



Charting the currents of arts and culture
from Becher Bay to Sooke to Port Renfrew

Cultural Mapping Project

August, 2010



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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Arts, culture, and heritage are generally understood to be significant elements of the social and economic life of the Sooke Region. Ninety-three percent of respondents to the ArtsWave general survey indicated that arts and culture contribute to the livability and quality of life of the area; 92% agree arts contribute to a sense of neighbourhood or community, fostering community identity; and 86% agree that arts contribute to economic opportunities, employment and attract tourists. Eighty-six percent also indicated that arts provide opportunities for personal growth and education; while 77% feel it is “very important” or “essential” to their personal health or sense of identity.

The Sooke Region

The Sooke Region includes the ten-year-old District of Sooke, five unincorporated communities from the Juan de Fuca Electoral area (East Sooke, Otter Point, Shirley, Jordan River and Port Renfrew), and three First Nations Reserves (Scia’new, T’Sou-ke, and Pacheedaht). The choices for the Sooke Region about its future are shaped by geographic, social, and economic forces, with some components within its control and some not. There is a vibrant community of artists and well-established programs and festivals of visual arts and music, as well as a variety of literary and dramatic activities.

The Project: ArtsWave

Between January and June 2010, the community was invited to discuss the nature and importance of arts, culture, and heritage in the Sooke Region, with a view to understanding and documenting what exists; what supports or challenges local endeavors; what gaps are perceived by community members; and what community members think might be done to address those gaps. The project, entitled ArtsWave, stimulated discussions among individuals and groups, identified existing activities, and laid the foundations for new collaborations. Funding for ArtsWave was provided through the generosity of 2010 Legacies Now, the District of Sooke, The Sooke Community Arts Council and Sooke Fine Arts Society.

The project involved surveys (general, artist, and organization), community and youth interviews, and public meetings. There is unusually high support for the arts in the Region, and the views of the participants were fairly consistent about the strengths and challenges of arts, culture, and heritage.

Strengths and Challenges

The identified strengths of the Region include the natural beauty of the area, which attracts and inspires the residents. The well-established organizations attract and support artists; and a notably active volunteer corps sustains an unusual variety and quality of arts activities. The strong artistic presence of the local First Nations is felt by many to be an important characteristic of the local culture.

The diversity and high calibre of the artists in the Region often surprise visitors and those new to the area, while at least one local institution, the Sooke Philharmonic Orchestra, is known to attract musicians and others to move to the Region. The relatively small size of the population makes it possible for participants to be intimately involved in the local arts scene, though that same small size can hamper more ambitious undertakings.

The challenges to the arts of the Region involve both capacity building among arts and heritage organizations and a need to secure better facilities. Activities reflect current economic uncertainty, with several organizations reporting plans to reduce programs as a result of recent cuts to funding of the arts. The variety and scope of local projects make it difficult both to schedule them and also to publicize them effectively. Groups report that they'd like to improve communication and coordination among themselves and with their audiences, perhaps by securing funds to hire professional staff. Numerous respondents wish for more activities that include youth (ages 15-18). The venues in use have physical limitations, with poor acoustics for music being a major issue. Access to both public and private venues is sometimes restricted and some organizations struggle with the cost, especially for rehearsal time.

Priorities

Survey responses, interviews and discussion in the public meetings all indicate a perception that the Region's political leaders underestimate the value and importance of arts to community life and to local economic health. Participants in the ArtsWave project expressed a clear desire for local governments to take a stronger role in supporting local arts and heritage organizations and artists. Specific priorities supported by many individuals and organizations include both capacity building and facility improvements, as follows:

- Promoting the creation of public spaces for cultural use and the integration of public art in the planning and design of buildings, open spaces and the street environment;
- Assisting with coordination, organization and marketing of local arts organizations, including developing a paid staff position to coordinate functions like festival scheduling, cooperative marketing, notice of events, etc.
- Developing a vibrant cultural district in downtown Sooke, including multi-activity spaces appropriately designed for public galleries and exhibitions; musical performance and rehearsal; workshops and other instructional activities; art sales; and attractive gathering places for residents; and
- Recognizing and promoting cultural excellence and diversity in the Region.

While there are clearly challenges facing the health and sustainability of local arts and heritage organizations in the Sooke Region, the overall picture that emerges from the findings of the ArtsWave Project is that of an energetic, ambitious arts community that is eager to identify opportunities, foster collaboration, and put itself on a sustainable footing for the benefit of all community members.

1.0 ARTSWAVE

1.1 The Region

The Sooke Region lies on the southern tip of Vancouver Island and extends along the coast between Becher Bay and Port Renfrew. It includes the District of Sooke and the unincorporated communities in the Juan de Fuca Electoral Area of East Sooke, Otter Point, Shirley, Jordan River and Port Renfrew; as well as the Reserves of the Scia'new, T'Sou-ke, and Pacheedaht First Nations.



The temperate climate, natural beauty, rural ambience, and proximity to Victoria have attracted a population of approximately 13,500. Residents are known for their community engagement, and Sooke describes itself as “A Volunteer Capital of Canada”. Community groups have undertaken significant projects in sustainable energy, community health, food security, and the arts. From an economy that was recently based on resource extraction, particularly logging and fishing, the community is changing rapidly in the face of development pressures, tourism, and a volatile global economy.

The arts have always been part of the community, as documented by Community Historian Elida Peers. In “Art History Notes” (Appendix 1) she describes some of the people who have contributed to the art and cultural traditions of the area, supporting and fueling the regional passion for heritage. Community members are engaged as donors and volunteers, leaders and audience members.

1.2 The Project

With the impacts of the rapid population growth of the Region becoming evident, social planning by and for the Region is a matter of wide interest. The Community Health Initiative (CHI) has provided a forum for discussing the elements of a healthy community and how it may be nurtured and sustained. Among the indicators of community health, the arts figure prominently.

Arts and culture are understood to be significant components of a viable community, and so attention to the possibilities of incorporating arts and culture into community and regional planning has grown. The description of factors that contribute to a healthy arts and cultural community offered by Duxbury and Campbell¹ seem to apply to the Sooke Region:

- access to urban markets
- agglomeration economies enabled by a local organizational catalyst such as a university
- an appealing landscape
- existence of in situ aboriginal artistic concentrations
- artists flee high rents or urban centres and seek a rural/small community
- "quality of life"
- artists will often take leadership roles in community initiatives

ArtsWave was developed to serve as the starting point for discussing the extent to which these aspects of a healthy arts community might apply to the Sooke Region. By comparing the strengths and gaps in the arts and cultural services, the project intended to collect and consolidate data, inform planning and policy, support economic development and tourism, and expand access and participation. Funding for ArtsWave was provided through the generosity of 2010 Legacies Now, the District of Sooke, The Sooke Community Arts Council, and Sooke Fine Arts Society.

1.3 The Process

The ArtsWave project was publicized in press releases in *The Sooke News Mirror* and *The Rural Observer*. (Appendix 2) At the same time, work began on drafting three surveys. Drafts of these questionnaires were tested with a small group of community volunteers to ensure the clarity of the questions and to determine how much time was required to complete each one.

The first questionnaire, the general survey, was for individuals, and available throughout the community on paper in 8 pick-up locations and electronically through the District of Sooke web site. (Appendix 3) This questionnaire included a section designed

¹ Duxbury, Nancy, and Campbell, Heather, "Developing and Revitalizing Rural Communities through Arts and Culture". September 2009: Municipal World Magazine

specifically for community members who described themselves as artists. One hundred fifty-three individuals returned questionnaires between 16 April and 22 May 2010. This general survey, designed to be completed in 20 minutes, represented a significant commitment on the part of the participants. In fact, analysis of the electronic surveys shows that 61 of the 153 respondents took more than the estimated time, with some taking an hour or more. The length of the survey was the subject of some comment, but nearly all who mentioned it were complimentary and appreciative of the opportunity to share their views.

“Mapping activity that has been undertaken in 2010 will hopefully provide a positive focus for our long-term planning. There is incredible and yet untold fine arts talent, from Becher Bay to Port Renfrew, and the cultural mapping process will refine and highlight what we have, and where and how we can go forward as a greater community.”

Dave Bennett

“Reading & compiling, analyzing and weighing all the comments and answers in this questionnaire will be challenging. More challenging will be the positive actions taken as a result.”

Bill Skuce

Individual and small group Interviews were also conducted during the community interview section of the Artswave project. Arts groups and community champions were invited to share their thoughts on a series of questions in small gatherings. Note takers recorded information. Fifty-nine residents of the Region participated in these informal interview sessions about the assets and gaps of the Region’s arts, culture, and heritage community. The interviews were based on scripted questions and expected to take an hour. (Appendix 4) Again, several discussions continued longer than the estimated time, with some meetings lasting as much as three hours. The information gleaned in these interviews is an integral part of this report, but equally important was the opportunity to gather together and discuss the community’s access and commitment to arts and culture.

An additional set of meetings for youth was held at the Edward Milne Community School (EMCS) after it was noted that only 6% of the surveys returned came from youth. The school administration and faculty graciously permitted discussions in two art classes and one theatre class, involving forty-three high school students. (Appendix 5)

All of the arts and culture organizations and cultural businesses in the Region were invited to complete the organization survey. This questionnaire was distributed on paper and electronically. The 13 surveys that were returned reflected the views of regional non-profits, businesses, and informal organizations. (Appendix 6)

Following the interviews and the initial analysis of the data, two public meetings were held to promote discussion among groups and community members. One meeting was held during the day, so District and Electoral Area staff and senior citizens could attend, the other in the evening.

1.4 Summary of Participation

The methods used to engage and reflect the views of the community members were:

General Survey: Questionnaires, paper or electronic, for individual members of the community. 153 participants

Artist Survey: An extension of the general survey for those self-identifying as artists. 72 participants

Community Interviews: Individual and small group interviews. 59 participants

Youth Interviews: Three group interviews at Edward Milne Community School. 43 high school students

Organization Survey: Paper or electronic survey, for non-profit and commercial organizations. 13 participants

Public Meetings: Two meetings, presenting results and inviting additional discussion. 30 participants



Spirit Pole Carving T'Sou-ke First Nation



Sooke Region Museum

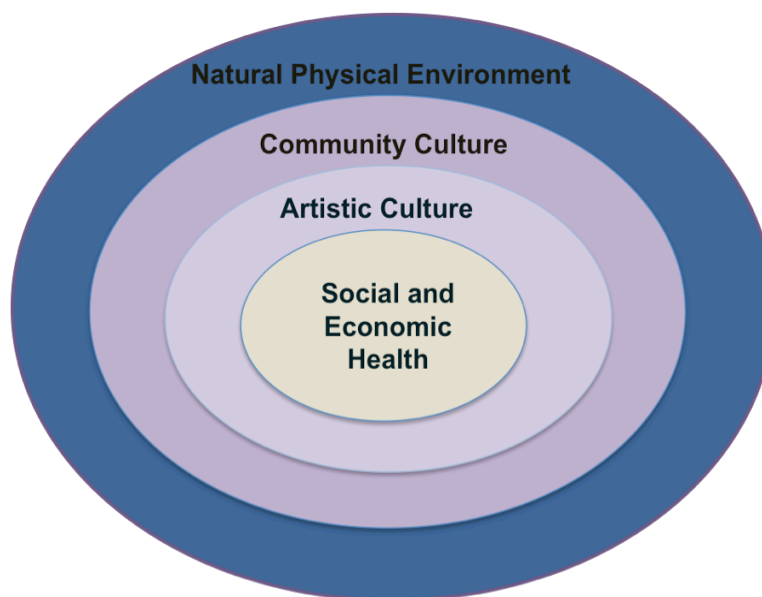


Sooke Dance School

2.0 COMMUNITY CULTURE

2.1 The Community Culture of the Sooke Region

The culture of a community includes many aspects such as language, foods, history, common activities, attitudes, beliefs and values. For the purpose of this project, the artistic culture of a community is seen as a part of the larger community culture, as the ways the community culture is reflected and creatively expressed through writing, music, theatre, painting, pottery, dance and more.



