The Art of Development and the Development of Art:

A Powerful Partnership – Business, Community and the Arts

Canadian Conference of the Arts

Conférence canadienne des arts

CEDTAP PATDEC

Through the account of his journey to visit 8 very different community based arts groups, Silver Donald Cameron has woven a thread that reveals how these sustainable creative businesses enrich the fabric of our lives. Here in this booklet you can read about powerful partnerships that have grown up between artists and the creative communities that flourish around their enterprises. In these projects we can discern a new type of social economy in its fledgling state.

The Canadian Conference of the Arts and the Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program have developed their own powerful partnership stemming from our commonly held belief that the arts and community economic development can do more to assist each other. In approaching Silver Donald Cameron to write this booklet we knew that through his insight and analysis he would set out lively examples of successful collaborations between arts enterprises and community development groups. These stories are meant to provide inspiration for people working in municipalities, arts organizations, regional councils, co-operatives, tourism groups and other citizens groups. Silver Donald Cameron's insightful text has captured the essence of the dynamic relationship between arts and community development. Please read and enjoy this booklet, talk to others about these ideas, and contact either CEDTAP or the CCA for more copies of the booklet or to give us your comments or suggestions.

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Business, Community and the Arts

"It was only about halfway through my career that I really *got it*, really grasped what I was doing," says Frances Wasserlein, executive producer of the Vancouver Folk Music Festival. "I'm the manager of a social enterprise. That's what I'm doing.

"And I only got it because I've gone for about five years to the Social Venture Institute at Hollyhock, up the coast at Cortes Island. That's taught me the language of business and how to talk about a non-profit arts enterprise on a business-to-business basis. You have to learn to think in terms that can be translated into their language. Otherwise you don't grasp their questions or suggestions.

"But I also had to believe it was important for them to know about the passion that moves people to do what I do. The social entrepreneur is motivated by passion instead of gain. And I had to take the chance of exposing that passion to them.

"That's one of the big cards you have to play, that passion for what you're doing, be it folk music or organic juice."

Sitting in a funky Gastown coffee shop, she gestures at her organic juice and laughs.

"But the relationship between Community Economic Development and the arts is complicated," she says. "Take VanCity, for example."

VanCity, the progressive powerhouse of BC's financial world. Canada's largest credit union, with $9 billion in assets, 300,000 members, and subsidiaries in insurance, trust services, investments and venture capital. Creators of socially-responsible mutual funds, the on-line Citizens Bank and the VanCity Community Foundation. A co-operative which shares 30% of its profits – $5.4 million – with its members and the community, and which annually confers a million-dollar VanCity Award on a bold and innovative community project.

VanCity, which loaned $30,000 to Frances Wasserlein's Festival when it was almost insolvent, and which is assisting it to find a new shared home with two other festivals, where the three will also share a single administrative core of staff and facilities.

"VanCity's priorities are social justice, environment, and CED," says Frances, "but they don't really get the arts part of CED. Our Festival doesn't qualify for VanCity granting programs because they don't understand CED the same way. They think it's showing people how to run a restaurant. We think it can be paying artists, too.

"There's a widespread lack of understanding of the arts side of the equation. But VanCity listens, and VanCity evolves. In BC, a solution to this conundrum is possible."

Photo courtesy of Vancouver East Cultural Centre

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The Multiple Bottom Line

The Social Venture Institute which Frances Wasserlein attends each September is conducted, she notes, "by people interested in the triple bottom line."

And what would that be? Two new voices:

"The Vancouver East Cultural Centre is a million-dollar business," says Duncan Low, its executive director. "Arts and culture is the fourth-largest employer in BC. The only real difference between us and other businesses is that what we're selling is the performing arts. We get subsidies, sure, but so do cattle farmers and Bombardier. Subsidization in business exists across the board."

Absolutely wrong, says Angus Ferguson, artistic director of Dancing Sky Theatre in Meacham, Saskatchewan.

"We're not producing a product, we're talking to people," Ferguson declares. "We're in a dialogue with the community. If people aren't coming to the theatre, then there's a problem, but that's not measuring our success in monetary terms. We do our work for different reasons. We pursue our passion in our work."

The two viewpoints reflect two different bottom lines. Duncan Low has built a reputation as a brilliant social entrepreneur by retiring a $250,000 debt and securing a million-dollar VanCity Award to renovate the theatre. He is concerned with creating opportunities for emerging and innovative artists, and with the cultural enrichment of an underprivileged urban neighbourhood. For him, money is an essential tool.

Angus and Louisa Ferguson are preoccupied with the steady erosion of rural communities, which are losing their economic foundations in farming, forestry, mining, and fishing. Their theatre, which has been operating in Meacham since 1993, seats 100. The village's population is 85. Perhaps half are associated with the arts – potters, painters, sculptors, fabric artists, jewellers, musicians. If the artists don't revive Meacham, it may disappear altogether, as many rural communities already have.

These divergent viewpoints reflect the complexity of a multiple bottom line. Increasingly, enlightened companies measure their business success by environmental sustainability and social responsibility as well as profit. People, planet, profit: a "triple bottom line."

A community *arts* business is inevitably judged by a multiple bottom line. As Duncan Low notes, it need not make profits, but it must at least break even. Angus Ferguson speaks to the test of social responsibility, contributing to community advancement by creating jobs, luring visitors and new residents, generating hope and optimism. Most community businesses, deeply involved with quality-of-life issues, are automatically sensitive to environmental concerns, and some – like Tohu in Montreal – make important contributions to ecological sustainability.

But a community arts business faces a fourth bottom line. It must also succeed artistically, creating work which is imaginative, stimulating, bold and beautiful.

Surprisingly, community arts organizations often meet these multiple expectations. They come from the community, and share community values. Indeed, they very often spring into being because the community faces a crisis. A major local employer is closing – the Stratford railway yards, the Cape Breton coal mines, the Meacham grain elevators. What are we going to do now?

That question is a crucial one – because the question itself reveals that the community intends to survive and prosper, which is the essential impulse behind community economic development (CED). People may have come to this place for economic reasons, but they have made a home here, and the home has become more important than its economic rationale. If the original economic foundation has vanished, they will create a new one. Community economic development is fundamentally an act of love, the expression of a people's love for one another and for the life they have made together.

