The Future of Culture

Approaches for Canada's Capital Region

A Discussion Paper for
Choosing our Future

Building a Sustainable
National Capital Region
Choosing our Future

Bâtir une région de la
capitale nationale viable
Choisir notre avenir

Choosing our Future is an initiative led by the City of Ottawa, in partnership with the City of Gatineau and the National Capital Commission, to prepare Canada's Capital Region to meet the challenges of the 21st century. It will result in long-term strategic directions that integrate the concepts of sustainability, resiliency and liveability into all aspects of our communities.

Purpose

This series of Discussion Papers presents a range of ideas for how we can succeed in facing challenges such as demographic change;; resource scarcity; globalization and economic uncertainty; rising energy and food costs; and sudden shocks such as extreme weather conditions and emergencies. The papers are intended to stimulate dialogue about the best ideas for the future of the region and provide the basis for our future plans.

Discussion Papers in this series include:

- The Future of Culture

- Greening the Economy

- The Future of Social Development

- The Future of Food and Farming

- The Future of Natural Systems

- The Future of Buildings and Energy Supply

- The Future of Water, Stormwater, and Wastewater Infrastructure

- The Future of Materials and Solid Waste Management

- The Future of Land Use, Growth Management and Urban Form

- The Future of Mobility

The ideas discussed in this series include many that were suggested by participants at public and stakeholder events during the process to date.

Other information about the initiative can be found online at:

www.choosingourfuture.ca

Choosing our Future Discussion Paper

June 2011

Prepared by HB Lanarc Consultants Ltd. with contributions from:

City of Ottawa

City of Gatineau

National Capital Commission

Table of
Contents

1 Introduction

1.1. The Future of Culture

To ride the wave of challenges and prepare for the unpredictable, we need to create a more sustainable, resilient, and liveable region. Those communities that manage to prosper in the 21st century will be those that plan for change—both to reduce their impact and to manage the inevitable changes already underway. Plans for a sustainable future are more than plans for managing land use, urban growth, and transportation, although these are central concerns. Thinking about the future requires changes in how we think and what we value, how we work together to express this, and the way that these values inform how we live in the real world.

Culture is about arts and heritage; language; urban design and a sense of place; and, diversity and identity. Ultimately, culture involves a shared set of values that plays a significant role in the day-to-day choices that we make. In this light, it makes sense that addressing the challenge of sustainability will also require a shift in our core set of values, beliefs, and assumptions about the world including our relationships with other people and with nature. Culture plays an important role in fostering creativity and sustainability in Canada's Capital Region.

1.2. Summary

A range of high-level strategic directions to creating vibrant, resilient cultural systems is explored in this paper. Each strategic approach is a response to the question: "What and how much should we do to achieve a more sustainable, liveable and resilient region?" Based on public and stakeholder feedback, this paper is designed to help forge a preferred path for the long-term plans developed through Choosing our Future. The strategic directions described here are not meant to be exclusive. Rather, they are framed as questions to stimulate discussion, responses and additional ideas. These discussion areas include:

- **Creative cities** — The integration of arts and heritage with the economy provides cities with an economic advantage. How can we design and build cities that support new connections between sectors and attract and retain the talent of creative innovators?

- **Public art and the built environment** —What role can public art play in deepening our understanding and strengthening our connection to the environment, both built and natural, while creating beautiful places that people value?

- **Place and belonging** — How can the development of unique cultural and sub-cultural districts and the preservation of cultural landscapes in rural, suburban, and urban areas be used to create a "sense of place" that residents can relate to and identify with?

- **Broad participation in decision making** — How do we harness the increasing diversity of our communities and empower people from all backgrounds and to fully participate in the democratic process?

- **Happiness and well-being** — Strong connections between people have been shown to be a primary indicator of happiness and well-being. How can cities play a role in supporting not just physical health and well-being, but also social, mental, and spiritual health?

Flickr/Mike Gifford

2 Background

2.1. Culture Defined

The term "culture" describes the shared set of values, beliefs, and customs that make up the essence of our individual and collective identity, defining how we live our lives, our relationships to others and to the environment. Culture is also used to describe the foundation and inspiration for the creation and sharing of cultural products such as visual art, performing arts, architecture, and heritage interpretation—collectively termed "arts and heritage."

