing a path forward through partnerships and collaboration, that will provide support to arts, culture, and heritage contributors.

In 2019, the City of Courtenay undertook a Cultural Services Review (CSR). In this report, a key recommendation was the creation of a Cultural Stakeholders Group. This group is made up of members of the following:

- Sid Williams Theatre (SWT)
- Comox Valley Art Gallery (CVAG)
- Courtenay and District Museum and Paleontology Centre (CMPC)
- Comox Valley Arts (CVA)

CVA acts as the convener, coordinator and lead of this group which meets on a regular basis (weekly or bi-monthly) to discuss cultural planning, current and potential issues that will affect the local community, establish relevant outcomes and act in an advisory role to the City of Courtenay. This report has been written by CVA in consultation and collaboration with this group. In addition, each of these organizations has also endorsed this report.

Comox Valley Arts

Established in 1967, Comox Valley Arts is the central access point for cultural functions and is responsible for fostering growth of the sector within our community. It is responsible for promoting, collaborating, communicating, and sharing the knowledge, resources, and activities of the sector, and celebrating them in community. Our approach to supporting and building the capacity of the Arts, Culture, and Heritage leads to advocacy with municipal, regional, provincial, and federal governments around the importance of arts,

culture, and heritage. In addition, CVA provides support, guides policy and advocates for funding for local organizations and programs that provide access to these important aspects of our community.

Background Information

The CVA represents the entirety of the Comox Valley Regional District. The CV is home to a large assortment of cultural creators and leaders. With a boundary that stretches as far north as Oyster River and south to Fanny Bay including both Denman and Hornby Island, the valley is host to an impressive list of amazing creative talent, ranging from artists to educators and municipalities and service organizations. In early 2017, Phase 1 of the Cultural Inventory Project in partnership with the City of Courtenay and Urban Systems was completed with a total of 2400 responses collected. Some of the members from that survey are listed below.

Community Groups

Courtenay Little Theatre	K'omoks First Nation	CVEX
Rainbow Youth Theatre	City of Courtenay	North Island College Fine Arts
Comox Valley Folk Society	iHos Gallery	Dept Elevate
Vancouver Island MusicFest	Spirits of the West Coast Gallery	Dance Schools (10+)
Filberg Festival	Comox Valley Restaurant	Acting Schools (3+)
Three Legged Dog Productions	Association	Potter's Place
Cumberland Village Works	Comox Valley Farmer's Market	Printmakers Guild
Cumberland Arts & Cultural	Comox Museum	Wachiay Studio
Society	Cumberland Museum & Archives	100s of independent artist studios
Hornby Island Arts Council	Pearl Ellis Gallery	Dove Creek Recording Studio
Denman Arts	Artful: The Gallery	Corwin Fox Recording Studio
Central Island Arts Guide	Artworx	The Cave Recording Studio
participants	Artsphere	World Community Film Festival
Lupine Art Studio	Brushworks	ImageFest
Kelly Cat Access Community Art	Wet Paint Art Group	Comox Valley Photographers Club
Studio	CYMC	

Civic Partners

Comox Valley Arts Sid Williams Theatre
Courtenay & District Museum & Paleontology Centre
Comox Valley Art Gallery
Comox Valley Arts
Comox Valley Regional District
Town of Comox
Village of Cumberland

Over the last 15 years the City of Courtenay and along other relevant groups have conducted several surveys and commissioned many reports on the evolving and expanding cultural community of the CV. (Appendix A).

Some of the findings from those reports are:

- Comox Valley Arts Cultural Inventory Project estimated between 4000 to 6000 cultural workers in the Comox Valley in 2017, ~7% of BC's cultural workforce [Based on 2014 Stats Canada Cultural Indicators].
- Arts education improves creativity, academic achievement, motor skills, confidence, perseverance, focus, collaboration, decision making and accountability. Studies measuring creative thinking, critical thinking, problem solving, and reasoning all find these functions increase and improve when arts education is added to the educational mix.
- Synergetic relationships between businesses and culture are identified so that economic benefits can be measured and felt by the whole community through increased cultural revenues and attendance as well as a growth in business

Cultural Service Review and the Fee for Service Agreement

More recently, the City of Courtenay in 2019, undertook a [Cultural Services Review](#). The outcomes of the report provided clarity around the actioning of several recommendations that support Cultural contributors within the City and the surrounding municipalities, and region. The report establishes the City's role in the provision of cultural services in Courtenay. The document also provides short term, medium term and on-going strategies and recommendations to facilitate the City's cultural services development. The report was received for information and adopted by Council on November 25, 2019.