What are we going to do now? The answer usually begins with a form of stock-taking which CED expert John McKnight has dubbed "asset mapping" – examining the community closely to see what assets it really has. Given enough imagination, the most surprising things may emerge as assets – a Shakespearean place name, expertise in rughooking or soapstone carving, medicinal plants, a sports tradition.

Capitalizing on these assets frequently involves the arts. Often the community needs to make itself more attractive, and the arts always attract people – business operators, tourists, retirees. As author Richard Florida notes, rich experiences have become a form of wealth – and the arts provide an infinite variety of experiences. The arts are also the most labour-intensive of industries, giving the largest amount of employment for the smallest financial investment.

A successful community arts business is a powerful instrument. But what are the elements of such a business? How does one succeed or fail?

The Bones of Every Business

A community arts business is generally – not always – a non-profit organization. The most widespread misunderstanding about non-profit businesses is that they are not allowed to generate profits. They can, and do, though the profits are often called "earnings" or "surplus."

"The whole notion of 'not-for-profit' is wrong," says Frances Wasserlein, restating a comment from a colleague. "It should be 'not-for-loss.'"

Structurally, the main difference between a non-profit and a private-sector business is that the non-profit may not distribute its profits to owners or shareholders. It can only reinvest its profits in its own operations, or give them to other organizations pursuing similar objectives. Non-profits are designed to provide useful products or services, not to make their owners wealthy.

In other respects, the structure of a successful non-profit enterprise parallels the structure of any other business. It has to raise money to finance its operations. It has to produce goods or services. And it has to market those products to a clientele.

These three activities – **finance, production** and **marketing** – are the basic functions of any business.

If a community wants to start a festival, for instance, the organizing committee must raise money to rent space, hire staff, advertise, pay the artists and handle the revenues as they come in. That's the finance function.

The organizers then have to ensure that all the elements come together, and the curtain really does go up at curtain time. That's production.

To lure an audience, the organizers must promote the festival through advertising, news releases posters and Web sites. Even non-profit businesses which give their products away – churches, foundations, food banks – have to ensure that their clientele knows how to obtain them. That's marketing.

Two other functions span the three basic activities. **Human resources** oversees the relationships between the business and its employees – hiring, firing, benefits, union contracts and so on. And all its functions are co-ordinated by **management** or administration, which is generally answerable to a **board of directors**, the ultimate authority in the organization.

A structure like this can be found in almost every organization, from the Ford Motor Company to the local Rhododendron Society. Even self-employed people have to hustle up the work, complete the assignment and keep themselves alive while they do it – marketing, production, finance.

The Character of Non-Profit Business

In many ways, a successful community business is simply a well-run business. It does effective market research, and shapes its marketing accordingly. It takes carefully considered risks in order to grow. It is vigilant in maintaining the quality of its products and productions. It stays fresh by ensuring the constant renewal of its Board and staff, and by giving important roles to young people. It maintains cash reserves to finance new initiatives, or to sustain it in adversity.

It also creates new profit centres as an outgrowth of its core business. The Stratford Festival, for instance, sells workshops on theatre arts and crafts, university courses on Shakespeare, backstage tours, luncheon speakers, and special train expeditions from Toronto – as well as the usual range of gifts, books and souvenirs.

Nevertheless, some normal business options are closed to a community non-profit. It can't finance itself by selling shares. It generally has few tangible assets to pledge for loans. It may be vulnerable to the whims of politicians and bureaucrats, who rarely understand its intrinsic importance. Perpetually strapped for cash, it may under-pay its people, make its suppliers wait for payment, skimp on its marketing. (People in the arts tend to focus on production, the actual practice of the art, which is the part they truly love.) Non-profit managers have little prospect of advancement – they hold the top jobs already – and they must use persuasion rather than commands to motivate their volunteer workers.

Community arts businesses are also increasingly stressed by the consolidation of other businesses. Outside Toronto, few communities contain head offices which can be tapped for contributions, or for Board members with international business experience and glittering networks of contacts. The concentration of the media into national chains and networks means that local outlets employ fewer local reviewers and carry less local news, which greatly impedes low-cost guerrilla marketing.

But the non-profit has unique opportunities as well, notably community good-will and self-interest. It may be eligible for government and foundation funding, even municipal assistance – although the increasing accountability requirements of governments burned by scandals create a heavy burden on non-profit businesses. It is close to its market. People will donate time, cash, goods and materials to it.

A non-profit's most important subsidies usually come not from governments, but from volunteers, including artists. Frances Wasserlein's Vancouver Folk Music Festival relies on 1200 trained and experienced self-managing volunteers, including entire families. If each gives 10 hours, and their effort is worth $20 an hour, that's nearly a quarter of a million dollars' worth of labour – free. And the stronger the community commitment, the greater the chance of success. The community won't *allow* the venture to fail.

A Powerful Partnership

What the community economic development movement brings to the arts is a sharp awareness of how community businesses operate, and what they require for success. What the arts bring to community development is a particularly attractive set of products and opportunities – and a passion for beauty and excellence. It is a powerful combination.

The Stratford Festival

Photo courtesy of Peter Smith

"Fred was working at a greenhouse down by the river," said Marg Wade."He really enjoyed it, but he was at a dead end. One day Beth Hall came in – she was on the organizing committee – and she said, 'You know, it's a shame there isn't a florist in town. If this theatre idea works out, there won't be any place to buy flowers for the actors.'

"When Fred told me about the conversation, I said, 'Well, why don't we open a flower shop?' That was in January, and we opened in March, and the Festival opened in July." Fifty years later, Wade's Flowers Ltd. has 14 employees and owns a substantial building at the main downtown intersection of Stratford, Ontario – and the "theatre idea" has become an internationally-celebrated classical theatre company. In 2004, the Stratford Festival of Canada would mount 704 performances of 14 productions in four permanent theatres. Six Shakespeare plays would share the stage with works by Cocteau and Marivaux, several modern plays and the musicals *Anything Goes and Guys and Dolls*. Nearly 600,000 people would attend. About 40% would come from outside Canada, chiefly the northern US.

If any one person could be held primarily responsible for the Festival, that person would be Tom Patterson, a Stratford-born journalist who had long believed that the town's many Shakespearean associations – the Avon River, the Shakespeare Tavern, electoral wards named for Falstaff, Hamlet and Romeo – made it a natural site for a theatre festival. In 1952, he asked city council for $100 to go to New York and sell the idea to Laurence Olivier.

