

Background

Development of the Huron County Cultural Plan covered a fourteen month period from March, 2013 to April 2014. The completed Huron County Cultural Plan was approved by Huron County Council in May, 2014.

STEERING COMMITTEE & STAFF WORKING GROUP

The Plan's development was guided by an eighteen member Steering Committee made up of sector representatives and stakeholders who met on a monthly basis throughout the project period.

As well as the Steering Committee, a Staff Working Group made up of County of Huron employees from the Cultural Services and Planning and Economic Development Departments provided a second layer of oversight to the development of the Cultural Plan.

In total, twenty-six individuals including: County of Huron staff, community and sector organizations and lower-tier municipal representatives directly engaged in guiding the development of the Cultural Plan's strategic directions and recommended actions.

Community Consultation

Community consultation was undertaken at various times over the course of the project. In addition to the steering committee meetings, the project also included an online survey, community forums and one-on-one interviews with stakeholders.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS & RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

A total of 51 recommended actions within a framework of six strategic directions are contained in the Cultural Plan.

1. ***Invest in our People.*** Expand Huron County's human capital by providing professional development opportunities locally, engaging more youth in local culture and recognizing the importance of volunteers to the cultural sector and the community.
2. ***Foster Partnerships and Collaborations.*** Increase the sector's capacity by bringing different partners together to share resources and expertise.

3. ***Implement a Communications Strategy.*** Develop and implement a comprehensive communications strategy to share our stories, promote our creative industries and cultural programming and build visibility and appreciation for local culture.

4. ***Leverage Existing Cultural Resources.*** Build on or adapt some of our existing cultural resources to meet new community needs.

5. ***Advance the Municipality's Role in Cultural Development.*** Continue to support the County of Huron's leadership role in ways that are of benefit to the entire sector and community at large.

6. ***Preserve and Promote our Cultural Heritage.*** Preserve our cultural heritage for future generations and build appreciation and respect for our individual and shared histories.

IMPLEMENTATION

The 51 recommendations in the Cultural Plan were to be implemented over a four-year span beginning in 2014 and continuing until the end of 2018.

County of Huron's Role

Principal responsibility for implementation of most of the strategic actions outlined in the Plan resided with the County of Huron. The Cultural Services Department acted as the lead on most initiatives and was responsible for the oversight of the Plan's implementation.

Partnerships

Huron Arts & Heritage Network (HAHN), as the County's cultural umbrella organization, acted in an advisory capacity to the Cultural Services Department throughout the implementation period.

In order to successfully build on the cultural capital in the County, Cultural Services also worked closely with many partners and collaborators from the local cultural sector, lower-tier municipalities, social agencies and community groups in implementing the Cultural Plan. Working with our networks and sharing ownership of some of the action items provided the project with additional skills and resources and improved our ability to implement more of the recommended actions.

Following is a list of the 51 Recommended Actions contained in the Huron County Cultural Plan with a brief description of the work done to fulfill each of those action items.

1. Invest in Our People

1.1 *Nominate local individuals and organizations for external awards and recognition programs and provide support in preparing those nominations.*

Staff assisted with preparation of nominations for National and Provincial awards:

- Kingsbridge Centre - Governor General's History Awards 2018 - Unsuccessful
- The Great Storm of 1913 Remembrance Committee - Governor General's History Awards 2014 – Recipient of Excellence in Community Programming Award
- Blyth Festival - Ontario Premiers Award for Excellence in the Arts – submitted nominations each year from 2013 to 2016. Festival was a finalist in both 2013 and 2014.

1.2 *Support the recommendations in the “The Heart of Community: A Report on Volunteerism in Perth and Huron Counties” prepared by the United Way Perth-Huron.*

Cultural Services staff participated in United Way Perth-Huron's Volunteerism Subcommittee that oversaw the development of the new iVolunteer Perth-Huron online portal. The site currently has 43 member organizations and there are 150 prospective volunteers who have created profiles on the iVolunteer website. The site averages about 600-700 searches per month.

1.3 *Provide professional business development training workshops and mentoring for cultural and creative industries to help ensure the health and competitiveness of that economic sector.*

Cultural Programs and Huron Arts & Heritage Network partnered with Small Business Enterprise Centre, United Way Perth-Huron and Work in Culture to offer 8 Professional development workshops since 2015 targeted to the arts and culture sector. Over 100 participated in the 8 workshops.