A society's values are the basis upon which all else is built. These values and the ways they are expressed are a society's culture. The way a society governs itself cannot be fully democratic without there being clear avenues for the expression of community values, and unless these expressions directly affect the directions society takes. These processes are culture at work. Cultural vitality is as essential to a healthy and sustainable society as social equity, environmental responsibility and economic viability.

John Hawkes, The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability.

2.2. Context

Just as the 1970s brought with it an emerging recognition of the need to include environmental impacts in our decision-making framework, the same is now becoming an emerging requisition for culture. Canada's External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities was established in 2004. The Committee set out a planning framework based on an expanded definition of sustainability—one based on the concept of four pillars that includes cultural vitality along with the more common pillars of economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental sustainability. The Committee declared that "Creativity must become the distinguishing feature of our culture."[1]

Figure 1: Culture includes shared values, behaviours and traditions.

The concept of identity is implicit in culture and expressed through arts and heritage, and it is this concept that has perhaps the greatest resonance for Canada's Capital Region. In today's world of global competiveness and mobile capital, a strong regional identity along with beauty, creativity, and diversity is critical to attracting the kind of talent, tourism market and businesses that keep our economy strong. In the nation's capital, these elements take on a special meaning that helps to define Canadian identity both locally and nationally, creating a source of national pride.

Culture also plays an important but largely silent role in a region's ability to retain youth and talent. Even more so than financial capital, talent is often drawn away by new opportunities and preventing the loss of talent is becoming as important as attracting new talent. A strong identity and a vibrant arts and culture scene that encourages participation is central to both retaining and attracting global talent. Canada's Capital Region has the unique ability of being able to draw from the founding nations (Algonquin/Aboriginal, French and English) as well as from many immigrant cultures. Opportunities to celebrate these cultures and empower local communities create social cohesion, which can help keep youth and talent in town and act as a beacon for new talent.

2.3. Challenges and Trends

Looking forward, Canada's Capital Region will need to deal with a number of growing challenges in order to maintain the high quality of life that residents currently enjoy and advance regional sustainability. At the same time, new opportunities have emerged. The future challenges and trends affecting culture include:

Increasing diversity

With the increase in diversity present in our communities, there may be different or conflicting values and habits among residents, and a rising number of subcultures that further distinguish the distinctive identities found in society. Neighbourhoods with a strong cultural identity present both opportunities as well as challenges as we strive to balance support for unique cultural traits while encouraging a shared sense of identity and the integration of new immigrants into wider society.

Challenges for the arts

As culture has not traditionally been seen as a basic need nor associated directly with economic development, government funding of resources has tended to be allocated after other priorities such as health, social services and infrastructure have been funded. At times of economic constraint, funding reductions to several sectors, including the arts, can be a real possibility and challenge. Yet, there is public demand for high-quality service and

programming. There is also an increasing diversity of artistic expression, both in content as well as medium, as new technologies provide opportunities to create and present art in previously unknown formats, such as digital media and multi-media.

Transition in heritage conservation

Heritage conservation is increasingly seen as a local government responsibility and the focus has tended to be on tangible heritage (art, events, and buildings) with less emphasis on the intangible aspects of heritage such as stories, music, drama, dances and ways of being. With a rising awareness of intangible heritage coupled with new technology options and social media, trends have emerged for collaboration and the documenting of culture in digital formats, which create opportunities to display these elements more prominently.

Lack of identity in urban design and form

Our built environment tends to be dominated by common standards and regulations; though they offer safety and necessary predictability, these forms and patterns present challenges to the creation of unique identities and vibrant public spaces. Big business and well-known brands have also contributed to the "sameness" found in cities across North America. Urban and rural environments are increasingly indistinguishable from one another, rather than being places that create a strong and unique sense of identity.