The town's largest employer was the CNR steam locomotive repair shops, and they were being closed. The Council gave Patterson $125 – the first gesture in a pattern of support that was crucial to the Festival. Patterson never met Olivier, but he did contact major foundations and producers, notably the Toronto theatre doyenne Dorothy Mavor Moore.

She suggested he phone Tyrone Guthrie, the celebrated Shakespearean director. Guthrie had long wanted to produce Shakespeare's plays in the Elizabethan manner, on a stage thrusting out into the audience. Though he had hardly thought of doing it in a Canadian railway town of 19,000 people, Guthrie instantly responded. "When do you want me?" he asked.

Patterson's original Chamber of Commerce committee evolved into a fledgling foundation, which expected to raise $30,000, but instead raised $157,000 – *$73,000 in the town of Stratford*. At one crucial moment, the contractor who was digging the amphitheatre, Oliver Gaffney – whose daughter is now the Festival's manager of public affairs – was told he was unlikely to be paid. Deeply committed to the project, Gaffney simply shrugged and kept digging – an act of faith which has become legendary in Stratford.

King Richard III, starring Alec Guinness, opened on a thrust stage under a 150-foot tent on July 13, 1953. It resounded through the theatre world like a thunderclap. The New York Times called it "a little gem of imaginative theatre." The Herald-Tribune marveled that such a production could be staged by "this inaccessible town and this impertinent theatre." In one stroke, Stratford had achieved international fame. It never looked back. The tent was soon replaced by a unique, award-winning permanent Festival Theatre, later to be augmented by three other venues – notably including the Tom Patterson Theatre.

During the next 50 years, the organization would have its low moments, but it always found ways to bring in new blood and renew itself.

By 2004, the Festival's budget was nearly $52 million. Directly and indirectly it sustained nearly 3300 jobs and injected $145 million into the local economy. Eighty-one percent of its revenues were earned, chiefly from ticket sales, and another 14% came from fundraising. It received about 4% of its budget ($2.03 million) from government grants, but the $55.8 million it generated in taxes represents a spectacular return to the taxpayer – roughly 2750% in less than a year.

As the theatre prospered, so did the community. Famous people from Maggie Smith to Peter Mansbridge would make their homes there. Still only a town of 30,000, Stratford developed restaurants, boutiques, bookstores and other cultural events which made it a sufficiently desirable retirement destination that its housing prices are higher than those in the much larger university towns of Kitchener, Guelph and London.

In 1989, a prosperous merchant named Marg Wade won a council seat, later becoming Deputy Mayor. During her tenure, the Festival foundation came to Council seeking a $1 million contribution. The money would spark a fund to convert a former vaudeville hall into a second Festival theatre.

"Of course I supported that," says Marg Wade. "Everything I have, I owe to the Festival. It's the best thing that ever happened to this town."

The Simon Charlie Society

The Simon Charlie Society site doesn't look like much – a couple of portable buildings, a little chipboard-sheathed workshop, a small house, all set on a few acres next to a creek on the TransCanada Highway near Duncan, BC. But this is a place of dreams and visions. Simon Charlie is a bright-eyed, cheerful little man of 84, recently invested in the Order of Canada, a legendary carver whose work adorns museums as far away as Australia, New York and the Netherlands. He is still carving industriously in his humble workshop, but he has also inspired the only carving school in the entire Coast Salish region, which includes much of southwestern BC and northwestern Washington. The classes going on in the portable building represent the future of Coast Salish art – not only carving, but also weaving, painting, silver-smithing, basket-making and other crafts.

Carving and the other crafts are actually sacred arts, but to survive they have also become articles of commerce. You can learn to carve here – but you can also take training for self-employment. The classes are run on a cost-recovery basis, and the Society also generates revenue by running a gallery in the summer, and by publishing. Its products include a directory of Coast Salish businesses, and a gorgeous annual calendar featuring original paintings by aboriginal artists. The calendars are sold in 35 Staples stores throughout Vancouver Island.

"The idea is to create several micro-businesses with revenue streams which will eventually support the Society," says Miles Phillips, the Society's former executive director. "Publishing is one of them – and there's lots of room to expand it. We've thought of a cookbook, a poetry book, maybe a colouring book."

Why not? In the Okanagan Valley, 500 km inland, is Theytus Books, Canada's first aboriginal publishing house, established in 1980. Theytus publishes books for and about aboriginal cultures from across the country. With two full-time employees, it has now issued more than 90 titles. Its mandate is to produce quality literature presented from an Aboriginal perspective, and it publishes four to six new titles annually.

For the Simon Charlie Society, however, even publishing is a means to a larger end. Its eventual objective is a self-sustaining Coast Salish cultural institute, including an entire pre-contact Salish village surrounded by performance spaces, archives and retail shops. It would also feature demonstrations of traditional medicine and food preparation, and presettler sustainable resource management.

"It's a big dream," admits Jane Marston, who has been studying and teaching with Simon since 1984. "But philanthropists are looking for places to spend money, and now that we're an incorporated society companies will talk to us too."

A dream, yes. But – as Stratford's Tom Patterson would attest – everything starts in dreams.

Celtic Colours

Photo courtesy of Celtic Colours International Festival

Five guitarists sit on the stage in the community hall of Judique, NS, pop. 743. All evening they have been playing in turn, backing one another up, playing in a dozen different styles, each trying to outshine the other. Now they are wrapping up the evening with a shared medley, and the music soars through the hall like audible joy. When they strike their last chord, the packed hall erupts in whistles, foot-stompin' and wild applause.

Three of the players are Nova Scotian virtuosos: Scott Macmillan, Dave MacIsaac, J.P. Cormier. One, John Doyle, is an Irish-born resident of North Carolina. And one is a fresh-faced young woman just barely out of her teens, Anna Massie, also a brilliant fiddler, who is BBC Radio Scotland's Young Traditional Musician of the Year.

