

CULTURAL ROUNDTABLE LAUNCH

OCTOBER 25, 2014

10 a.m. to Noon

NOTES FROM DISCUSSIONS

ATTENDING: 31 members of the Grey Highlands community attended.

WELCOME: Meeting facilitator Wendy Stewart welcomed and thanked those attending for coming out to assist in launching the Grey Highlands Cultural Roundtable.

PURPOSE: Facilitator outlined the purpose of the meeting.

- To update the cultural community on our current project.
- To listen to the community about ideas on developing a cultural network, including how best to promote culture.
- To foster collaboration and coordination among cultural groups and event organizers.
- To determine how this cultural roundtable should unfold in the future.

OVERVIEW & BACKGROUND: Facilitator reviewed the background of municipal cultural planning in Grey Highlands and the current Cultural Development Fund project, including priorities for the fund addressed through this collaborative project. (Please see the attached Power Point presentation as handed out to participants.)

CULTURAL PLAN ACTION ITEMS: Facilitator outlined the action items from the municipal Cultural Plan. The meeting focus was identified as “Feeding the Field” and “Connecting the Community.” These are noted in the attached Power Point presentation as:

- 2.2. Encourage professional development opportunities, networking and resource sharing among artists and cultural groups
- 2.3 Create opportunities for cross-sectoral networking and collaboration; encourage coordination of culture with other aspects of the community

DISCUSSION FOCUS: Facilitator then encouraged comments and input on the two action items focus. Below are comments on the focus and what individuals in attendance saw as important to the community, themselves or their respective groups.

One attendee began discussions with comments about concerns about the definition of culture – as seen by the ministry as “creative artistic activities and heritage preservation”. The broad definition of culture used under previous phases of municipal cultural planning were too wide and did not allow for focus on the creators in community. There is concern the funding is supporting bureaucracy rather than individual or collective artistic creators.

The facilitator noted rather than defining culture, this meeting seeks to establish a way to move forward the community Cultural Plan to support and promote many aspects of local culture.

A marketing professional asked what has been done to “Feed the Field” in the past. The facilitator noted this meeting is for a higher level discussion about ways and means to move forward. It was suggested previous projects have developed Grey Highlands Cultural Roundtable – Meeting Notes – Oct. 25, 2014

digital cultural resources through the library, workshops for the community on municipal cultural planning, a community profile was developed along with a municipal cultural plan and a cultural planning committee was begun in the community to carry forward events like Culture Days, which has been supported by the municipality for the past couple years through a budget for performers and promotions and in-kind use of facilities. A website of local cultural assets was also created and populated from a database of local assets at visitgreighighlands.ca.

Perhaps this roundtable could have smaller focus groups to:

- Encourage interaction between professionals in the community
- Determine needed workshops to develop cultural entities in the community, for example:
 - o On social media use – demographics are changing for Facebook
 - Youth are more on Instagram and Twitter
 - Successful use of Facebook to promote events (eg. Elora)
- Identify directives to follow-up – who are we trying to reach and how?
 - o Who brings the biggest return? 50-year-old woman seeking a trop
 - o Who shall we target for initiatives – target by demographics and monitor results
 - Communications differences based on demographics
 - rural area presents barriers to highspeed internet and one coverage method
 - not sure the “shotgun effect” of flyer mailing gets biggest bang
 - winter and lack of transportation in winter is also an issue
 - o Communication is key – verbal/in-writing
- Evaluation – measure initiatives by attraction – need a threshold for best return
 - o An email or general mailing was seen as being too scatter gun
 - o People are offering their free time and interest – should be more focussed so people are clear on what they are here to do and discuss specific issues.