Improved connectivity

Physical isolation can be countered, in part, through better technology and 24/7 connectivity. Social media extends communities beyond their geography and makes ideas and information universally accessible. While this limitless access to information and ideas has many benefits, there is also a growing desire to "unplug" from the constant electronic chatter. Interactive art (or installation-based art) provides a unique opportunity to participate and experience culture by involving the spectator and providing a means to connect neighbours to one another.

2.4. Goals

Recognizing the need to address these issues and challenges and to envision a better future, Choosing our Future, through community outreach, has developed a set of high-level aspirational goals to define success over the long term. This discussion paper and the strategic directions that are identified respond to a primary *Culture and Identity* goal and two related goals, as follows:

Primary Goal

Cultural vitality and diversity contribute to the region's strong identity

Ethnic diversity, artistic expression, and distinctive cultural heritage are supported and valued, contributing to a strong sense of place, identity, inclusivity and meaning. The culture of the region reflects a strong ethic of community and sustainability.

Related Goals

All residents enjoy a high quality of life and contribute to community well-being

Our communities are healthy, safe, secure, accessible, and inclusive places, where all residents have the opportunities required to enjoy a high quality of life and be involved in community life.

Economic prosperity supports residents, community well-being, and ecological health

Wealth is generated with a fraction of today's material and energy throughput and with respect for the limits of planetary ecosystems and resources. The region's economy supports regional self-reliance, good jobs for residents, and contributes to a high quality of life for all residents. Residents and businesses also support responsibly produced goods and services from around the world.

Other goals can be found on the project website: www.choosingourfuture.ca.

2.5. Current Plans and Programs

The Cities of Ottawa and Gatineau both place importance on the role culture plays in the success of their communities. Both address culture, arts and heritage in their policies and directions; the City of Ottawa through its Arts, Heritage and Human Services Plans, and the City of Gatineau through its Policy on Cultural Diversity and its Cultural Policy. The National Capital Commission's role in culture is more general; its mandate focuses on the maintenance and enhancement of physical assets and cultural events of national significance in the region.

Current plans support an "intercultural" approach to diversity. This cross-cultural approach helps the region's communities understand and embrace different cultures and to celebrate them. If successfully implemented, interculturalism strengthens the identity of each culture while also helping them to find their place within the larger community. In general, these plans place less emphasis on cultural values and beliefs, focusing more on arts, creativity, and heritage. The City of Ottawa's Arts and Heritage Plan renewal process is beginning to bring together the varying approaches to and definitions of culture.

Some examples of efforts by the governments in the region to achieve cultural goals are described below:

Arts

- Ottawa's Arts Plan contains both 20-year goals and shorter 5-year action plans. The Plan focuses on five strategic directions: public access to the local arts; artist retention; building creative capacity; revitalizing public and natural spaces through the arts; and economic development. Implementation of these directions is linked to investment, provision, and improvement of local art spaces and marketing. A renewal process is currently underway towards the development of a second 5-year action plan for arts, heritage and culture.

- Gatineau's Cultural Policy identifies commitments to various aspects of arts and heritage, including support and promotion of local artists (in performing arts, literature, visual art, music, film and television) at both professional and amateur levels.

Heritage

- Ottawa's Heritage Plan includes provisions for identifying, collecting, and preserving local documentary and material heritage; researching, interpreting, and promoting local history and heritage; and involving citizens in heritage preservation, interpretation, and stewardship. The Plan relates the importance of heritage to overall guiding principles for the city.

- Gatineau's Cultural Policy includes commitments to heritage and history, including development and promotion of heritage; creation of a development plan to ensure harmony between heritage and new construction; natural heritage; and the promotion of distinctive heritage projects in urban centres.

- NCC works to present the Capital as a place to experience Canadian heritage and culture. This includes timely, lively interpretive programs through the use of new technologies.

Diversity

- Ottawa's Human Services Plan includes a strategic direction for diversity and inclusion. It acknowledges and encourages increasing ethnic and cultural diversity and diversity

---

Seeds of Success

Below is a list of some of the many programs and initiatives currently underway in the region.