This is the Guitar Summit at the seventh annual Celtic Colours International Festival in Cape Breton Island, and – as always – it is dazzling. But then the whole Festival is dazzling. Held every October, when the Cape Breton hills riot in orange and gold, crimson and lime, Celtic Colours presents concerts in every corner of the island. The finest Celtic musicians in the world come from Scotland, Ireland, the United States, Brittany – not to mention Upper and Outer Canada – to appear in huge ice rinks, school gymnasiums, Canadian Legion halls and at North America's only Gaelic College.

As it has grown, Celtic Colours has added musical workshops, visual arts exhibitions and workshops, and extensive guided hikes through the blazing landscape.

Celtic Colours may sound like an event designed to attract and engage visitors – and it is. Cape Breton is among the world's premier tourist destinations, but its traditional season is only high summer. It is hard to repay the investment in an inn or a restaurant which thrives for two months and hibernates for ten. The Holy Grail of Cape Breton tourism – of Canadian tourism, to a large extent – is to extend the season. By holding the Festival in early October, Celtic Colours actually extends the season through September as well, since many visitors come early to do a little advance touring.

Celtic Colours only breaks even – but everyone else turns a profit. Tickets and other sales account for 39% of Festival revenues, and donations another 13%. Subsidies account for 48%. But with taxable revenues from 19,000 ticket purchasers flowing to hotels, restaurants, service stations, gift shops and other enterprises, "it's a good business deal for all of Cape Breton," says Festival co-organizer Max MacDonald. "Fifty percent of our business is from off-island, and the word-of-mouth from people who've been here builds both our own audience and the tourist trade in general year by year.

"It's a stimulating experience for performers and audiences alike, too. In terms of artistic growth and exchange, it's just great."

Anna Massie would agree.

"It's fabulous to be here, playin' with all these people I've been listening to for years," she says. "I can hardly believe I'm here."

Toronto Artscape

"They say Al Capone visited here during Prohibition," smiles Bruce Rosensweet, Toronto Artscape's Director of Tenant Services. "In those days, this building was right on the waterfront. It was built in 1926 for liquor exports 'to the Caribbean.' But the ships came back for another load the next day." He smiles again.

"This building" is the Case Goods Warehouse in the former Gooderham and Worts distillery, at the foot of Parliament Street just east of Toronto's downtown core. Established in 1832, this was once the largest distillery in North America. Its taxes provided over half the revenues of the federal government. Now a National Heritage Site of 44 buildings on 3.3-hectares, it may be the best-preserved collection of Victorian industrial architecture in North America.

Alternatively, it's a gloomy cluster of blackened brick factories and warehouses. After the distillery ceased operating in 1990, several new owners tried to re-develop it, without success. For a decade the site was mainly used as a film location. More than 700 films were shot there.

Then, in 2001, it was sold to Cityscape Developments, who saw its potential as an arts and entertainment district. Cityscape called Toronto Artscape, Canada's acknowledged leader in converting derelict commercial and industrial buildings into studios and homes for artists.

As Artscape's literature notes, "the arts and real estate have a volatile relationship." Impecunious artists nose out cheap, adaptable space – old warehouses and factories, seedy waterfronts, immigrant districts, down-at-heel neighbourhoods. The word spreads. It's a good 'hood. More artists move in. Cafes and galleries spring up. Funky boutiques appear. Arts businesses rent offices and rehearsal halls – publishers, agents, arts organizations. There's music in the air, vibrant colour in the windows, hot argument on the sidewalks. It's a neat street, with a fresh beat.

Then the neighbourhood is discovered. Sidewalk traffic increases. The shops prosper. The restaurants and boutiques go up-scale. Property values rise. The houses are gentrified, the offices renovated. The area becomes trendy. Greenwich Village. Yorkville. Granville Island.

You can't expect cheap rents in such a desirable location, right? The rents go up, and the artists can't afford them. They find another cheap, shabby neighbourhood, and the cycle begins again.

Everyone benefits. Except the artists.

Enter a developer with a difference: Toronto Artscape's band of happy warriors, blending real estate smarts with devotion to the arts. Spun out of the Toronto Arts Council in 1986, when the city's booming real estate market was squeezing artists out of the downtown, Artscape provides affordable living accommodation and studio space to artists and arts organizations in half-a-dozen inner-city locations, and also operates the Gibraltar Point Centre for the Arts on the Toronto Islands. Artscape uses various mechanisms to obtain space. Sometimes it buys; more often it leases. It trawls for money in provincial social-housing funds, economic development programs, foundation initiatives. In its first project at 96 Spadina, it simply leased two complete floors of the building, and subdivided the space for more than 40 tenants. In effect, it bought space in bulk.

"The average studio runs from 300 to 500 square feet, and costs about $300 to $500 a month," explains Tim Jones, Toronto Artscape's executive director. "Commercial landlords are reluctant to rent such small spaces, and they're worried about artists as tenants. In fact artists are the *most* reliable tenants. They're sometimes late, but they almost never skip out on the rent."

In 1999, when the residents of the Toronto Islands were desperate to save their community's disused school, Artscape obtained a 20-year lease from the city, plus a one-time contribution from the Trillium Foundation – but only on condition that the proposed Gibraltar Point Centre for the Arts be fully self-supporting. The Centre now rents long-term studio space to artists as well as short-term studio and bedroom rentals. It also provides retreat space for a variety of clients, and an annual juried Artist Residency Program which allows 10 artists to concentrate completely on their work for 30 days. What Gibraltar Point really provides, says director Susan Serran, is not just physical space, but "psychological space."

When Cityscape called about the distillery project, Artscape negotiated below-market rates for a 20-year lease on 50,000 square feet in two large buildings. It raised $3 million for renovations, and by late 2003 it had leased space to 71 artists and 26 non-profit arts organizations, including theatres, dance ensembles, artist-run galleries and two opera companies. The Distillery District had already become a cool place to be, and dozens of buildings were still available.

Artscape is now reaching out in other ways. It publishes *Square Feet: The Artist's Guide to Renting and Buying Work Space*. It is seeking ways to "clone" itself in 15 other centres across the country. It also provides consulting services to cities looking to use arts facilities for urban renewal – most notably New York, which wants to do something exciting with the abandoned Coast Guard base on Governor's Island.

In 2003, Artscape organized Creative Spaces + Places, a landmark international conference on the relationship between cultural development, economic competitiveness and community building. The conference was attended by over 400 policy makers, urban thinkers, and cultural entrepreneurs, including such luminaries as Richard Florida and Jane Jacobs.