To implement the report's many recommendations, a five-year Fee for Service Agreement (FFSA) between Comox Valley Arts and the City of Courtenay was signed in 2020. Comox Valley Arts was tasked to collaborate and support the development, engagement, and promotion of arts, culture, and heritage within the City and the greater CV. Within the FFSA are some 5-year deliverables pertaining to cultural tourism including:

- Promote Tourism & Economic Development Through the Arts and Culture Lens
- Continue to cultivate cultural tourism through general programming, youth and senior programs, and centralized marketing streams
- Development of our community's Cultural Industry profile through tourism and economic development resources.
- Further development of the Business of Arts educational series which supports artists directly in operating
- Continue to promote and publish the annual Central Island Arts Guide.
- Assess and centralize Arts, Culture & Heritage tourism, and marketing efforts for the region, establish a Cultural Tourism advisory committee

The implementation of the FFSA shows great foresight on behalf of the City of Courtenay and is an amazing opportunity to ensure greater representation of the arts and culture in many more aspects of municipal funding and projects.

CURRENT TOURISM & CULTURAL PARTNERSHIPS

The Comox Valley Economic Development Society (CVEDS) had held the service contract to deliver tourism and economic development opportunities within the CV. These services are majority funded through the provincial *Municipal and Regional District Tax* (MRDT) revenues from the Town of Comox, the City of Courtenay, and the Comox Valley Regional District. The Village of Cumberland, Denman Island, and Hornby Island withdrew support and related MRDT funds. This contract to deliver economic services including the Vancouver Island visitor centre, destination marketing and other strategic priorities will be terminated in [August 2021](#). It was also announced early January 2021 that Tourism Vancouver Island has been subcontracted or partnered in delivering tourism services with the details of that still undiscovered at this time. With these current partnerships in flux, it will be important to understand and study these relationships as a precedent and apply that knowledge within the context of future strategies.

The majority of CVEDS funding ([\\$800,000](#) in 2021) was derived from the MRDT. MRDT is a program that was originally introduced in 1987 to raise revenue for local tourism marketing, programs, and projects. The MRDT is a tax of up to three percent on the purchase of accommodation imposed in specific geographic areas of the province (designated accommodation areas) on behalf of municipalities, regional districts, or eligible entities.

CVA/ CVEDS Memorandum of Understanding

In 2018 Comox Valley Arts also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with CVEDS. Within that MOU is an agreement for Comox Valley Arts to explore ways to encourage more cultural content for tourism marketing and provide input into regional destination marketing and event development.

Over the many years of working with CVEDS within the confines of the MOU, CVA has been successful in delivering:

- Marketing Collateral Development:

Each year, CVA has produced the [Central Island Arts Guide](#), and associated studio tour. To make this happen each year, CVA takes on or contracts out the design and layout, advertising and sponsorship opportunities, an up-to-date membership roster and the printing and the distribution of over 25,000 copies throughout Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland.

- Online Marketing Content:

CVA works in partnership with CVEDS in the development of [Discover Comox Valley](#). CVA regularly provides content and resources to enhance Arts, Culture, and Heritage weekly, such as the review of existing outgoing marketing and providing insights and resources, we collaborated on purchased content in the BC Guide to Arts & Culture 2019 bi-annual. CVA offers an RSS feed from our ongoing content, provides up-to-date overview static descriptions of cultural organizations and Arts, Culture and Heritage in the Comox Valley, as well as outreach to sector professionals and organizations on where and how to submit information to CVEDS.

- Arts and Culture Business Enhancement Sessions:

CVA routinely offers [professional development workshops](#) and courses to our members and the public. Courses are planned and offered throughout the year with topics ranging from *Facebook for beginners* to *Music Licensing and Song writing for Film and TV*. CVA also provides links and information

to other skill sharing being offered across Vancouver Island and province wide through the CVA website and Discover Comox Valley.