- Ottawa Arts and Heritage Plan Renewal

- Ottawa Human Services Plan

- Gatineau Cultural Policy

- Gatineau Policy on Cultural Diversity

- Gatineau Immigrant Settlement Program

- Major festivals such as Winterlude, Canada Day, Sound and Light Show, Ottawa International Jazz Festival

- NCC-protected heritage structures, archeological sites and artifacts, sites of national significance and cultural landscapes

- Ottawa's 2011-2014 Corporate Planning Framework identifies effectively integrating immigrants economically, socially and culturally as a priority

- Archives, museums and related heritage programs

in persons with disabilities. It also recognizes diversity based on personal interest, geography, and identity. The Plan proposes a range of approaches,

- Ottawa's Equity and Diversity Policy fosters an environment that respects people's dignity, ideas and beliefs thereby ensuring equity and diversity in employment and that customers and others have access to City facilities, products, services, and grants as defined by human rights legislation..

- Gatineau's Cultural Diversity Policy commits to a framework of intercultural bridge-building and openness, starting at the neighbourhood level.

- Gatineau's Cultural Policy also gives priority to the provision of French-language cultural activities and products, and aims to create links with other Francophone communities. It calls for the establishment of an intercultural policy for co-operation and hospitality with other cultural communities, Anglophone communities, and indigenous groups.

- Gatineau and Ottawa each have immigrant integration programs.

- NCC has included a more extensive youth engagement focus in their programming and activities for the most recent Corporate Plan, as well as a continued commitment to support the diversity of ages and cultural backgrounds found in the Capital Region.

Art in the city

- Ottawa's Arts Plan includes strategies to encourage community connectivity and identity building by increasing public art in public spaces and natural places. This includes a policy for larger capital projects which directs 1% of the project costs to the creation of public art.

- Gatineau's Cultural Policy includes commitments to identify neighbourhoods with distinctive character and develop a strategic plan to support cultural areas in the city. It includes policies for the integration of public art; consideration of artistic value, identity and symbolism in architecture for new buildings; and developing infrastructure to promote artistic creation.

- NCC has a long-term goal of creating a gathering place for Canadians in the core of the Capital. It also reviews and approves the location and design for all proposals for commemorative works and public art on federal land.

- The National Capital Region has the highest concentration of museums of any region in Canada, including 6 national museums. Other major Cultural institutions include the National Arts Centre, National Gallery of Canada, over 150 libraries and information resource centres, and over 260 historic places. Ottawa's 4 local cultural umbrella organizations (Arts Ottawa East, Council for the Arts in Ottawa, the Council for Heritage Organizations in Ottawa, and Ottawa Festivals) represent over 250 local arts, heritage and festival organizations.

Celebration

- Ottawa invests in and provides logistical support to a vibrant line-up of major local festivals, fairs, and events. Examples include the Ottawa International Jazz Festival, Electric Fields Festival, Ottawa Bluesfest, Ottawa Chamber Music Festival, Festival X (a photography festival), and the Carp Fair. In 2010, the City was named the top North American City in its size category by the International Festivals and Events Association in recognition of this positive event environment.

- Gatineau commits to the development of major cultural events that provide unique cultural programming, or those events that are not specifically focused on culture but that integrate the arts.

- NCC organizes, sponsors, and promotes events and public activities in Canada's Capital Region to enrich the cultural and social fabric of the country. This includes high-profile events such as Canada Day and Winterlude.

- Spotlight is a guide to what's happening in the Ottawa-Gatineau region. This online events calendar celebrates the wide range of cultural activities in the region. It highlights events for all ages and interests taking place across the region's diverse communities. The calendar was developed by the City of Ottawa in collaboration with the National Capital Commission and the City of Gatineau.

Collaboration

- The City of Ottawa's Arts and Heritage Plan renewal process positions culture as the connective tissue between the other three pillars of sustainability, between sectors, and between the strategic plans or initiatives at municipality and community levels.

- Gatineau includes numerous references to opportunities for partnership and collaboration with other cultural organizations in its Cultural and its Cultural Diversity policies.

- NCC is committed to greater partnership and collaboration, and a more transparent public process.

