

Topic	Sustaining and growing a vibrant arts and culture ecology in the Yukon		
Date	Thursday, March 5, 2020, 3:30 to 5:30 pm	Location	Antoinette's Restaurant, 4121 4 th Avenue, Whitehorse, Yukon
Host(s)	Clare Daitch, Mass Culture		
Participants	Virginie Hamel (AFY), Jenna Winter (Nakai Theater), Scott Maynard (Music Yukon), Jayden Soroca (Animator), Jacob Zimmer (Nakai Theatre), Duncan Sinclair (Jazz Yukon, Musician), Patti Balsille, Keitha Clarke (Musician), Matthew Lien (Musician), Andrea Simpson-Fowler (Leaping Feats, Borealis Soul), Kelvin (MC and Producer), Chad Walasek (Indian Classical Dancer), Paige Galette (Gwaandak Theater), Katherine Munro (Poet), Katherine McCallum (Larriken Entertainment; Yukon Music Camp), Leslie Leong (Artist), Al Cushing (Retired Arts Manager), Colette Acheson (Artist), Melania Sheldon (Artist, ED Creative Lab North Society)		
Notetaker(s)	Maria Simon		
Facilitator(s)	Inga Petri, Strategic Moves		
Invitation	<p>Join this conversation about the specific actions we each can – or have to – take to sustain and grow a vibrant arts and culture ecology in the Yukon. Or put another way, what is our boldest ambition for the Yukon? Over the last decade, sector-wide conversations have resulted in some new collaborations and new activities in our territory. Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists, makers, producers and cultural workers in every community across the Yukon are making their way – sometimes against all odds and sometimes aided by strong community and audience support. As we embark on the 2020s, let's reflect on where we want to go as an arts and cultural community and explore how to get there together. Let's gather over appetizers and indulge in the art of conversation and working together. <i>(Distributed via email invitation and ArtsNet List serve).</i></p>		

Some of the themes and ideas that emerged from the Gathering	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-A strong need to have a clear ambition as a member of the arts community and the idea that once there is a clear ambition, everything else follows --- money follows vision and community buy-in.-The importance of having a bold vision, free from financial/ administrative constraints to begin with.-The importance of developing a large space in the community specifically for the arts- an arts hub or even an arts district where all kinds of organizations and artistic / creative endeavours can locate, work, teach, learn, perform and present-Creating a unified voice or a coordinated advocacy for the arts; like an arts and culture union / alliance / network. Example - a role Music Yukon has taken in the past. Collaboration, partnership, mentorship and outreach as key features of successful arts communities.-Aspiring to see the Yukon as not merely a national leader but a leader globally and being recognized internationally as an amazing garden that fosters artists, advances artistic practices in new or innovative ways and generates a healthy arts ecology-We do so well with so little here in the Yukon. What are the possibilities if we had more? Are there any limits? NO!
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What social change needs impacts your research?

-Creating more affordable housing for artists as a 'first-things-first' issue. It has been pressing for many low wage workers across all sectors in the Yukon in recent years. Sometimes considerations aren't just about art. Lack of accessible funding and lack of time to actually create art besides working a side job or full time job are major hurdles to artistic advancement.

-The Arts need to be regarded as legitimate professions and not merely a leisure or spare time bonus activity. The need to be fully appreciated for the significant contributions to and untapped potential for the economy, individuals health and well-being, critical thinking and creative problem solving skills.

-Current strategies for development don't create a lot of movement that makes a difference. The Yukon needs strategies that create results; policies with intentions. Where do we want to go and how do we bring public funders along?

- Change is required in the way funding is made available and accessed. Currently, there are too many government barriers that affect who is eligible and who is not. Without enough funding for everyone, established or simply older companies keep getting funding, and new things are hard to grow when there is little support. Also, how to change the flow of funding - give more trust to the arts org within the funding system - to manage the flow of development/work.

- Better internet conduits and access points to all communities. In the Yukon internet speed, reliability and cost are critical barriers - we need to advocate for the necessary public investment to happen quickly, so we are full participants not an after thought for all things arts in Canada and the world.

- Better coordination between Yukon government, specifically Tourism and Culture and Economic Development to help create cultural tourism initiatives.

-Creating tourism marketing strategies that include the arts and fund artistic experiences for tourists

- All types of artists need to come together to show a unified need and that this need is urgent

Perspectives and thoughts

Four discussion points were identified for a bold vision for arts in the Yukon. It is not enough to just want something; it is important to recognize the bold vision attached to it. Key questions participants considered were:

- A. What's your boldest dream related to your topic?
- B. What is the change that you seek?
- C. Do you have the facts you need to advance this dream? What is missing to make your case convincingly?