During discussions people were asked to give reasons why they attended and what they hope to get from a Cultural Roundtable. Many people (names are not included here) offered their insights, including:

- Opportunity to connect with the area and inform own group involvement
- Support inclusive opportunities to offer a voice for those with different abilities or cultures
- Supporting the library initiative as the library supports community
- Interested in how get community people to work together
- Identify a broad spectrum of interest in the community – help define closer what to work on
- Provide input and help define the project
- Find professional development and information opportunities
- Attract interest to the area and seek to supply resources to the cultural sector - “what is the field?”
- Arts administrator seeking to include art in planning and support local tourism
- If the “field” is Grey Highlands – what is the attraction/how do we get people to stop/shop/move here
- Previous Arts Council experience seeking to get folks to drop baggage and work together for success
- Need triggers to initiate discussion – field is full of culture, art space is important, audience space connects
- Need to build the audience – promote the local arts inventory – get the news out there
- An artist directory to promote all the good things available in our community
- Concern about continuing resources after grant funds are expended – how make this sustainable
- Observe the evidence of partnering in community between museum and library
- Promote the arts – glad so many artists and performers in attendance

- Encourages by idea of a list of arts and culture on an inventory list – need stronger understanding
- Encourage co-planning of event dates so not too much competition – potential to co-market
- Local ski club membership brings 750 families from GTA/KW/London here
- one third have weekend properties - always wanting to know about the “1000 secret things up here”
- people want to know through simplistic communications what to do and see while visiting here
 - o when is the water up in the lakes; what is the farmers market timing; where are the trails?
 - o When are local restaurants open – from when to when – where get info centrally?
- Business could be communicators – act as information brokers to visitors
- Interest in inventory and how to better communicate with residents
 - o Municipal ad in Advance doesn’t reach all – social media and website could help
 - o How can we communicate to all ages and what ways are best?
 - o Clarify communications – use municipal TAX BILL to keep people connected
- Potential necessity of an Arts Council – how could we fund this?
- Cluster people speaking from similar perspectives – have break-out sessions so each may identify topic
- Culture is fuzzy – really have to define the “creators” not leave it to bureaucracy
- Should there be a top-down approach or a ground up approach (like an Arts Council)
- Different strokes for different folks always bring varying perspective – beware a “milk marketing board for the arts” – Roundtable brings the supply and demand sides of culture together
- Fundraising is important for many local groups – including Friends of Library/Museum – competition?
- Interested in helping out however it works – flyer mail out was a good way to spread the word
- Library staff not being paid to be here – interested in volunteering after retirement
- Previous chair of cultural planning committee – disbanded as Roundtable was coming
- Wants to see people coordinate - was a struggle to get people to agree on “why here” and “what doing”
- Great need for patience, collaboration and inclusive thinking
- You may have your own agenda but need to listen to others and determine best practices
- Generational farmer heard through heritage committee – suggests early pioneers created community through the fabric of the land we have today – we are losing some natural heritage features to development
- Grey Highlands is rich through the diversity of its communities – still learning about collective community
- Must hold it together and promote ourselves
- Central information source will be key
- Need to monitor and evaluate newspaper as an information source – not reaching all?
- Need to promote WORK, REST, PLAY, ENJOY!
- Sometimes hard to get people who commute to the city involved as they have less time here
- The family experience is key to attract full range of visitors and new residents – something for all ages in all seasons – allows attraction of visiting friends and relatives as well
- Lifelong resident cares about community – how do we promote ourselves effectively
- Hard to maintain volunteers for long-term events – need to support through municipal council
- Relative newcomer on volunteer board felt it was an adjustment moving here 12 years ago
- Came here because of natural beauty – resident evolution the longer here more involved
- Weekend and visiting demographics looking for cultural things to do
- Attended to see who responded to the call
- culture is an emotional thing but must be pragmatic for local business too
- looking at this through three lenses – as an involved volunteer wants more action in cultural development
- active/directed creative process would allow more involvement from across community
- father of artist who wants to come back here to be part of the creative process