A conference highlight was *Beyond Anecdotal Evidence*, a report by Ryerson University researchers Ken Jones and Tony Lea on their effort to develop tools to measure the economic and social impact of cultural investments, using geomatics, census data, surveys and various other techniques. Their test cases? Artscape's two properties on Queen Street in Toronto. They had earlier participated in a similar analysis of the revitalized Stanley Theatre in Vancouver, showing that crime in the area had decreased, new bars and restaurants had opened, and retail sales had doubled in the five years after the theatre opened.

"Five years ago, the only people interested in affordable space for artists were artists," says Tim Jones. "Today everyone's interested – urban planners, community development people, economic developers, the private sector – and not just here but everywhere, as the work of Richard Florida makes the relationship between creativity and prosperity better known. The arts and the creative sector is the fastest-growing part of the new economy, and ultimately the most important part, because it's the source of new ideas and new products."

Saskatchewan Festival of Words

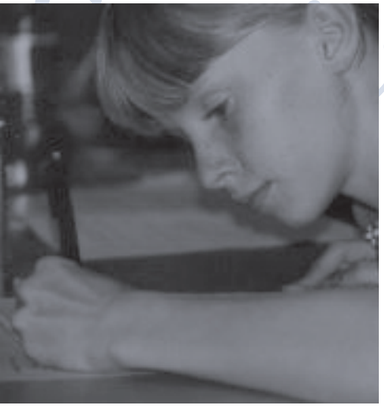

Photo courtesy of Festival of Words

In 1996, in Moose Jaw, Gary Hyland called a group of friends together. He had an idea to discuss – a literary festival in Moose Jaw.

Gary Hyland is a teacher by trade, an activist and builder by necessity, and a poet by vocation, with five poetry collections and two chapbooks to his credit. (He writes, he says, "mostly between midnight and 4:00 AM.") He makes a habit of getting together with people to discuss an idea – and astonishing results seem to follow. A radio station (CJUS-FM, Saskatoon). A respected literary publishing house (Coteau Books). A nationally-recognized summer writing program (the Sage Hill Writing Experience). A film festival (Wide Skies). And a few other odds and ends like a hockey school and a school of the arts.

So it is hardly surprising that the first Saskatchewan Festival of Words took place the following summer. Gary Hyland was – and is – its artistic co-ordinator.

The Festival, says operations manager Lori Dean, is designed to "celebrate all the imaginative ways we use language" with readings and book-signings by major authors like Rohinton Mistry, Yann Martell, Katherine Govier, David Adams Richards and Leon Rooke. The Festival also includes dramatic performances, panels, talks, cabarets, interviews, programs for children, and performances by singer-songwriters. In the week leading up to the Festival proper, it runs a writing program for teenagers.

"We deliberately schedule programs to have patrons interact with the presenters," says Lori Dean. "Both sides love it. We also try to find ways for presenters to get together, like the Green Room, where writers from different places can get to know one another."

As the Festival grew, it began running events throughout the year – open-mike coffee houses, author readings, and performances by musicians like Ian Tyson and Connie Kaldor. In partnership with SaskEnergy, Coteau Books and a local bookstore, the Festival created a "Books for Kids" project, providing students from selected schools with books to take home and read with their families. In the future, it hopes to offer weekend writing workshops and an eight-week winter course in screenwriting.

Naturally, Gary Hyland has not run out of ideas. The Festival of Words spun off Cineview Saskatchewan, which screens quality films throughout the year. Hyland became the executive director of an arts advocacy group (Moose Jaw Arts in Motion), which spearheaded the creation of a $7.5 million three-building cultural centre in downtown Moose Jaw, which he also chairs.

The Festival of Words has an annual budget of "about $200,000," says Lori Dean, of which 80% is spent in Moose Jaw. The Cultural Centre will house more than 20 arts businesses, and will form part of a $30 million Project Moose Jaw which includes various other downtown projects. The Centre alone will create the equivalent of 73 full-time jobs.

"I love this work," says Lori Dean. "I used to work for the federal government, but there didn't appear to be any creativity in what we did. This? It's night and day."

The Murals of Chemainus

If you turn in a complete circle on the centre line of Mill Street, in downtown Chemainus, BC – pop 4200, more or less – you can see six enormous mural paintings, each depicting a passage in the town's history. And you can catch glimpses of three more. Towering above Heritage Square is the powerful, solemn "Native Heritage," a 50' by 20' triple portrait of three prominent Cowichan leaders, painted by a Basque from Northern England named Paul Ygartua. Across the road, "World in Motion" stretches along a wall in front of the Travel Infocentre – horses and wagons, early cars and trucks, a historic inn, a marching band. Painted by BC artist Alan Wylie, the mural is twelve feet high and more than a hundred feet long – 3.69 by 31.08 metres, to be politically precise. Twenty-three years after they were begun, the 35 Chemainus murals are world famous. You can see them in books or photographs or on the Web. But nothing really prepares you for the impact of all these big, bold paintings within a seven-block low-rise microdowntown.

The murals are everywhere, life-sized and larger, looming up beside you, greeting you as you come around a corner or leave a shop. Steam locomotives charge off the wall. Oxen drag sawlogs through the woods. Loggers wrestle with an early donkey engine. Turn again and you see mining camps, gunboats, telephone offices. The faces are Chinese, aboriginal, Japanese, European. The downtown walls are exploding with life.

The murals have transformed Chemainus from a moribund sawmill town into a world-celebrated open-air art gallery which attracts up to half a million tourists a year. One later mural portrays The *Spirit of Chemainus*, a 92-foot wooden brigantine inspired by the murals. That mural is one of three painted by Dan Sawatzky, who was so charmed with Chemainus that he lived there for some years. He became a property re-developer, converting derelict buildings into a charming mix of offices, coffee shops, galleries, bookstores, craft stores and other small enterprises. He also designed Heritage Square.

The town had 40 businesses in 1981. Today it has more than 300 – and the originator of the murals, Karl Schutz, is now an arts and tourism consultant. He has introduced the mural concept to more than 60 other communities as far afield as Australia, New Zealand and Scotland. Because every town is different, all the murals are unique.

