

Topic	How do Festivals influence arts, culture & community?		
Date	October 21, 2020	Location	Squamish, BC
Host(s)	Peter Buchholz and Feet Banks		
Participants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Andrea Graham (Bass Coast) 2. Kirsten Andrews (Squamish Constellation Festival) 3. Brianna Craver (Burn in the Forest/GVIAS) 4. Jay DeMerit (Rise & Shine) 5. Devon Guest (District of Squamish) 6. Jen Bower (Crankworx) 7. Kat Frew (Gibbons Hospitality) 8. Amy Liebenberg (Squamish Arts Festival) 9. Dorte Froslev (Brackendale Art Gallery) 10. Stephen Vogler (The Point Artist-Run Center) 11. Feet Banks (Heavy Hitting) 12. Peter Buchholz (The Common) 13. Elliot Hearte (Arts BC) 14. Kristin Cheung (Mass Culture) 15. JP Tondreau (Evotion Events) 16. Patrick Weiller MP (Liberal Party of Canada) 		
Notetaker(s)	Katarina Trapara		
Facilitator(s)	Peter Buchholz and Feet Banks		
Invitation Questions	How do Festivals influence arts, culture & community?		
Perspectives and thoughts	<p><u>The importance of the human experience of connection and community</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having festivals in the summer can “fill our tanks up” with a sense of togetherness and connection as we go into colder, darker months - Festivals can support local economies, evident in the case in Whistler beer festivals - Experiences at festivals are a good litmus test of the health and vitality of the community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When you provide experiences for citizens through sport or the arts, you can track the markers of health: economic markers, outdoor, education, fitness, mental health, etc. - Temporal aspect of festivals: the fact that they are a few days long means that people can step out of their day-to-day lives and to step into something new - Benefit to the artists who are usually alone working on their music/art: being at a festival allows artists to make future connections/collaborations with other artists <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Festivals also connect artists and their work with a broader audience, and helps them economically 		

- The future of technology and community is a bridge: creating a technology-based solution as to how people can stay connected before and after a festivals
 - the creation of apps where one can “earn the right” to attend a festival (namely youth) is one avenue taken (e.g. Rise & Shine)
 - Spirit of the festival can be spread out throughout the year online as well

Discussion about the size of festivals: How do the panelists manage the size aspect of festivals? Can smaller, more regional festivals hit the same kind of quality of cultural experience as some of the larger ones (e.g. Pemberton Festival)?

- Bass Coast has intentionally limited its size in order to ensure that there is consistency--that people can trust that they will have the same amazing experience in the future
 - If it were to grow exponentially, it would surprise people and break the trust.
 - Limiting growth of Bass Coast has also been a test to see whether there was a threshold where one loses the community experience
- Smaller events can have the same power and impact on people--the impact isn't necessarily about the headlining event, but about smaller, individual experiences
- Growth isn't necessarily an indication of the success of an event or a festival
- Impact shouldn't be measured by growth, but about those magical moments experienced by performers or audience members--these experiences are hard to measure data-wise
- We need to build the idea of social profit, rather than profit or value measured in a capitalist economy.
 - Social profit can include wellness of community, the role of art in social change, the creative, cultural and knowledge exchange.
 - We need to have more tools to measure these social impacts in addition to a cultural-economy calculator
- Festivals, whether big or small, should be about profit for the community. Some events/festivals take economic losses rather than gains.
- A benefit of larger festivals, in contrast, is that there is a larger mix of people from different backgrounds, not just the “usual suspects” that might show up to smaller festivals.
 - Larger, accessible festivals may entice more (local) submissions and therefore be more successful
 - Depends on what your festival needs to thrive
- One of the hardest parts is to find the sweet spot financially, where you can produce high quality events without going to an overcrowded event

