



# Culture in Action:

Demonstrating the  
Social Benefits  
of Culture



2019





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## **CREATIVE NOVA SCOTIA LEADERSHIP COUNCIL'S VISION:**

- More Nova Scotians recognize, participate in, and benefit from culture
- More exchange happens among artists, creators, and change-makers of all disciplines
- More community development policies and programs are informed by a culture lens

# Introduction

In numerous exciting and inspiring ways, Nova Scotia is enacting a shift toward a broader understanding of the value of culture to society.

In 2017, the Government of Nova Scotia marked a milestone with the release of **Nova Scotia's Culture Action Plan: Creativity and Community**. In it, the Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage identified six themes it will use to guide a comprehensive, government-wide culture agenda. They are:

- Mi'kmaw culture
- Creativity and innovation
- Education, partnerships, and understanding
- Cultural diversity
- Cultural stewardship
- Awareness and economic growth

**The Culture Action Plan (CAP)** urges all levels of government and all Nova Scotians—not only those in the culture sector—to recognize the importance of culture to our future prosperity and our collective well-being.

The economic importance of culture and creativity is the focus of a 2014 report from the **Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council (CNSLC)**. *Culture: Nova Scotia's Future* offers recommendations for realizing that economic promise.

This new report builds on that earlier one. Here, the CNSLC showcases examples of “culture in action” at the community level. We augment these stories with emerging research on the social value of culture and testimonials from community leaders who are using culture and creativity in transformative ways.

Our focus here is “social benefits”—considering the more intangible and interdependent ways that culture inspires us, challenges us, heals us, and strengthens us.

As Nova Scotians seek new and inclusive ways to create prosperity, advance cultural diversity, and ensure sustainable communities for generations to come, culture is our great strength, our collective core business, and our most promising renewable resource.

Trevor Murphy, Chair,  
Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council

# Defining social benefits

Lately there has been much emphasis on the economic importance of culture. But those of us who work in the sector know this isn't the full picture. We know there are many intangible and social benefits of culture that are harder to measure.

For example, we know that culture shapes identity, that it preserves social bonds, that it promotes equality and challenges discrimination. It also creates places that are more interesting to live in and visit. Cultural diversity, special events, festivals, galleries, and performing arts all help to attract immigrants and tourists, and create vibrancy for the people who live here.

Education experts agree creativity is an essential part of social change, and the first requirement of innovation. While you can have creativity without innovation, you can't have innovation without creativity. Cultural expression and cultural development, when encouraged, foster innovative thinking as well as pride of place and overall well-being.

These social benefits translate into new opportunities and sustainability. Although it is difficult to demonstrate quantitatively how cultural expression and development translate into societal growth, the following stories and accompanying research aim to lend credence to these claims.

## WHAT NOVA SCOTIANS VALUE

In 2018, Nova Scotia's Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage (CCH) completed the second Culture Index Survey. Nova Scotia was the first province to undertake a study that illustrates the social value of culture, and has been collecting this data since 2015.

The 2018 Culture Index Survey found that:

- 81% agree that culture helps enrich the quality of our lives
- 78% agree that culture helps create community identity
- 74% agree that culture helps connect people from different communities and backgrounds
- 63% agree that culture helps attract new residents from outside Nova Scotia
- 59% agree that cultural organizations are critical to the sustainability of their community

# Culture in Action

The stories presented in this document highlight three themes that are being advanced and developed in cultural research:

- the importance of cultural expression to foster understanding
- the dynamics of hubs and clusters
- the conditions that spark creativity

In the two years since the release of the Culture Action Plan, the CNSLC has been exploring these themes with leaders from across the province who are engaged in creative industries, social innovation, and community development. We're noticing that when cultural considerations are a priority or a decision-making lens in communities and organizations, some or all of these themes are at work.

We see this as "culture in action." Our next steps are to deepen and share our understanding of how to recognize and measure culture's importance to all Nova Scotians.



With the launch of the Culture Action Plan in February 2017, the CNSLC convened a year-long dialogue with experienced leaders in the development of social and creative hubs, and community-led cultural initiatives that strengthen sustainability in rural and urban areas. The culmination of this exploration was a Cultural Communities Summit held in Pictou, NS, on June 7, 2018, at the deCoste Performing Arts Centre. Pictured above are panelists Rose Zack, Troy Greencorn, Eric Stackhouse, and Paula Davis.

“It’s just stunning to believe that a state-of-the-art cultural centre in a beautiful heritage property with such a large footprint in downtown Sydney is becoming a reality.”

– Alyce MacLean, chair of Lumière and board member, New Dawn Enterprises Ltd.



New Dynamics: Alyce MacLean joined fellow panelists Mary Elizabeth Luka, Virginia Stephen, and Michael Fuller at the 2018 Cultural Communities Summit to share their combined experience in the rise of hubs as vibrant economic and social engines in Canada.

# Creative Energy

## The promise of social and cultural hubs

Alyce MacLean describes joining the board of New Dawn Enterprises, Canada's oldest community development corporation, as the beginning of a beautiful partnership. It was 2014. MacLean was volunteer chair of Lumière, Sydney's downtown art-at-night festival. She needed a workspace for Lumière's single employee. Not much, just a desk and access to Wi-Fi.

New Dawn needed someone with Alyce's background to help expand its mandate into culture and creativity. New Dawn had just opened a temporary mixed-use Centre for Social Innovation in the former Holy Angels High School near the downtown. It acquired the school and an adjacent 130-year-old convent in 2011 because it saw the need for affordable, safe, and sustainable space, especially for the creative industries and small not-for-profit organizations. They were right. Within a few months of opening in 2013, it was home to more than 40 tenants and its two-year occupancy projection was reached.

Lumière's partnership with New Dawn is a case in point. In solving its workspace challenge with an affordable lease, the volunteer-driven organization could focus on a contemporary art festival. In September 2018, with eight Lumière installations sited at the Centre campus, thousands of Sydney residents got a closer look at plans and renovations to the adjacent convent space. Slated to open in the fall of 2019, it will be renamed as the Centre for Arts, Culture, and Innovation.