The region has made significant progress in embracing new immigrants, protecting heritage resources, supporting the arts, and developing collaborative partnerships for success. What is perhaps lacking is a specific focus on linking arts, heritage and culture to the pressing challenges of the 21st century.

3New Directions

3.1. Strengthening Culture

While approaches taken to reach cultural goals have met with success in many cases, there are a number of new opportunities when looking towards the future. The following presents a range of strategic directions, approaches and practices, including some that build on existing initiatives already underway for creating a more sustainable, culturally-rich society.

Creative cities

One of the strongest themes in current municipal and local approaches to planning is the idea of "creative cities." There is recognition that our economies are going to be increasingly dominated by creative industries, broadly defined as industries that depend on people who can combine different ideas and pieces of information to create innovative new products (tangible and intangible) and perhaps even new industries or sectors. Our cities need to support creativity in order to compete; to do so, we need to support the arts, build cities that provide space for artists, designers, and other innovators, and make places where they can easily connect with one another.

Creativity is an economic driver. It also helps to integrate cultural thinking into the design of public spaces, and recognizes the value of heritage and diversity in provoking discussions that spawn new and creative ideas. Ottawa's recently updated Economic Development Plan embraces this creative cities concept.

Moving towards a creative city model could strengthen the commitment to intercultural approaches already embedded in current plans. The adoption of such best practices could support a vibrant and economically viable arts community, with likely economic spin-offs such as a stronger technology sector, increased tourism, and greater local income capture as residents spend money in their communities. The creative city approach could build on the region's role as a technological centre of innovation, and could become the national foundation for the creative economy if linked to other regions and economic centres. A greater capacity for innovation throughout the region could result in benefits in more traditional economic sectors. The following in an example of best practice from Roanoke, Virginia. "Centre in the Square", located in a renovated warehouse in downtown Roanoke, Virginia was created as a public/private project to provide free housing for five major cultural organizations: a theatre, a science museum, a history museum, an arts council, and an art museum. The organizations are provided with free utilities, maintenance, custodial and security services. These services represent ~ 30% of the organizations' operating budget. Since the Centre's opening in 1983, over 350 new businesses have opened in the neighbourhood. The Centre in the Square acts as a catalyst for further downtown economic development; its annual economic influence is estimated at $25 million. http://www.centerinthesquare.org

Strategic Approach to Creative Development

Toronto's AuthentiCity Planning Framework is an example of a strategic, city-wide approach to arts-related and creative economic development. Starting with existing cultural institutions and the organic evolution of surrounding districts into creative neighbourhoods, it suggests the use of tax increment financing or community improvement program areas (CIP) to leverage these assets into stronger generators of creative economic activity.

Locating the right mix of assets together with investments, institutions, and creative practitioners can create synergies with significant economic benefits. An assessment of creative hubs in St. Paul Minnesota, for instance, has shown that the hubs have benefitted artists by enabling greater collaboration and the cross-fertilization of ideas. The hubs provided affordable spaces in areas where rents were rising and have also helped to boost professional reputations. Some creative hubs were seen to have contributed to urban revitalization efforts in their support of local creative businesses and contributions to neighbourhood safety. Another similar example is found in the City of Port Phillip, Australia which recognizes cultural vitality in their municipal Corporate Plan. One of the City's initiatives to assist in this is the "Small Poppy Neighbourhood Grant." The grant helps local people develop projects they feel strongly about, including projects that improve the appearance or use of shared space, build social connections, share resources and ideas, or support neighbourhoods to adapt to climate change. It provides a 'matching grant' to support their efforts. The grants are intended for small grassroots groups of neighbours rather than established groups, who are eligible for other types of funding. Project ideas include a neighbourhood tool library, "new neighbor" welcome program, recording of oral histories of

older residents of the block, and a bike-in movie event. Funding typically ranges from $200 - $10 000. http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/smallpoppyneighbourhoodgrants

The Toronto Community Foundation's *Arts On Track* initiative is also an example of building creativity into core public infrastructure and enhancing the public realm. The project will revitalize transit stations to promote both culture and public transit in Toronto, and arose as part of the City's "Clean and Beautiful City" initiative. The platforms of the three subway stations will link thematically to the major cultural institutions in the area, such as the Royal Ontario Museum, Gardiner Museum, Textile Museum of Canada, Art Gallery of Ontario, Ontario College of Art and Design and the Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts. http://www.tcf.ca/Default.aspx?tabid=306