Schutz was a Chemainus businessman in 1971 when he visited Romania and noticed crowds of people gathered around 400-year-old mural paintings on the monasteries. They had come to see the history of their faith in outdoor art, he says. Why wouldn't they come to see the history of a community? Back home, "everyone thought I was crazy. Then in 1981 the mayor asked me to direct a downtown revitalization project. I said, Okay – but only if we do the murals."

"People often ask me, 'If you do murals, when does the turnaround of the downtown begin?'" says Schutz. "I say, 'Two hours after the first painter starts painting!' It's true, the moment the painter starts, people gather around. They start coming from other towns.

What are those crazy people doing in Chemainus? Let's go see."

The next stage, says Schutz, is the development of the performing arts in Chemainus. To occupy all those tourists in the evenings, Chemainus built a $4 million theatre which has commissioned seven new plays as well as presenting classics like Shaw, Wilde and Tennessee Williams. (Sawatzky designed the theatre's exterior.) An upcoming $9 million expansion will include a 75-suite Chemainus Festival Inn. The goal is an international-quality theatre festival modelled on the Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Every year, the Chemainus Festival of Murals Society adds one new mural and restores two older ones. Its revenues come from selling books, fridge magnets and postcards, and from a busy downtown art gallery. The murals are maintained by a curator, Cim MacDonald, who once worked in the sawmill offices but now paints full-time. She is just completing a watercolour of an early Halifax fire brigade, to be used in fund-raising by the Halifax Fire Deparment, much like the one she did for Victoria. Details are at www.victoriafirehistorical.ca

The truly astonishing thing about the Chemainus murals is their ripple effect. Without the murals, people say, we wouldn't have the bright and vibrant downtown. We wouldn't have the theatre. We wouldn't have the tourist businesses. We wouldn't know that a person could make a living as a painter, or a sculptor, or an actor. When we travelled, we wouldn't say, "I'm from Chemainus" like we do now. We'd say "I'm from Vancouver Island."

The Chemainus murals say that the history of our own place is important – and thus that we are important. They say that a stone well-thrown in Chemainus can create ripples in Scotland. They say that art belongs in the centre of our lives, that it should speak to us every day. They tell visitors that they are standing in a bright, dynamic community.

The murals say there is a future here – and the future is going to be fun.

The Film Circuit

Photo courtesy of Les invasions barbares

In 1989, at 26, Cam Haynes founded a film festival in Sudbury, Ontario – not an obvious place, but through diligent marketing, Haynes attracted 10,000 people. That was 3000 more than could actually be seated in the theatres. The festival is now the fourth largest in Canada.

Timmins, North Bay and Sault Ste. Marie were hungry for good films too, so Haynes set up a Northern Film Circuit, and began sending Canadian and foreign films out to them.

The Circuit soon covered much of Northern Ontario. Haynes "didn't pay much attention to it" until 1995, when he realized that he had stumbled upon a whole new business model.

Film is an expensive medium, and the cost of advertising and marketing, says Haynes, is so large that it "guarantees you'll lose money on a film." In addition, each individual print of a film costs about $1500. But the Film Circuit only required one print, and no advertising; local film enthusiasts were promoting the screenings by word of mouth. His films were making money.

"The owner of the theatre makes money on the night we show the film," Haynes explains. "The owner gets a percentage of the gate, and all the candy sales and so on. The community group makes money – not a lot, but some. And the film-maker makes money, too – again, not much, but $1000 out of Belleville is better than nothing."

Once Haynes turned his formidable attention to the Circuit, it grew to encompass 140 locations in Canada. (One is Cinefest Saskatchewan, a spin-off from the Saskatchewan Festival of Words.) Haynes intends to add 40 more venues every year for the next three years. Now associated with the Toronto Film Festival, the Circuit employs eight people full time, distributing current films like *The Corporation* and *The Barbarian Invasions* to cities like Corner Brook, Cornwall and Kelowna.

"There is an audience for independent films," Haynes says. "It's a taste, like Scotch, that you develop when you're older. That older audience doesn't often see itself reflected in films, but it's both enthusiastic and influential. In every community, about 10% of the population has a great influence in the community. That 10% sells these events, which brings the other 90%. Generally the attendance and the box office receipts double every two years."

With the Canadian operations growing rapidly, Haynes turned his attention abroad. The Circuit now distributes to community groups in 50 locations in 11 foreign countries, chiefly Britain, Ireland and the US. A dozen more countries are interested. On any given day, the Circuit has between 10 and 50 screenings at various places in the world.

"Inside Canada, we'll play any good film," says Haynes. "Outside, we play mainly Canadian films, which don't get shown very much abroad. But I hope that one day, this kind of distribution will mean that Canadian films will actually be able to pay for themselves or make money on a commercial run. It will allow us to continue making films of cultural significance."

The success of the Film Circuit, Haynes believes, has something to do with his own background in community non-profit organizations.

"There are certain situations where it *has* to be a non-profit," he says. "You need the *power* of a non-profit. A non-profit can get people to volunteer, for instance. Doing it for profit would give it the wrong scope, the wrong focus, the wrong motivation. This is motivated by and for the community, and belongs to the community."

The other key thing in such an enterprise, he concedes, is a champion.

"Everywhere I've seen something fly, there's been a single-minded champion to bring it forward," he says. "And the champion ultimately moves on – or destroys what has been created. Fortunately I knew when it was time to leave Sudbury, and then the domestic Circuit. You hire people well, and you leave them alone. Megalomaniacs don't do well in this kind of work."

Tohu: la cité des arts du cirque

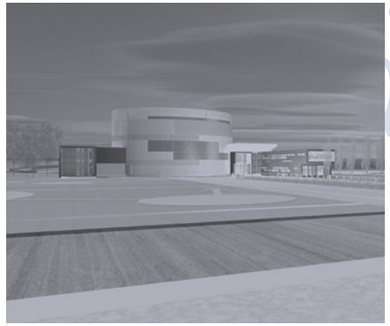

Photo courtesy of Tohu

"The word 'tohu' doesn't mean anything," smiles Charles-Mathieu Brunelle, sitting in a modest office in Montreal's hard-luck St-Michel district. "But it will take on meaning as Tohu evolves." The name, he explains, comes from the French expression 'tohu-bohu,' a state of fertile confusion verging on pandemonium.