A community's artistic culture develops from the larger community culture of which it is a part. The artistic culture also reflects and shapes the community culture. The purpose of the first two questions on the general ArtsWave survey was to identify what the residents of the Sooke Region value in their communities, what the most important characteristics of the community culture are to its residents. A summary of all the responses to the general and artist surveys can be found in Appendix 7.

2.2 What's Personally Important to Residents

For those who responded to the survey, the natural world is overwhelmingly the most important feature of the Region, with 75% describing the physical environment of the west coast as one of the most important reasons they choose to live in the area. Various features of the natural environment were specifically mentioned, with the scenic beauty of the Region at the top of the list (35%). The ocean, coastline, harbour views, and the opportunities presented by the marine environment (22%); the large trees, forests and trails for exploring them (22%); and the generally rural nature of the area (22%) were the next most frequently identified aspects of the natural world. Beaches were mentioned by

11%; access to wilderness areas and the peace and quiet of the Region were each mentioned by 6%; while 5% identified fishing or crabbing as important to them.

“Natural scenic beauty second to none, which draws and inspires artists of all disciplines to this region. Great community spirit and support for this vibrant Arts Scene, with lively, interesting and involved people who volunteer their time and energy to promote the Arts. For the most part, the new-comers, old-timers and T’Sou-ke peoples value this land, share a desire for peace and harmony and have a great sense of pride in, and ownership of, the affairs of this region.”

After the natural world, the nature of the Region’s communities (37%) and the people (30%) of the Region are highly valued, with 30% commenting on the value of small town attitudes and a generally slower pace of life. Friendly, kind, caring people were mentioned by 17%. Community spirit or pride was mentioned by 8% of respondents; diversity and a generally child-friendly, safe environment were also identified.

The numbers of artists in the Region, and the calibre and diversity of cultural opportunities were identified by 28% of the respondents as among the most important characteristics of the Region. Music, including the Sooke Philharmonic Orchestra and the Region’s choirs, were mentioned by 9%, while 8% specifically listed the Sooke Fine Arts Show. The presence of First Nations art was also mentioned.

Affordable housing, and general affordability in the Region were listed by 15% of the respondents; while community facilities and proximity to a larger urban centre, the city of Victoria, were each mentioned by 9% of respondents.

2.3 How Residents Describe the Region to Others

When describing the Sooke Region to someone not familiar with the area, residents’ descriptions shifted somewhat from what they identified as personally important. The area’s natural environment and scenic beauty remained at the top of the list, with 56% including it. Two specific features of the natural environment were mentioned, with 35% including the presence of the ocean / shoreline in their description and 18% including beaches, the latter often by name. In personal importance these had been specifically mentioned by 22% and 11% respectively. One activity category was mentioned more frequently as well. Fishing and boating were listed by 16%, as opposed to only 5% including it as personally important. Mentions of forests and trails, with opportunities for hiking and biking, fell slightly from 22% (personally important) to 18%.

The presence of many artists and arts-based activities were included by 27% of the respondents, with the Philharmonic Orchestra and choirs identified by 21% and the Sooke Fine Art Show by 10%. The communities and people of the Region were included by 17%, with 11% describing them as “friendly”. The small town feeling and atmosphere were appreciated by 20%, while mentions of housing prices or general affordability almost vanished.

Many more specific places and features were identified in describing the Region to others, including the Sooke Pot Holes Regional Park, Whiffen Spit, the Galloping Goose Trail, Sooke Harbour House, and the presence of small businesses and services. The

availability of many good local restaurants was included by 10% of respondents. Mentions of the proximity to Victoria remained the same at 9% of respondents.

Perhaps the most significant difference between the responses to the first two questions was the inclusion of some negative comments in the descriptions to people not familiar with the area. For example: *“the forest that Western Forest Products stripped away last year”; “lack of sidewalks”; “inaccessibility of waterfront”; “speeding logging trucks that run through the heart of downtown”; “schools that perform poorly in provincial surveys”.*

There were also a number of statements about the natural beauty, rural and small town qualities being threatened by too much development, as in: *“municipal council dedicated to development”: “lovely area, being spoiled by increasing overdevelopment, poor infrastructure and very poor roads . . . which make the overdevelopment dangerous.”*

2.4 A Broad-brush Picture of the Sooke Region’s Community Culture

The picture of the Sooke Region’s community culture that emerges from the responses to the first two questions on the general survey incorporates:

- A very widely held love for the natural world and the beauty of the west coast shoreline, ocean, rivers and rain forests;
- A close connection to the scenic beauty of the area, as well as to the many resources and activities the physical environment offers;
- An attraction to the still largely rural nature of the area;
- An appreciation for the attitudes, friendliness, and relatively slower pace of a small town, and the availability of locally based businesses and services;
- A recognition of the numbers and diversity of artists who call the area home, the consequent richness of the arts-based activities available, and the strength of local support for arts and heritage;
- Emerging tensions between those who love the area as it is and those who wish to see the population grow and the communities develop further; and
- Fears that the environmental qualities and beauty that have attracted so many to the Region are being eroded or in danger of being destroyed.

The tension between the love of what is and concerns about what the future might bring are expressed succinctly in the following two survey responses:

“The town of Sooke is growing too fast now, so visit it before they sell out to any more hotels and developers. There is still beautiful scenery and great fishing and wonderful art, but Sooke itself seems hell-bent on becoming nothing more than a suburb of Langford.”

“I also describe Sooke as a town at the edge of change and with an air of excitement about that change.”

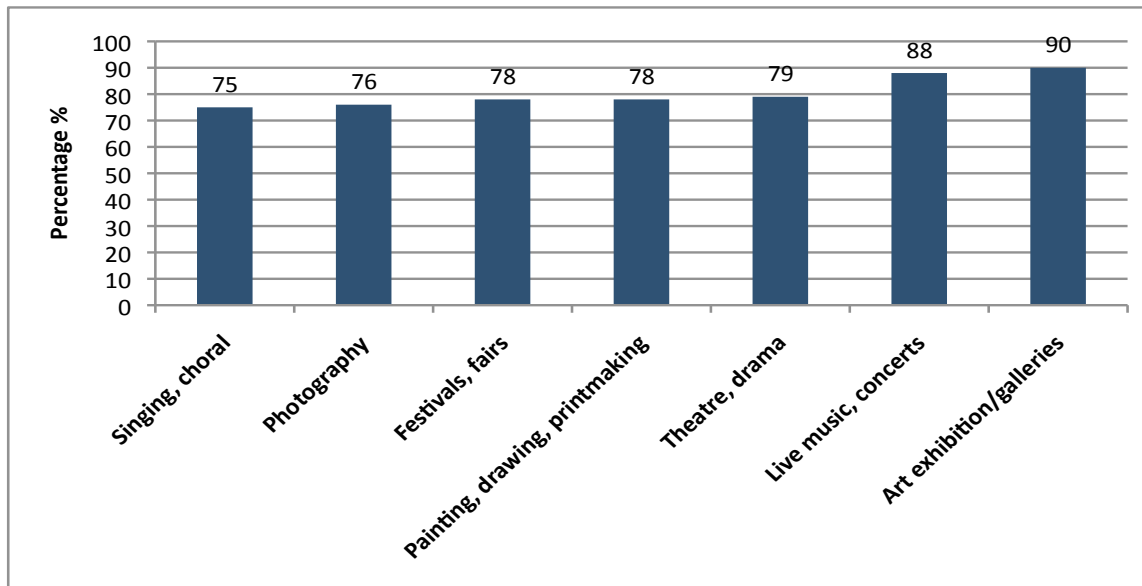
3.0 ARTISTIC CULTURE

3.1 The Sooke Region's Artistic Culture

The individual responses to the ArtsWave general survey reveal a passionate commitment to a broad range of artistic and cultural interests, and there is no question that those who responded to the survey see the arts as a vital and vibrant part of the Sooke Region. A summary of responses to the individuals' and artists' surveys appears in Appendix 7.

All of the 19 activities listed on the questionnaire were judged by at least 48% to be part of regional artistic culture. A closer look shows that more than 75% of those surveyed consider vocal and instrumental music, theatre, painting or drawing, and photography to be part of the Sooke Region's artistic culture.

Highest Ranked Artistic Categories



In describing the features of the regional community culture, residents emphasized again the importance of the surrounding ocean and forest. Silence, seaweed, farming, beekeeping, gardening, permaculture, walking, and hiking were specifically listed as part of the Region's arts and culture. The culinary arts are a strong part of the community context, and also received special mention from several respondents as part of regional arts.

"Our ability to be in nature and live in relationship with a natural environment. In cities and suburban developments this link back to the land has often been severed. In fact I think that this relationship to our natural environment is the underpinning of every other artistic endeavor."

This natural richness, situated within about an hour of the provincial capital and three institutions of higher learning (the University of Victoria, Royal Roads University, and Camosun College), offers intellectual resources balanced with a rural lifestyle. This geography promotes the interplay of teachers, artists, performers, and audiences, with many respondents enjoying all four roles.

At the heart of the Region's artistic and cultural endeavors is a skilled and committed cohort of volunteers. At the time of this writing, plans are underway to establish a volunteer bureau, in response to community requests to promote and support community involvement and to serve organizations seeking volunteers with specific skills.

"We moved here because of the affordability of housing compared to the Victoria Metropolitan area and the peaceful atmosphere, scenery and accessibility to the water. We've decided to stay here because of the people that we've met."

3.2 A Broad Brush Picture of the Sooke Region's Artistic Culture

The picture of the Sooke Region's artistic culture that emerges from the general and artists' survey responses and interviews with actively engaged residents is a vibrant, rich and diverse tapestry that includes:

- Large number of resident artists;
- Artistic products and performances of a very high quality;
- Art works that are inspired by and reflect the natural beauty of the Region and its predominantly rural character;
- Significant influence of the First Nations presence and traditional art forms;
- A strong sense of local history and appreciation for the local museum, heritage preservation, and heritage-focused activities;
- A broad scope of arts-based activities, with a strong preference for visual arts and live music, along with craft shows, theatre, and festivals;
- Widespread respect for two cultural institutions, the Sooke Philharmonic Orchestra and the associated choir and smaller performance groups, and the Sooke Fine Arts Show;
- Strong volunteer and community commitment to the arts;
- An appreciation of the culinary arts and garden design;
- A generally high level of satisfaction with the cultural life of the Region; and
- A widely held understanding that arts and culture contribute to individual and community health.

The picture also includes some significant challenges including:

- Insufficient coordination among groups;
- Lack of a mechanism for sharing information about arts activities;
- Finding ways to cope with recent provincial funding cuts;
- Availability and affordability of suitable venues for exhibitions, rehearsals, performance, and instruction; and
- Perceived lack of sufficient artistic opportunities for youth.

Sooke Region Cultural Scene



4.0 GENERAL SURVEY

4.1 The Participants

One hundred fifty-three individuals responded to the general survey. No question was answered by every respondent because the organizers, knowing that some information (such as financial data) was sensitive, invited respondents to complete only those questions they wished. In the general survey, most questions were answered by about 85%, or 130, of those participating, with questions about income, expenditure, and donations receiving predictably fewer responses.

The sample clearly consisted primarily of residents who are already engaged with arts and heritage activities: 98% participate in an artistic or cultural activity at least once or twice a year, 29% participate 6-10 times per year, and 40% engage more than 10 times a year. Only 2% said they never participate. Fully 82% said they are moderately or highly satisfied with regional cultural offerings, which seems to be an unusually high level of contentment.