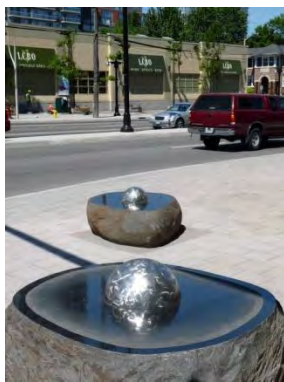## Public art and the built environment

Figure 2: Seed Pods by K. Ciesluk

Public art, whether in the form of outdoor sculpture or temporary performance, helps us understand our relationship with our built and natural environments and heritage that are at the core of sustainability. Artists such as Ottawa's Karl Ciesluk, Britain's Andy Goldsworthy, Germany's Herbert Dreiseitl, and Seattle's Buster Simpson have developed public works that helps to redefine the notion of infrastructure and encourage us to reflect on the nature of materials and natural elements within the built environment.

It is not just specific works of public art that can help us define our relationship to landscape and the natural environment; the entire built environment that we inhabit influences our relationship to land and community. The built environment reflects our values and attitudes, making its design and ultimate form (from architecture to land use patterns) a cultural act. Idealistic and aesthetic considerations such as meaning and beauty often clash with practical considerations of longevity or performance. Poor building and infrastructure design can

Culture in the Built Environment

The physical integration of culture might include parks and plazas oriented to invite nature into everyday life, reflecting ecological values and strengthening a cultural connection to place, environment, and natural history.

Streets that include elements for recreation and play such as climbing, giant chess, gardens, and pavement art could create extraordinary places and invite people to break from their "normal" lives.

Zoning regulations that balance the needs of extended families with the desire to integrate with the "single-family neighbourhood" character could help to enable traditional social structures and activities.

Notions of local and national heritage may expand to emphasize intangible elements like stories linked to physical sites; this is already underway through evolving communications technology.

Places can influence social behaviour through the design of the space. Some best practices are emerging. See Space Syntax for more information: http://spacesyntax.com

create places that are devoid of local expression and have little relationship with elements of the indigenous landscape.

Through their influence over land use patterns, building design, public space and infrastructure, the cities of Ottawa and Gatineau in partnership with the NCC have a powerful role to play by encouraging efforts to infuse meaning and beauty into elements of the built environment. Collaboration between planning professionals and cultural professionals have proven to be fruitful in this regard.

Place and belonging

Historically newcomers have tended to gravitate towards closely knit communities with people from their former home countries. In many communities, this has led to the development of distinct neighbourhoods such as Ottawa's Chinatown or Little Italy. If encouraged, these ethnic enclaves can become thriving commercial and cultural centres. However, the application of universal infrastructure standards, sign bylaws and building codes, and the homogenizing influence of corporate branding can limit these unique identities. The cities and NCC can play a role in facilitating diverse neighbourhoods by enabling communities to produce locally inspired infrastructure, signage, and building character guidelines, as well as by providing support for unique and local cultural programming in these areas.

Cultural distinctiveness is not limited to different ethnic groups. Identifying with a neighbourhood or a specific geographical area is part of the culture of a place. Many people associate with a neighbourhood, block, street or building within their community. Each of these spaces can develop its own unique sense of place and identity that can boost residents' sense of belonging—leading to shared community identity and values. In Vancouver, for instance, responding to new interest in local food production and neighbourhood greening, many neighbourhoods have started to remove grass sod from the public boulevard in front of their houses and to replace it with food gardens and ornamental plants. In most cases, these have greatly added to the quality and identity of these neighbourhoods with cities largely ignoring what are, in fact, bylaw infractions. More recently, here in Ottawa this gardening movement has received some endorsement as the City looked for volunteers to plant neighbourhood traffic circles.