- Arts and Culture Tourism Event Development:

In person engagement is key to the success of our cultural economy. Successful event planning is the culmination of partnerships and effective visioning. Bringing art to the people and people to the arts is at the backbone of what CVA does. We have provided high level support for events like Filberg Festival, Cumberland Wild, Woodstove Festival, Comox Valley Fall Fair and Arts in Bloom which are some of the Comox Valley's most popular and attractive events.

- Destination Marketing and Management Planning Session(s):

CVA participated in a strategic planning session held October 2019 as representatives of the arts, culture, and heritage sector. As well as participating in the [Economic Recovery Task Force](#) as a sector providing feedback from our State of the Arts survey.

- Visitor Centre Consignment Program & Retail Store:

CVA did extensive outreach on behalf of the [retail store](#) to transition the quality of inventory to locally created products and created informational material and support to the creative community to participate in these services. As well CVA has provided guidance and opportunity around online sales systems, product capturing including photographing inventory, marketing artists created content.

- Advisory Groups:

CVA has actively engaged with both Destination BC, Tourism Vancouver Island, including several publications such as BC Guide to Arts & Culture. All with the goal to drive opportunities in our sector. In addition, CVA participated in the information and input sessions held during the [Innovate 2030](#) planning in 2019.

While CVA has been instrumental in supporting CVEDS throughout this process and ensuring that the CV's cultural community is represented and supported within the parameters of our current partnerships and agreements. It has become apparent that as the valley continues to grow at an unprecedented rate and hosts more tourists each year, the current models and partnerships are not adequate to meet the present and future needs of either our civic or community cultural partners.

A PROBLEM OF SCALE AND SCOPE

It is anticipated that the CV will grow by 5000 residents over the next 5-10 years. With the ongoing effects of the Covid -19 pandemic international travel has been replaced by more local regional travel. Many seasonal vacationers (snowbirds) are now calling Vancouver Island home this winter, and some may look to make the move permanent. With this growth, comes the inevitable need to expand and enhance the current models of targeted marketing and promotional efforts when it comes to Cultural Tourism. Within the last two years it has become clear that the scale and scope of the current Tourism model is not adequate to fully support the CV arts, culture, and heritage community.

These concerns have been identified and through ongoing discussions and engagement it has become apparent that these concerns are shared by other cultural proponents such as Vancouver Island MusicFest, Downtown Courtenay Business Improvement Association, Cumberland Village Works (Cumberland Wild Festival and other large events), Filberg Lodge & Festival, and the Courtenay Little Theatre.

While the success of a region as a tourist destination depends on many factors, when applying a cultural lens to the issue there are a few key areas that can be identified. One such item is the effectiveness of an organization to include its members and partners in effective funding and support. It had been identified that CVEDS in its current role as the tourism service provider to deliver tourism and economic development opportunities within the CV, had not met its obligations in relation to the Arts, Culture and Heritage Sector. Given the recent [changes](#) to the most recent economic development service contract and as we delineate a path forward with new and existing community partners, some of the key issues with the previous relationship should be identified in an effort to make sure they are not repeated in the future.

1- A lack of engagement with key Cultural Partners

The CVEDS led Destination Marketing Advisory Committee had not met since 2019. This lack of engagement with the community has led to some mistrust as well as a lack of confidence in their ability to deliver on key cultural outcomes. With this engagement comes transparency, and the lack of transparency has been a strain on many sectors working within the CV.

2- Imbalanced focus on CVEDS-produced events

Rather than supporting arts, culture, and heritage organizations in their programming, CVEDS would typically ask to add or leverage Cultural assets (talent, planning, volunteers, marketing etc.) to events like Dine Around or Shellfish Festival which are CVEDS initiatives. Other world class events like Vancouver Island Music Fest, the Cumberland Wild and Filberg Festival are on equal footing if not above some of the CVEDS initiatives and would benefit from additional marketing and promotional efforts and funding. These events typically do not receive the attention or support from CVEDS that they require or deserve. Leading to an overall impression and reality is that over the years many opportunities were lost to broaden the scope and reach of our tourism marketing strategy by not looking beyond the preferences and limits of any single organization.