Discussion about engaging local artists in festivals

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It's important to do both: have your local artists but also bring in artists from the province or beyond <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Great way to get the bar equalized so that the local artists try to reach same level as non local artists - Some panelists' festivals feature more than half local artists (Squamish Constellation Festival and Bass Coast); some have made a decision that local artists were the most important focus (Squamish Arts Festival) - Many artists apply to a limited number of sets: important to choose artists with equity in mind, blind listens, making sure to represent marginalized groups, geographic areas, etc. - Partnership with local organizations/radio stations to get youth involved and give them opportunity to play in front of a bigger audience - Important to establish close connections between festival organizers and local talent, take the extra effort to engage local artists: personally calling artists and having conversations with them was one strategy - For one festival that has international events (Crankworx), one of their core values is to showcase the culture and vibe of the destination itself <p><u>What is a positive story you have to share regarding COVID-19?</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Everyone came together and collaborated in the organizing of the festival (Gibbons), and adapted by making the festival longer. Some business who were at risk of shutting down during COVID were upheld by the festival - The BC Music Festivals Collective was formed--had incredible conversations and sharing of knowledge and information that they hadn't had in the past on that level - Re-organizing during covid was emotionally and mentally consuming, but it made one festival (Squamish Arts Festival) seriously look at what their mission was: does the mission exist without a stadium? Inadvertently made the festival international, had new events happen that hadn't before this year - Certain festivals/events managed to successfully raise money, either for charity or the festival itself--some managed to raise more than years before (Terry Fox Run, Sunshine Coast Hospice Society) - There was the broadening and growth of some festivals, featuring new people from different backgrounds--social improvement - COVID created new opportunities to enjoy outdoor space and get together, creating hopefully a strong legacy for the future - COVID made it crucial to have good organization, something that should be carried forward into the future as well - The winter months, however, pose a challenge: more difficult to keep the community together, key events have to be cancelled <p><u>Have festivals become more difficult due to the BC liquor laws?</u></p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issues with zoning: makes movement difficult at a music festival, affects the user experience - Segregated licence zones amounted to long line ups, people being ID'd multiple times, loss of bar revenue - Many panelists agree that there are challenges surrounding the laws <p><u>Discussion on COVID recovery/rebuilding and role of funding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As the arts and festivals industry starts to recover, the work will be to figure out how to monetize the recovery, and to continue to validate the arts, culture and festival sectors - This industry will be slower to recover and hopefully when it does recover, it hits a point of critical mass where it accelerates and builds momentum - Recovery depends on support at all levels, including the level of funding: our job will be in figuring out how to tell the story and show the qualitative data to the government so they can support arts/culture/festival industry - The 21 million government funding announced to arts and culture recovery in BC is huge; BC is ahead of the game. We need a wider-spread federal plan, however. One piece of the relief money did go to groups who are not already receiving funding from the major funders, but only one. Canada Council for the Arts gave money to people who were registered with them as equity seeking groups according to their priorities--this is hugely problematic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do we want to rebuild a sector that actually has closed down all of those groups who are not able to receive funding for various reasons (e.g. nonurban areas) - Do you think that COVID has increased the public perception of the value of arts and culture? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Problem of the expectation of online content to be free of charge - Electronic music has been available free for a long time... hard to monetize - Panelists agree that people do realize that they need arts and culture, and that they value it. Monetization is difficult. - Patrick Weiller MP weighed in and stated there is more funding that is coming, and asked if anyone had any ideas of where that support can be best directed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some festivals were able to access federal funding, but many were not because they didn't meet the 50% canadian content threshold, we need to work on this. - Another challenge brought up was the fact that application process (e.g. WSSF) is very extensive and time consuming: massive deterrent to festival organising
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<p>What research would be useful?</p>	<p><u>The following research questions were relevant to the discussion:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) How do we quantify/qualify the value of the arts in society? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relatedly, how do we build the concept of “social profit”? How can we develop tools to measure positive social impacts? - Researching how to measure the value of arts in society can also help with COVID-19 recovery; presenting data to the government so that it can support the arts, culture and festival industry 2) How can we use technology (such as apps) to improve people’s experiences of a festival? 3) How do we fairly monetize online content? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One could gather data on how other organizations monetized their events and their levels of success. - To tie questions (2) and (3) together, the potential of creating a deeper experience for patrons through technology may be an interesting way to better monetize the event. One might be able to demand more sponsorship dollars and/or more sponsors that would be interested in creating the festival.
<p>Whose voices are missing around the table?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A couple of panelists left mid-way through the meeting
<p>Resources & Links (mentioned during discussion or shared afterwards)</p>	
<p>What next steps were mentioned as a result of the Gathering?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Working on the issue of funding for COVID-19 recovery. When the doors open back up again, many arts and culture organizations may not still be here. Panelists are grateful for the support coming in, but also acknowledge that it’s barely enough at present. - Mass Culture, the sponsor of this gathering, said that this is just the introduction and indeed the first of many future discussions. Hopefully that will be brought to fruition and we will all meet again and continue these important conversations. - Patrick Weiller MP reached out to Peter Buchholz, thanked everyone for their contribution and proposed a second gathering which might include the Minister of Culture.