NEW DAWN ENTERPRISES

New Dawn's bold venture into mixed-use development that cross-pollinates social enterprise, culture, and technology is the largest investment in downtown Sydney in almost a decade. It will open in an area largely characterized by empty buildings and for-sale signs. "It will offer people a reason to come back to our downtown," says Erika Shea, New Dawn's VP of Development. "The creation of a sizable cultural hub against this backdrop is transformational."

Engaging the community around self-reliance has been New Dawn's mission for more than four decades. For Shea, this project is tangible evidence that the community has turned a corner, "one that many of us are longing to turn." With investment from both the Province of Nova Scotia and Canadian Heritage, the renovated 40,000-square-foot facility will provide a home for change-makers who are steeped in culture and innovation, what New Dawn calls "forward-looking energies."

For Alyce MacLean, the last five years of "making it work" have been satisfying and exciting. "It's still hard to believe that a state-of-the-art cultural centre in a beautiful heritage property with such a large footprint in downtown Sydney is becoming a reality," she says. "It's just stunning."

# The Art of Healing

## Improving health outcomes

At a children's hospital, a child resists a needle. Since Buddington, the hospital clown, is also due for his flu shot, he suggests they get their needles together. In some medical settings this might be out of the question. But because the IWK hospital works through a creative lens, the answer is an immediate Yes.

The IWK Health Centre is the leading centre for women, children, youth, and families in the Maritimes. It is also a world leader in therapeutic television programming. In fact, many patients see Buddington for the first time when they tune into Child Life Television (CL-TV). Buddington and CL-TV are just two of many ways that culture supports medicine at the health centre.

CL-TV creates much of its own programming, which is broadcast throughout the hospital and live-streamed on the Internet and via its own YouTube channel. It can also show movies. All this has been made possible by a strategic partnership with Cineplex, the IWK Foundation, and in consultation with the Nova Scotia Community College and IWK staff and patients.

In 2014, the IWK approached Cineplex with a vision to transform its auditorium into a TV studio, online conferencing centre, and movie theatre. Cineplex loved the idea and it was the first project of its kind in Canada to which it lent its name. The refurbished theatre even accommodates patients in their hospital beds.

CL-TV provides an obvious distraction for sick kids, but it also provides opportunities for long-term patients to learn new skills, including scripting,

“The more we understand the relationship between creativity and healing, the more we discover the human power of arts.”

– H. Stuckey & J. Nobel,  
*American Journal of Public Health*, 2010



COURTESY IWK

“Culture plays a huge part in the environment we create in care and healing.”

– Steve Ashton, VP of People and Organizational Development, IWK



CREATIVE NOVA SCOTIA LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

lighting, and hosting a show. It also offers a valuable learning tool for staff and physicians, notes Steve Ashton, VP of People and Organizational Development. With their TV shows, children give voice to their experiences and reveal invaluable insights, he says. He points to a video produced by their Youth Advisory Council. It shows, in a humorous way, how health care professionals occasionally overlook a patient when speaking to their parents, or “talk to you like you’re two when you are 14.”

The IWK’s creative lens is part of a holistic approach to patient care and community building. Good care depends on not only clinical expertise, but creative problem solving and the right culture. Steve Ashton calls this mindset a “virtuous circle”—a feedback loop that reinforces positive outcomes. He sees Nova Scotia as a creative place that invests in culture, innovation, and sport; this helps to attract and retain the kind of people that make the IWK special. “We need people who think like artists and scientists,” Ashton says.

## INTERVENTIONS WITH OUTCOMES

An Arts Council of England research review looks at the effect of music interventions on psychological and physiological outcomes of patients in a hospital environment. For example, concerning surgery and pain management, “Music can have a positive role during the pre-operative stage, during surgery, and for post-operative recovery. It significantly reduces anxiety and stress and helps to normalize vital signs. Of great importance are the findings on the significant reduction of anaesthetics, medication for sedation, and analgesics. These results also showed that music interventions can contribute to achieving cost-benefits effects.”

*Quoted from Arts and Music in Healthcare: An Overview of the Medical Literature, 2004–2011, by Rosalia Staricoff and Stephen Clift (Canterbury Christ Church University, 2011)*



# Social prescriptions

In the United Kingdom, there is plenty of research on the benefits of art and music in health care. A promising new area is “social prescriptions” for combatting loneliness, improving mental health, and battling chronic illness. A couple of Canadian pilot programs are examining the sustainability of culture-based interventions.

The Montreal Museum of Fine Art has been involved in art and wellness programming for two decades. According to the *Montreal Gazette*, some physicians will be using their prescription pads to take that therapeutic mindset one step further. As of November 2018, members of Médecins francophones du Canada can prescribe their patients free visits to the Montreal Museum of Fine Art. The one-year pilot project is reported to be a first in the world.

The article by Brendan Kelly quotes Dr. Hélène Boyer, vice-president of Médecins francophones du Canada and head of the family medicine group at the CLSC St-Louis-du-Parc. “There’s more and more scientific proof that art therapy is good for your physical health,” said Dr. Boyer. “People tend to think this is only good for mental-health issues. That it’s for people who’re depressed or who have psychological problems. But that’s not the case. It’s good for patients with diabetes, for patients in palliative care, for people with chronic illness.”

In December 2018, an article by Jason Miller in the *Toronto Star* reported on a community-health pilot in Ontario that will offer free singing classes, fishing lessons, craft, and museum visits (among others) as alternative remedies for social isolation and certain mental health disorders. The article describes real-life examples of the surprising efficacy of social prescriptions and goes on to show statistics from UK models that have improved public health outcomes.

## Impacts of art-based learning

- The arts build resilience and self-esteem in young people.
- A student involved in the arts is four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement.
- Low-income students who are highly engaged in the arts are twice as likely to graduate college as their peers with no arts education.
- 72 percent of business leaders say that creativity is the number one skill they are seeking when hiring.