Space - Creating environmentally sustainable spaces that have the capacity to adapt to latest technologies and cater to current needs with the potential for growth. Having a metropolitan approach: creating a space that fosters inclusivity, diversity and accessibility. Creating one space/district or campus that houses all artists- writers/visual artists/film/theatre/music etc. that includes soundproof spaces to practice and record, spaces to perform and collaborate; administrative spaces, communal spaces such as bars and cafes with multiple floors to provide ample space and room for growth. This space needs to be under solid leadership and have a sustainable business model. This space should be open to the public. Having this space would say to the world that cultural workers in the Yukon are open for business and recognized nationally and internationally.

Excellence and Professionalism - In order to have excellence, we must support the arts/artists. We need to focus on how to retain artists in the Yukon who typically leave because they lack resources like training in the Territory. There needs to be community support for mentoring and job shadowing in the Yukon to keep artists here. Artists should be able to make a living doing work in the arts without side jobs, perhaps through the creation of an Artist status in Canada that provides a guaranteed basic income for those in Arts careers. Support has to be in place to capture and enhance revenue for cultural workers. There needs to be a focus on raising the bar.

Yukon as a Global Leader - Honing the Yukon brand; there is a lot of mystique in the Yukon that makes it attractive on an international scale. There is a strength in our stories, which are authentic and unique to the North and are connected to the land. While tourism is high, it needs to be recognized that the cultural tourism in the Yukon is underdeveloped. The word Yukon as a brand, with identified cultural context, will create an appetite (for cultural). Our geographic position presents certain challenges, such as isolation/the high cost of travel within and outside of the Yukon and challenges in finding Southern investors. There needs to be more of a government focus to market local culture nationally and internationally, and culture needs to be woven throughout the tourism market. There needs to be a holistic vision for market development. The Territory could consider forming partnerships with other cultural hubs, universities or circumpolar connections.

Community engagement/teaching - Recognition that we are all inherently creative beings and therefore it is vital for the community to train in and expose young people to the arts throughout the Territory. Appreciation is increased when we know something about the arts;

<p>What research would be useful?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hard data to tell the story of the importance and benefits of investment in arts and culture. -How to streamline funding applications to facilitate eligibility for different types of activities and remove roadblocks to reporting. Making funding more flexible so that there isn't a need to plan so far in advance. Too much restriction in the funding system prohibits spontaneity of ideas and unplanned opportunities. -How funding can support those in the arts to grow at their own pace. -A feasibility study for creating an all-purpose arts complex in the Yukon. Yukon Government needs to recognize that the arts are an economic driver and this should be pushed forward as a public investment. A feasibility study would be an obvious step forward to a tangible vision. - Comprehensive information on all organizations working in the arts in the communities. - Having clear information on how much government funding is currently spent in the Yukon on arts. Current curriculum spending on arts versus other programs; how to incorporate art into other subjects. -How to develop the funding and staff capacity to get programming out to communities and engage in relationship building/forming partnerships. This includes identifying readily accessible contact persons in Whitehorse for people in the communities. -How other communities (internationally and nationally) of comparable size have created a tangible vision/campaign to promote the expansion of arts in the community -Feasibility of creating airfare subsidies for cultural workers to lessen impact of geographic isolation and potentially attract investors from outside the territory. This would also allow performers to showcase their work outside the territory without this added heavy financial burden.
<p>Whose voices are missing around the table?</p>	<p>Personal outreach was undertaken to gain a diverse group by artistic discipline, age, gender, Indigenous and People of Colour. In most dimensions, we achieved good results. We had 2 Indigenous and 2 PoC RSVP, and 1 of each were able to join the conversation. This level of participation by members of these two groups is felt to be lower than is desirable for the Yukon. We need to continue to reach out and find ways to include more diverse voices in the ongoing conversations.</p>
<p>Resources & links (mentioned during discussion or shared afterwards)</p>	<p> https://yukon.ca/en/budget-2019-20 https://yukon.ca/en/2019-20-main-estimates-tourism-and-culture https://yukon.ca/en/2019-20-main-estimates-education https://yukon.ca/en/2019-20-main-estimates-economic-development </p>

What next steps were mentioned as a result of the Gathering?

- Celebrate the successes and excellence we have already achieved in the Yukon and build on them.
- Create opportunities for more professional development in the Yukon such as beginner and master class offerings for artists and performers. Fostering a collaborative environment that pairs people with those on their level or beyond it.
- Advocating for more training and mentorship for youth as the future leaders of the Arts community in the Yukon.
- Creating consistent liaison roles for communities; a representative who could serve as a contact/resource for artists in the community and providing onboarding for new artists.
- Introduce regional touring program for artists and learn from other regions who do this well ie: BC and Alberta. Yukon artists are celebrated for excellence outside of Territory.
- Finding more ways to encourage/invite outside artists to the Yukon to share their expertise with local artists.
- Ongoing development/marketing of cultural tourism to the Yukon; accessing more markets and promoting the Yukon as a cultural destination.
- Exporting Yukon products to make artists' work more economically viable. Creating more occasions for performers to share their work outside the Territory.