



CULTURAL CAPITALE  
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# Comox Valley Cultural Development Plan Executive Summary

Prepared for  
Cultural Capital of Canada Steering Committee

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# Comox Valley Cultural Development Plan

## Introduction

The Comox Valley acknowledges that culture has substantial economic and social impact for the region. The purpose of this project is to ensure that cultural capacity issues that may limit the region's ability to attract and retain investment, skilled labour and a creative economy are addressed through a range of strategies and actions.

### ***Purpose of the Comox Valley Cultural Development Plan***

The *Comox Valley Cultural Development Plan* is a practical guideline for collaboration among cultural organizations, municipal and regional governments, artists, and businesses to magnify the impact of cultural events, festivals, performances and experiences. 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 investment.

The *Comox Valley Cultural Development Plan* is one of the legacies of the Cultural Capital of Canada 2007 award. It strives to:

- Build capacity in the cultural sector,
- Identify a Common Cultural Policy,
- Coordinate cultural impact and resources and
- Create long-term cultural economic benefits.

The *Comox Valley Cultural Development Plan* provides a blueprint for the Comox Valley to:

- Identify and articulate a strategic cultural vision for the region,
- Guide and integrate cultural planning,
- Provide an investment framework in the sector
- Guide the municipalities and regional governments in planning development in the areas of role definition, cultural investment, and culture and heritage facilities and programming.
- Improve information exchange and understanding of arts and cultural opportunities region-wide.
- Enable coordinated planning and development of region-serving cultural programs and facilities.

## **Comox Valley Cultural Development Plan**

Capture key issues and opportunities in arts and cultural development that are best addressed cooperatively at the regional level, and that would complement or enhance initiatives of local governments and cultural organizations.

Better define and understand the scope, role and impact of arts and cultural industries within the Comox Valley economy.

Develop actions and strategies to enhance positive economic impacts.

## ***Comox Valley Common Cultural Policy***

Through the Cultural Capital of Canada award, the five jurisdictional areas of the Comox Valley, The City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland, Comox Valley Regional District and the K'ómoks First Nation have successfully demonstrated an ability to collaborate on and deliver a diverse range of cultural experiences. Building on these foundations, a Comox Valley Cultural Policy integrates the spirit of the distinctive municipal policies and cultural practices into a broad framework that will enable continued focused collaborative ventures. The following policy is presented as a complimentary policy to those currently existing.

### **Vision**

The Common Cultural Policy is built on the fundamental principle that culture is vital to the individual, social and economic well being of the Valley and that the municipal, and regional governments of the Comox Valley are committed to supporting culture.

### **Mission**

An important priority for the municipal, and regional governments of the Comox Valley is ensuring that present and future generations of citizens benefit from a healthy and inspiring cultural environment that builds on our valley's unique heritage and evokes feelings of pride and achievement and contributes to a better quality of life.

It is in this spirit that the municipal and regional governments adopt the following mission:

***Ensure that citizens of the Comox Valley have the opportunity to share, express and experience culture in a region that respects the past, celebrates the present and welcomes the future.***

## **Comox Valley Cultural Development Plan**

Citizens have expressed a desire for a broad definition of culture, founded on a number of key principles, that will inform the policy and guide the Comox Valley in setting goals and developing cultural strategies, initiatives and programs.

### **Key Principles**

The Comox Valley's Cultural Policy is comprised of the following key elements:

#### **Quality of Life**

Quality of life is measured not only by economic prosperity, but by the benefits incurred from participation in cultural activities: a sense of identity and belonging, of confidence, of community and of shared heritage. It is the sum of the physical, mental, social and spiritual components that make up our humanity. It is what will make the Comox Valley an even more attractive place to live.

#### **Partnership and Collaboration**

The successful development of a thriving cultural community requires a healthy social capital marked by active volunteerism and a strong non-profit sector, solid partnerships and a sharing of responsibility among the governments of the Comox Valley, the private sector, cultural organizations and other agencies and citizens.

#### **Diversity**

By celebrating the diversity of our cultural heritage and creative expression, building on the values and experiences we share, and welcoming newcomers to the Valley, we will be able to know each other better and to make the Comox Valley an even more attractive place to live, where all citizens can feel a sense of pride and belonging.

#### **A Valued Cultural and Creative Community**

Culture is vital to the individual, social and economic prosperity of the Valley and the municipal and regional governments are committed to continuing to support and promote cultural growth.