*Sources: Canadian Council on Social Development, 2001; Department of Justice Canada, 1999; Eccles and Barber, 1999*



COURTESY MCCL

## Building resilient and creative youth

Ask anyone involved with the MacPhee Centre for Creative Learning (MCCL) and they will tell you that society benefits when lifelong habits of artistic expression are cultivated. After all, they regularly witness this outcome. The Centre ensures that young people who have not yet had an opportunity to explore their creativity are not left behind. In 2018, its open doors welcomed more than 900 young people.

MacPhee Centre helps youth between the ages of 12 and 19 to connect to their artistic passion and purpose. A growing body of research points to better outcomes when students are engaged in the arts (see Impacts of arts-based learning). The research is borne out in the real-life stories of the Centre's participants. "We help build people up," says Heather MacDonald, MacPhee Centre's executive director. "Using creativity, in whatever form they wish, our youth build self-worth, self-identity, validation, and higher aspirations."

A community hub located in a beautifully restored historic building in downtown Dartmouth, it offers programs in visual and performing arts, music, videography, creative writing, and technology—all in a safe and inspiring space. The Centre reaches out intentionally to disengaged youth, helping them develop confidence, friendships, employment skills, and an appreciation for "giving back."

The Centre is also broadening networks for its youth by partnering with like-minded community groups and arts organizations such as IWK, Hal-Con, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, NSCAD University, the East Preston Family Resource Centre, and Nova Scotia Community College. By focusing on such a strong foundation in the arts, the MacPhee Centre is ensuring its participants are connected, supported, and empowered to become engaged citizens. "We are a community, a whole, that empowers youth to access their own individual creativity and access their path to success, whatever success means to them," says MacDonald.



"We're using community, culture, and creativity to support youth in their learning journeys and encourage a love of learning."

– Heather MacDonald,  
MacPhee Centre

# Mi'kmaw Worldviews

## A place of gathering, sharing, and exploring

"I think you'll want to see this," said the caller to Don Julien. It was 1989, and foresters working next to a known Paleo-Indian site near Debert had discovered new artifacts at the base of a tree. Steve Davis, an archaeologist with Saint Mary's University who authenticated the foresters' findings, immediately contacted Julien, who is the executive director of the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq.

First discovered in 1948, the Debert site provides evidence of human existence in a 13,000-year-old ice-age landscape. A significant North American ancestral place, it is one of the oldest of its kind in Canada and continues to reveal new information about indigenous history and about their living descendants: the Mi'kmaq.

For Julien, this was the moment he knew he needed to enact a bold plan for long-term stewardship. Julien spent a decade working to protect these important sites. Slowly the idea for the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre emerged. The concept was a museum where Mi'kmaw people could ask their own questions and tell their own stories. In doing so, the Nation could achieve a long-held goal to reclaim the knowledge of their ancestry. "Mi'kmawey Debert will be a place of gathering, sharing, and exploring," he says.

When the galleries, curatorial spaces, trails, and educational programming are operational, it will be a meaningful and dynamic destination—a place infused with Mi'kmaw worldviews. "We've always been asked to prove ourselves," says Julien. "I've always said we don't want people to feel sorry for us, we want people to know where we come from and the struggles that we've gone through. And once they do, then I think they'll have more appreciation."

From that phone call in 1989, it has taken three decades for this vision to come together. For the first few years, Julien met with just about every group there was in Colchester County and with many across Canada. "We were just a small team at the time, but we knew it would be exciting if we could set aside land for a museum," he says. Eventually they negotiated the land, necessary permissions, and partnerships. With a mandate from the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs, Julien was asked to take the lead on bringing the project to life.

A group of Elders was convened to shape the vision and purpose of the project. The Elders' Advisory Council, formed in 2002, sought to connect with the past in order to



"I do this  
because  
I love my  
people."

– Don Julien,  
ED, Confederacy of  
Mainland Mi'kmaq



COURTESY OF REICH + PETCH DESIGN INTERNATIONAL

understand the future. “Our language connects to our whole universe, our whole society,” says Julien. Also central to the project is sharing knowledge of centuries of living on the land. “Our approach is grounded in the way Mi’kmaq lived,” he says.

Mi’kmawey Debert Cultural Centre is intended to strengthen Mi’kmaw culture from within. The facility will educate through immersive experiences, workshops, and gatherings that are open to the public. Visitors will be encouraged to engage with exhibits and learn about First Peoples and their modern descendants. Healing and reconciliation will also be a part of the core programming—for individuals and for communities. For Julien, success means new understanding going in all directions, connecting and enriching all cultures.

It starts with sharing Mi’kmaw stories. “Our people and everyone else living in and visiting Nova Scotia will be able to appreciate who we are and that we’re still here,” says Julien. “They’ll come to Mi’kmawey Debert and see what the Mi’kmaq were about and are still about today.”

When Don Julien was a boy, he made it a habit to listen quietly when friends and relatives gathered around his grandparents’ table. Absorbing the stories of Elders and family members laid the groundwork for his future life’s work. “That’s where knowledge comes from,” he says. “I do this because I love my people.”

## REDISCOVERING HISTORY

According to the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC), there is growing interest across Canada and throughout the world in experiential learning about traditional cultures, knowledge, and worldviews. The Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network (NSITEN) supports authentic businesses and community initiatives in Indigenous tourism. NSITEN member and TIANS director, Robert Bernard, sees this trend as an opportunity to create understanding and strengthen communities. “Not enough people know about us, but doors are starting to open,” says Bernard.



# Laws of Attraction

Three decades building  
Parrsboro's vision

In the 1980s Parrsboro was suffering post-industrial decline. Mills were closing, businesses and farms were shuttering, and freighters were no longer stopping for lumber. What the town did have, says Michael Fuller, was an authentic arts culture and built heritage, including two museums.



