

REPORT ON THE NANAIMO CULTURAL FORUM 2010

“The purpose and Structure of the Nanaimo Cultural Committee”

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May 28, 2010

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### “Purpose and Structure of the Nanaimo Cultural Committee”

On Tuesday, May 18, 2010 the Nanaimo Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee hosted a Forum for members of the City and Regional District’s arts and cultural community. Approximately sixty people attended the Forum.

During the course of the day long forum two workshops were held regarding the “Purpose and Structure of the Nanaimo Cultural Committee”, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Approximately thirty people attended the morning session, while participation in the afternoon session declined to about twenty.

#### Workshop Format:

The facilitator of the workshop had been asked to focus the session on three points as follows:

- The purpose or mandate of the Nanaimo Cultural Committee
- Committee membership / structure
- Terms of office / absences

At the beginning of each session, participants were randomly assigned to tables which seated the same number of people. Each table then designated a person to write a summary of their conversation. Appendix A of this document is a verbatim transcription of each table’s notes.

Participants were asked to initially focus on identifying concerns they might have with regard to the mandate and structure of the Committee. They were asked to try not to focus on specific or personal solutions until the common concerns had been identified. They were also requested to ask themselves why specific issues were of concern.

Each table then reported to the larger group regarding the concerns they had identified. Following which the larger group worked to identify the concerns that were common to the majority of participants and what the potential solutions to the concerns might be. At the end of the day the facilitator provided a brief summary of the common concerns of both groups and offered some of the identified solutions to those common issues.

#### Summary of Identified Common Concerns:

The following is a list of concerns that were common to the majority of participants in both workshops. The list does not include each and every concern or issue that arose during the day. It is a summary.

- 1) The process and criteria for appointment to the Cultural Committee are not clear or transparent to the arts and cultural community.
- 2) The structure of representation on the Committee is not known. There appears to be no structure to the appointments and there is an evident lack of culturally diverse representation.
- 3) There is no clear limit to the maximum term that someone can serve on the Committee. Members can be repeatedly reappointed when their three year term expires.
- 4) The Terms of Reference or mandate of the Committee is too broad for a volunteer based group to realize. Several of the responsibilities noted in the Terms of Reference are carried out by PRC staff or are in the control of the PRCC.
- 5) Information regarding the activities of the Committee such as the specific expertise or experience each member of the Committee brings, how many meetings are held, the number and role of sub-committees or the minutes of meetings, are not readily available to the arts and cultural community.
- 6) There is no direct, tangible relationship between the Committee and the arts and cultural community.
- 7) There is a need for improved communications between the Committee and the arts and cultural community.
- 8) There is a need for a dedicated staff position at the PRCC to support the Cultural Committee. (It was noted that this is one of the goals of the current Cultural Strategy.)
- 9) There is a desire to have specific accountability or performance measures in place to assess the achievements of the Committee on a regular basis.
- 10) Conflict of interest guidelines for members of the Committee need to be clarified and publicized each time there is a call for applications to serve on the Committee.
- 11) There needs to be structured and regular communications between the Committee and the arts and cultural community.
- 12) Beyond program eligibility criteria, the overriding priorities upon which the Committee bases its funding recommendations are not clear.

## Recommendations to Address Concerns:

It is recommended that:

- The Nanaimo Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee (PPRC) articulate a structure for the six at-large appointments to the Cultural Committee. The structure could include expertise or representation of professional arts administration, a range of disciplines of practicing professional and community artists and not-for-profit, governance experience. The Committee as a whole should represent the cultural diversity of the community, including the aboriginal community. It may be necessary to expand the scale of the Committee in order to achieve a representative structure.
- The PPRC should create and post a public document which articulates the criteria and process for appointment to the Cultural Committee.
- A maximum term of appointment to the Cultural Committee should be established. Other public sector arts agencies have established six years as an appropriate term. For Nanaimo appointees that would mean a maximum of two consecutive three years terms.
- Committee appointments should be staggered to maintain continuity. As the Committee has six at large members, three renewals and three new appointments would be required each three years. Interim vacancies should be appointed only for the remaining term of the vacant appointment.
- Conflict of interest guidelines should be clearly stated each time there is a call for applications for appointment to the Cultural Committee.
- The Terms of Reference for the Cultural Committee should be revised to reduce the scale of their responsibilities to what is clearly within their control and capacity to achieve. Those items that are carried out by staff or are within the control of the PPRC should be removed.
- The Cultural Committee should be asked to articulate their guiding priorities for funding recommendations. Those priorities should be based primarily upon the vision statement in the Cultural Strategy
- The website for the PPRC could have a link to a page for the Cultural Committee. The Cultural pages could include profiles of the members of the Cultural Committee, their background and expertise. Sub-committees should also be profiled and minutes of Committee meetings could be posted to the page.

- A communications strategy to keep the arts and cultural community informed regarding Committee activities, as well arts and cultural development initiatives could be developed and implemented.
- When resources permit, a dedicated staff position to work with the Cultural Committee should be engaged. (As per the current Cultural Strategy.)
- The implementation of the recommendations above should not impact the resources available for distribution through the funding programs of the Cultural Committee.