3- Leveraging of existing events for the benefit of CVEDS

Building upon the success of other events and attractions can be an effective approach, especially if those new events can occur during shoulder seasons, but the effort must be made to ensure that the “parent event” does not suffer. A recent example of this challenge would be Winterfest. It was developed by CVEDS as a winter counterpart to the popular and successful Music Fest, but the mismanagement of event funds and lack of communication ended up stressing relationships with Music Fest staff and organizers.

<https://decafination.net/tag/vancouver-island-music-fest/>

4- Inadequate support for local events

Ensuring local events with massive draw and potential that could encourage an increase in tourism to the CV if marketing occurred outside of the CV. There are many examples including the Central Island Studio Tour that occurs during the shoulder season annually in May and has an attendance of over 5000 many from outside the Comox Valley. This event continues to grow but each year received little to no focus on behalf of CVEDS in reaching an audience beyond the valley. As well, most events that have been presented at the other Civic Partners (SWT, CVAG, CMPC) venues, did so without much or any support from CVEDS. Our community also holds hundreds of events annually from the Downtown Courtenay Summer Markets, Cumberland’s Woodstove Festival, Comox’s Nautical Days, to smaller outlying event like the music series at the Merville Hall, Black Creek Fall Fair, or Fanny Bay Days each

supporting the Comox Valley’s thriving arts, culture, and heritage scene. This again resulted in missed opportunities in reach and scope for each event, as well as the valley as a whole.

5- Low-level grants with too much focus on MRDT revenue

Granting opportunities with guidelines that may be too restrictive combined with low funding amounts become an issue for several community groups as the years went on. For example the [Sport & Event Attraction Fund](#), whose goal is “creating existing or attracting new events that have the ability to bring overnight stays to the Comox Valley”. With more of a focus on overnight stays, and such small amounts of funding based on the criteria, the type of events that qualify may be limited. Instead focus seems to be on collecting the revenue of the tax applied to sales of short-term accommodation (up to 3%) often known as ‘hotel bed nights’.

6- Lack of focus on Arts & Culture

Starting almost 15 years ago with the [Comox Valley Cultural Development Plan](#) and its follow up [marketing documents](#), a roadmap had been created in an attempt to enhance the cultural sector through economic development. While some of the “Cultural Products” identified in the report have received support such as culinary experiences and festivals, many other of the recommendations and areas of the cultural sector have been neglected if not forgotten in subsequent development plans. In fact the [2018 Strategic Priorities Plan](#) makes no reference to any arts, culture or heritage initiatives or areas of focus, only to have arts and culture come back again in the [Innovate 2030 Masterplan](#).

This has resulted in a community consensus that the cultural marketing campaigns in the CV are not all encompassing of the sector, tend to only pick the events and initiatives that favour CVEDS based events and have been extremely inconsistent over the years.

The CV is fortunate to have an amazing array of both natural and cultural assets that make it the perfect four-season tourist destination. Arts, Culture and Heritage plays a key role in the current and future success of the Valley and the scale of funding and overall reach needs to match the growth of the valley. As highlighted in this report the current model of tourism funding and leadership through CVEDS is not operating in a balanced and equitable way in relation to the cultural community.

To ensure that our cultural leaders, artisans, artists, musicians, actors, creatives, and makers feel supported and are given the opportunity to showcase their talents to the world, a better system of cultural representation, participation and advocacy needs to be developed. Partnerships need to be re-evaluated and funding dispersal should be addressed to allow the most competent and best equipped groups to be able to effectively reach and support their members where possible.

PUTTING COMOX VALLEY ON THE MAP

A Collaborative Approach

It has been established through the results of the CSR, engagement with local cultural collaborators and this report that the decision making and funding around the marketing and promotion of cultural tourism should be directed by its sector to ensure a more balanced, efficient, and authentic approach to arts and culture tourism and marketing through the CV.

The CVA has in many ways been acting in a similar role to what is described above for many years but without the high level of engagement from adjacent community leaders or financial support. As proposed in the CSR as well as with the support of other key cultural partners it would be proposed that the CVA undertake a more active and direct role by acting as Cultural Tourism Advisors. This role would ensure a more balanced approach to engagement and funding as CVA would be able to liaise between the tourism service provider and the greater culturally creative community, with more purpose, passion, and direction.