Figure 3: Greenery and flowers decorate the boulevards and traffic circles in many Vancouver neighbourhoods. Source: (L) Flickr/Alastair (R) Flickr/Steve Tannock

When places have very distinct identities they are easy for people to envision; images of unique features or well-known places and the specific character that they represent can be easily called to mind. Boston, as an example, has many neighbourhoods with very distinct identities. This "imageability" of Boston, described by Kevin Lynch in *Image of the City,* can be attributed to its unique combinations of street patterns, architectural styles, gathering places, edges (such as the Charles River), and landmarks.

Another example of best practice which supports the idea of 'place and belonging' is Jane's Walk. Jane's Walk is a series of free neighbourhood walks inspired by the work of urbanist and activist Jane Jacobs. Volunteer tour guides take groups of people to the area where they live, work or play in, and allow people to share personal experiences of place. Jane Jacobs believed strongly that local residents understood best how their neighbourhood works, and what is needed to strengthen and improve them; these walks build on this belief by using local residents to choose the route and what stories, buildings and history they will share. Though originating in Toronto, the idea of Jane's Walk has spread to cities across North America. The walks connect participants to their surroundings and help build bridges between neighbours and communities, all while discovering their city on foot. (http://www.janeswalk.net)

Some places are distinct because they are frequented by a particular subcultural group or community of interest. This might be a group of skateboarders or sports fanatics or people interested in food and cooking. Supporting these groups to help characterize unique places (community gardens, skateboard parks) with their identity can be of significant benefit. This notion of distinctive places can be applied on a larger scale as well. The NCC has championed the preservation of "cultural landscapes" in the Capital Region, as has the City of Ottawa within the renewal of its Arts and Heritage Plan. UNESCO defines "cultural landscapes" as "distinct geographical areas or properties uniquely represent[ing] the combined work of nature and of man.

[2]"Often the way we design and build communities and situate them in the landscape is at odds with this approach to creating and preserving distinctive cultural landscapes. Aboriginal cultural landscapes are of particular importance in the preservation and development of distinctive places.

Broadening participation in decision making

Canada's Capital Region is faced with some fundamental cross-cultural challenges to engage the residents of the region including the First Peoples, Inuit and Metis communities, especially the Algonquin First Nation upon whose traditional lands the area rests, and the multiple ethnicities and subcultures that have arrived with successive waves of immigration and have settled within the larger community. There is the added challenge of balancing local, provincial, and national identities. Fortunately, existing plans support a collaborative and intercultural approach to diversity, which will help each of the different cultures to understand the others and to co-exist through mutually beneficial relationships. Despite these plans, it is still a challenge to ensure that our formal and informal governance structures (municipal councils, boards of directors, and committees) are truly representative of the increasing diversity of our community

One approach to broadening participation is to build the capacity of different groups to engage in the decision-making process. Efforts underway in Toronto and other multi-ethnic cities build the capacity of different immigrant groups to participate in civic governance. Such initiatives would deliberately draw a different range of values into decision-making processes. Visioning and goal-setting exercises would be structured to identify and encourage different values and the ways in which they can be expressed.

Another approach involves using participatory arts in community development. As an example, what started as a university research project to produce a 'triple bottom line' audit of five small towns in central Victoria, Australia became an arts-led community engagement program. A visual artist recruited townspeople to produce, and later exhibit, a range of artworks in a variety of mediums that explored the research themes. A composer, writer and director collaborated with residents to produce an original musical theatre production that drew on ideas shared during focus groups. The show, *Right Where We Are*, was performed and staged by local people at the final town hall events. A filmmaker captured the entire process and final products on camera, and produced a documentary. The project built connections between arts, academic institutions, and municipal government, and was effective at demonstrating the value of Culture in community development. (http://www.culturaldevelopment.net.au/projects_past.htm#smalltowns).