1.4 *Work with local artists and arts organizations to expand on the number of recreational arts workshops available locally and improve the affordability and participation levels for those workshops.*

Created the Test Drive Your Creative Side in partnership with HAHN and funding support from Ontario Trillium Foundation. Program ran in 2015 and 2016. Over 2 years the program ran 34 classes, hired 20 Huron County artists and had total registration of over 300.

1.5 *Provide more intensive arts-based skill development opportunities for local youth (e.g. arts camps, workshops, young companies).*

Imago filmmaking program in 2016 was open to youth 14-19 years of age. Through the program youth had the opportunity to work with five professional filmmakers from Huron County. Programming included a series of three film-making labs followed by an intensive 3-day weekend masterclass May 27-29, 2016.

The Deep Roots feature-length documentary film had six paid intern positions that provided young film makers the opportunity to get practical experience and mentorship.

1.6 Investigate the possibility of establishing a Cultural Specialist High Skills Major at two Huron County secondary schools

No Action

1.7 Establish a scholarship fund for local youth headed into the creative sector.

Blyth Centre for the Arts and Huron Arts & Heritage Network partner on an annual \$1,000 scholarship in 2016 that is presented to a graduating Huron County Secondary School student who is going on to post-secondary studies in any arts discipline. To date three students have been awarded scholarships: Emma Johns (Clinton), Dan Pavkeje (Exeter) and Liv Hussey (Goderich)

1.8 Promote more volunteer opportunities in the arts, culture and heritage sectors to high school students.

iVolunteer Perth-Huron portal is promoted to secondary school students in the Avon Maitland District School Board as a source of volunteer opportunities to fulfill their mandatory 40 hour of community involvement.

1.9 Identify the youth friendly spaces in each community and promote to youth as spaces where they can gather and provide assistance in organizing arts programming.

Two comprehensive Huron County Library branches created and/or updated dedicated spaces for youth.

Asset mapping work by library identifies all community assets, including those that may be youth friendly.

Promotion of programs and activities being offered by the Cultural Collective in South Huron, that offers programs aimed at youth.

1.10 Provide more opportunities for youth to contribute to local culture by encouraging and recruiting youth to sit on the Boards of Directors, Advisory, Planning and Steering Committees for our cultural organizations.

No Action

1.11 *Work with existing cooperative education programs in the County's secondary schools to place more students in creative and cultural industries.*

Huron County Museum and Huron County Library have provided cooperative education opportunities for 5 secondary school students within Cultural Services since 2014.

2. Foster Partnership and Collaborations

2.1 *Provide not-for-profit board training including: succession planning in organizations to ensure our cultural leaders pass on their knowledge and passion before they leave.*

Huron Tourism Association sponsored a Board Governance Best Practices Workshop in February, 2016. The workshop was attended by 68 people from the not-for-profit sector of Huron County.

2.2 *Bring together private sector businesses and cultural organizations to explore sponsorship opportunities that are mutually beneficial.*

Huron County chosen by Business for the Arts as an ArtsVest program community. As part of the yearlong program, five Huron arts organizations: HAHN, Bach Music Festival of Canada, Goderich Little Theatre, Blyth Festival and Art aRound Town, received 28 hours of capacity building and mentorship training on corporate sponsorship. Through the program the five arts organizations were able to realize \$20,158 in new corporate sponsorship funds from 16 local companies. ArtsVest Ontario provided matching funds of \$13,654, creating a total influx of new sponsorship to the arts community of Huron County of \$33,812 in 2015.

2.3 *Hold a funders' forum to present information of different public funding programs and opportunities available.*

A Funders Forum was held in Bayfield in fall of 2014. The forum included representatives from Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Ontario Trillium Foundation, Perth-Huron United Way, and Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Looking at holding a similar forum again in 2019.

2.4 *Provide support to sector organizations to write effective funding proposals*

Staff has assisted or prepared funding applications for numerous cultural organizations including successful applications for:

- Alice Munro Festival
- Blyth 14/19
- Cultural Collective
- Huron Arts & Heritage Network
- 2017 IPM
- Kingsbridge Centre

2.5 *Promote membership in Huron Arts & Heritage Network (HAHN) to those in the arts, culture and heritage sectors.*

Huron Arts & Heritage Network's (HAHN) Board of Directors fluctuates between 8 to 10 members at any given time. Board recruitment is ongoing, as with any not-for-profit organization, and over the past four years it averages about two new Board members joining each year to replace departing Board members.