Individual survey participation didn't reflect the Region's population distribution, with no input on the general survey from Scia'new Nation Reserve, Jordan River, Port Renfrew, or Pacheedaht Nation Reserve. Not surprisingly, 60% of the respondents came from Sooke, with 16% from Otter Point, 12% from Shirley, 11% from East Sooke, and 1% from T'Sou-ke Nation Reserve.

The representation based on length of time in the community was remarkably well distributed. Three per cent of survey participants had lived here less than a year, and the others were almost evenly divided among those who had lived here from 1-5, 6-10, 11-20, or more than 20 years. The women who responded to the survey outnumbered the men by 72% to 28%.

The community age range was not so well reflected, with more than half of the respondents 46 or older. People under 30 made up only 6% of the cultural mapping sample but 35% of the 2006 Sooke municipal population. To address that imbalance, special interviews were held at Edward Milne Community School, with a discussion of the findings summarized in Section 7, Youth.

Eighty-two percent of the respondents view arts and culture as very important or essential to their enjoyment and pleasure. Among those responding to the question about how important arts participation is to their personal health, wellness, or sense of identity, 77% feel it is "very important" or "essential", with 40% saying it is "essential".

"Arts in Sooke are vital for the health of the community. One of the reasons we chose to live in Sooke was the variety of art available to us." Sally Manning

4.2 Local Events

The list of regional cultural activities is long, and the levels of participation suggest that most respondents enjoy many of them. The percentages of respondents attending events is high—the Sooke Fine Arts Show, the All Sooke Arts and Crafts Show, the Sooke Fall Fair, Art in the Park, and theatre performances at Edward Milne Community School were each attended by more than 58% of the respondents. (Appendix 7, Question 5) The number of respondents who had participated in First Nations activities ranged from 3-16%, and should be considered in light of the 64% who consider such activities an integral part of the regional culture. Among the individual responses, 45% had participated in heritage events in the previous year and 72% consider it part of the Region's artistic culture.

Asked to name their three favorite arts events, community members overwhelmingly named Sooke Fine Arts as their favorite event, and others described it as one of their top three. The Sooke Philharmonic Orchestra was the second favorite event, with other regional music events making a very strong showing. There was no obvious 3rd place: exhibitions, music, and other performance were all cited. A notably high percentage of those who attend arts and cultural events are pleased with them—82% are moderately or highly satisfied with the area's offerings.

Regional support for arts and culture encompasses more than attendance. Fifty four people estimated the number of volunteer hours they had donated to arts or cultural organizations in the past year, with the sum of their hours—more than 7490—suggesting an exceptionally high level of community engagement. Sixty-nine percent of respondents purchased memberships in a cultural organization, and 32% of those willing to disclose their contribution to a regional organization had made a financial contribution, with others donating goods (16%) and/or services (28%).

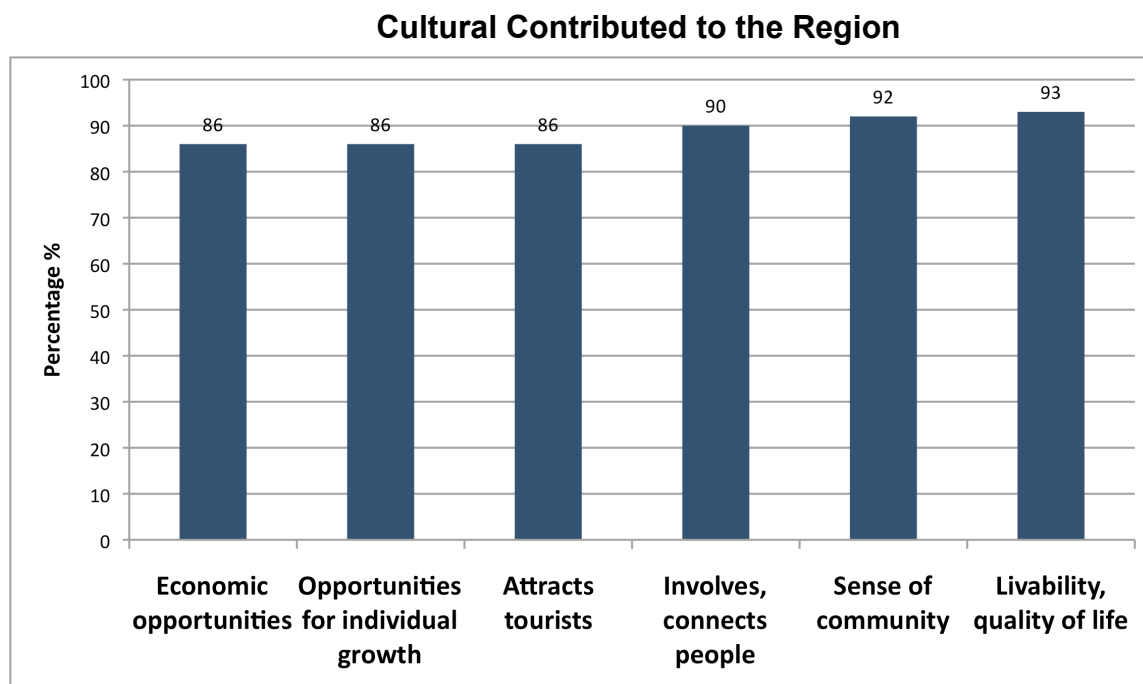
4.3 The Importance of Arts and Culture to the Residents

The high level of participation in arts and culture has many rewards for the community members. Given a list of ways that arts and culture might be personally important, most respondents find personal benefits from participation. More than half of the sample agree that arts provide entertainment as well as diverse opportunities—for social connection, for meeting new people and knowing the community better, for learning new skills, for personal enrichment, for expressing oneself better, and for contributing to the community. Fifty-six percent see participation in the arts as a means of creative expression. Forty-four respondents find arts and culture important as an impetus to get out of the house. Only 3 respondents said arts and culture are unimportant.

“Art and culture is integral to every community. We are so much more than drones tailing, we have creativity and passions that touch hearts and help our community to both celebrate and heal.” Anne Miller

4.4 Contributions to the Region

Asked what arts and culture might contribute to the Region, there was very strong agreement on the primacy of their community and social value. Ninety-three percent agree that arts and culture contribute to the livability and quality of life of a place. Ninety-two percent agree that the arts and culture contribute to the sense of neighborhood or community, fostering community identity and/or cohesiveness. Ninety percent agree that the arts and culture can involve and connect people of all ages, backgrounds, and/or cultures. Opportunities for growth, education, and enrichment were identified by 86% as important contributions, with the same number indicating that arts and culture might provide economic opportunities and employment, as well as attracting tourists.



4.5 Travelling for Arts and Culture

The level of participation in cultural activities outside the Sooke Region confirms that the community commitment to the arts and culture is profound. The question about what arts, culture, and heritage events people attended outside the Region produced lists of activities that take place primarily in Victoria, but also in Vancouver, Seattle, other parts of North America, and Europe. The support for music and arts outside of the Sooke Region reflects the support within. Forty percent of those who described the activities for which they traveled named a range of music performances, and 37% mentioned galleries, museums, and exhibitions. Theatre, dance, and movies were each attended by approximately equal numbers of respondents (14%). Six percent traveled to see gardens; one person to participate in Native arts events; and one person to Question Period at Parliament.

4.6 Strengths, Challenges and Weaknesses

As one might imagine from the data on arts attendance beyond the Sooke Region, the respondents have a range of opinions about what local activities need additional development. The responses reflect the local interest in, and support for, the visual arts and music, with live music/concerts tying public art installations as community priorities (44%). The next area that respondents said would merit additional development was First Nations cultural programs, exhibitions, and performance, mentioned by 39%. Activities and programs for youth were mentioned by 37% of those who responded to the general survey; courses, workshops, and educational opportunities by 36%; and visual arts exhibitions and galleries, by 33%. Fairs and festivals had an interest level similar to that of programs for visitors (30%).

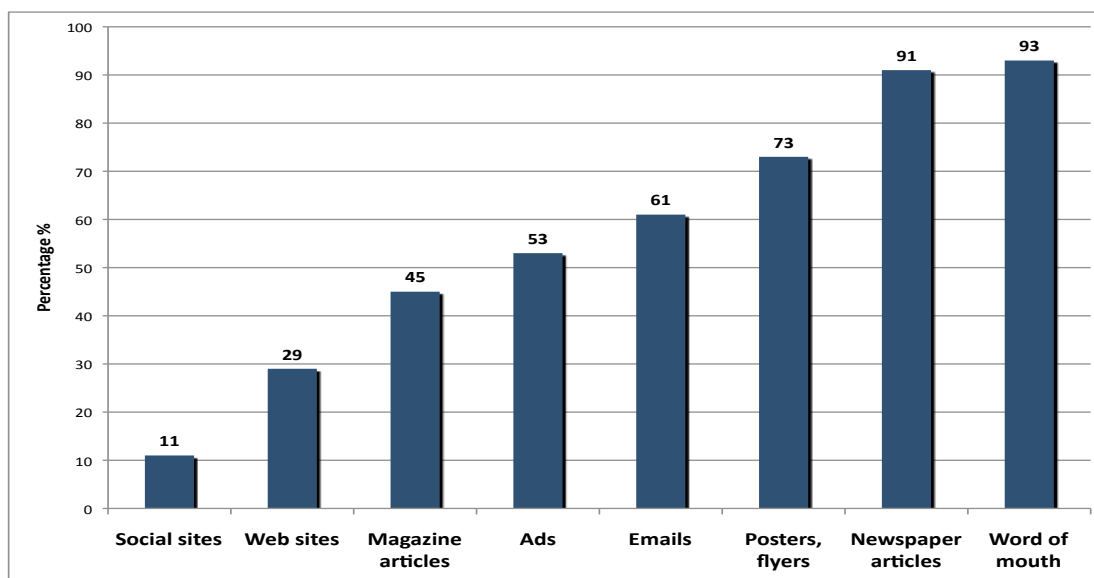
When the question about additional development was turned into one asking people to identify weaknesses and challenges surrounding regional arts, different concerns emerged. The number of people who answered each part of this question varied from 98 to 118, so it's necessary to look at numbers of people responding instead of comparing percentages among questions. One may also consider that the queries with the most answers should be viewed as the ones about which those surveyed have the strongest opinions.

Not surprisingly, half of those completing this question cited lack of funding as a very important challenge. This response rate, 68 people, was substantially higher than the response rate for the other weakness identified as a very important challenge, the lack of display facilities (52). The responses to the question are tempered, with the next cluster of answers grouped in the category of "somewhat of a challenge": lack of leadership, lack of variety or diversity, and not enough volunteers as the most frequent response (44-46) in the category. Not enough supporting services and not enough attendance followed closely among the gaps that were "somewhat of a challenge". Interestingly, the possible gap that was cited most often (27) as "not a challenge" was also lack of sufficient variety or diversity. Nineteen people found that lack of volunteers was not a challenge.

The answers elicited by the question about barriers to participation were consistent with the preceding answers, with lack of suitable facilities mentioned by 69 people. Visual artists struggle to find exhibition space. Musicians spoke nearly unanimously about the lack of a large hall with good acoustics. Participants in each public meeting chose to spend time discussing venues, and the reader is referred to section 9.1, where the topic is explored in detail.

Seventy respondents considered lack of information a serious barrier to participation in the arts. The most important source of information is word of mouth. Other sources of arts information are the newspapers—*The Sooke News Mirror*, *The Rural Observer*, and *The Times Colonist*, posters, and email. It may be a reflection of the respondents' age, but other electronic media have not yet become a significant source of information. Social networking sites such as Facebook were used by about twice as many as the least utilized mode, television channels other than Shaw Cable 6 and Shaw.

Sources of Information



Coordination and scheduling of events were challenges that arose in every discussion, with the Region having the mixed blessing of too much going on.