> **DiverseCity: The Greater Toronto Leadership Project**
>
> DiverseCity works to diversify Greater Toronto's leadership landscape. While 49.5% of the Greater Toronto Region's general population are visible minorities, the urban region's elected offices are comprised of only 10% visible minorities, and of senior leaders (across all sectors) only 4% are visible minorities. DiverseCity's eight different initiatives are attempting to change this.
>
> One of these initiatives, School4Civics (School for Civics), was launched as a non-partisan training program designed to build the capacity of emerging diverse civic and political leaders committed to making progressive social change. The program's expert faculty include political strategists, campaign managers, and former candidates with front-line experience from a multi-party perspective.
>
> Another initiative, DiverseCity Fellows, involves a one-year training program for 25 rising leaders that aims to broaden their civic networks, deepen their awareness of issues facing the region, and strengthen their capacity to lead change.
>
> For more info: www.diversecitytoronto.ca

The impact of more explicit attention to culture when making decisions will be decision-making processes that adopt more diverse methods and will involve a broader diversity of voices. Decision-making processes are one way through which citizens learn more about each

other and one another's cultures. Supporting the development of unique places and neighbourhood districts that are culturally distinct but also welcoming of others should be among the top priorities for local governments and community partners.

Happiness and well-being

Research by John Helliwell at the University of BC has shown that a person's happiness (well-being) comes not from wealth or prestige— although a severe lack of money can certainly hinder well-being—but from the density of social relationships. In other words, the more connected we are to other people, the happier we are with our lives. This finding seems to counter conventional public policy that focuses on the generation of wealth, which allows us to become more independent but sometimes isolated.

Cities are starting to be seen as not just places that help satisfy society's basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter, but that also support whole-being health—physical, social, emotional and spiritual well-being. Our urban environment shapes not only the physical elements of our lives that impact our health in terms of noise, pollution, exercise, workplaces, housing, healthcare and mobility, but also the social and spiritual elements of our lives. The environments we live in affect many things from our sense of "home" to our level of stress; they can offer spiritual refuge or contribute to crisis, and influence our interactions with other people and living things.

> **Healing Cities**
>
> What would it mean for a city to be "healed"? How might the built form and natural spaces of the city actually care for people's physical, spiritual, mental, social and emotional needs?
>
> A Healing City would involve:
>
> - Whole Communities (land use, density, and site layout)
> - Conscious Mobility (environmentally-friendly and community-oriented transportation system)
> - Restorative Architecture (green buildings)
> - Thriving Landscapes (multi-tasked open space)
> - Integrated Infrastructure (water, energy, and waste systems)
> - Nourishing Food Systems (food production, distribution, consumption, etc)
> - Supportive Society (social services, participation, governance,)
> - Healthy Prosperity (economic development)
>
> For more info: www. healingcities.org

Places such as Stonehenge in England, Ayers Rock in Australia, the Pyramids of Giza in Egypt, Chichen Itza in Mexico, Angkor Wat in Cambodia, the Parthenon in Greece, Dharamsala in India, and Mecca in Saudi Arabia are physical testaments to the cultural and personal importance of spirit, of connection to something greater than an individual, and of the recognition that there is more to ourselves than we can physically touch or see. While these are monumental examples, it is possible to achieve the same intentions at a smaller scale, allowing us to experience happiness, connection and beauty in our own cities.

3.2. Conclusion

The above discussion has offered some ideas for the role of culture generally and more specifically the range of cultural practices that we call "arts and heritage" that can help us make the transition to more sustainable and resilient communities. We can think of culture as the social or shared production of meaning in our society. The Choosing our Future Partners have a potentially powerful role to play in facilitating this shared production of meaning through their role in shaping the built environment and public realm, facilitating public participation, and supporting cultural and artistic programming.

Perhaps most challenging for any discussion on culture and sustainability is the dominance of consumerism in our society. This part of our culture is at odds with a world of finite resources. Local governments in the region and the NCC have very little connection with the powerful mediums of television, print and internet marketing that reinforce consumer culture. However, we should remember that an equally powerful medium is the daily interaction between people within the places where they live, work, play and learn. It is here, in the realm of public spaces, buildings, and landscapes that we can build a stronger set of values that can guide us on a path towards sustainability and resilience.

Endnotes

[1] Canada. External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities From restless communities to resilient places: building a stronger future for all Canadians: final report of the External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities.
[2] UNESCO. Cultural Landscapes. http://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape#1