2.6 *Provide networking events and opportunities for the arts, culture and heritage communities in Huron.*

Huron Arts & Heritage Network's Speakeasy program ran from 2013-2015. Speakeasy's were informal networking events with entertainment held in different locations around Huron County several times a year.

2.7 *Work with the Local Immigration Partnership Council to include more diversity in cultural programs by actively reaching out to newcomer populations.*

Cultural diversity is built into programming by staff for the following events:

- Huron Multicultural Festival
- Day of the Dead event at Exeter Library
- Alice Munro Festival of the Short Story Programming

3. Develop and Implement a Comprehensive Communications Plan

3.1 *Prepare a report that gathers and analyzes quantitative data to measure the economic and social impact of local arts, culture and heritage in Huron County as the basis for making the case for support and appreciation for the local cultural sector.*

There is currently a lot of work being done on how to measure the positive economic and social impacts of arts and culture to a community. This recommendation will move forward into the next cultural plan

cycle with the intention that we can adopt some of these new data collection models to measure the contributions of arts and culture in Huron County.

3.2 Publish an annual report card on the status of the creative and cultural sector in Huron County.

A progress report was published mid-way through implementation and made public in spring 2016.

3.3 Position creativehuron.ca as the primary hub to promote and share information on Huron County's arts, culture and heritage activities, stories, organizations and industries.

Creativehuron.ca page views by year:

- 2014 – 25,087
- 2015 – 25,308
- 2016 – 24,058
- 2017 – 14,277
- 2018 – 11,598

Most of the marketing and promotion switched from creativehuron to social media platforms in 2017. Creativehuron.ca was recently re-launched with a fresh design without database information

3.4 Continue to build the database created through the cultural mapping project and make it into a marketing and promotion tool for all of Huron's cultural resources

1,286 arts, culture and heritage asset records uploaded to Huron County database.

3.5 Promote the large music scene that exists in Huron County by creating a distinct directory of musicians, music teachers and live music events and venues

Information was collected and database records were created for over 100 Huron County musicians and bands in 2014.

3.6 Promote the County's cultural selling points and contributions to quality of place in Huron County as part of newcomers attraction strategies

Cultural Passport program ran for 2 years 2015 & 2016. 200 cultural passports printed and distributed to host families of international students in the Avon Maitland District School Board. Passports offered discounts and incentives to students and host families to visit 10 cultural attractions and events in Huron County.

3.7 *Include an educators menu on creativehuron.ca that lists local heritage and cultural sites information and activities that complement the education curriculum*

Through the Huron County Museum & Historic Gaol, Cultural Services has increased direct partnerships and communication with the Avon Maitland and Huron Perth Catholic District School Boards through ongoing collaborative programs (Takeover Day) and co-organizing events and cultural performances that speak to the Ontario curriculum and connect students with local history, heritage and culture both in the classroom and onsite. Staff have also re-launched and widely promoted its slate of school programs designed to meet curriculum expectations and successfully fostered an increase in the number of students visiting the museum and gaol.

4. Leverage Existing Cultural Resources to Meet Community Needs

4.1 *Share best practices for modifying and renovating existing facilities into usable creative performance and studio spaces.*

A Senior Fellow of Artscape, spent a full day with Board of Directors of Blyth 14/19 to consult and share best practices for Blyth Memorial Community Hall renovations.

Links to Artscape and ArtsBuild Ontario, provincial organizations dedicated to building and renovating cultural spaces are available on creativehuron.ca

4.2 *Launch creative makerspaces in public facilities and spaces.*

Huron County Library has been acquiring Maker technology including a 3D printer, Ozobots, KANO computers, Cubelets and more to expand the range of technology that is available to residents. The Makerspace technology launched at the IPM in 2017 where there were 4000 interactions with the public.

4.3 *Expand Huron County Cultural Awards to reflect the new Cultural Plan vision statement and strategic actions (e.g. innovation in the arts).*

An Innovation Category was added in 2015 and the Warden's Award in 2013 to the Huron County Cultural Award's list of categories. Other categories are: Heritage Individual/Organization, Individual Artist, Community Contribution, and Community Event or Organization.

4.4 *Look for ways to extend the tourism season beyond the summer months by encouraging the production of more cultural events in the spring and winter.*

- Doors Open Huron County Event – October 2014
- 161st Battalion Remembrance - October 2016

- Haunted Huron – October 2018

4.5 Create new dynamic tourism experiences by packaging existing cultural activities and programs with accommodation and dining offers.