LAWRENCE NICOLL

Artist Nancy Tankersley at work during Parrsboro's 2018 Pleine Air Festival, a globally recognized visual arts festival that is helping the area develop its reputation as an artist-friendly community.



“We can build an economy not just by people coming and buying paintings, but by people coming and buying a life.”

– Michael Fuller, Parrsboro Creative

Michael Fuller is an artist and creative entrepreneur. When the idea to restore an old ferry as a travelling “cultural ambassador” fell through, Fuller collaborated with playwright Mary Vingoe to produce a play onboard and they launched what became Ship’s Company Theatre. A vision for professional theatre featuring Maritime work was a new approach in 1984, but what Fuller and others recognized was that Parrsboro had the ingredients to rejuvenate itself around a creative economy.


As the theatre flourished, so did the town. Businesses reopened and flower baskets were hung from the lampposts. After many years of billing it as such, says Fuller, Parrsboro became a known cultural destination appealing to artists of many stripes. As community and government leaders began to support the idea, Parrsboro Creative was created and became an organized hub for the vision.

In 2015, a Cultural Campus was initiated with a seasonal arts and artisan program under the Parrsboro Creative umbrella. Executive director Robert More says that by 2016 there were 18 courses and 170 students. Program leaders are amateurs and professionals—such as renowned actor Sheila McCarthy and painter Tom Forrestall, who teaches with his son William.

77%

of those surveyed agree that culture helps attract visitors from outside Nova Scotia

– 2018 NS Culture Index Survey



Courses range from grassroots to master classes, across a spectrum that includes painting, photography, music, acting, dance, writing, and fibre arts.

Programs take full advantage of the uniqueness of the surrounding area. Visual arts courses run in the Art Lab Studios and Gallery while fibre arts take place in the historic Ottawa House. Blacksmithing is in the Age of Sail Heritage Museum with its forge from the 1800s. The Ship's Company Theatre is now in a flagship new home designed by architect Brian MacKay-Lyons. Other venues include Arlene Collins Gallery and a restored and renovated church, The Hall, a cultural and music space with proper lighting. Revitalized as parts of a Cultural Campus, these town assets root the learning experience in a sense of history and tradition.

"You start with partnerships and then you expand," says More. Mixing established businesses and new creative enterprises is key to the process. Since the Ship's Company Theatre was launched more than three decades ago, Parrsboro has purposefully built its new self-image. Michael Fuller describes it as a mosaic. "As you add pieces, it starts to define itself," he says. "Something greater than the sum of its parts."

## Building blocks

- Parrsboro Creative grew from Art Lab Studios and Gallery ([artlabstudios.ca](http://artlabstudios.ca)), a co-operative studio gallery founded by six artists, including Michael Fuller and Krista Wells.
- The core element of the Parrsboro Creative vision is an Artist Attraction Program—an open call to established and emerging artists to relocate to Parrsboro and participate in rejuvenating and repopulating the town.
- The Cultural Campus is building partnerships in the area and attracting creative visitors.
- In early summer, the Parrsboro Pleine Air Festival attracts visual artists from around the world to paint in the area, compete for prizes, and sell their paintings. This influx is a measurable boost to the economy and an international sales pitch to move to Parrsboro.
- The season is extended into late fall with the 10 Days in October festival, capitalizing on the seasonal beauty and local cuisine. Visitors experience art exhibitions in many venues, guided art tours, and performances in theatre, film, and music.

## REVITALIZING PLACES

The study *Driving Growth* examines how local government can drive growth through the arts. It notes that government investment, leadership, and support of the arts are key to maximizing growth. The study highlights five economic impacts: boosting local economies by attracting visitors; creating jobs and developing skills; attracting and retaining businesses; revitalizing places; and developing talent.

*Source: Driving Growth Through Local Government Investment in the Arts (Local Government Association, UK, March 2013)*



LEN WAGG

# Sustaining Acadian Culture

“I don’t sing, I don’t dance, though I wish I could,” says Joeleen Larade. Instead she employs local youth to sing and dance, and by doing so, keep Acadian culture alive. Larade is Directrice générale at Conseil des arts de Chéticamp—a non-profit school for the arts that aims to preserve the region’s French language and rich Acadian heritage.

Larade is leading a bold plan to turn the tide. Her strategy is focusing on youth. At age four children start classes in dance, music, and theatre in French. By age 12, they are teaching the younger groups. By age 15, they can get summer jobs running the camps and theatre productions. By 20, the most skilled are paid to perform and do the technical work for local plays and for productions that tour as far away as France.

Each July, the Conseil runs a Festival Artistique des Enfants—four days of theatre, yoga, movement, vocal projection, dance, and song for young children, who then stage a production. Those wanting to do this work in French come from all over the Maritimes.

Every August the Conseil runs a four-day camp for older, more experienced youth, who create a production, complete with a top-notch band, to showcase their particular talents. Former students come back from university to work for the summer, playing the main roles on stage. There are also programs to teach technical skills, including lighting and sound. One student went on to study engineering in New Brunswick and now works with CBC in Toronto and comes back to volunteer.

Chéticamp’s children are surrounded by anglophone language and culture, says Larade. Her mission is to give them as much French as possible. In fact, the Conseil collaborates with the P-12 education system. When the bell rings to end the school day, the children walk directly over to the Conseil. “We are always thinking ten years into the future,” she says. For Larade, it’s personal. In ten years, her four-year-old will be old enough to teach art in French to the children who are his age now.



“We are always thinking ten years into the future.”

— **Joeleen Larade, Conseil des arts de Chéticamp**



# Modelling Inclusion

## Can a cultural centre heal a community?

Kerry Johnson is president of JACBA—the Jordantown-Acaciaville-Conway Betterment Association. Founded in 1973 by community leaders, including Johnson’s late father Hubert, the association was created to address systemic racism in three founding African Nova Scotian communities.