“As a former New Yorker, the Sooke Region has offered me the opportunity to be equally stimulated by my environment.” Heather Kaney

More people than expected were willing to share information about their expenditure on arts and culture. Four of the 114 people who answered the question spent no money directly on arts and six had no idea how much they spend in a month. Monthly expenditures on such things as tickets, art work, CD's, movies, books, and the like divided fairly evenly among those who spent \$30 or less (26), \$31-\$50 (30), and \$51-\$101 (27). Ten people spent between \$101 and \$199 monthly; eight between \$200 and \$299, and three spent more than \$300 per month.

Fewer people were able or willing to quantify the money they spent on arts-related travel, accommodation, or meals. Five spent no money and 6 others didn't know. Thirty-two spent \$30 or less; 19 spent between \$31 and \$50; 22 spent between \$51 and \$100; 1 between \$101 and \$199; 5 between \$200 and \$299; and 6 more, over \$300 per month.



Sooke Garden Tour

5.0 ARTIST SURVEY

5.1 The Participants

The last question on the general survey asked, “Do you consider yourself an artist—amateur/hobby or professional?” The 84 people who said yes were invited to answer additional questions about their artistic practices and 72 did so.

To help define the respondents’ artistic involvement, the questionnaire offered five possible descriptions. Distribution among the categories was surprisingly even: aside from the 4.2% who are salaried professional artists, 19% are self-employed professionals, 19% are semi-professionals, 29% are serious amateurs and 28%, casual hobbyists.

As one might predict from the interests described so far, 56% of the artists responding are visual artists and 53% are musicians. Literary arts, less prominent in the general section of the survey, are the next most practiced form, with 29%. Photography is practiced by 28%, and theatre by 25%. Smaller numbers are involved in dance, film, video, storytelling, and interdisciplinary practices, as well as fibre arts, ceramics and glass, jewelry, woodworking, landscaping, and publishing.

Nearly two thirds of the respondents to the artist survey had received arts training of some kind. The least common means of study were apprenticeship (6%) and graduate study (7%). Most regional artists have attended workshops (65%) or are self-taught (51%). Twenty-three percent and 26% received training at university or in high school. Other modes of education included private instruction and some distance learning. Only one third belong to a guild, union, or artists’ association. Seven belong to the Sooke Community Arts Council, five to Sooke Fine Arts Society, four to Sooke Scribblers, three to All Sooke Arts and Crafts, two to the Greater Victoria Arts Council, and one each to the following organizations:

- American Federation of Musicians’ Union
- American Federation of Musicians local 247
- Art Gallery of Greater Victoria
- Bloody Words
- BC Crafts Council
- BC Potters’ Guild
- Canadian Authors’ Association
- Canadian Gourd Society
- Canadian Mosaic Association
- Canadian Society of Children’s Authors, Illustrators and Performers
- Canadian Weavers’ Guild
- Children’s Writers and Illustrators of BC

Crime Writers of Canada
Editors' Association of Canada
Federation of BC Writers
Federation of Canadian Artists
Federation of Canadian Artists, Victoria Chapter
Fired Up
Greater Victoria Potters' Guild
Honor Collective
MediaNet
Romance Writers of America
Royal BC Museum
Society for Evolutionary Art
Sooke Literary Guild
Sooke Weavers' Guild
Southern Vancouver Island Potters' Guild
Stinking Fish Studio Tour
Terrace Writers' Guild
Vancouver Island Sculptors' Guild
A writers' group
Youth Bundle

5.2 The Practice and Income

Survey participants spend a significant amount of time on their art. The largest number, 30%, are able to spend 11-20 hours per week, with more than a quarter spending 6-10 hours per week and 21% spending 0-5 hours. Smaller numbers are able to spend more time: 14% work 21 – 40 hours, and 4% work more than 40 hours per week.

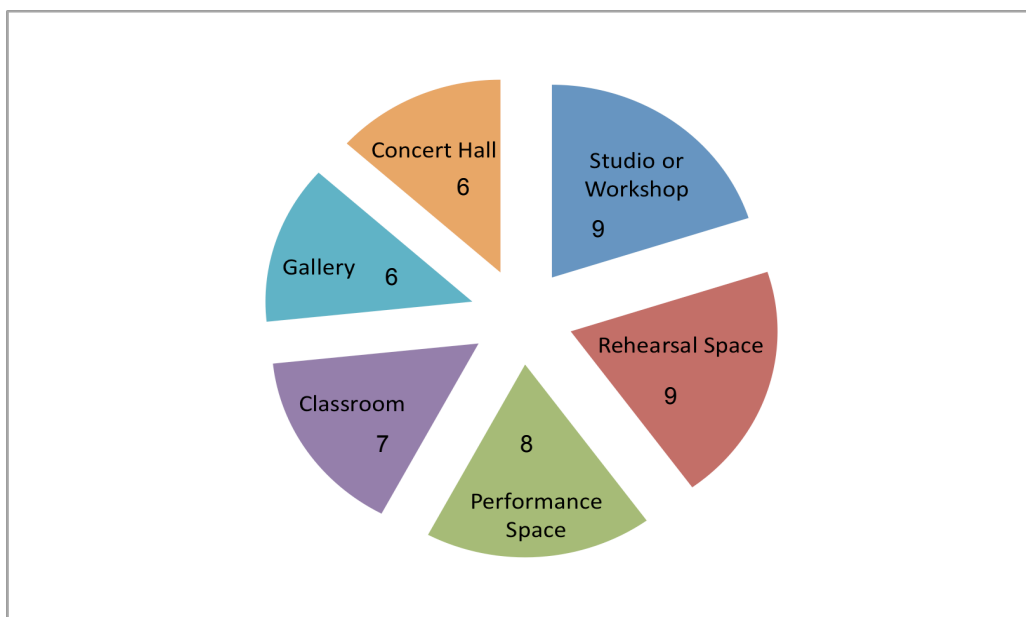
The financial returns vary. More than half of the respondents earn no income from their practice and 46% (33) of the 71 people who answered this question do generate income. The primary source of revenue is product sales, and approximately one third of the artists receive commissions. Twenty-eight percent teach, with five people receiving money for performance and/or royalties.

In terms of actual revenue, the number of respondents earning \$5,001 or more was 14 while 13 earn under \$1,000. Annual costs were a different matter. Only three respondents spent nothing. 86% spent \$5,000 or less; 10% spent more.

5.3 Strengths, Challenges, and Weaknesses

Nearly all—91%—of the respondents to the artist survey work at home or in a home studio. A few work in a commercial facility or rented space; some work in local churches. Asked what kind of studio/rehearsal/work/instructional/performance spaces might be desirable, the answers poured out. The suggestions often included an arts centre in a new or retrofitted building that would be suitable for a range of activities. Some suggested easier or increased access to the Edward Milne Community School Theatre and the Region's community halls; and one artist proposed a school of arts. Models for arts centres that were mentioned in the survey included the Coast Collective (Colwood), a Qualicum Beach gallery and gift store, Eaglearts Academy (Shawnigan Lake), the Metchosin Centre for Creative Arts, and the Island Savings Centre (Duncan).

Specific needs that were identified by more than 2 respondents were:



One respondent summed up the need as:

“Innovative, creatively designed, exquisite space, designed to bring people together in community - a reflection and celebration of our shared and innate beauty - reflecting this in offering artist-led programs and collaborations, artist mentorships, venue for sharing beauty, with learning and celebration at its core, ESPECIALLY FOR YOUTH, space to host artist, and community, co-operatively run, high level of youth involvement.”

The Government's Role

Artists had thoughtful and imaginative responses to the question of how local and regional governments might better support the arts of the area. Citizen access to the local government is valued, as is the support of local volunteers. The artists who responded recognize that the small town atmosphere and community feeling attracts artists, residents, and tourists and urged that the regional characteristics—rural and

downtown—be nurtured. They commented on the increasing population and loss of rural character, views, and water access.

“We need to define how we can evolve in our thinking about community and environment. We are treating life around us very badly.”

Various respondents found the quality of some local architecture unappealing, and suggested that the governing bodies develop a strategy to make the artistic elements of the community more apparent.

“We have too much that is invisible to the casual visitor. Make the town look artistic, from attractive sidewalks right up to sensibly placed but creative signage and ease in getting around for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Make it a happy place to be.”

The theme of underfunding ran through many of the survey responses. Grants, bursaries, and scholarships from both government and local developers was seen as a prudent investment in community health, although there was also some sense that the community should strive to *“Help arts groups become independent of government handouts.”*

A first, fundamental step to improve the success of regional arts was government acknowledgement of the importance of arts and culture to community well being. Respondents requested leadership, consistent policies, paid staff, and coordination. It was suggested that tangible expressions of such support might include increasing youth and school arts programs and the local installation of more public art.

“The local government should realize just how majorly important the arts are to Sooke and it's outlying areas. Tourists come when events like the Sooke Fine Arts Show are produced and the SPO [Sooke Philharmonic Orchestra] performs; these must be supported as well as other artistic endeavors whether they are out of the "mainstream" or not. More "community" is needed rather than the "competitive edge" that I feel from other artists; we need to help each other more and support one another; this is how a town becomes known and how it treats its out-of-towners as well.”

Ideas about construction that were put forward by respondents to the artist survey included building a new arts complex to house galleries with performance, rehearsal, studio, teaching, and even living space for artists in all media. More modest ideas included building a new community hall that includes arts facilities or retrofitting the Edward Milne Community School Theatre.

Among the final comments offered by the artists, the matter of coordination and scheduling arose again as a concern. The number and variety of offerings is such that regular postings of events would help schedulers and audiences. On a related note, one respondent suggested a map to marked sites that are accessible by foot or car. The question of markers was echoed in a request for greater public visibility for the local arts, year round. The buildings that were described in the final comments included a movie theatre, a performance space that was not related to a pub, and an arts centre that incorporates the Region's maritime heritage or its involvement with forestry.

6.0 COMMUNITY INTERVIEWS

6.1 The Participants

All the interviewees identified themselves as active participants in the arts or heritage of the Sooke Region. Their involvement represented a diverse range of views from people who are business owners, visual artists, authors, musicians, choir members, dance instructors, piano instructors, board members, founding members of organizations, volunteers, and those engaged in event production

Interviewees came from the entire Region:

District of Sooke	58%
East Sooke	16%
Otter Point	2%
Shirley	10%
Port Renfrew	10%
T'Sou-ke Nation	2%
Pacheedaht Nation	2%

Those participating in personal interviews had spent an average of 20 years in the Region, and their time here ranged from 1 year to more than 70 years.

6.2 The Community Culture

Asked to discuss the community culture, participants described both the natural environment and the concentration of artists in the Region as essential attributes. The respondents all commented on the natural beauty of the area. They feel that this setting is a catalyst for artistic inspiration and an attraction for the arts community. The Region is generally regarded as “rich” and “vibrant” owing to the high quality of the artists and musicians who work and live here.

6.3 The Artistic Culture

Participants in the community interviews identified several factors that contribute to the artistic uniqueness of the Region. Culturally significant attributes included the influence of the First Nations culture; the reputation of organizations such as the Sooke Philharmonic, the Sooke Fine Arts Society, and the Blue Grass Festival; the high concentration of artists; the strong volunteer commitment; and the strong sense of local history. Physically significant attributes mentioned were the close proximity to an urban centre (Victoria); the integration of the natural setting in daily life; the small size of communities in a strong rural setting; and the existence of gathering centres such as the community halls, Sooke River Flats Campsite, and the Edward Milne Community School Theatre. The Region's relative affordability also shapes its character.

6.4 Arts and Health

There exists a strong belief amongst all interviewees that maintaining healthy arts, culture and heritage community - and the organizations that sustain it - is very important. They consider it critical to the Region's identity, social needs, growth and economy. Regional culture is considered vibrant and dynamic, but also hidden, and suffering from a lack of publicity and coordination among groups.