- consumer of culture – wants to see it become sustainable
- active member of many groups would like to see more promotion and coordination among groups
- a list or directory of cultural assets and artists could become a one-stop communication place
- event calendar would be helpful so groups would have one central area to post and promote
- a process to allow groups to connect and reach out to contact each other would help
- resource sharing – the municipal ad is not necessarily the place for all things
- interest in community health and well-being
- a commuter who finds it difficult to be too involved has no specific agenda
- concern over limiting scope of discussion – need streams of activity
- dream of people in arts who may WORK in the field here and survive
- graphic artist promotes regional arts for 10 years – guide for serious artists in cultural business
- publishes a juried arts calendar and a history book about Eugenia – working on another history book
- always open to information and resource sharing
- traveller enjoys culture but feels needs to journey outside the area to fulfill cultural needs
- few things in our own area – walking trails could be enhanced with guided walks
- an umbrella group where each group could meet each other would be beneficial
- Markdale cable provider wants to support cultural promotion and development
- Community involvement is key – start it and it will grow
- Wants things to do with the whole family in the area
- Local actor and playwright focus on need to develop audiences through all platforms of social media
- Coordinate all cultural endeavours – keeping populace and tourists informed of what is happening
- 2010-12 Dusk Dances event was well attended but could have been promoted more to sustain
- Municipal event calendar could be developed to “pop” and be more exciting to draw more people to it

FURTHER DISCUSSION: One attendee noted in attending all candidates meeting there wasn't much discussion about culture – and it is not prominent in the strategic plan of the community. Arts and culture are integral to the development of a healthy community – it also drives artists to come here. Hopes the Roundtable will help develop arts.

Meeting facilitator clarified the municipality is not seeking to create culture, but is taking a facilitator role through providing facilities for use. The municipality does support culture as we are here discussing it.

Councillor said he sat on the cultural planning committee until it fizzled. Many groups were invited to participate and nobody came to that group. It coordinated Culture Days in 2013 then was given to another group to coordinate in 2014 with provision of municipal facilities and a budget of \$5400 for coordination, promotions and performers.

Typically arts councils are not political – as they may be advocating to municipal and other governments.

One person suggested she wanted to have an art show at a municipal facility, but the cost was prohibitive. A reduced cost of rentals would lead to more events. It was noted perhaps groups could collaborate to share costs of rentals. It was also noted by the councillor that it is hard to pick and choose who gets reduced rates – can't reduce for everyone. Perhaps the cultural umbrella group could apply to the Financial Assistance Program to get use of facilities for cultural groups for days beyond Culture Days.

It was also noted there are many places in the community which could potentially provide locations for artistic events and programs, including restaurants, Beaver Valley etc.

There needs to be some way to help each other through coordination – takes a long time to arrange things and we can't keep all the people happy all the time. Perhaps this would be assisted by defining culture more closely to help limit the scope of projects.

NEXT STEPS: Attendees were asked if the next meeting should be at the Kinxplex or perhaps at another location within the community – one of the libraries or Kimberley Hall? Potential to have a meeting at Beaver Valley? How would people like to see this progress. There was not a lot of feedback – though it was thought smaller focus groups would be appropriate.

One attendee from a multi-cultural and people with disabilities group noted smaller groups would encourage her to attend. She will not attend another general meeting like this one.

Project lead noted group could meet at smaller location. Follow-up meeting will be fairly soon – potentially next month (November). Focus groups may be the way to go at a better venue where it is more of a discussion not a presentation. Take away the microphone and allow people to speak up for themselves.

Consultant for training on hand thought these meetings would be a good way to determine what kind of training people want for skill development for organizations. "What do you know we don't know."

We need to know the things that are in place already – what is not effective needs to become more effective. How do we do that? In what ways may we optimize the website, get the promo out to others, get likes on the page, email sharing, get a Grey Highlands YouTube channel, gather content and promote visitgreyhighlands.ca.

The community channel on cable may be used to promote other areas of local culture. Channel information could be internet based and stream from there – still determining this process and will depend on rest of development.

ADJOURNMENT: Attendees were thanked for their participation. Meeting ended at 12 p.m.

HIGHLIGHTS – noted on flip chart throughout the meeting:

- Importance of targeting demographics
- Focus groups could form as "clusters"
- Once focus is determined allow larger feed in
- Arts directory/support arts/promote
- Clear communications essential
 - o How to connect to each demographic
 - o Central source of information
- Inclusion is important
- Coordination of event dates
- Info for visitors – promote the 1000 secrets out there
- Communicate through businesses
- Arts council is an opportunity
- Volunteers are required to keep all groups going
- Family activities in Four Season area