This role would require direct funding to CVA and would help in the establishment of some long-needed benchmarks and deliverables in Arts, Culture and Heritage tourism for the cultural sector across the entire CV. With both short and long-term goals CVA would be able to meet immediate needs as well as future needs by planning, developing, and supporting a more robust and encompassing cultural approach to tourism.

Timeline

Short Term (1-2 years)

1- Convene an advisory committee that involves the creative community in telling their story.

A grass roots artist led initiative to ensure all voices are heard.

2- Convene Arts, Culture, and Heritage roundtable discussions.

Bringing the main voices of civic led partners to the table on a regular basis to discuss relevant issues and set outcomes. *This has already been convened with many positive aspects already being noted.*

3- The collection of art and culture economic data

To be used as a guide to where the biggest gains can be made immediately, and where growth could be attained with little extra effort.

4- Develop a real time Events Calendar and source

A list of resources and calendar of upcoming events, opportunities, and content to be made available to the tourism service provider

Mid - Long Term (3-5 years)

5- CVA to become the leading figure and organization in the marketing, development, and tourism within with the cultural sector for the CV.

6- Develop an Arts, Culture, and Heritage Tourism Strategy

7- Assist in development of local and valley wide cultural plans

8- Begin feasibility studies and advisory panel looking into the creation of a Community Arts Centre

With over 15 years of community input, reporting and analysis there is an immense list of actionable items that have been identified as cultural opportunities. This is a great resource that can and will be used in future discussion and plans. A more robust list of the items is listed within. (Appendix B.)

Once established, an Arts, Culture, and Heritage Tourism Strategy, in collaboration and guided by the advisory and cultural partners committees, can be implemented through measurable and effective actions.

SUMMARY

Many of the arts, culture, and heritage community members believe this is an opportunity to use the power of our sector to support the overall wellbeing of our community in the long term. Tourism and economic development dedicated to our industry and its audiences will contribute to a thriving, connected, and engaged CV. Thousands of citizens, groups, organizations have built this prosperous industry and they deserve support in both development aspects and in direct funding.

With the unprecedented challenges that are being put on the global community and CV with Covid 19 - we need to adapt the tourism, service, and cultural sectors to be able to engage quickly and at all levels of the community as well as plan for a future that has taken these lessons and provides an outlook that will empower and entrust our cultural community for years to come.

It is with great gratitude that we thank all our partners and community leaders that have gotten the CV to where it is today and the vision for our community that will ensure a legacy of cultural leadership and creativity.

APPENDIX A

REFERENCES



The following are several of the resources and initiatives that have been referenced in this report.

- 1- 2007 CVRD/CVEDS plan partly funded by the Cultural Capitals grant and input taken through the regional growth strategy consultations:
<https://discovercomoxvalley.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Comox-Valley-Cultural-Development-Plan-Draft.pdf>
This included a complete marketing plan:
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/nqybazcu2yc6bsd/Comox%20Valley%20Cultural%20Development%20Marketing%20Plan.pdf?dl=0>
- 2- 2017 Parks & Recreation Plan that included Culture pg. 104-108,
<https://www.courtenay.ca/assets/Departments/Rec~and~Culture/Parks~and~Rec~Master~Plan/2019-07-02-Parks-Rec-Master-PlanFINAL.pdf>
- 3- 2019 Cultural Service Report
https://www.courtenay.ca/assets/Community/Documents/Courtenay_Cultural-Services-Report-Final2019.pdf
- 4- 2019 Innovate 2030 sessions conducted by MDB Insights
<https://discovercomoxvalley.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/CVRD-Presentation-Nov.-26-Final.pdf>
- 5- 2020 Economic Recovery Task Force – Industry Advisor Business Case Action Plan –
<https://discovercomoxvalley.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Industry-Advisor-BCAP-Submission-Summary-Report-Nov-24.pdf>
- 6- The draft Strategic Plan for Municipal & Regional District Tax (MRDT) includes growth of Arts, Culture & Heritage tourism marketing, as well as service offerings (e.g., Bookable tours). This draft was presented at the CVRD in January 2021; however, it is not yet available for public viewing.
- 7- City of Courtenay Annual Report 2019
https://www.courtenay.ca/assets/City~Hall/Annual~Reports/Courtenay_Annual_Report_2019.pdf

APPENDIX B



CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES

Arts, Culture and Heritage sector members need to be engaged in the decision making around how their industry and their audiences need to be supported. There are incredibly progressive ideas brewing about how to develop tourism externally as well as regionally. People want to visit communities that are diverse and strong. Support for the growth and promotion of a diverse creative community will help us build a healthy and thriving community where our proven interest in Arts, Culture, and Heritage are valued and invested in.