"Support for the ARTS in our area is paramount to aiding people in living a rich life. Creativity and enjoyment of such are the threads that hold us as individuals and our communities together. It is life blood."
Rebecca Girouard

6.5 The Health of the Arts

Given a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1=not at all healthy and 5=totally healthy), participants in the community interviews rated the health of the arts and cultural communities in the Sooke Region. The interviewees gave regional arts and culture an overall rating of 3.5. Individual responses ranged from a 5 rating for caliber of talent to a 1 rating for coordination amongst organizations and supporting infrastructure. Those who commented discussed various aspects of the health of the community. They agree that the quality of arts in the Region is high, and that resources and support are low. Cohesion and communication among organizations were also rated as low. Respondents hope that increasing communication and coordination can create a better public face for the arts and for the Region. Some stated that a healthy arts community is critical to keep Sooke from evolving into a bedroom community.

"Art is the SOUL of a society. A society without it is like a body without a heart"
Frederique Phillip

6.6 Regional Assets

The important regional assets and strengths were identified as the First Nations culture; access of the coast to coast Pacific Marine Circle Route; the documentation and preservation of history by the Sooke Region Museum; the quality and reputation of Sooke Philharmonic, Sooke Fine Arts Show, and the internationally known Sooke Harbour House. The strong support of the business community and the efforts of volunteers are considered essential. Among the notable community assets are people—Norman Nelson, Elida Peers, and Evonne Black were mentioned by name—as well as the commitment, skills, and number of active volunteers.

6.7 Challenges

Challenges for the Region include a general lack of coordination and cohesion among arts and cultural organizations. There was a strong interest expressed in promoting better communication as well as coordinating scheduling, promotion, and marketing. Cuts to provincial funding are a major concern for the majority of those participating in the community interviews, as is the lack of arts programming offered to the youth (ages 13-18) of the Region. Difficulty making a living wage in the arts is a concern for the

artists and musicians included in the interviews. Interviewees have found it difficult to locate home-based studios, although they didn't specify whether they meant difficult to locate in order to visit; or difficult to locate to use. Some wonder whether there will be follow up to the community interviews, or money to implement any recommendations.

Many organizations are concerned about attendance at their events. Whether this is a result of the 2008 international economic melt down and the subsequent recession or a longer-term trend is not clear from the responses.

Weaknesses include lack of professional staffing (and the funding to secure it), and the limited coordination among groups. The Sooke Region's politicians are believed to underestimate the value and relevance of arts to community life and to economic health. Access to the EMCS Theatre and to the community halls (in Sooke and Shirley) is considered by some to be difficult. Contributing to access problems are cost and agreements concerning staffing, permitted activities, and the technical quality of the theatre, all of which diminish use.

Interviewees wondered how to foster organizational continuity. Supporters and audiences tend to be older, and little has been done to ensure that youth and the working commuters will engage as the older participants withdraw. At the same time, long-term community volunteers noted a lack of appreciation and recognition for the earlier work and programs that created the foundation of the existing arts community.

"Sooke has already an exceptional cultural life which creates this specific and unique atmosphere to the benefit of our community—however we should be attentive that our all challenge still is to let it grow and give it a firm foundation, by having various platforms for the arts to perform and encouraging awareness by different means: "with a big focus and support on the young ones and their families" this is our future—but also for all other members of our community regarding information and access/transportation to various events. Establishing such scene will enhance business and of course tourism." Dagmar Kless

6.8 Aspirations

The interviewees enjoyed dreaming of what they might do if money were no object. Community members were eager to discuss possibilities, interested, and excited about the future. The top three dreams expressed are the following:

- Renovate, improve or build facilities to expand existing resources and improve the quality of space for performances, instruction, exhibition, sales or marketing, and networking.
- Improve the Sooke Country Market, currently the seasonal site for locally made, baked, or grown products, to include works of art and performance, year round.
- Create a coordinated summer/winter festival of the arts.
- An alternative to creating infrastructure was to first foster artistic excellence: *"Buy an [excellent] orchestra, pay them well, and let that stimulate activity in related sectors."*

6.9 Attracting Arts and Culture to the Region

The majority of interviewees agreed that there already exists a strong potential to attract cultural and creative employment and enterprise; and that to continue to build on this trend will require a strong vision, leadership, government commitment, and resources.

“Support of the arts contributes to a vibrant community and has proven to be of economic benefit.”

A frequent suggestion was that an inventory of existing spaces used for arts activities be made and their use analyzed. New construction was often proposed, but interviewees understand that any facility that might be contemplated would have to be self-sustaining. At the time of this project, government support for the arts is at a low ebb. Grant dependence is seen as perilous, and taxpayers are scrutinizing expenditures carefully. At the same time, interviewees feel that governments need to understand and to act upon the fact that the arts are a civic necessity, like schools and health; and that they deserve and need support. While they can and should be run in a business-like manner, arts and culture cannot be defined solely as profit points.

Collaborations are seen as one path to reduced costs. The sharing of administrative and operational staff by community organizations was suggested as a means of lowering costs and fostering cohesion. The seasonal Sooke Country Market was seen as a platform for expanding arts exposure and sales, in the manner of the Salt Spring Island Farmers' Market. Some proposed that a group of cultural organizations might declare a summer festival season and establish a regional program of arts.

6.10 Minority Engagement

In the community interviews, members of minorities—youth, First Nations, and visible minorities—were asked about the extent to which they felt included in the arts and culture of the Sooke Region.

Overall response to this question was very low, with some respondents identifying seniors and new residents of the Region as “visible minorities”. Although the majority of interviewees are youthful in spirit but not in age, their general comments center on a belief there needs to be a stronger emphasis in developing programming for the youth in the community – whether in the school system or through the leadership of arts organizations. Low youth involvement was cited by many of the (adult) interviewees.

Approximately 50% feel there is a strong inclusion of First Nations representation, particularly within the Museum. However the remaining 50% either didn't answer the question or feel significant improvement could be made with regard to the inclusion of the First Nations residents.

7.0 YOUTH INTERVIEWS

7.1 The Participants

As part of the ArtsWave project, group interviews with high school arts students were conducted to share ideas on how to enhance Sooke Region's arts and cultural community as it relates to youth.

Forty-three senior level (Grades 11/12) visual arts and musical theatre students at Edward Milne Community School were interviewed during two classroom sessions in early June 2010. Twenty-four students in visual arts and 19 theatre students participated. Most of the students indicated they have lived and attended school in Sooke most of their lives. One is a European foreign student; one is First Nations; and four reported they had moved to Sooke during their secondary school years. Approximately eight of the students are enrolled in the Advanced Placement Visual Arts Course, which involves them in first year university level curriculum. This section summarizes the students' responses, which ranged in age from 16 to 19 years.

Students' stated reasons for taking the arts and theatre courses are similar to the reasons given by adult respondents to the survey questions as to why they engage in or volunteer in the arts.

Musical Theatre – “It's a fun course; learn a lot about social skills through character study and role playing; improve social skills where needed; improves self esteem; helps manage a shy / introverted personality; it's a very safe place to take risks / push yourself; develop discipline; learn to trust, learn assertiveness, learn communication skills that are helpful in educational / work settings; fun to mentor Journey Middle School kids when they come to perform with high school students. “

Visual Arts - “It's relaxing, like the teacher, she's 'awesome'; get to hang out with [the teacher]; enjoy drawing, like being creative & want to improve ability; create for myself but also like to see my work on display.”

When asked how many intend to pursue a career in the arts / creative sector, approximately 40% of the theatre students indicated they were planning to pursue some sort of post secondary schooling and /or pursue work in the creative sector. Approximately 30% of the visual arts students indicated interest in pursuing a career in the arts or creative sector. Their examples included photography, attend Emily Carr, pursue education to become a writer, architecture, culinary arts, and become an art teacher. One young man indicated he intends to work in carpentry, which he believes allows for creative expression.

When asked if the students saw themselves living in the Sooke Region in the future, about 50% of the group indicated they would eventually like to come back to live in Sooke. They expressed an interest in attending school or work elsewhere for a while, to see what the world holds.

When asked if they felt that once their education is finished they felt the Sooke Region offered employment or business opportunities for them, most were very unsure. With the current conditions, they didn't feel really positive, but they're hoping that when the time comes, within 3 – 5 years, employment opportunities might improve.

7.2 Active Participation in Arts, Heritage and Culture

When asked if they consider themselves to be active participants in the arts, heritage and culture of the Sooke Region almost all indicated their involvement is almost exclusively within the school. They see their school, EMCS, as having a rich arts and culture environment.

Their involvement outside of the school is limited, as their school work, the extra rehearsals/projects that are required, and part time employment for many, take up much of their time. Their participation outside school included involvement in producing art and organizing displays for the bus shelter, doctor's office and Sooke Fine Arts Show. A small group of youth reported they are involved with Sooke Harbour Players.

They indicated they would be more active when school is out, during the months of July and August, if there were more interesting events for youth e.g.; a music festival with art and food kiosks/ booths etc. There was strong feeling that interesting activities, and events currently exist for the 14 years and under age group. Most agreed that by the ages of 15 or 16 they outgrow these activities, and there are no appealing, affordable, local activities and events in the Sooke region for the 15 – 18 year old age group. Once youth reach the age of 19 +, the interviewees believed many opportunities open up for this group.

7.3 The Community Culture

In describing the general culture of the Sooke Region, the students described the community as peaceful, with a laid back pace; a small town with nice, friendly people. One person used the word "redneck" to describe the culture. Also mentioned were the strong sports culture –(soccer, hockey, baseball, basketball) and the trees, ocean, the Pot Holes, camping, local beaches, surfing, fishing, and off-roading (all terrain vehicles, motorcycles, mountain biking). It seemed clear that the students interviewed enjoy and appreciate the beauty of the natural surroundings.

7.4 The Artistic Culture

In describing the artistic culture of the Region, the youth interviewed indicated that the high school is their arts and culture milieu. Particularly noted were the plays, fashion shows, and projects that are produced annually, including youth art exhibitions, and special projects undertaken by the leadership classes within the school.

The students acknowledged there seems to be a lot going on but indicated they lack the time to participate or become aware of what is going on outside their school culture. There was also a perception that the existing community activities are not much "fun" for this age group.

When asked to describe their idea of “fun”, the responses included: A café in Sooke for youth with pool and ping / pong tables, video games, internet access, big TV, and affordable food. In their view such a café would not be located at the local recreation center, SEAPARC, and not marketed as a youth program. The students see it running like a business, with clear expectations for patrons’ conduct.

7.5 Youth Identified Arts and Cultural Assets of the Region

The high school students who participated in the group discussion identified the following as cultural assets in the Region:

1. Canada Day celebrations, however, they would like to see some youth influence on the organization committee.
2. They expressed a “love for live music festivals” like the Sooke River Blue Grass Music Festival; however the students lamented that’s all they seem to hear in Sooke!
3. The natural environment, specifically the Pot Holes and local beaches.
4. Teachers: the Visual Art teacher, Sue Garat and Musical Theatre teacher Lisa McLellan were identified as assets. Students indicated they rely heavily on them as teachers, respected mentors, strong advocates for youth, and organizers of artistic and cultural events, activities and opportunities.

All 6 blocks of the Visual Art course are full for next year. Sue is a very popular teacher and art is a very popular class.. While many students don’t find relevance in the general curriculum, the art program allows students to create their own relevance “

Sue Percival, Educational Assistant

7.6 Feeling Included in the Region’s Arts and Cultural Scene

The high school students indicated they are not actively seeking to join existing arts groups while attending school, although they feel included and welcome in the organized arts and culture scene. They feel that youth art is usually most appreciated by other youth, not so much by the adult population. Some youth indicated they use the bartering system to access each other’s artwork. They would like to see their artwork in the local coffee shops and to have an appropriate space for jam sessions on weekends.