Tohu sprang out of the fertile confusion of circus arts in Quebec, best-known to the outside world through the internationally-famed Cirque du Soleil. Begun 20 years ago as a group of buskers, Cirque du Soleil now runs nine shows simultaneously in Las Vegas, at Disney World, and on tour in Europe and Asia. It employs 3000 people, 1200 of them at its international headquarters in Montreal.

Cirque du Soleil is a private company, formed in 1984.The École nationale de cirque, the National Circus School, was formed three years earlier, in 1981. In 1999, the two organizations joined with En Piste, the national association of circus performers, to form a new non-profit organization which would establish Montreal as an international circus arts capital by creating one of the most important concentrations of circus arts infrastructure in the world.

But the new organization was not only about circus arts. It would participate in the reclamation of the second-largest urban landfill in North America. In addition, it would help revitalize the impoverished, gritty neighbourhood of St-Michel.

In a word: Tohu. Circus magic, transforming a dump-site into a gem – in the second poorest neighbourhood in Canada.

"This is something never done before," explains Charles-Mathieu. "A sector of society or an artistic milieu uniting behind one project, a chain of production and creation in one place. Here we can train artists and present shows, yes, but we can also create new shows, new companies, new processes. This is a bit like the Silicon Valley of circus."

Tohu's site began in 1925 as the Miron quarry, where much of the stone for Montreal's historic buildings was dynamited from the bedrock. A neighbourhood of small, "temporary" quarry workers' homes grew up around the site. (The "temporary" homes are, of course, still there.) After the 192-hectare quarry was closed, the city dumped garbage into it for more than 30 years. The trash lies 20 meters deep.

The site is now the St. Michel Environmental Complex, home to environmental initiatives including Montreal's main recycling centre – and the park to be created over the dump will be one of the largest green spaces in Montreal.

The entrance to the whole complex is the circus precinct, a $73 million set of projects. The 32,000-square metre headquarters of Cirque du Soleil houses not only its offices and rehearsal studios, but also an enormous range of workshops and ateliers. Nearby are the stacked and cantilevered boxes of Cirque du Soleil's new artists' residence, and the dramatic angles and soaring glass of the new École nationale de cirque.

Perhaps the most arresting new building is the huge round tower of Tohu's new home, the Chapiteau des Arts. A circular theatre seating 840, the Chapiteau des Arts is 42 metres in diameter. Its roof rises 20 metres clear from the floor. It will house a bar and restaurant, plus the administrative offices of Tohu itself, and also an exhibition space.

Two European collectors have loaned Tohu a priceless collection of 12,500 circus artifacts and images, some of which will be permanently displayed in the exhibition lobby.

"I spent ten years trying to find a home for my collection in Europe," says Pascal Jacob, a noted French circus scholar and historian. "Here it was done in three months. In Montreal, everything seems to be possible."

Above all, though, the Chapiteau des Arts is a Big Top cast in concrete, available not only to the local circus community but also to travelling circuses and other troupes which need a huge, round theatre.

In keeping with its environmental theme, the Chapiteau des Arts is as green a building as Tohu can make it. Its design includes recycled materials, like the steel girders which support the roof. Its electricity is generated by methane extracted from the dump by the nearby Gazmont plant. It is heated by solar energy, and also by hot water generated by the gas-extraction process. Green plants grow on part of the roof, and no rainwater is allowed to escape. Even the lighting is kept inside the building, reducing the light pollution in the Montreal sky.

"The building is a symbol, and also a teaching tool," says Charles-Mathieu. "The whole complex has a recuperation-recycling-reinventing theme, and the city has made Tohu responsible both for programming within the park site, and also for cultural activities for the St-Michel neighbourhood. Their view was, you guys know what show business is, so make this park attractive. Which is good, because the strength of a cultural institution is its roots in the neighbourhood."

St-Michel is a multicultural district, with high unemployment, where about 70% of the population speaks neither French nor English. Tohu already employs numerous local people, and has organized its cleaning and maintenance work, its restaurant staff and its technicians as worker co-ops. It will eventually develop store-fronts on busy Jarry Street for "social-economy" companies and organizations – cultural and environmental enterprises, organic food stores, Fair Trade coffee houses and other socially-responsible ventures.

Tohu's vision is at once national and international, global and local. Its cultural programming agreement with the city requires it to mount 40 performances and 10 exhibitions annually, free, for the community. Tohu's first events, before its building was even complete, included parties with trapeze artists, make-up workshops and the like.

They attracted up to 1500 people. Not long ago, Tohu put together an exhibit of visual art relating to the circus, and presented it in the St-Michel community library. Ten thousand people attended.

For Charles-Mathieu, Tohu is a demonstration project which advances deep Canadian social, cultural and environmental values – and also expresses confidence in the future of its immediate neighbourhood, demonstrating that even an appalling blight can be transformed into a showplace.

At the heart of this ferment – this tohu-bohu – is the circus. Sylph-like figures performing unbelievable feats of balance, ape-muscled strong men lifting impossible burdens, sad clowns evoking waves of laughter, brilliantly-costumed figures whirling free in the air. Glittering, illusive and transcendental, the gorgeous spectacle of circus is the most democratic and inclusive of all the performing arts. Old or young, sophisticated or naive, the circus transforms us all into children. It is a show, says Pascal Jacob, about "the truth of the body." And perhaps the brave and adventuring truth of the spirit as well.

The Creative Economy

From Aristophanes to Leonardo, from Sir Christopher Wren to J.K. Rowling and Anne of Green Gables, the arts have always been an important economic engine. Today, however, they are emerging as a central factor in the post-industrial economy.

The cultural industries and their near-cousins, the information industries, are the heart of the "creative economy" – those activities which generate economic value through the creation of intellectual property rather than physical products. The value of those activities has grown exponentially in the past generation, and its leading companies – Disney, Time-Warner, Bertelsmann, News Corporation, Microsoft, Oracle – stand near the top of the economic heap.

The creative economy, says Richard Florida, author of the much-discussed *The Rise of the Creative Class*, is driven by a new "creative class", especially by the "creative core", those people who actually produce "new forms or designs that are readily transferable and widely useful." This core group includes scientists, engineers, and programmers – but it also includes the entire range of cultural figures: artists, writers, entertainers, actors, designers, architects, impresarios, film-makers and so on. Their work entails not only problem-solving, but "problem-finding": not merely building a better mousetrap, but noticing the need for such a mousetrap.