- Develop a cultural brand to be used in all communications
- Create something like the “Island Good” campaign
- Develop a marketing/media strategy for year-round local and external promotion of ACH Activity in the region,
- Focus on stronger coordination, collaboration, and communication between ACH members and tourism properties
- Embrace and promote a contemporary and progressive vision of heritage in the community
- Strengthen awareness of cultural activities through integrated tourism packages
- Improve community awareness and understanding of the range of programs and activities within the community
- Develop a central community calendar (or redevelop existing) that allows for easy central submission and distribution of information (e.g., Promote RSS feed distribution to other calendars, newsletters, event listing websites) This could include an interactive cultural map or cultural portal as a “one-window” tool for access to information on cultural activities and experiences
- Develop a calendar for planning & resource sharing to streamline and systematize year-round ACH activity
- Encourage and support community cultural organizations in increasing of programs and activities and increase funding opportunities
- Support and empower the development of an annual Heritage event
- Incorporate values and vision of official community planning components such as equity, climate action, healthy neighbours, and strong agency, into ACH planning
- Strive to integrate culture into all planning processes including land-use planning, economic development, tourism, and planning for new civic facilities,
- Understand and use the communication channels of diverse communities,
- Promote youth, cultural diversity and interculturalism in programming delivered,
- Transform the current advisory committees to the Culture Working Group to support integration of culture across departments

- Address ongoing accessibility needs at all municipal venues, from the perspective of attending or participating in cultural events
- Consider establishing an ASL requirement for municipally supported events
- Expand efforts to increase visibility and understanding of Aboriginal culture through and seek participation from Aboriginal communities in new initiatives
- Establish a youth arts council to liaise with organizations and government to address the needs and ideas of our youth
- Support and empower the establishment of an annual valley-wide multi-cultural event
- Seek to establish the Comox Valley as a “Market City”
- Establish a public art policy & fund, acknowledging that public art is an attraction in and of itself. Increase investment in public art to bring cultural vibrancy and identity to the City Centre as a cultural hub. Consider a sculpture walk, or light-art installations, art kiosks, painted sidewalks, street banners, bridge decoration, shade cloth art at parks
- Work to create attractive and memorable outdoor spaces in the City Centre (and other neighbourhood hubs in the region), including covered performance/meeting space
- Build and promote cultural and heritage site maps for easy mobile access and user interaction
- Establish core funding to activate ongoing research, consultation, access, and analysis of cultural needs
- Mapping, facilities, preservation, costing, and key finding reporting is important to the future of a thriving cultural community
- Evaluate the feasibility to establish facilities and spaces to attract individuals working in the creative cultural sector.

APPENDIX C



LETTERS OF
SUPPORT

Dallas Stevenson
Executive Director
Comox Valley Community Arts Council
Re: Comox Valley Arts and Converge Proposal
2021.03.18



Dear Dallas,

Please accept this as a letter of support and appreciation for the Comox Valley Community Arts Council's (Comox Valley Arts) creation of the Converge report.

The Courtenay and District Museum and Palaeontology Centre (CDM), now celebrating its 60th year, has a mandate of preserving and interpreting cultural and natural history of the Comox Valley region.

The CDM manages substantial regional collections, interpretive exhibits, and programmes of social and natural history. Discoveries of Cretaceous marine reptiles provide a unique lens through which the museum can merge interpretation of cultural and natural history. A broad audience responds well to this and visits the museum as well as other regional attractions and businesses. The museum and other arts, culture and heritage organizations are significant in driving regional economic development.

Community builders in British Columbia and across Canada created organizations, such as museums, theatres, interpretive centres, and galleries with mandates to enrich community life. Today, arts, cultural and heritage professionals, working with boards and staff, continue to realize these legacy mandates while adapting and growing towards the future.

The keys to success for these organizations, and for the community, are public engagement and participation. This requires genuine, direct, messaging. As in any sector, engaging people who know and can convey the worth of a service or product is most effective for economic development.