7.7 Significant Barriers to Youth Participation in Arts and Culture

The students interviewed indicated there is not a lot of opportunities / facilities to just hang out, play music, show art work, use the internet and purchase low cost food. There is no place other than the school art room to practice art. Art supplies are expensive to acquire once one is out of school and many cultural events, activities, and courses that take place in the Region are not affordable to youth.

Some of the students said they would use a space where they can jam, set up their amplifiers, guitars, and drums and play loudly and work towards improving their ability, without worrying about irritating neighbours.

Lack of enough youth willing to take on leadership roles was expressed as a concern.

When asked if they would participate in organizing youth focused events, many indicated they would help organize / market a youth focused event in the summer if there was mentorship / leadership / support from a local, recognized organization.

7.8 Top Arts and Cultural Priorities for Youth

During the group discussions, the students identified the following items as their top priorities for arts and culture in the Region:

- An indoor / outdoor youth festival, in August, combining drama, live music, art work, food by culinary arts students, with youth from other schools invited to participate.
- A café in Sooke for youth with live music, an open mike, food by EMCS Culinary Arts Program students, youth art work on display, along with a pool and ping / pong tables, video games, Internet access, and big TV, Students would like such a café in a central place that is safe and secure, with clear expectations as to conduct. They would not like such a café to be located at the local recreation center, SEAPARC, nor to be marketed as a youth program.
- A studio / space where youth can hang out, practice, jam and possibly record music.
- Affordable access to facilities. The youth seem to see the community hall as an exclusive “club” for the over 50 residents of Sooke. Students wondered if the adult groups using the facilities have to shoulder similar expenses, i.e. security / insurance.
- An annual summer festival that includes youth participation focused on live music – not necessarily “teen music” but a variety of good music – with opportunities for young artists to perform, display and sell art work; and with different types of food kiosks.

Comments by the arts teachers included the following:

- Funding cuts to the arts programs has resulted in larger class sizes, not enough funding for special needs youth to be included as not enough staffing dollars are available for these kids to attend rehearsals etc.
- A summer follies that would incorporate youth would be an interesting possibility for future arts and culture in the Region.
- The inclusion of youth art in the Sooke Fine Arts bistro is great. In the future it would be nice if youth could have a section within the show, but realize that adjudication and hanging fees are expensive

8.0 ORGANIZATION SURVEY

8.1 The Participants

Among those returning the organization survey were seven groups that identified themselves as non-profit; three commercial, for-profit enterprises; two informal groups; and one that didn't specify its structure. These groups represent music, literary, heritage, visual arts, and theatre groups as well as a community organization. They include members from throughout the Sooke Region. The size of last year's membership of these non-profits ranged from 33 to 191, with two not reporting their membership. Both informal groups had fewer than 20 participants.

Among the non-profits and the informal groups, only 4 out of 10 have paid employees. One contracts artists for specific performances and has 15 part-time staff members. One has 3 full time staff, 3 part-time, and 3-5 seasonal staff; one has one part-time and one seasonal staff member; while the other has two part-time staff members. The three commercial organizations have 5-6 part time staff at one and 1 part-time person at another; and the third is staffed by the owner.

8.2 Local Events

The sample of organizations responding was smaller than anticipated, but the range of their activities and their community involvement speaks to the scope of arts and culture in the Region. The music groups included an orchestra, choir, musical society, and chamber group. Among them they offer concert series, performances, guest artists and teachers, workshops, open stage evenings, and lessons.

The arts and heritage organizations offer tours, exhibitions, and entry to historic buildings. The performing arts were under-represented among the respondents, but those responding offer workshops, lessons, school performances, dance performances, fund-raisers and guest instructors. A literary group mentioned workshops and festivals. Most participate in community events.

8.3 Supports from the Community

Volunteer commitment again arises as a fundamental strength of regional organizations. Nine groups reported that they use volunteers, and eight reported the annual hours that they had received from volunteers. The smallest number of volunteers per organization was 6, the largest, 300. The total number of volunteer hours contributed to the eight reporting organizations was over 32,000 hours (32,109). The average amount of time contributed ranged from about 3 hours per volunteer per year to a hefty 128 hours per volunteer per year. Within this range, the other reporting organizations received an average of 11 (two organizations), 25, 33, 37, and 44 hours per year from the volunteers.

Seven organizations reported their annual attendance and five of them each served more than 1,000 people last year. The largest attendance (of the organizations reporting) was 7,500. The smallest group performed two small concerts per year, which

had audiences of approximately 40 at each one. The total participation reported by these eight organizations was 17,205, which suggests both quality from the organizations, significant support from community, and real economic impact.

Organizations reported mixed success in attracting and retaining the workers—staff, volunteer, and board—that keep them going.

The informal groups reported no problems with recruiting or retention, with one judging the questions not applicable and the other saying that there were no problems. One of the commercial respondents didn't complete the section and another either found the questions not applicable or had no problems. The third commercial group had difficulty recruiting and retaining skilled specialists as well as volunteers.

Among the non-profits, one group reported no problems in any of these areas. Two reported no problems with recruiting or retaining workers. Others found more challenges, though each had difficulties in different areas. Two noted difficulty retaining and recruiting both board members and volunteers. Another had no trouble in those areas but struggled to find and retain skilled workers. The last found recruitment—but not retention—of both board members and volunteers a challenge.

Summary Table of Responses to Questions 15 – 20

15. any difficulty recruiting skilled workers?	Yes 2	No 6	NA 3
16. any difficulty retaining skilled workers?	Yes 2	No 6	NA 3
17. any difficulty recruiting board members?	Yes 3	No 6	NA 1
18. any difficulty retaining board members?	Yes 2	No 7	NA 1
19. any difficulty recruiting volunteers?	Yes 4	No 6	NA 1
20. any difficulty retaining volunteers?	Yes 2	No 7	NA 1

One response was not tallied, from the respondent who commented that, *“For questions 15-20, yes and no could apply to all, or sometimes reflect the reality.”*

Several others offered comments on questions 15-20.

“It is always the same 10-15 people who do everything. Some give many hours, some less, but very difficult to encourage above this #.”

“If I had the funding I would like to formalize our volunteer management and recruitment.”

8.4 Strengths, Challenges and Weaknesses

Funding

The informal organizations manage with little cash, reporting annual budgets of under \$60,000. Three groups didn't share their budgets, but the non-profit and commercial groups who did respond reported annual budgets that range from \$5,000 to \$400,000, with five organizations working with annual budgets between \$5,000 and \$65,000.

Four organizations shared a breakdown of where their funding came from. The amount of revenue earned by these organizations covers a wide range: one group earned 10% of its funding; one 50%; one 55%; and the last 100%. Two had significant grant support, with one receiving 60% and the other 54% of last year's budget from government grants. The other two non-profits received 10% and 0% of their funding from government grants.

Donations of cash, services, and goods accounted for 17% of two groups' budget and 18% of another's. Other sources of funding included facility rentals and member fees, each about 30% of the budget for two of the organizations. Another group said that their income came from revenue, government grants, and donations, without specifying the allocation. One receives 10% of its budget from an unspecified source. One group supplements its grants with a tax levy.

None of the non-profits reported running a current deficit, nor does any run one from year to year. Three of the other groups either didn't respond or felt the question didn't apply. One organization had received a personal loan.

The decrease in available government funding didn't affect the informal and commercial groups, nor did it have an impact on the two non-profits that receive no grant funding. The effects on the other non-profits are significant, with three of the four reporting a reduction in programming: shortened seasons, fewer special projects or visiting artists, reduced adult programming and advertising, and/or postponed upgrades. The fourth, which lost operating funding, didn't specify how its activities would change. Two groups are worried that the cuts that they have already made may be insufficient, and that more cuts may be necessary after 2011, when the full effect of the reduction of provincial grants to the arts is felt.

Venues and Communication

Two non-profits are finding adequate facilities, services, and supports, responding "no" to the question of whether the organization needed facilities, services or other supports that are not available or not sufficiently available in the Sooke Region. Others list various needs: office and phone facilities; a meeting room; financial support for those who can't afford user fees; subsidized event space (indoors and outdoors); landscaping and maintenance help; and free rehearsal and storage space. One described the challenges of transforming an arena into an exhibition space for fine arts with concurrent demonstrations, food services, sales area, and performance space.

Among the commercial and informal groups identifying services or supports that are needed in the Region, one commented on the difficulty of finding funding for special

programs as well as of scheduling performance space. Another echoed the wish for a central calendar for scheduling and publicizing events.

The respondents from two of the commercial organizations both cited finances when asked if there are significant barriers to operations or viability in the Region. One highlighted the costs to families; the other, general economic uncertainty that extends beyond the area.

Few of the non-profits found anything to add to the comments made on the previous question. Two mentioned the highway and its traffic as a barrier that discourages audiences from visiting Sooke and then moving around comfortably once they arrive. Another cited the lack of space for youth, the effort required to adapt available space, and the lack of volunteers prepared to do more than donate money as potential problems. Another barrier is the territorialism reported by one respondent.

Government Support

Arts and culture are addressed both by the Sooke Official Community Plan (Appendix 8) and also by the 2010-2012 Strategic Planning document from the Sooke Program of the Arts Committee (Appendix 8). The relevant Juan de Fuca Official Community Plans do not include sections on the arts, beyond mention in the Port Renfrew Comprehensive Community Development Plan definitions that religious buildings and retail establishments may involve arts. The two documents that do include discussions of arts and culture suggest various measures that Sooke could undertake to enhance and strengthen the arts, culture, and heritage in the Region. These suggestions, which focus predominantly on physical changes, were listed on the organization survey and respondents were asked to choose the four that they believe are the most important.

The highest rated proposals and the number of organizations that support them are the following:

Proposal	Times chosen
Increase public funding support for local heritage & arts organizations and artists.	9
Promote the creation of public spaces for cultural use & the integration of public art in the planning & design of buildings, open spaces, & the street environment.	7
Recognize & promote cultural excellence & diversity within the Sooke Region.	5
Encourage the development of a performing arts centre in the Sooke Region.	5
Encourage the development of public gallery & exhibition spaces in the Sooke Region.	5
Promote recreation, tourism, & arts & cultural opportunities through advertising & increased venues for arts, entertainment & tourism.	4
Encourage arts / cultural facilities (municipal and regional) to locate in downtown Sooke or the central waterfront area.	4

See Appendix 6, question 24 for a complete list of options.

Organizational Contributions

Invited to indicate what the respondents' organizations might contribute to enhance regional arts and culture, the respondents showed some confusion between what they wished for and what they might offer. Grants for workshops and festivals are on their wish list, along with space; support from the community and government; staffing and money to improve and maintain the Visitors' Centre; adding a stage and performers' facilities to the Sooke Flats; and *"funding, manpower, think tank"*.

Potential contributions from the respondents are guest performers, instructors, workshops, and opening doors to the arts for all ages in Sooke. Established organizations offered to serve as educational resources; to serve as a heritage resource to help future planning; to help establish a folk festival; to help develop more singing opportunities for youth; and to coordinate with other organizations to establish a festival of the arts in Sooke. One wishes to work more closely with other non-profit organizations, specifically in the areas of advertising and administration.

Five of the 13 responding organizations don't partner or share resources with other organizations. Those who do so have established a variety of connections. Some share equipment, and some informal groups either partner with commercial groups or donate proceeds in return for access to space. Some join other organizations for special performances. Three reported that they collaborate with other organizations but didn't specify how.