Forbes magazine reports that Canada has 17 billionaires. Seven of them are deeply reliant on the creative economy – the largest group by far. The group is led by Ken Thomson, whose family fortune, originally based on newspapers, equals those of his three nearest competitors combined. The most recent arrival is Guy Laliberté, CEO and founder of Cirque du Soleil, who started his working life as a street entertainer. Equally striking is the lack of *any* representation from manufacturing, heavy industry, transportation, mining, forestry, fishing, agriculture, steel, manufacturing – all the traditional sources of Canadian wealth.

Richard Florida's persuasive analysis of these developments has made him a sought-after adviser to cities seeking a place in the new economy. His message is simple. The three Ts of development are Technology, Talent and Tolerance. The strength of a city is its cultural and intellectual life. Creative people are the engine of the new economy, and they want a good "people climate" and a high "quality of place" – research universities, art galleries, ethnic cultures, heritage neighbourhoods. The creative class values diversity, authenticity, tolerance, a range of stimulating experiences.

And companies move to the cities where such people gather, not the other way around.

A municipal government can't create a good people climate, but it can certainly encourage one – as Montreal has consciously done with its circus-arts complex, as Toronto has done by celebrating the uniqueness of Cabbagetown and Little Italy, as Halifax has done with Historic Properties and Vancouver with Granville Island.

Nor is arts-driven revitalization limited to major centres, as Stratford, Meacham and Chemainus demonstrate. Not all creative people want or need to live in cities. Rural life is generally cheaper, and offers space and certain kinds of freedom which urban centres cannot provide. Arts-driven development can be just as powerful in a rural setting – and with appropriate technology, especially Internet access, artists can live in places they love, and still market their work to the world.

What CED brings to the arts is entrepreneurial savvy. Though artists do not always like the fact, or even recognize it, they are operating businesses. If they were as good at business as they are at their art, they would be very prosperous people. CED practitioners are experts at starting and running businesses – especially businesses for whom profit is not the most important bottom line.

But what the arts bring to CED is at least equal to what they receive. CED has succeeded in many different ventures and venues, but its story remains largely untold – and artists are the great communicators, the great storytellers. They are people whose deepest values and perceptions are seamlessly interwoven with their professional practice.

Individual artists may be reclusive, but art is by nature a social activity, and artists live by what they love. They are truth-tellers, and their disciplines give them a certain charisma, an inherent celebrity power which commands attention.

Even more important, the arts can carry CED right into the core of the creative economy, which is where today's action is. The creative economy is producing enormous amounts of wealth, and cultural work can travel at the speed of light. The possibilities of this partnership are limited only by our imagination and our courage.

Appendix: The Cast

(in order of appearance)

Frances Wasserlein
Vancouver Folk Music Festival
Vancouver, BC
www.thefestival.bc.ca

Duncan Low
Vancouver East Cultural Centre
Vancouver, BC
www.vecc.bc.ca

Angus Ferguson
Dancing Sky Theatre
Meacham, SK

Antoni Cimolino
Executive Director
Stratford Festival of Canada
Stratford, ON
www.stratfordfestival.ca

Simon Charlie/Jane Marston
The Simon Charlie Society
Duncan, BC

Anita Large
Publisher
Theytus Books Ltd.
Penticton, BC
www.theytusbooks.ca

Max MacDonald/Joella Foulds
Celtic Colours International Festival
Sydney, NS
www.celtic-colours.com

Tim Jones
Executive Director
Toronto Artscape
Toronto, ON
www.torontoartscape.on.ca

Terry Lea and Ken Jones
Ryerson University
Toronto, ON
www.ryerson.ca

Lori Dean
Saskatchewan Festival of Words
Moose Jaw, SK
www3.sk.sympatico.ca/praifes/

Gary Hyland
Moose Jaw Cultural Centre (and much else)
Moose Jaw, SK
www.garyhyland.com
www.moosejawculture.com

Johanna Reymerink
Chemainus Festival of Murals
Chemainus, BC
www.northcowichan.bc.ca/murals.htm

Karl Schutz
Karl Schutz Arts and Tourism
Chemainus, BC
www.kschutz.com

Cam Haynes
The Film Circuit
Toronto, ON
www.e.bell.ca/filmfest/filmcircuit/index.html

Cirque du Soleil
Montreal, QC
www.cirquedusoleil.com
École nationale de cirque
www.enc.qc.ca

Charles-Mathieu Brunelle
Tohu: la Cite des Arts du Cirque
www.tohu.ca

Richard Florida
Richard Florida Creativity Group
www.creativeclass.org
University of Pittsburgh
http://www.heinz.cmu.edu/~florida

Silver Donald Cameron is one of Canada's most versatile and widely-published authors. His 15 books include novels, social and literary criticism, travel and nature writing and humour. His essays and articles have earned four National Magazine Awards, and he has won numerous other awards for his work in radio, television and the stage. He was formerly a columnist with The Globe and Mail, and currently writes a weekly column for the Halifax Sunday Herald. Dr. Cameron has taught at four universities, and been writer-in-residence at three more. As a citizen, businessman and consultant, he has been intensely involved with community economic development in Isle Madame, Nova Scotia, where he has lived since 1971. He is also a popular speaker with the Atlantic Speakers Bureau who uses humour and storytelling to enliven his provocative thoughts on a variety of issues.

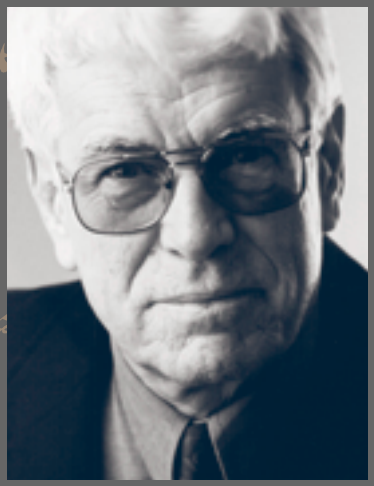

Photo courtesy of Don Robinson

Cameron is the author of The ArtsSmarts Story, a booklet published by the CCA to illustrate the value of creativity in education and Ideas, Energy, Ambition, Dreams for CEDTAP. (Free copies of The ArtsSmarts Story are available from the CCA.)