Staff participated in development of Taste of Huron website taseofhuron.com that promotes local food and drink producers as well as customizable local food tours.

4.6 Develop a cultural tourism marketing campaign to promote Huron County's 'signature' festivals and events.

The Economic Development Department included 4 pages of the 54-page 2019 Visitor's Guide to highlight and promote our signature festivals and events happening throughout the year.

4.7 Build appreciation for our natural heritage by promoting outdoor recreational opportunities (e.g. hiking trails, rivers, beaches, etc.).

- Staff participated in the implementation of the Huron County Cycling Strategy
- Staff participation in G2G Rail Trail Strategy Session with municipal stakeholders in 2018
- Select trails featured in 2018 Huron County Visitors Guide
- Economic Development staff are updating the Huron County Trail Guide in 2019

4.8 Ensure that our civic spaces (downtown cores, parks, etc.) have the necessary infrastructure to be venues for community events and cultural programming

No Action.

4.9 Work with Chambers of Commerce and BIAs to produce cultural events and activities in the downtown cores

Staff works with:

- Goderich BIA on Huron Multicultural Festival
- Wingham BIA on Alice Munro Festival of the Short Story
- Clinton BIA on Culture Days
- Exeter BIA on Christmas Lantern Walk

Cultural Services staff are connectors. We work with representatives from over 100 different community organizations and groups on a regular basis.

5. Advance the Role of the County of Huron in Local Cultural Development

5.1 Investigate a Huron County funding program that provides seed funding for arts and culture initiatives similar to the Huron Heritage Fund.

Staff reviewed arts & culture funding programs from 8 comparable municipalities. Some of the best practices from those municipal funding programs were built into the application for Supporting Local Economic Development (SLED) program application. Economic Development's SLED program and Huron Heritage Fund are currently supporting some of the sector's funding needs.

5.2 Explore the development of a Huron County public art policy that includes a review of possible funding options for commissioning public arts projects.

Staff have reviewed a number of comparable municipal public art master plans. The challenge is identifying a sustainable funding model, i.e. 1% of capital budget for art, as well as how to introduce and implement a public art policy in a two-tier municipal structure.

5.3 Huron County convene a meeting of interested stakeholders to begin discussion and planning for cultural programming in 2017 to celebrate Canada's Sesquicentennial that will also support the activities planned by the International Plowing Match.

- Staff held an Open House to discuss potential Canada 150 projects at Huron County Museum in fall of 2016.
- Ontario150 funding supported the 2017 Huron Multicultural Festival.
- Canada 150 funding supported programming at the 2017 IPM.

5.4 Take the lead in promoting local cultural events and activities as part of the Canada's annual Culture Days weekend.

Cultural Services and HAHN have worked together the last 2 years to create cooperative marketing materials to promote all of the activities happening in Huron County on Culture Days weekend (last weekend in September) including 25 events in 2018.

Huron County Library participated in Culture Days @The Library by offering interactive programs in several branches.

5.5 Have Huron Arts & Heritage Network (HAHN) act as an advisory committee to the County of Huron throughout the Cultural Plan's implementation.

Cultural Services has a seat on the Board of HAHN. Information is shared on what Cultural Services is working on through a monthly report to the HAHN Board from the Cultural Development Officer.

5.6 *Continued support from the County of Huron for current Cultural Services Department programs including: Huron Heritage Fund, Huron County Art Bank, Summer Reading Program, Internet Access Training.*

The County of Huron continues to support the Cultural Services Department and the implementation of related strategies (Huron County Library Strategic Plan, Huron County Museum Strategic Plan and County of Huron Cultural Plan). Funding opportunities available through the federal and provincial governments continue to be pursued and offset core funding requirements whenever possible. Since 2014, 32 projects have received over \$100,000 from the Huron Heritage Fund and the County has purchased 10 artworks for the Huron County Art Bank.

5.7 *Continuation of support and partnership with Huron Arts & Heritage Network (HAHN) from the County of Huron.*

Many cultural programs and activities are produced jointly between HAHN & Cultural Services including the annual Huron County Cultural Awards and Huron Multicultural Festival. Creativehuron.ca is hosted and maintained by County of Huron.