Two centuries of history connect these places. Take Conway, for example. Founded as Brindley Town between 1783 and 1785, its first inhabitants were Black Loyalists and pioneers recruited by the British in the aftermath of the American Revolution. The formerly enslaved and their descendants found life in Nova Scotia almost as harsh as what they had fled. Their land was the poorest, their wages the lowest, and their education segregated and inferior.



Fast-forward to the mid-20th century. While universal human rights improved in principle, discrimination continued—in housing, employment, community services, and education. Many youth of African descent experienced racism and physical abuse, while the school achievement gap widened.

In 1975, an incident at Digby High School triggered a complaint to the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission. Years of study and recommendations followed, but the government offered no resolution. Another formal complaint filed in 2005 led to intense community consultation and settlement agreements announced in 2011, one which referenced “the possibility of establishing an African Nova Scotian Community Centre in Digby,” with federal, provincial, and municipal stakeholders. Coincidentally, a similar vision had also emerged in talks between the African Nova Scotian community and the local RCMP. By 2018, Digby County, the Province of Nova Scotia, and Government of Canada agreed to cost-share the \$5,560,000 investment required to see the realization of this project, a dream come true for the local community.

The new centre will be built on a 19-acre parcel of land adjacent to a ballpark in Acaciaville. Recreation will be part of the plan, but the vision is more far-reaching, with an emphasis on cultural heritage and community development. Education partnerships have



“We envision a place that models diversity and inclusion. A place you want to visit every day.”

– Kerry Johnson, JACBA, and Brad Barton, community leader

LEN WAGG/COMMUNICATIONS NOVA SCOTIA

been forged with Acadia University, Université Sainte-Anne, and the Nova Scotia Community College. Further engagement continues to be guided by JACBA, in cooperation with the Digby Education Committee.

Is this a turning point in addressing racism? At the announcement of the provincial funding, Brad Barton, a community leader behind JACBA who began his education in a two-room segregated school, was quoted in the *Digby Courier* as saying “people need to see what our community is about. Only then will people be inspired to stand up for change.”

The province’s Culture Action Plan states it emphatically: “A culture is not just built on successes, pride, and goodwill; a culture also holds on to our defeats, our grief, and our most shameful decisions ... We all need to recognize our power to change such things.” As Kerry Johnson says, “People have woken up ... and Nova Scotia can lead the way.”

## Power to change

Nova Scotia’s Culture Action Plan commits to a group of actions to advance cultural diversity including:

- continue to address systemic racism and discrimination and acknowledge head-on that these remain problems
- support initiatives of the UN’s International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024) by aligning with its three pillars: recognition, justice, and development
- support the various cultural communities and identities in the province ... and build awareness and understanding among all cultures



# Cultural Mentors

## An intergenerational approach to learning bears fruit

“Everyone wants a place to belong,” says 19-year-old Joe MacMaster. “For many people, getting involved with your local culture remedies that.” MacMaster’s ancestry is Scottish. A proud Cape Bretoner, he says he always appreciated his culture, but he never learned the language. “[Once] I started Gaelic classes at school, I really liked it,” he says.

At 15, Joe enrolled in Na Gaisgich Òga (Young Heroes), a seven-month program offered by The Gaelic College in St. Ann’s that aims to equip a new generation with functional fluency. The program accepts 20 students a year from across Nova Scotia, ranging in age from 10 to 16. The students travel to the college for intensive immersion one weekend each month from September to March.

But the secret sauce is this: each student is paired with a mentor who is a fluent Gaelic speaker. Joe has high praise for the program. “It really, really works,” he says. “My Gaelic came a long way.”

The year that Joe took his deep dive into Gaelic is also the year he began playing the fiddle in earnest. Of course, it’s a bonus that Natalie MacMaster is his aunt and the late Buddy MacMaster was his great-uncle. He says he grew up surrounded by great musicians, and once he began practicing he went to as much live music as he could.

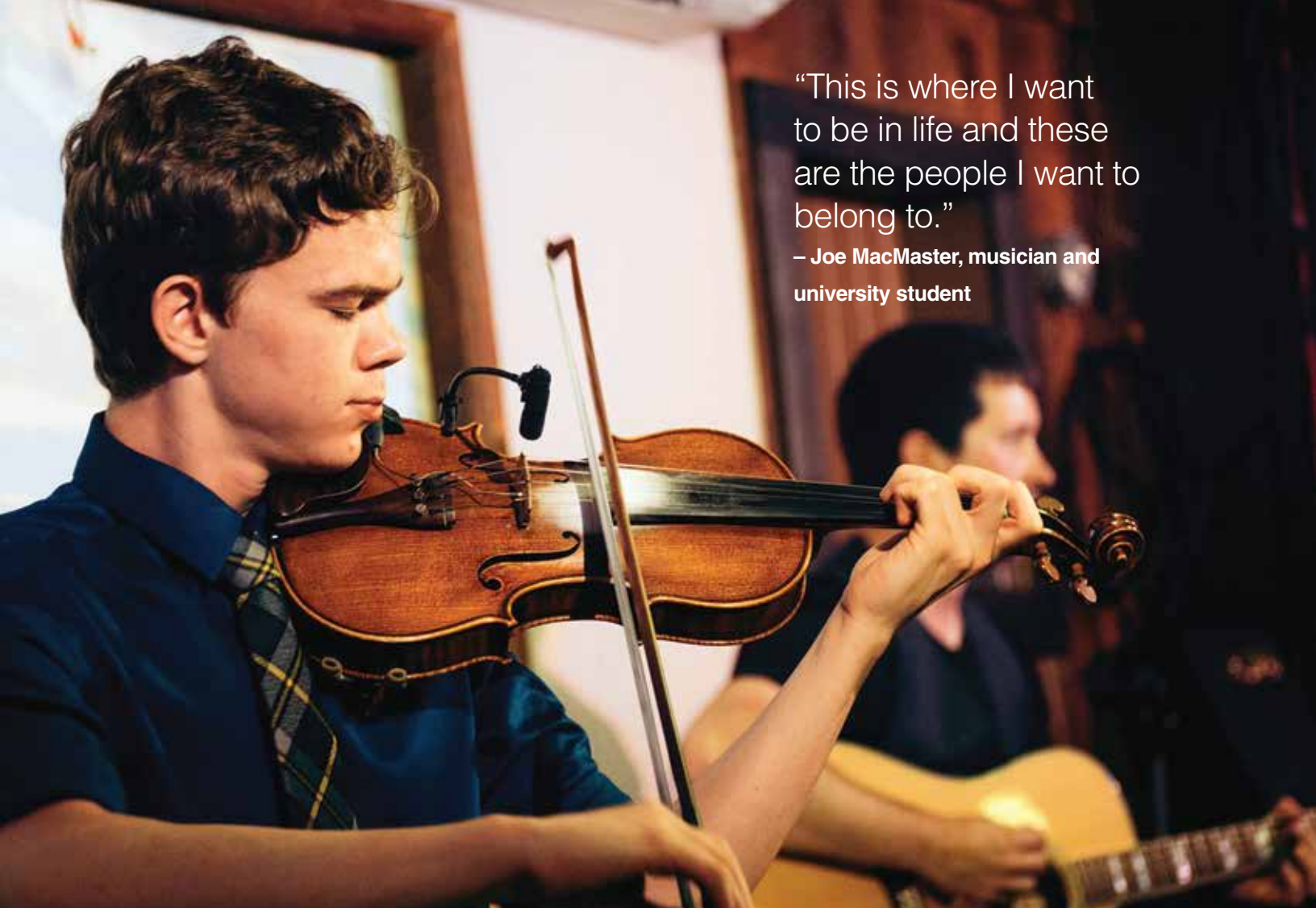
During the school year, Joe studies science at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish. Come summer—the music season—he earns steady applause and his tuition playing two gigs a day, usually on the fiddle but sometimes the bagpipes.

