



Arts, Culture and Heritage assets serve and uphold basic human needs across all areas of civilization and the economy.

What's Emerging

- Performing arts organizations are taking longer to build back after the COVID-19 pandemic than anticipated. Operating costs, sponsorships, private sector fundraising, earned revenues and grants have all been affected. The Professional Association of Canadian Theatres notes that, while the overall culture sector accounts for 2.3% of Canada's GDP, the performing arts industry was among the hardest hit sectors nationally, and experienced the most stringent and longest-duration of restrictions globally.
- There is a focus on engaging people to return to attending live performances and in-person events. While the pandemic gave organizations the ability to present events virtually, engaging audiences in-person is a priority.
- Increased attention is being paid to the benefit that Niagara could derive from having an Arts Council organization. The role of Arts/Culture/Heritage in civic engagement and community building is not well-understood in Niagara, and the region lags behind comparator municipalities when it comes to investment in this sector.
- Volunteering patterns are changing. Volunteer Canada notes that Arts and Culture organizations have one of the highest rates of volunteer hours in the country (104 hours/year). Overall, 25% of volunteers see contributing to community well-being as a leading motivation for volunteering.
- The Rodman Art Institute of Niagara (RAIN) is engaging the community in examining options for a new public art gallery in the region. This builds upon Rodman Hall Art Centre's 60 years of work to steward a 1,000+ piece collection. Twenty per cent of the works in the collection are certified as Canadian Cultural Property, because they have been determined to be of significance to the nation.

Suggested Community Action Steps

- Build upon evidence already gathered, to advance the culture sector in Niagara as a key element in the region's tourism industry and creative economy. A 2019 Niagara Community Observatory policy brief defines the culture sector as including occupations in the performing arts, spectator sports, heritage amenities, amusement and recreation activities.
- Encourage all municipalities in Niagara to invest in supporting local assets in the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector. Take a partnership approach to creating models that market beyond Niagara's signature events and sites. Market-ready product exists that requires support to stabilize, and to generate easily-secured 'additive tourism' among travellers already visiting the area.
- Gather organizations working in this sector, to identify opportunities to take collective action to demonstrate the role the sector plays in the socio-economic well-being and growth of the Niagara community.
- Examine and describe the current state of volunteering in the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector in Niagara.

Indicators

- **Involvement in and Time Spent on Arts, Culture and Heritage Activities in Niagara**
- **Arts, Culture and Heritage Assets in Niagara**
- **Contribution of the Cultural Sector to the Socio-Economic Wellbeing of Niagara**

Happening Now

- The Lincoln and Pelham Public Libraries merged in 2022, as Lincoln Pelham Public Library, to share services, resources, programs and staff. A focus on technology, Makerspaces, and decreasing the digital divide is supported by a new Digital Strategies Librarian.
- The Living Library collection at the Niagara Falls Public Library brings voices of lived experience to inform the design and delivery of housing services in Niagara.
- The Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre produced a 3-part Indigenous Perspectives docuseries highlighting Indigenous history in Niagara. The Series is included in a new mandatory Indigenous Engagement course for all Niagara Region staff. The Region's health equity strategy includes a priority for meaningful, authentic engagement with First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. This includes ensuring promotion and celebration of Indigenous cultural identities and heritage.
- In 2022, the Shaw Festival Theatre in Niagara-on-the-Lake marked its 60th anniversary, presenting performances, productions, concerts and shows in the community to an audience of 170,803. Add-on experiences, including 3,943 events, classes, workshops, and activities, engaged an additional 60,903 participants. The theatre has grown to be Niagara's largest cultural charity, and one of the 20 largest employers in the region. Every dollar spent with The Shaw leverages an average of \$7+ in local and regional spend (\$238,000,000). Hundreds of members of The Shaw Guild contribute thousands of volunteer hours toward Shaw Festival activities, and donate proceeds of fundraising efforts to The Shaw.
- In 2023, the annual Celebration of Nations gathering of Indigenous arts, culture and tradition received a national Cultural Event Award from the Creative City Network of Canada. The September event, held at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in St. Catharines, celebrates creativity, diversity and resilience.
- A 2021 Brock University policy brief emphasizes the importance of supporting arts organizations to rebound from the pandemic, citing their \$2 billion+ contribution, in direct and associated spending, to Niagara's economic and social well-being. The arts community is cited as "resilient and creative" in responding to pandemic challenges.
- Juno award winners and nominees from across Canada performed at 13 for 13 Culture Festival events held during the Niagara 2022 Canada Summer Games. Each of Niagara's 13 municipalities were paired with one of Canada's 13 provinces and territories, to showcase unique entertainment and culinary experiences.

