



Happening Now



Arts, Culture & Heritage

The presence and creative expression of a diverse range of arts, culture and heritage opportunities gives our community vitality and helps to bring people together.

- The annual Celebration of Nations Indigenous arts, culture and tradition gathering is held in September at the FirstOntario Performing Arts Centre in St. Catharines. The three-day event caps off year-long programming that celebrates creativity, diversity and resilience. In 2019, the Celebration's third year, more than 40 events welcomed over 3,500 community members and visitors. The event was held virtually in 2020. It included an annual awards ceremony honoring outstanding achievement in Performing Arts; Visual Arts; Intellectual Advancement; Language and Culture; Empathic Traditions; and Two Row Alliance.
- A 2019 policy brief examining the economic impact of the culture sector in Niagara calls for identifying new ways for the sector to advance as a cornerstone of the region's tourism industry and creative economy. The brief cites the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector's role in strengthening community resilience, through broad impact on building openness, diversity and adaptability. The culture sector is defined as including occupations in the performing arts; spectator sports; heritage amenities; amusement and recreation activities.
- The Canada Summer Games will be held in Niagara in August, 2022. Planning is underway to ensure that cultural events and celebrations affiliated with the Games will help to shine a light on our region's wealth of arts, culture and heritage amenities.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, museums and other organizations in this sector in Niagara are finding new audiences through virtual programming.



What's Emerging

- Building up the inventory of Niagara's cultural assets, and describing the depth of the informal dimension of the cultural sector are identified as important steps in helping our community to establish upstream support systems to position workers in the sector to scale up activities, and participate more fully in the economy.
- Public Libraries in Niagara are increasingly recognized for being welcoming community hubs that offer comprehensive access to information and digital resources. They help citizens to bridge the technology divide; provide reliable access to the internet, computers, and technology; and they partner with human service agencies to offer opportunities for satellite outreach. (This statement is also included in the Community Belonging Sector of the Living in Niagara-2020 report.)
- The COVID-19 pandemic is having a devastating effect on the numbers of people who are able to experience, and who are able to express themselves through in-person arts, culture and heritage events and amenities. It is having a similar effect on revenue levels for non-profit arts organizations. An informal preliminary review of the pandemic's impact estimates that collectively, local non-profit arts organizations in Niagara lost millions of dollars in revenue generation in 2020.
- Interest in finding the optimal balance between virtual and in-person programming is building. This may make arts, culture and heritage events more accessible for people who are not able to access programming in-person. A hybridized model could also help to offset any pandemic effects that last longer than anticipated.

Suggested Community Action Steps

- Engage Arts, Culture and Heritage sector players in developing a common agenda and measures of success regarding the role this sector plays in the health and well-being of Niagara. Describe the sector's direct and indirect impact on Niagara's growth.
- Establish a baseline description of cultural knowledge in the Niagara-wide community.
- Describe and measure the breadth and depth of the digital divide in Niagara, and work collaboratively across sectors to address the gap.
- Identify and address barriers to participation in Arts, Culture and Heritage activities in Niagara.
- Describe the role of, and opportunities for volunteers in the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector in Niagara.

Indicators Measures for these indicators can be found at: www.livinginniagarareport.com

- **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**