#### **Stewardship and Sustainability**

Governments and citizens share the important responsibility of safeguarding and enhancing culture for future generations. The restoration, preservation and protection of the tangible objects and intangible elements of our culture and identity are paramount to the sustainability of a strong and vibrant cultural heritage. The municipal and regional governments also recognize and encourages the important role played by volunteers and non-profit organizations in governing, managing and supporting our cultural resources and continue to support cultural facilities and foundations

#### **Economic Development**

Culture contributes to a diversified economy through the financial impacts

## **Comox Valley Cultural Development Plan**

associated with both resident and visitor experiences. Direct economic benefits include employment, tax revenues, local spending, and income from tourism. Consequently, the Comox Valley will benefit from a supportive environment for the growth of the Valley's cultural sector.

### **Access**

Citizens of the Comox Valley must have the opportunity to join in the full range of cultural experiences in the region. Since the Cultural Policy encourages a wide range of cultural and creative expression, residents in the Comox Valley will contribute to and benefit from cultural activities not matter where they live. Beyond ensuring that location is not a limiting factor, there needs to be a focus on removing barriers that prevent some citizens from participating fully in the cultural life of the Valley. Improving access particularly for disadvantaged citizens will help to improve the quality of life throughout the Comox Valley.

### ***Goals of the Common Cultural Policy***

The municipal and regional governments will demonstrate their commitment through actions and partnerships designed to strengthen the resilience of the cultural community and to ensure that the cultural legacy of the Comox Valley is protected, preserved and enhanced for future generations. This will be achieved by successfully attaining four basic goals:

- 1. Access to a wide range of cultural experiences and opportunities**
- 2. Enhance community capacity to support and promote cultural activity**
- 3. Encourage excellence in the work of artistic and cultural professional and organizations**
- 4. Foster growth, sustainability and investment in the Comox Valley's cultural industries**

# Comox Valley Cultural Development Plan

## The Outcomes

The Cultural Development Plan provides a wide range of detailed actions and investments that can be undertaken by one or more of the partners. Using the tools of Advocacy, Education and Investment to target the producers of culture – the Individuals and Organizations – the cultural activities of the Comox Valley can be enhanced and strengthened to produce the following outcomes:

**Collaboration and Partnership** – The Comox Valley Cultural Development Plan is founded on increased collaboration and partnership between and among organizations, individuals, local governments and business.

**Sustainability** – Sufficient resources and skills must be available to maintain the sector’s health.

**Infrastructure** – Cultural capital for performance, presentation, education, and inspiration must be planned in advance and incorporated into regional strategies.

**Economic Impact** – A vibrant culture has economic impact through its employment, products, tourism and capacity to attract creative people and industries.

**Community Pride** – A community, proud of its cultural treasures, supports cultural activity through volunteerism, participation, cash and in-kind donations, advocacy and promotion.

		
Advocacy Education/Training Investment	<b>Producers:</b> Creative Persons Viable Cultural Structures Venture Culturalists Champion of Culture Empowered Citizens <b>Products:</b> Festivals and Events Music and Performing Arts Visual & Fine Arts Heritage, Museums & Places Multicultural & Communications Culinary & Eco Experiences	Collaboration & Partnership Sustainability Community Pride Infrastructure Economic Impact

## **Comox Valley Cultural Development Plan**

### ***Economic significance***

A study was prepared by Miller Dickinson Blais Inc. on the economic impact of cultural industries for the Comox Valley. The recognition that 'Culture Works' has emerged during the past ten years as planners and economists pinpointed culture as an important capital asset that establishes the pre-conditions for creativity and innovation in growing economies.

Economic analysis of the cultural sector in the Comox Valley revealed:

Utilizing conservative and established approaches to economic impact calculation, it is possible to make the case that the total economic impact of the cultural sector in the Comox Valley exceeds **\$75 million per year**.

The cultural sector contributes about \$1,222 per person to the local economy.

More than 3.5% of the local population is employed in the (broadly-defined) cultural sector, a percentage much higher than in comparator communities and more than double the national average.

Investment in culture and cultural activities can be justified by their direct and indirect economic impact however, the intangible benefits of a vibrant cultural climate and its capacity to stimulate creative and innovative industries is even more significant.

The Comox Valley was compared with three other similar communities, two of which were Cultural Capitals. In all instances investment in cultural industries has been a vital strategy for economic and community revitalization. Through investment communities benefit from additional jobs, a strong tax base, growth of cultural enterprises, attraction and retention of talented people/businesses, and the promotion of community identity and diversity.

### ***Recommendations***

Adoption of the Common Cultural Policy by the City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland and the Comox Valley Regional District as the basis of partnerships and collaborations.

Formation of a transitional Steering Committee to guide the creation of a Cultural Agency.

Identification of funding to support a Cultural Agency that can implement common cultural goals.

Implementation of the Comox Valley Cultural Development Plan