

BUILDING
community
identity and pride

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The arts have been instrumental in facilitating social cohesion, bringing tourism to unlikely places, fostering a sense of belonging, and preserving collective memory.

Culture-based businesses and organizations:

- 1 The arts help to facilitate social cohesion.
- 2 Arts and culture can be used to brand a community and set it apart from others.
- 3 The arts can help foster a sense of ownership, belonging, and pride within a community.
- 4 The arts help to preserve a collective memory and foster a continuing dialogue about the past.

Key arguments for building community identity and pride

1. The arts help to facilitate social cohesion.

Diverse communities are brought together with the help of the arts, providing opportunities for residents to reflect on their shared and individual experiences (Coalter, 2001a; Lowe, 2000; Matarasso, 1997):

The arts provide a forum for intercultural understanding and friendship (Matarasso, 1997).

The arts help make visible those people who have traditionally been invisible in society (Coalter & Allison 2001).

The arts give people the opportunity to interact socially thereby reducing isolation by helping people to make friends and strengthening community networks (Coalter, 2001a; Lowe, 2000; Matarasso, 1997).

Difficult social issues like homelessness, HIV/AIDS, racism, and the treatment of special populations such as persons with disabilities

can be addressed through the arts (Azmier, 2002; Marschall, 2004; Matarasso, 1997).

The arts provide opportunities for people to engage socially and strengthen social bonds.

Community-based participatory arts projects can encourage intergenerational contact (Lowe, 2000; Matarasso, 1997; Perlstein, 1999).

2. Arts and culture can be used to brand a community and set it apart from others.

A unique city vision can be created through the arts and culture, one that helps in marketing the community internationally and nationally, and appealing directly to local citizens. Examples of urban planning initiatives that create a brand for cities on the basis of the arts include Chemainus, BC's, "Town of Murals" and Trois-Rivières, QC's "Capital City of Poetry" (Azmier, 2002; Hannigan, 2003).

3. The arts can help foster a sense of ownership, belonging, and pride within a community.

A sense of civic pride in residents can be achieved through the arts, leading to more engaged citizens and safer neighbourhoods (Azmier, 2002; Coalter, 2001a; Coalter, 2001b; Lowe, 2000; Matarasso, 1997; Pitts, 2004).

When a community invests its time and money into a public mural, the chances of it being vandalized are slim.

In the U.K., taking part in local art projects is one of the top 6 reasons for volunteering (Matarasso, 1997).

The arts can help to nurture local democracy (Matarasso, 1997).

The arts can help build the organizational capacity of a community (Matarasso, 1997).

The arts can facilitate effective public consultation and participation (Matarasso, 1997).

Many struggling inner-city neighbourhoods have used the arts as a means of redefining the community's collective identity. The arts have enabled communities to transform a negative image of their neighbourhood into a positive one (Lowe, 2001; Matarasso, 1997).

4. The arts help to preserve a collective memory and foster a continuing dialogue about the past.

Images and buildings live beyond the lifespan of the individuals who created them thereby leaving a legacy for the next generation.

Community art events create a common memory of the event and a positive commemoration of special occasions.

The arts can be used in community rituals that encourage healing and celebration.

PROFILES

Kitchener, ON

Celebrating community: Kitchener's Festival of Neighbourhoods.
creativecommons.ca/project-profiles/Kitchener-Festival-of-Neighbourhd.html

Nanaimo, BC

The Nanaimo Banner Festival.
creativecommons.ca/project-profiles/Nanaimo-Banner-Festival.html

New Westminster, BC

Art We Awesome: Queensborough Middle School Woodcarving Mural T.
creativecommons.ca/project-profiles/New-Westminster-Art-We-Awesome.html

Toronto & various northern communities, ON

Building community through celebration: Red Pepper Spectacle Arts.
creativecommons.ca/project-profiles/Toronto-Red-Pepper-Spectacle-Arts.html

Vancouver, BC

Artistic opportunity and community development: Community Walls/
Community Voices.
creativecommons.ca/project-profiles/Vancouver-Community-Walls.html

Vancouver, BC

An evolving tradition: Vancouver's Annual Winter Solstice Lantern
Procession.
creativecommons.ca/project-profiles/Vancouver-Secret-Lanterns.html

REFERENCES

For a current list of references (articles and weblinks), visit:
creativecommons.ca/making-the-case/building-community-identity-pride-3.html

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