MacMaster is determined to build a future in the place he loves. To that end, he has mapped out a life plan that includes becoming a chiropractor. “It’s a career I find interesting,” he says. “And it’s stable. It allows me to stay home.”

It’s been hard for him to watch many of his friends move away to find work. He believes those who leave lack a connection to local culture. The ones who stay?

**67%**  
of Nova Scotians  
agree that culture  
provides reasons  
for people to stay  
in their community

– 2018 NS Culture Index Survey



“This is where I want to be in life and these are the people I want to belong to.”

– Joe MacMaster, musician and university student

NOVASTREAM INC.

“They realize what a gem it is,” he says.

“Regardless of where you are, if you take part in the local traditions of the area, you begin to see the beauty of them, and feel a connection with them, especially if it connects to your ancestry,” says Joe. “Cape Breton Island is a hotbed for traditions, and those that take interest in them often find a reason and even a responsibility to stay here.”

Music and language have deepened his sense of belonging and responsibility to his culture and his community. “I found my place,” he says. “This is where I want to be in life and these are the people I want to belong to.”

## CULTURAL LEARNING

A 2014 study from the UK found that learning through culture improves student success in all subjects, and that participation in structured arts activities increases cognitive abilities. It also found that students who study arts subjects are more employable and are more likely to stay in employment. A follow-up study states that “arts and culture are a life-enhancing and essential part of our existence.” The 2017 report outlines evidence regarding “four values of cultural learning”: educational, social, economic, and personal value.

Sources: Key Research Findings: The Case for Cultural Learning (*Cultural Learning Alliance, UK, 2014*) and Imagine Nation: The Value of Cultural Learning (*Cultural Learning Alliance, UK, 2017*)



Visiting artists from the Lunenburg Academy of Music Performance (LAMP) perform at local schools, a volunteer-supported outreach program that touches thousands of schoolchildren annually.

VIRGINIA STEPHEN

# When Art is Everywhere

## Lunenburg's experiential learning culture



“Music is part of the fabric of this community.”

– Virginia Stephen, Lunenburg-based arts educator

Lunenburg is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, known for its traditional architecture and living waterfront. Year-round residents and visitors alike enjoy an array of cultural events and international festivals celebrating Rossini, folk art, and documentary films, just to name a few.

What sustains such vibrancy? According to Mayor Rachel Bailey, it's in part the careful preservation of traditions that reflect a seafaring heritage. But it is equally the newer mix of artists and makers and engaged citizens who want to balance a working waterfront with a thriving cultural scene. “The whole town is like a campus,” says Bailey. “The opportunities for personal fulfillment are addressed in so many ways.”

# Education and engagement

- The Lunenburg Academy of Music Performance (LAMP) has been running programs since 2014. It brings in master musicians from around the world to run four-day to two-week residential academies for young professional musicians from over 20 countries. Instructors also offer half-day master classes. Public concerts are offered at the end of the residencies, a benefit that brings international recognition to Lunenburg.
- Graduates of NSCAD University (formerly the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design) vie to become artists-in-residence through the NSCAD Community Studio Residency program. Lunenburg is one of four sites that offer emerging artists a year-long residency to develop their practice in donated studio space and through work with community members and students.
- The Lunenburg School of the Arts offers extension courses—a boon for those who want to develop their visual art and craft skills. This appetite for lifelong learning in the arts is increasing as Lunenburg attracts a growing number of retired people.
- People from around the world study English at the Eurocentres Atlantic Canada language institute.
- The town also hosts the internationally recognized Boxwood and Folk Harbour music festivals, which offer full-day music and vocal workshops for adults and children.

Lunenburg is a hub for lifelong learning in the arts. “There’s a tradition of doing things with your hands, for example, such as quilting, weaving, or mat hooking,” says Virginia Stephen, a local arts administrator, curator, and educator who moved back to Nova Scotia from Alberta and chose Lunenburg. According to Stephen, the popularity of these traditions is no surprise, given generations of self-sufficiency and skilled craftsmanship. “The arts and craft are social activities that reflect the valuing of objects that are both useful and beautiful,” she says. “Folk art also grows from the artistic activities of people from all walks of life.”