5.8 *Continue to promote Huron County Libraries as information centres.*

The Library's new Strategic Plan incorporates the development of community hubs into its vision for the next five years. This is being achieved through Libraries Transforming Communities work where staff turn outward in their communities to better understand local aspirations, main concerns and specific issues and how they can address them through daily work and with local partners. As of early 2019, over 40 community conversations and 220 street interviews have been conducted.

A Community Asset Map is underway, compiling a listing of all assets in Huron County.

6. Preserve and Promote Our Cultural Heritage

6.1 *Work with existing municipal heritage advisory committees to promote the advantages of having appointed heritage committees.*

Staff are providing support to Bluewater Heritage Advisory Committee and Goderich Municipal and Marine Heritage Committee on hosting Ontario Heritage Conference in May 2019.

6.2 *Convene a heritage networking organization to connect members of other heritage committees and organizations across the county*

No Action

6.3 Create a uniform heritage plaque program with which to recognize significant heritage resources

Huron County Historical Society has continued moving forward with their historic plaque program in the last few years and have identified both subjects and locations for new historic plaques in the County.

6.4 Provide and promote workshops on conservation and collection management topics

The Huron County Museum held 'Museum Secrets' Workshops in 2016:

- Vintage Vehicle Care
- How to Document and photograph your family treasures
- How to Research your home using the Huron County Archives
- Tour of the Museum & Behind the Scenes

The Museum continues to offer outreach opportunities to groups that include speaker's topics on documentation, photography, preservations, as well as archival topics.

6.5 Use and encourage the use of digital media and technology to create new content that tells our community's stories

The Cultural Services Department continues to use digital media and technology in innovative ways to promote the culture and heritage of the Huron County. Examples of projects completed include: Digitized Newspapers, Henderson Digitization Project, Huron Heritage Moment videos, archives online initiative, Deep Roots Documentary, Huron County World War Commemorations Video. 24 distinct Newspapers have been digitized, including over 134, 800 pages. 3650 artifacts are on PastPerfect online and Historic photos are on Flickr.

6.6 Connect the arts and heritage communities in order for them to collaborate on mutually beneficial projects

- Doors Open Huron County, 2014 – 44 local artists provided programming in 38 sites across Huron County
- From Furrows to Frontlines The 161st Battalion, 2016 – 550 ceramic poppies installed in front of Goderich cenotaph to mark the number of Huron County residents who did not return from WWI.
- Heritage Book Festival, 2018 - 25 local history authors participated in the two-day event

6.7 Work with municipalities and heritage committees to build on their existing heritage walks.

HAHN has received funding from Economic Development's Supporting Local Economic Development (SLED) program and Regional Tourism Organization #4 to develop audio walking tours based on printed heritage walks for Bayfield, Blyth and Goderich in 2019.

6.8 Connect local heritage organizations to regional and provincial initiatives and best practices by building membership and participation levels in regional and provincial umbrella organizations.

The Huron County Museum is a member of two groups that connect heritage organizations from the area.

- Huron Perth Middlesex Museum Network – representatives from museums throughout the area meet formally twice yearly for professional development opportunities and business meetings, but coordinate activities throughout the year. The Ontario Museum Association and Ministry of Culture are represented at these meetings. The group has a Facebook page, twitter site, and is currently developing a website to promote the group and affiliated sites. The Huron County Museum holds an executive roll in this group. Other organizations in Huron County that regularly attend meetings are the Clinton School on Wheels and St. Joseph's Historical Society. Other groups have been invited but at this point are not active members.
- Collections Staff are also members/attendees at the Pastperfect Users Group which is comprised of Museums throughout Southwestern Ontario. The focus of these museums is collections.
- Overall membership is held in the Canadian Museum Association, Ontario Museum Association, Archives of Ontario, and Canadian Association of Conservation of Cultural Property

6.9 Continue to move forward with the Archives, Corporate Records, Museum Storage Feasibility Study.

A feasibility study was completed in 2014 and brought forward to Council in 2015. Since 2015, the Museum has developed a Collections Committee to review current collections of the Huron County Museum. Archives, Library and Corporate Records staff continue to participate in the Enterprise Content Management project with the goal of digitizing collections.

In 2016, the Museum began a major collection re-organization project at its 110 North St. location in Goderich. The Re-organization project continues with a focus on the Museum and Gaol on-site storage locations.

Movement of corporate records will allow for increased storage at the Museum for small to medium artifacts.

Currently in 2019 the archives reading room expansion is happening to better serve the research public. To be completed May 2019.

The focus on internal review of collections with the potential for rehousing or deaccessioning continues.