In final comments, collective grant applications were proposed, and once again, the wish for an arts venue was expressed: *"An arts centre with teaching space and a vibrant programme for youngsters and adults would be great."*



Sooke Philharmonic Orchestra

9.0 PUBLIC MEETINGS

As part of the consultations with the residents of the Sooke Region, two public meetings were held in June 2010 -- one in the afternoon and one in the evening. The main purposes of the meetings were the following:

- to report on the information emerging from the general survey, the artist survey, and the community interviews conducted as part of the Cultural Mapping initiative;
- to give the participants an opportunity to ask questions or to comment further; and
- to engage the participants in a dialogue on some of the key issues and suggestions emerging from the surveys and interviews.

The agenda for the meetings, and a copy of the PowerPoint slides from the opening presentation can be found in Appendices 10.

Thirty individuals attended the meetings, including visual artists, musicians, choir members, writers, wood workers, crafters, representatives of cultural organizations and the community school, a Sooke Councilor, and the CAO of the District of Sooke. Following a presentation on the initiative to date, participants were asked to choose from a list of five suggested discussion topics that had arisen from the surveys and interviews, or to propose other topics they preferred. The resulting discussions in each meeting were somewhat different, focusing on the areas of most interest to the individuals present. This summary of topics and views covers both meetings combined.

9.1 Lack of Suitable Venues for Exhibitions, Rehearsals and Performance

Discussions about venues in the Region explored the various deficiencies that people had identified and what they would like to see corrected or developed. The discussions looked at the different needs for visual arts, instruction or workshop space, and performance and rehearsal space.

There was general agreement expressed among those present that a multi-activity space for the visual arts is highly desirable. There was some interest in a venue that could accommodate rehearsal or performance space as well. However, participants recognize that the physical needs for visual arts and the needs for music and theatre and other types of performances are quite distinct, so that many so-called “multi-purpose” spaces actually serve no purpose well. Speakers expressed a desire for purpose-designed spaces that might be clustered close together or located in the same building, so that a centre could accommodate many different kinds of activities simultaneously.

For example, when asked what they would like to see for the visual arts, if funding were not an obstacle, participants described a space that would provide for the following:

- A public art gallery with changing exhibits;

- Studio space for artists;
- Classrooms, workshop and instructional spaces;
- Meeting rooms;
- Office space for arts groups;
- A gift shop or other outlet for local arts sales;
- A tea shop and / or restaurant;
- Art supplies sales;
- A garden;
- Exterior display areas; and
- Display space for information on area artists and artisans.

As for the characteristics of the spaces desired, participants mentioned the following:

- A centre that would welcome both amateur and professional artists;
- Flexible spaces, possibly with movable seating or walls, that could accommodate multiple activities with full and constant use;
- Possible establishment of an artists' or studio cooperative;
- Presence of a paid administrator;
- A place supportive of mentoring, education, and skills transfer;
- Opportunities for juried artists to sell, as opposed to jurying individual works for sale.

Examples of centres from other communities were mentioned, including Qualicum Beach, the Coast Collective in Colwood, and neighbouring Metchosin, which has activities housed in three different buildings located close together (an arts centre, the Community House, and a museum).

An audience member suggested that a heritage site like the Wilford's Woodside Farm be acquired and operated as a working museum, possibly moving the existing museum there as well. There was also a suggestion to develop an arts and artisan college in Sooke, using existing school spaces, especially to pass on the skills of aging master woodworkers in the area.

Participants identified good lighting and good acoustics as essential in performance and rehearsal spaces for music, along with comfortable seats, a nice lobby and general atmosphere, plus the availability of risers. Rehearsal space also needs to be able to accommodate a choir plus a soloist working simultaneously, or an ensemble plus soloists. One ideal would be a custom-built recital hall for small choruses and chamber music, holding approximately 200 people. It was felt that a full sized symphony hall to accommodate the Sooke Philharmonic Orchestra was beyond the reach of a large Region with a small population.

Currently there are two churches with good acoustics that allow rehearsals and performances in their buildings, the Holy Trinity Anglican Church and the Sooke Baptist Church. The first holds approximately 100, which is too small for the community choir; the other reportedly seats several hundred. A private home also has been available for rehearsals, but is expected to be less available in future, which will increase the difficulty of finding and scheduling rehearsal space.

When the group looked at the Edward Milne Community School (EMCS) Theatre, they made the following observations:

Acoustics: Clearly not appropriate for music. The acoustics are reportedly worse for the performers than for the audience. It was mentioned that a study conducted approximately four years ago made recommendations about how to improve the acoustics in the theatre and estimated (at that time) that an expenditure of \$80,000 to \$100,000 would improve the situation. It was also pointed out that the theatre space at EMCS was built as “three classrooms”, but has not been used that way. The question was raised as to whether it could be renovated to be more suitable for musical performances.

Seating: EMCS Theatre has comfortable seats.

Lobby: EMCS lacks a nice lobby and suitable atmosphere.

Accessibility: School events have priority since School District 62 controls the space, even though the theatre comes from community fundraising. School events can also bump scheduled community events.

Cost: Thought to be high for rehearsal time

The wish list for a theatre space includes proper acoustics; appropriate lighting; movable seats; attractive lobby space; affordable rental / custodial costs; green rooms; and soundproof rooms.

The EMCS Theatre was considered more suitable for theatrical use than for music. It has green rooms and soundproof rooms. The main issues discussed revolved around rental costs; acoustics; ambience; availability of evening rehearsal time during the week; and the scheduling and bumping problems identified above. Questions were also raised as to whether community events could be overseen by volunteers rather than the school’s custodial staff: that is, rehearsals and events outside of school hours would be seen as, and treated as, community events and staffed accordingly.

A participant reported that the EMCS Society is reviewing the use of the theatre and its potential as a community facility outside of school hours. A conversation started about the possibilities for more cooperation between school staff and community participants, and willingness was expressed to carry on that conversation after the meeting.

Participants from Port Renfrew described the situation they perceive in their community, including the need to provide a focus and place of connection for the many resident artists. They also sought a place for exposing the strong music culture of Port Renfrew.

Examples given of facilities in other communities that accommodate multiple activities included the Sherwood Park Hall in Sherwood, Alberta which was described as having a performance area with a deck, tables, and a liquor license; the Mary Winspear Centre in Sidney, B.C.; and British Leisure Centres, which accommodate both arts and sports.

9.2 Lack of Information / Awareness of Activities and Events

Participants looked at the question of how to find out what is going on in the Sooke Region. A young artist indicated that, in her experience, if one doesn't receive word-of-mouth information in the community it is difficult to learn about events of potential interest. It was suggested younger residents need local television coverage of activities and events, Shaw coverage or an equivalent of CHEK TV or the A Channel.

A representative from the Sooke Philharmonic Orchestra reported on an effort to increase community visibility by installing a structure that will support a banner across the road on the way into Sooke. It was mentioned that a banner could be hung occasionally on the lighthouse next to the museum.

Other suggestions made to try to address the problems of notice and visibility included:

- Creating a cooperative central marketing / scheduling function for the Region. It was suggested this might be part of the proposed volunteer bureau.
- Creating a system for regular email notification of events, perhaps supported or facilitated by the District of Sooke;
- Using Facebook (the Vancouver Island Arts Group being one outlet) and / or Twitter.

9.3 Collecting Events into a Festival / Festival Season

Participants explored suggestions for working collectively to promote existing events as a series or festival and adding events to make up a festival or festival season. Existing events that might be linked include: Sooke River Bluegrass Music Festival, Canada Day celebrations, Philharmonic Fling, Beach Art, theatre productions, Sooke Fine Arts Show, and a Port Renfrew music fest. Suggestions were made to include community events, such as garden tours, fishing derbies, eco tours, the world's longest banquet table on Whiffen Spit, and other food events in addition to arts activities. It was suggested that such a series could also incorporate fundraisers and connect communities in the Region, as well as offer ways to expose people to different art forms that they might not experience otherwise.

In an earlier undertaking, organizations cooperated to create multi-activity attractions, as when Sooke Fine Arts and the then Stage West Players put on a three-day weekend of coordinated events.



Sooke Folk Music Society

9.4 Cooperation / Collective Action

A theme that ran through the discussions involved a desire for greater collective action or cooperative use of resources, including greater use of existing facilities. Once again it was suggested that an inventory of the usage rates of existing spaces be undertaken to assess the current use versus the capacity of the facilities. For example, it was pointed out that the Sooke Community Hall is used by crafts groups but seldom by other arts groups. Attendees wondered whether there are opportunities for greater use as well as about how the acoustics compare to those of other buildings. Questions were also raised about the future use of the Sooke Elementary School and whether it could be converted to an arts centre if a new school is constructed.

The need for cooperative advertising or marketing was mentioned in many contexts, especially the need for less expensive or free modes for smaller groups. The need for cooperative action among groups and individuals to lobby for greater funding and other support for the arts was also raised.

9.5 Priorities for Governments

Participants addressed the question of what priorities they would like to see governments address with respect to arts and culture, both in discussion and by responding to a printed question on the back of the meeting agenda sheet. Suggestions that were made in discussion included the following:

- Assist with coordination, organization among arts groups;
- Develop a paid staff position to coordinate and manage functions like festival scheduling, cooperative marketing, notice of events, etc.
- Help share staffing and infrastructure, an example being to expand the EMCS program office by supporting an additional staff member.
- Promote dialogue and idea generation.

The 15 options included in the printed question distributed at the public meetings were extracted from the Sooke OCP and the 2010-2012 Sooke Arts Committee Strategic plan. While these ideas suggested building structures more than building capacity among the citizens, many were of interest. The following received the most support from public meeting attendees as actions that local and regional governments could take to enhance and strengthen the arts, culture and heritage communities, activities and facilities in the Sooke Region:

- Encourage the development of a performing arts centre;
- Encourage arts / cultural facilities (municipal and regional) to locate in downtown Sooke or the central waterfront area;
- Promote the creation of public spaces for cultural use and the integration of public art in the planning and design of buildings, open spaces and the street environment;
- Encourage the creation of a vibrant cultural precinct in downtown Sooke;
- Increase public funding support for local heritage and arts organization and artists;
- Encourage the development of public gallery and exhibition spaces in the Sooke Region;

- Engage First Nations' artists to implement public art features;
- Maintain a database of the Region's arts and heritage resources, with links to related information; and
- Promote local artistic and heritage career training opportunities at the middle and high schools.

The priorities of the participants in the public meetings significantly overlap the priorities for government action indicated by the respondents to the survey of organizations. (See page 38)

In closing comments, one participant pointed out that supporting the arts is a necessary social and cultural activity, a community value; and that cutting funding for arts education in schools impoverishes students and thus the community.



Sooke Historical Society – Water Pipeline Public Art Installation

10. CONCLUSIONS

10.1 Strengths

The arts and culture of the Sooke Region are shaped by the natural beauty of coastal southern Vancouver Island. The marine and forested, largely rural landscape attracts highly skilled, committed artists. The natural environment also draws people to the Region to enjoy its beauty and the many cultural opportunities created by the large population of resident artists, musicians, and craftspeople. The communities of the Region retain a small town feel, where individual efforts and passions can make a difference. At the same time, Victoria and its artistic, social, and academic resources are readily available. Local government is seen as accessible, if not as engaged in acknowledging and supporting the cultural life of the Region as the artistic community might hope.

At the heart of the Region's artistic and heritage endeavors is a large, established and active volunteer base. Community involvement is enthusiastic and extensive. The ten survey participants who were willing to estimate their volunteer hours totaled over 1600 hours devoted to local cultural and heritage activities. Eight organizations reported that the volunteer time contributed by their members surpassed 32,000 hours.

ArtsWave participants understand the importance of the arts to personal and community health. Ninety-three percent agree that arts and culture contribute to the livability and quality of life of a place; 92% that they contribute to a sense of neighbourhood, fostering community identity and / or cohesiveness; 86% understand arts provide opportunities for personal growth, education and enrichment, as well as provide economic opportunities and employment. A surprising 77% feel that the arts are "very important" or "essential" to their personal health or identity.

