



## **ARTS COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS & SURVEY 2014 SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK**

Markham Arts Council (MAC) conducted arts consultations on August 12, 13 and 18, 2014 at Markham Civic Centre, Ontario Room with its members and other participants from Markham's arts community. Findings of an online survey entitled "Building Arts Community in Markham" augmented those of the discussions. The following notes summarize the main themes and ideas raised in response to questions about the Benefits, Needs and Challenges, Solutions and Opportunities experienced by the individual artists and arts organizations who were in attendance and/or completed the survey.

### **I. THEME 1: NEEDS**

*These points were repeated throughout the workshops and surveys:*

- Access to funding, sponsorships / assistance with grant-writing
- Affordable space for rehearsal, performance, exhibition, meeting (lose members by having to relocate constantly)
- Opportunities for exhibition, performance, display
- Assistance with publicity and promotion
- Information on Resources of different kinds tailored to needs of the different disciplines: e.g. (general) publicity, design, printing, space, grants; (film production) permits, cars
- Building audience and in some cases, membership, especially on Boards
- Workshops (especially related to business aspects of the arts) and opportunities for networking

### **II. THEME 2: COLLABORATION**

*The synergies of partnership and collaboration were seen as key to creating benefits and solutions.*

#### **1. Publicity / Promotion**

- Use social media outreach – teen demographic as resource
- Find a group to combine your efforts to obtain funding, increase audience, share costs, promote
- "Free admission" always works
- Cooperative arts advertising space (newspaper, online, etc.)
- Workshops on marketing/promotions/social media/strategic planning/fundraising
- Create a Media / PR Resource List

#### **2. Cross-promotion** to inform the public

#### **3. Regular meetings** to discuss arts matters & network/more **social events!** / themed focus / think-tank evening

### III. THEME 3: ARTS COMMUNITY / ORGANIZATIONAL RENEWAL

*Several key issues relating to membership, research, and self-sufficiency were discussed.*

#### 1. Membership:

- difficulty in attracting new members
  - some groups have an aging population, especially artisans, and have difficulty logistically involving youth
  - connecting to people on an individual level is key
  - Action: have a Board member fair to attract new Board members into these organizations & advertise all the different arts groups as well; many people don't even know we (MAC/arts organizations) even exist
2. Cannot depend solely upon government/external funding to be a self-sufficient arts community
- try selling a do-it-yourself angle (like social painting)
3. Use **hard data** in support of strong arts & culture programming & speak directly to voters/residents of Markham

### IV. THEME 4: RAISING THE PROFILE OF THE ARTS IN MARKHAM

*While talented and productive, the grassroots arts community in Markham is struggling for profile and support. Outside of the City venues, it is largely composed of resident volunteers with daytime careers who are building the artistic and cultural life of the City through their arts and/or efforts. With the activation of the Markham Culture Policy & Plan, a unified and supported arts community will help realize Markham's dream of becoming a world-class city.*

#### 1. Arts & Culture Centre in Markham

- “We’re big kids now” with the population of a thriving city, but without the arts and culture infrastructure that the City of Markham needs to unite it
- There is no central place for artists to gather
- We need opportunities for greater visibility for artists & art organizations
- Lack of available, affordable performance/exhibition space e.g. Markham Theatre n/a even to local music, theatre groups, schools

2. Use **hard data** in support of strong arts & culture programming & speak directly to voters/residents of Markham

#### 3. Building audiences – outreach to the public

- Hold art competitions e.g. Art Battle/art gatherings/group shows/combined showcasing efforts with themes to unite the artists
  - Run programming geared towards younger audiences
  - Use art to connect to deeper & bigger concepts – “superpowers inside”, gathering audiences around higher ideas of art
  - Educate public to see importance of art & culture / why is art part of daily life?
- Change the language artists use: add the benefits shown in research to their self-promotion

## **V. THEME 5: HOW MARKHAM ARTS COUNCIL CAN BENEFIT MARKHAM'S ARTS COMMUNITY**

***MAC can serve the arts community by building upon existing services and creating initiatives in the following areas:***

### **1. Resources Database**

- **Media / PR resource list and toolkit to include:**
  - Economist & Sun 'Community Events Column'
  - TripAdvisor: get McKay Art Centre rated
  - Snapd Markham
  - Guiding Star, Markham event calendar
  - YorkScene, Tourism Markham
  - Event Calendar locations
- Sponsorship
- FAQs and resource list for contacts/advisors/mentors, by discipline

### **2. Membership Directory**

- tagged, online, categorized, cross-referenced directory of members (name, contact info., link to website, description of service, business interests/future plans; willingness to mentor-by discipline)

### **3. Workshops**

- marketing/promotions/social media/strategic planning/fundraising
- grant-writing
- acting/theatre seminars
- design thinking
- for festival-organizers
- visual artist professional development

### **4. Advocacy / Assistance**

- With City on individual filmmakers' behalf for permits / Petition for grants for artists whose work is helping to promote the City, ex. Why would shooting a film in Markham not get supported by Discover Markham?
- Liaison with City for community rates for space
- Assistance with grant-writing
- Introduction to mentors/advisors who know the short-cuts of their field

### **5. Activities**

- Joint advertising (newspaper ads, make social media connections, LaVaLab)
- Post to event websites e.g. YorkScene / link MAC to City's website Arts & Culture page
- Membership drive
- Develop "calls for businesses" – 1 pg ad distributed to different businesses asking for their space for workshops, exhibits, etc.
- Offer outlets for outreach, e.g. audition notices
- Present research to people to increase appreciation & understanding of art:
  - have regular "blurbs" about research on arts & culture (art articles, how arts affect you, factoids) #FridayFact
  - #MAC for members to provide and share to their networks
- Develop promotional trailers for art organizations/individuals (MTAC, local filmmakers, and MAC)
- Profile individuals/groups in future meetings, etc. to spread knowledge and create more fellowship and cohesion in the community