For this reason, the following deliverables outlined in the Converge report are critical to the CDM:

- "Promote Tourism & Economic Development Through the Arts and Culture Lens
- Development of our community's Cultural Industry profile through tourism and economic development resources.
- Assess and centralize Arts, Culture & Heritage tourism, and marketing efforts for the region, establish a Cultural Tourism advisory committee."

Thank you to Comox Valley Arts, for your significant collaboration and for proposing these critical steps.

Sincerely,
Deborah Griffiths
Deborah A. Griffiths M.A.
Executive Director



Dallas Stevenson
Executive Director, Comox Valley Community Arts Council

Re: support for the CONVERGE proposal prepared CV/Arts

Hello Dallas,

I am writing to express the Comox Valley Art Gallery's support for the proposal outlined in CONVERGE, a report created by the Comox Valley Arts – the community arts council - in consultation with arts, culture and heritage stakeholders.

We believe that that the arts, culture and heritage sector are vital to the community's well-being and economic health. There is tremendous untapped potential for attracting visitors, supporting local artists, and strengthening cultural organizations, and generating economic activity in the Comox Valley. This could be remedied by a strategic, well-planned, and unified approach to marketing and promotion, guided by people who have a deep understanding of the sector and a constructive, collaborative working relationship with the Comox Valley's arts, culture and heritage organizations.

Thank you for your work on developing this proposal. You have our full support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Glen Sanford', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Glen Sanford
Executive Director, Comox Valley Art Gallery

To: Mayor and Council: City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland. Chief and Council, K'omoks First Nation, Comox Valley Regional District Board.

March 15, 2021 – Regarding CONVERGE Report/Proposal from Comox Valley Arts.

The Sid Williams Theatre Society looks forward to any new opportunities resulting from CV Arts taking a larger role in tourism marketing for our valley's cultural sector. The SWTS has experienced all the issues noted on pages 7-8 of the CONVERGE Report, especially the negative impact and loss of revenue for our established events and those of our many rental-clients. We look forward to a new day.

Performing Arts and Film are major industries in British Columbia and on Vancouver Island, COVID notwithstanding. Both are also complex industries with widely varying disciplines and needs. Timing is always critical. We believe that CV Arts, being an active cultural participant and service provider, is in a better position to understand how this multi-layered economy flows through our valley, Island, and province. External marketing that appropriately supports our diverse cultural products and services would be a big step forward. Internal product and service development (a behind-the-scenes aspect of any good marketing) is another way to re-envision using the MRDT, as a sidebar (p. 2).

The persistent CVEDS/DMAC focus on "destination events" and hotel room bookings never worked for the SWTS. The Sid is a mid-sized regional facility not a concert-capacity arena. Most of our out-of-town patrons (8300 in 2019) are Islanders who return home after an event. ***This is still valid tourism*** considering the hospitality and retail spinoff. A key example of where the Sid *does* generate "room nights" is our 'Blue Circle' series: visiting talent and their "roadies." We are optimistic that CV Arts will work with us to boost this type of activity.

Another 2007-2019 disconnect was around the facility itself as an "attraction." The SWT is a multi-million-dollar facility serving Sid-presented events and many local and out-of-town rental clients. Over the last 20 years, we have (with the help of the City of Courtenay and others) invested further millions in our equipment, services, systems, and personnel, including our full-service Box Office. BUT we are also constantly ***in competition with larger and better-funded facilities on Vancouver Island***. To help us compete successfully, a tactical approach is needed, derived from industry expertise. CONVERGE references such an approach: a "synergistic relationship between business and culture" (p. 3) and a "collaborative approach between stakeholders" (p. 9).

The only item we would flag in the proposal is the placement of "feasibility studies". Whether for a single *Comox Valley Arts and Cultural Centre*, or the expansion/development of the facilities providing cultural services now; feasibility studies need to be ready much sooner than 3-5 years (p. 10). Otherwise, Federal funding windows will close before we get there.

In conclusion, we support many aspects of this proposal and hope that working with CVA, local government and other cultural partners will help us showcase our facility, its latest technology, and our high-quality events and services regionally and beyond.

Deborah Renz, Brian Mather

Management and Board – Sid Williams Theatre Society