Stephen also notes the impact of professional arts organizations on the next generation. Careers have been nurtured by church, school, and private music programs. Take the Lunenburg Academy of Music Performance (LAMP), for example, whose artists do local outreach, introducing about 2,500 schoolchildren each term to classical music. “Music is part of the fabric of this community,” she says. “For many of the music festivals, meeting that desire for learning and engagement is becoming more and more important.”

The next step for Lunenburg is to strategically package and promote this experiential learning advantage. For those seeking new skills, knowledge, and deeper understanding, all in a beautiful setting, Lunenburg is a natural destination.



# Life at Night

## After the workday is done

In historic churches, contemporary storefronts, public gardens, and spaces hidden from the untrained eye, people gather for an evening of provocative, immersive, and collaborative art. For the 11th year in a row, Nocturne—a free “art at night” festival—has brought a sense of wonder to the heart of Halifax/Dartmouth. And while thousands from an array of backgrounds come for the temporary art, they also experience the simple act of being together.



“There’s something special about art being the catalyst.”

– **Lindsay Ann Cory,**  
executive director  
of Nocturne

“It brings people out of the woodwork at a time of year when you just want to hibernate,” says Lindsay Ann Cory, executive director of Nocturne. “We know that most of the audience come with their family, young and old.”

Festivals such as Nocturne, Lumière, and New Glasgow Art at Night offer citizens not only the chance to see inventive one-night-only art projects, but it also allows them to see their communities in new ways, and perhaps even for the first time. And as the festivals’ names imply, the nighttime aspect plays a major part.

In a presentation at Music Nova Scotia’s recent Nocturnal Cities Forum, nighttime economy researcher Alistair Turnham stressed the fact that public events such as Nocturne, the North by Night market in Halifax’s North End, and the Halifax Pop Explosion are by nature social experiences. James Boyle, executive director of the Pop Explosion agrees. “The nighttime economy is what happens after the workday’s done,” he says. “It’s the culture of the streets, clubs, theatres, restaurants, and more.” People experience the benefits of culture, but also they benefit from the experience of getting to know each other.

Leading up to Nocturne in 2018, a new initiative was aimed at getting more newcomers to Nova Scotia involved. Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia



COMMUNICATIONS NOVA SCOTIA

(ISANS) partnered with Toronto's MAYBELLEarts to create a series of public art workshops that culminated at Nocturne. "There was a big gathering where participants could look at some of the art created at those workshops, but also tour the festival with their new community," says Cory.

The nighttime economy takes up half of each day. As it grows, it can drive prosperity and create more livable communities. But it's essential for planners to understand how a community sees itself by day and by night, and to involve the public in creating a vision for the future. Such a vision must include younger citizens, those who are looking at ways of gathering that stimulate creativity and are as inclusive and welcoming as possible. "There's something special about art being the catalyst," says Cory.

## **SOCIAL COHESION**

"Most importantly, the leisure economy [nighttime economy] is where, after the stresses of ever longer working days, we meet, eat, socialise, drink, dance, learn, laugh, fall in love, celebrate, and behave as we were born to behave, as social animals."

*Source: Manifesto For The Night Time Economy (Philip Kolvin, UK May 2016)*

# The Vision

The members of the Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council (CNSLC) believe in the power of culture to revitalize and sustain communities. In presenting these stories, our goals are twofold:

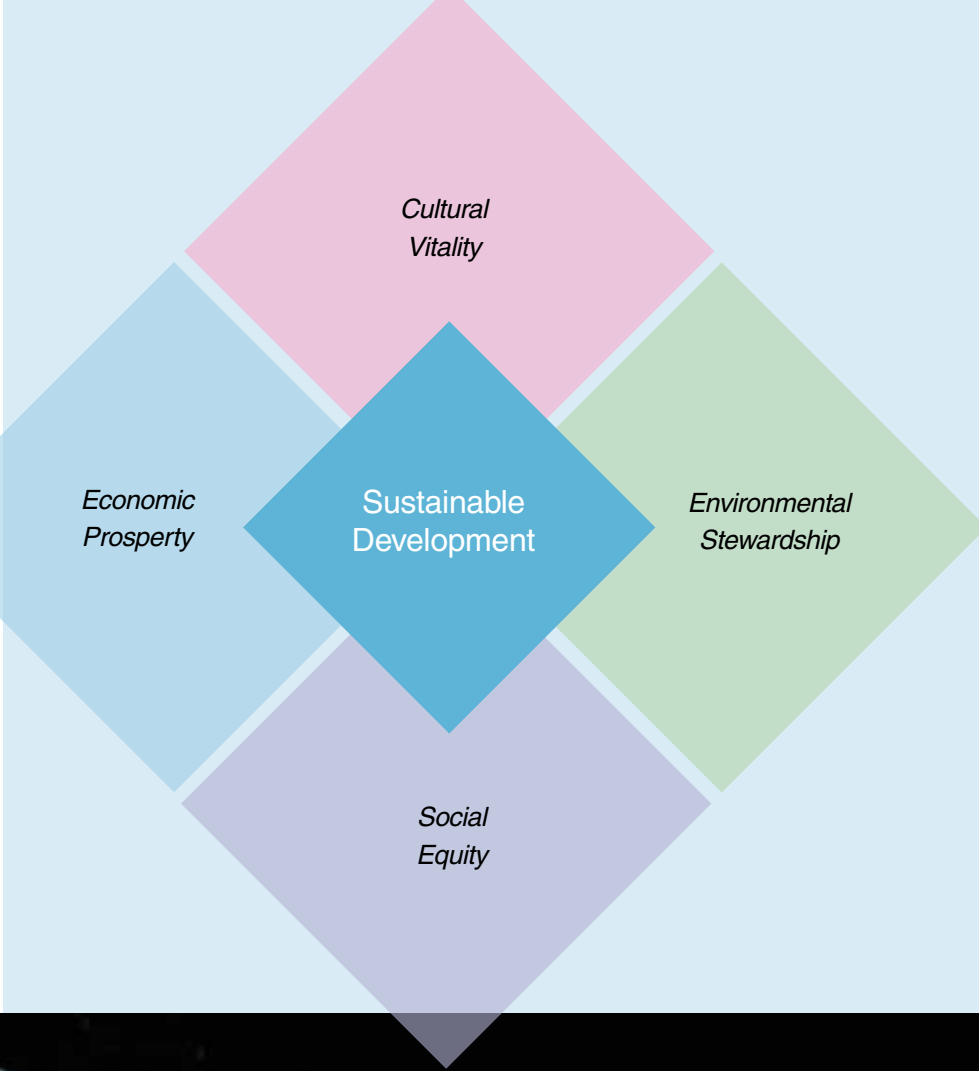
- to show that culture has social benefits in addition to economic importance; and
- to show how applying a culture lens informs better planning and decision-making for sustainable community development.