A majority of residents seem to be generally satisfied with the quality and quantity of the Region's cultural offerings with 82% indicating they are "moderately" or "highly satisfied". There is a very strong level of interest in visual arts and live music. Ninety percent and 88% of survey respondents included arts exhibitions / galleries and live music (respectively) in regional culture. However, the scope of artistic activities and interest is very broad. All of the 19 activities listed in the survey were judged by at least 50% of the respondents to be part of the Region's artistic culture, with two local institutions-- the Sooke Philharmonic Orchestra and its associated choir and performing groups and the Sooke Fine Arts Society's annual Fine Arts Show--having strong and widespread appreciation among residents. The responses also show strong interest in heritage.

The strengths of the Sooke Region's artistic culture can be summed up as including:

- Large numbers of highly skilled resident artists;
- A strong volunteer commitment to the arts;
- A widely held understanding that arts and culture contribute to individual and community health, as well as to the local economy.
- Artistic products and performances of a very high quality;
- A strong sense of local history and appreciation for the local museum, heritage preservation, and heritage-focused activities;
- A broad range of arts-based activities, with a strong preference for visual arts and live music, along with craft shows, theatre, and festivals.

10.2 Challenges

Cooperation and Communication

While it is clear that a number of cultural organizations are already cooperating, especially in the sharing of equipment, there seems to be a widely shared sense that more might be done. Possibilities for the larger organizations to share space and / or administrative staff with each other, and with related organizations (such as economic development or tourism) were mentioned. Possibilities for cooperative marketing by a group of organizations, perhaps with the assistance of the District of Sooke, were especially underlined. Promotion was considered critical for smaller organizations that simply cannot afford to do any significant advertising and that currently have trouble getting the word out about their events.

Communication among organizations was a common concern, with comments from all sectors of the surveys and interviews that more could be done to help people find out what is going on in the Region. Enhanced information about events was also seen as a way to increase audiences and to help avoid scheduling conflicts. Some survey respondents lamented the fact that many events occurred at the same time.

Specific cooperative initiatives that were mentioned include:

- Creating a comprehensive and up-to-date calendar of events;
- A group of organizations banding together to market the area and its events;
- Cultural organizations working together to schedule and market their events as a festival, creating a regional festival season.

Suitability of Venues

Proponents of the visual arts identified various shortcomings in the facilities currently available. They noted limits to existing gallery and exhibition space—the ice rink is annually adapted to house the Fine Arts Show—and a lack of readily accessible, prominent public spaces for selling local art and crafts. Studio and instruction space is scattered and limited. Respondents to the artist survey indicate that 91% of artists currently work at home or in a home studio. Desire was clearly expressed for more

studio and workshop space, especially to create opportunities for having artists in residence.

There was unanimous agreement among the musicians about the difficulties of performing locally. There are two churches with good acoustics, but their seating capacity and availability are limited. Rehearsal space is difficult to schedule for everyone, and much of it is too expensive for small groups. Larger halls have acoustics that are very difficult for performers and inadequate for audiences. A better performance and rehearsal space was an often-repeated wish.

The Edward Milne Community School Theatre seems more suitable for use for theatre or dance than for music, although the ambience, the lack of a suitable lobby space, and, again, acoustics remain significant issues. Access—cost, scheduling, and the priority given to school events—restrict community use. However, a conversation begun at one of the public meetings among musicians, other residents, and community school staff may hold promise of some improvement to access to the theatre spaces.

Need for Arts and Culture Centre (s)

The need for an arts centre or centres was a focus of comment and discussion. There is a perceived need for spaces that are designed or renovated specifically to meet the requirements of visual arts and for music and other performances. Many participants desired a centre or centres that would be purpose-designed to serve the different needs of different artistic modes as well as being capable of accommodating multiple activities simultaneously. More probing of comments about the desire for an arts centre revealed more concern about having spaces that are really appropriate for particular uses, whether they are in a single centre or more dispersed.

The widely expressed clarity about the need to design to suit the very different needs of different artistic activities is viewed by the cultural mapping team members as offering the possibility to the Region of avoiding the mistakes that have plagued many other small communities. In their attempts to create a multi-purpose facility, communities have often ended up with a facility that actually meets the needs of no artistic medium.

There seems to be a strong desire for a visible arts presence in downtown Sooke, whether it is one centre, or a series of venues devoted to the arts. Such an arts centre or district was imagined as a facility for the whole community, as well as for both amateur and professional artists.

Discussions of what is desirable specifically excluded discussions of cost. Even so, some commented that it would be essential for any construction to be well planned, with a sound business plan; others expressed reservations about additional costs to the community at this time.

Need for Funding & Administrative Support

Clearly some organizations are feeling the recent funding cuts directly now and / or are scrambling to accommodate the cuts that are expected to affect their organizations. There was a general call for stronger support from governments for arts, including funding and administrative support. Paid staff to support and coordinate local volunteers; to assist with event scheduling and promotion; to help develop grant proposals; and to administer existing and desired community facilities was widely mentioned as important.

Underserved Youth

The one population group that residents seem to feel is underserved with arts opportunities is the youth, especially ages 15 to 18. Musical theatre and visual arts courses are very popular with full enrollment year after year in the senior secondary courses. Students expressed the view that these courses were useful, fun and contributed to their sense of well-being. The long serving teachers of both courses received high praise for the quality of their instruction and connection to students. However, a lack of a formal music program at the secondary level is a concern expressed by students, teachers and the general public. As well, students expressed concerns over the lack of arts and cultural community-based activities oriented specifically for youth.

First Nations Visibility

Many survey respondents especially expressed a strong appreciation for the presence and traditional art forms of the local First Nations communities. There seems to be a desire among many non-aboriginal residents for greater connection, an even stronger presence, and higher visibility for First Nations artists and their work. There also seems to be a general lack of information or understanding on how to achieve that. The aboriginal representatives who participated in the interviews described their cultural activities as vital and expanding.



T'Sou-ke Arts and Culture Group

The key challenges to the viability and continued development of the cultural and heritage activities of the Sooke Region include the following:

- A need for greater communication and cooperation among local arts and heritage organizations, including scheduling, marketing, and possibly administrative resources;
- Existing venues that are inadequate to meet the needs of many performance modes as well as for public gallery and exhibition space and art and craft sales;
- A need for purpose-designed facilities with good acoustics for music and choral performances and rehearsals; gallery and exhibition space; studio and workshop / instruction space;
- A lack of staffing to support and coordinate volunteers and to assist with scheduling, promotion, and facility administration;
- A need for more arts programming suitable for youth (ages 15-18); and
- A lack of understanding as to how to secure greater connection with and visibility for local First Nations artists and their work.

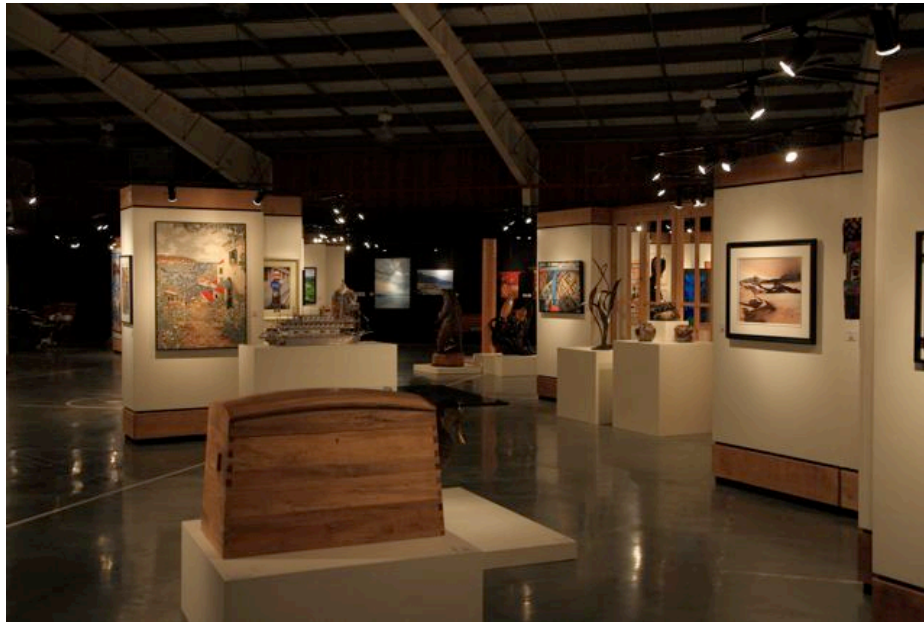
10.3 Desired Roles for Governments

A key desire expressed in survey responses, interviews and the public meetings is for substantive recognition by local governments of the importance of arts, culture and heritage to the quality of life and well-being of residents and to the economic and social health of the communities in the Sooke Region.

Among the current and proposed activities that have been put forward in planning documents by local governments, the following were rated as most important or most desired by ArtsWave participants to support the further development of arts and culture in the Region:

- Assist with coordination, organization and marketing of local arts organizations, including developing a paid staff position to coordinate functions such as festival scheduling, cooperative marketing, and notice of events;
- Encourage arts / cultural facilities (municipal and regional) to locate in downtown Sooke or the central waterfront area;
- Encourage the creation of a vibrant cultural precinct in downtown Sooke, including public gallery, exhibition and sales space and performing arts facilities;
- Promote the creation of public spaces for cultural use and the integration of public art in the planning and design of buildings, open spaces, and the street environment; make the strength of the arts in the Region more visible;
- Increase public funding support for local artists and cultural organizations and recognize and promote cultural excellence and diversity.

The ArtsWave project documents the very high level of interest in and appreciation for a very wide range of artistic and heritage activities in the Sooke Region. Community satisfaction with the quality and quantity of cultural opportunities is high, as is understanding of the importance of arts in maintaining the health of the community and community members. ArtsWave also reveals a strong desire to see more visible government recognition of the contributions of the arts to the social and economic health of the Region and more support for the cultural life of its communities. The energy and the dreams of the people of the Region have helped establish an abundant cultural life; the ArtsWave participants suggest that there is more that the Region can, and will, accomplish.



Sooke Fine Arts Show



Sooke Community Choir



Sooke Harbour Players

II. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is intended to paint a picture of the cultural community in the Sooke Region in 2010. The participants have been generous with their time and effort, and the coordinators have tried to capture as much of their information as possible. The findings are offered to the community in the hope of advancing a public dialogue about the community's desires and the possible futures for arts and culture in the Sooke Region.

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Sooke Fine Arts Society

Sooke Community Arts Council.

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Survey Respondents

The residents of Sooke and Juan de Fuca Electoral Area for their time and consideration in completing the survey questionnaires and personal interviews.

ArtsWave Drop Off Locations

The following organizations kindly provided space for printed surveys to be picked up and dropped off:

District of Sooke

Reading Room Café' and Bookstore

SEAPARC

Sooke Library

Sooke Region Museum

Sooke Fine Art Gallery

South Shore Gallery

Stick in the Mud Coffee Shop

District of Sooke

Bonnie Sprinkling and Mark Downton for their assistance with Survey Monkey

The Sooke Program of the Arts Committee

Edward Milne Community School

Susan Percival

Sue Garat,

Lisa McLellan

III. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Art History Notes, by Elida Peers, Community Historian

Appendix 2: Press Release

Appendix 3: General and Artist Surveys

Appendix 4: Community Interviews Questionnaire

Appendix 5: Youth Interview Questionnaire

Appendix 6: Organization Survey

Appendix 7: Summary Results of General and Artist Surveys

**Appendix 8: Sooke Official Community Plan (Arts & Heritage) and
Sooke Program of the Arts Committee Strategic Plan 2010-2012**

Appendix 9: DRAFT of Community Arts and Culture Database

Appendix 10: Agenda and Presentation from Public Meetings June 15 & 16 2010