We envision all of Nova Scotia as a vibrant and connected cultural ecosystem, and we want to help culture leaders and community leaders put these ideas to work.

In this vision:

- more Nova Scotians recognize, participate in, and benefit from culture
- more exchange happens among artists, creators, and change-makers of all disciplines
- more community development policies and programs are informed by a culture lens





## The four dimensions

The CNSLC shares the view of cultural thinker Jon Hawkes that cultural vitality is critical to sustainable development, as essential to the public good as social equity, environmental stewardship, and economic prosperity. He emphasizes that the four dimensions of good planning are intertwined and interdependent.



## Understanding Cultural Value

2017 Culture GDP: **\$929** million

2017 Culture Jobs: **13,101**

A growth trend for culture has been rising steadily in Nova Scotia over the last seven years. Data from a nation-wide Culture Satellite Account supports the business case for culture and reaffirms its role as an economic driver. The economics of culture for Nova Scotia is captured as one of the key themes in the province's 2017 Culture Action Plan. The Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council believes the full value of culture also includes its social benefits, enhanced by its significant economic importance.

**CULTURE TALKS**



Left to Right: Andrew Sare, Mhiran Faraday, Marcel McKeough, Margie Beaton, Scott Long, Virginia Stephen, Evelyn White, Trevor Murphy, Peggy Tibbo-Cameron, Chelsea Prime, Pamela Scott Crace, Robert Bernard, Troy Greencorn, Laurie Dalton, Rose Zack. Missing from photo are Martine Durier-Copp, Laura Mackenzie, and Nancy Oakley.

KELLY CLARK

# Taking Action Together

Culture is the essence of our humanity and the lifeblood of our communities. It is who we are as people, what we value, and how we express meaning. It encompasses the full diversity and expression of our arts, heritage, languages, and identities. It is our stories, old and new; our efforts to understand and to be understood.

In the creative economy, culture can be thought of as a new operating system that can revitalize communities with broad social benefits as well as create new prosperity. Culture makes people healthier, more connected, more empathetic, and better lifelong learners. Culture makes communities more welcoming, sustainable, and vibrant.

This is what we mean by Culture In Action. The stories contained in this report illustrate the many forward-looking energies that are being harnessed by community leaders willing to embrace development approaches that exist at the intersection of cultural expression, place-making, and new ecosystem dynamics such as hubs.

Specialists in the growing realm of creative community-building say there is no perfect formula for success, but consistencies and conditions can typically be seen in places that are finding new ways to thrive. For example, Parrsboro and Lunenburg both build on their cultural assets as part of their future development strategies, but their ideas are unique to their local origins and characteristics.

One way to take action is to help us build a greater awareness and understanding of the economic and social benefits of culture. Get creative and share your stories! Together we can lead Nova Scotia forward.

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## About The Council

The Creative Nova Scotia Leadership Council is a partnership of the culture sector and the Government of Nova Scotia, designed to foster better understanding and decision-making. The council is made up of 15 members who represent the culture sector throughout Nova Scotia. As a group, we work together to provide advice and leadership to government through the Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage. This includes advising on policy development, making recommendations on programs to promote arts and culture, and acting as a voice for the culture sector and creative industries.

Our members include artists, writers, filmmakers, musicians, performers, arts administrators, and other experienced sector professionals. Members are selected through a process that includes a public call for applicants, open nominations, review by the council's nominating committee, and final ministerial approval. Sector members serve three-year terms, for a maximum of two consecutive terms. The council also includes two representatives from the Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage. As well, a member of Arts Nova Scotia sits on the council in a non-voting role.

Together we strive for a variety of perspectives and a balance of representation throughout Nova Scotia. The CNSLC supports the Culture Action Plan, which is about building a Nova Scotia where cultural identity, cultural expression, and economic prosperity are interdependent. A place where diversity and heritage are embraced, and where communities thrive through more creativity and connectedness.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This document is the result of many contributors. The idea of collecting stories that exemplify the social benefits of culture was initiated several years ago as a follow up to a 2014 CNSLC report entitled *Culture: Nova Scotia's Future*. This new report benefited from the advice and early stewardship of former CNSLC members Terrilee Bulger, Fiona Diamond, Jamie MacLellan, and Carol Beaton, in addition to current Council members pictured above. We thank Gwen Davies and Joanne Wise for their work on early drafts, and Marianne Ward for final copy-editing. We are grateful to the Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage for its ongoing partnership and encouragement in this exploration of the social aspects of culture, an emerging field of cultural studies in Canada and around the world. We make no claim to be subject-matter experts in this area. Rather we are interested in continuing to learn and share what our continued outreach reveals. Finally, we wish to acknowledge and thank the panelists and participants of the 2018 Cultural Communities Summit, many of whose stories and questions informed this report.



IMAGE CREDITS CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Courtesy Lumière—Art at Night Festival; Communications Nova Scotia; River Bank Habitat (2018) by NSCAD Lunenburg Residency artist Gillian Marady-Jowsey, installation on Bay to Bay Trail; Len Wagg/Communications Nova Scotia; Communications Nova Scotia.